

State and Local

Society re-creates medieval life, history

By Lawson Reilly
Reporter

Like gladiators, the two armored men slowly approach one another — shields high, swords ready — as a crowd of spectators watch. Then, suddenly, the pair is a blur of swinging swords and parrying shields.

Onlookers wince each time sword and shield connect with a loud crack.

Seconds later, one of the fighters receives a blow to his heavy metal helmet. He steps back from his opponent, knees wobbling, and falls.

The Society for Creative Anachronism may be well-known for its re-creation of medieval combat, but the non-profit research organization is more than chain-mail deep, says Allen Hurst, a Texas A&M junior animal science major and seneschal of the local SCA shire.

The SCA's main function is to find out how people lived in the Middle Ages, Hurst says.

"We don't want people to think all we do is beat each other up," he says.

Graduate student and SCA member Corrie Bergeron says the SCA's roots go back to the University of California at Berkeley in 1966, when a group of fantasy and history buffs got together one weekend to participate in a tournament in celebration of spring.

Hurst says they used wooden swords and football pads to simulate medieval melees, and they apparently enjoyed it so much they did it again the next weekend — and the next.

Today the SCA has more than 20,000

members worldwide, he says, including shires and baronies in Australia, Europe, East Asia and even aboard the USS Nimitz.

A&M's shire has 45 members and continues to grow, Hurst says.

Bergeron, known as "His Lordship Brendan O'Corraidhe" to other SCA members, says each member adopts a persona — a historically possible character — from a period between 800 and 1650, such as a Viking, a crusader, a bard or a jester. If they wish, members can register their personas with the SCA so that no one else can use them, he says.

Hurst says a persona cannot represent a person who actually lived or a character from a book or a movie.

"You can be King Arthur's first cousin," he says, "but you can't be King Arthur," he says.

Most personas chosen are from the middle class, such as merchants or artisans, although some members prefer to be peasants. Members help each other research personas and create costumes, he says, and clothing can have a lot to do with the persona adopted.

"If you wouldn't be caught dead wearing tights then you're not going to be 16th century," he says. "If you wouldn't be caught dead wearing a dress then you wouldn't be an 11th century Norman or Saxon."

Asian personas are becoming more popular in A&M's growing shire, Hurst says, which has enhanced members' cultural knowledge even further.

"I'm learning a lot about Japanese armor," he says. "I can't pronounce it, but I know it."

Hurst studies medieval blacksmithing of armor and weapons. Other SCA members learn Middle Age songs and dances; brewing techniques for ale, wine and cider; and spinning and weaving, he says.

"You take a sheep and make a shirt out of it somehow," he chuckles.

Bruce Hartweg, a junior geophysics major, says he has known members who learned falconry and book binding.

Hartweg practices heavy fighting, which simulates combat with heavy weapons such as axes, spears, broadswords, halberds, maces and two-handed swords. The weapons are made of rattan bamboo, he says.

The SCA has strict safety rules for fighting, which include weapon regulations and minimum armor limitations, Hartweg says, and the most severe SCA injury he has heard of is a broken arm.

"For the most part injuries are bruises," he says.

Combatants are on their honor to admit when they receive a crippling or killing blow, Hartweg says. Judges are not used, although marshals are on the combat field to ensure safety rules are followed.

Tammy Hobbes, a freshman computer science major, says most women in the SCA are dress ladies who help buckle and lace fighters

into their armor. Hobbes, however, chose to enter the male-dominated area of heavy fighting. She says everyone in the SCA has been supportive of her decision.

"They recognized that I wanted to be different, and I could probably handle it," she says.

The fighting requires a lot of skill and stamina, Hartweg says.

"What I wear when I'm fully armored is about 80 or 90 pounds," he says.

Hurst says most fighting is done in tournaments on weekends.

The SCA divided the United States into 11 kingdoms, he says. A&M is part of the Shire of the Shadowlands, which is part of the Oklahoma and Texas kingdom, Ansteorra.

At least two SCA events take place somewhere in A&M's kingdom each weekend, Hurst says. Most of the events are fighting tournaments, but they often include art and science contests, as well as gaming tournaments. Hall feasts are also popular during holidays.

In the fall the SCA will sponsor King's College — a series of classes in Rudder Tower dealing with life in the Middle Ages.

One of the SCA's largest events is the Pensive War, in which about 200 people from the East and West kingdoms fight each other annually at Cooper's Lake, Pa., Hurst says.

"We usually hire ourselves out for, oh, like a six-pack," he laughs. "We try to pretend it's real, for the weekend at any rate."

Pre-trial sessions begin in Austin drug-test case

AUSTIN (AP) — Brenda Jennings says her employer should not have the right to test her urine unless the firm has reason to believe she is taking drugs.

