



Above: Members of The Shire of the Shadowlands gather under their pavilion for feast.
Right: Jeff Turner ducks under an opponents lunge during a practice round of fighting.

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to mention reputation, to accept the glove. There are two styles of armed combat in SCA —heavy weapons fighting and light weapons fighting or Rapier.

Heavy weapons fighting is when two armed knights are unhorsed and have to fight on ground. Their weapons are made of rattan and wrapped in duct tape.

Jeff Turner, "Valentine Drake," says heavy fighters wear about 100 lbs. of armour.

Heavy fighters wear equipment, made of leather or steel, that covers all parts of the body. Their helmets are lined with three inches of foam, says Turner, a computer science and psychology major at Texas A&M.

The second style, called Rapier or swash-buckling, is similar to fencing. Fighters are required to wear several layers of "trigger," a thick, woven material and a face mask.

Scott Stemberidge, "Llewelyn Brydydd Mir," has been practicing rapier for three years. During his duels of rapier fighting, he says he has come across several women fighters. "I have seen some fine women fighters."

In the Kingdom of Ansteorra, which includes all the shires in Texas and Oklahoma, the King and Queen are chosen through right of arms, meaning heavy combat. Presently, the Kingdom is ruled by a Queen, who earned her title by beating 40 men and women, including her husband.

The finest rapier fighters are known as "Dons." They are recognized as being outstanding.

"Becoming a Don is a great honor," says Stemberidge. "You get extreme respect from others."

Role playing is a major part of fighting, as it is with everything else. It adds authenticity, drama and excites the crowd.

Struck by a dagger in his rib, one light fighter moaned with pain, grabbed his ribs and slowly, gradually stumbled to the ground.

"If you're bleeding, you imagine that you're losing blood. If you're struck, you imagine great pain. And, if you die, you try to make a dramatic exit," says Stemberidge, a light weapons fighter.

The fighting events dominate most of the day. The evening is saved for feasting, dancing and storytelling by the campfire.

Shirley Hutto, "Ariel Beaullett," hates to see the weekend end.

"I work 50 hours a week and SCA events are a good way to forget about work."