The 27-year-old production inspector at Minco Technology Labs Inc. of Austin is the central figure in a court test of the right of a private company to order mandatory, random drug tests.

"We are not machines, we are people," Jennings told reporters during pre-trial sessions. "They can't check our oil to be sure we are productive."

The class action suit was filed by the Texas Civil Liberties Union in the name of Jennings, a Minco employee for three years. She alleges her right to privacy is violated by the company's announced program for routine, periodic urine testing.

The firm, which tests and distributes computer chips for military and space contractors, says the drug tests are necessary. A year ago an employee addicted to heroin stole \$250,000 in computer chips and tried to sell the chips to support his expensive habit.

Minco is backed in the suit by the Texas Association of Business, which contends random testing is necessary to control drug use in the work place.

The electronics firm's managers have been tested, but the firm agreed not to test rank-and-file workers until the court challenge is complete.

"I am against random testing," Jennings said. "I think there should be at least some suspicions before they call you down to the laboratory."

Jennings says she has never been asked to take a urine test nor has she volunteered for one.

But she said she feels she has been working under pressure since the suit was filed in December 1986.

"I know there are several people watching me, all the time," she said.

Clements predicts defeat for 'budget busters'

LAREDO (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements, chastising legislators who endorsed a budget with spending levels higher than his plan, predicted Monday that Texans will not tolerate new taxes.

Clements began his 17-city austerity tour in the border city of Laredo, where he also met privately with Gov. Jorge Trevino Martinez of the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon to discuss regional issues.

Clements planned another no-new-taxes stop in Harlingen later in the day. But in Laredo he told about 75 supporters that he would veto a 1988-1989 budget above his \$36.9 billion spending plan.

A House committee has approved a \$38.4 billion budget proposal and the full Senate approved a \$39.9 billion proposal. The state faces a projected \$5.8 billion deficit and either must cut spending or raise taxes.

Clements said he would not cut human services, education or prison

expenditures. "The truth is this is a battle between fiscal conservatives on one side and budget busters who want to greatly expand the size, role and cost of state government on the other side," Clements said.

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— Gov. Bill Clements

side," Clements said.

"Right now, the only thing the Legislature is talking about is spend, spend, spend and tax, tax, tax. . . . I will veto any attempt to raise taxes \$5.8 billion. . . . We're going to live within our means," Clements said.

He said he agreed to the extension of the temporary sales tax and

the motor fuels tax increases thinking legislators would agree with him.

"I was mistaken," Clements said. "I did not get cooperation. The response of too many, especially in the Senate, was 'Bill, you've only gone halfway. Go whole-hog and support a \$5.8 billion tax bill.'"

Clements said a tax increase would not attract new businesses to the state and would do little to help the unemployment rate, which in Laredo is about 18 percent.

"The best thing we can do for those out of work, for those in need, for our schools, is to get our Texas economy moving again so we can create jobs and have the increased revenues from a growing economy," he said.

House Speaker Gib Lewis said legislators do not want to raise taxes, but it might be necessary to maintain current services.

Clements said that when he left office in 1982, the budget for the

biennium was only \$26.6 billion and has increased by \$10 billion.

"In the last year and a half, the people of Texas made it clear to me they understand we can restrain

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spending without cutting essential services, even if they don't know the line-item detail of the budget," Clements said.

The governor told Laredo supporters that he endorsed the twin-plant manufacturing concept along

the border. He said the governors from U.S. and Mexican border states would meet within 60 days to discuss regional issues.

Later, in Harlingen, Clements addressed the controversial Casa Oscar Romero. The Catholic-run sanctuary for refugees from Central America has drawn the ire of some Cameron County residents as it attempts to move to a new location near Brownsville.

"I am fundamentally opposed to the theory of a sanctuary for illegal aliens," Clements said in response to a request for assistance from Joe King Jr., a spokesman for a group opposed to the Casa.

He said he would ask the U.S. Attorney General for an opinion on whether the Casa Oscar Romero legally could house illegal aliens. If the practice is against the law, Clements said, he would ask the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service "to do something about it."

"I've got a terrible secret. If they only knew what I go through to stay thin."

When the extreme fear of being overweight becomes obsessive, it leads to unusual and harmful eating practices.

Anorexia and Bulimia are eating disorders which are becoming more prevalent. **Anorexia**, the excessive pursuit of thinness, can result in malnutrition, low blood pressure, loss of hair, irrational thinking and even death. **Bulimia**, compulsive eating binges followed by the purging of food, can lead to severe dental problems, kidney failure or cardiac arrest.

Warning Signals may vary, but often include:

- The secret fear of becoming fat
- Feeling out of control around food
- Binging on huge quantities of food and then purging, by vomiting, laxatives, or diuretics
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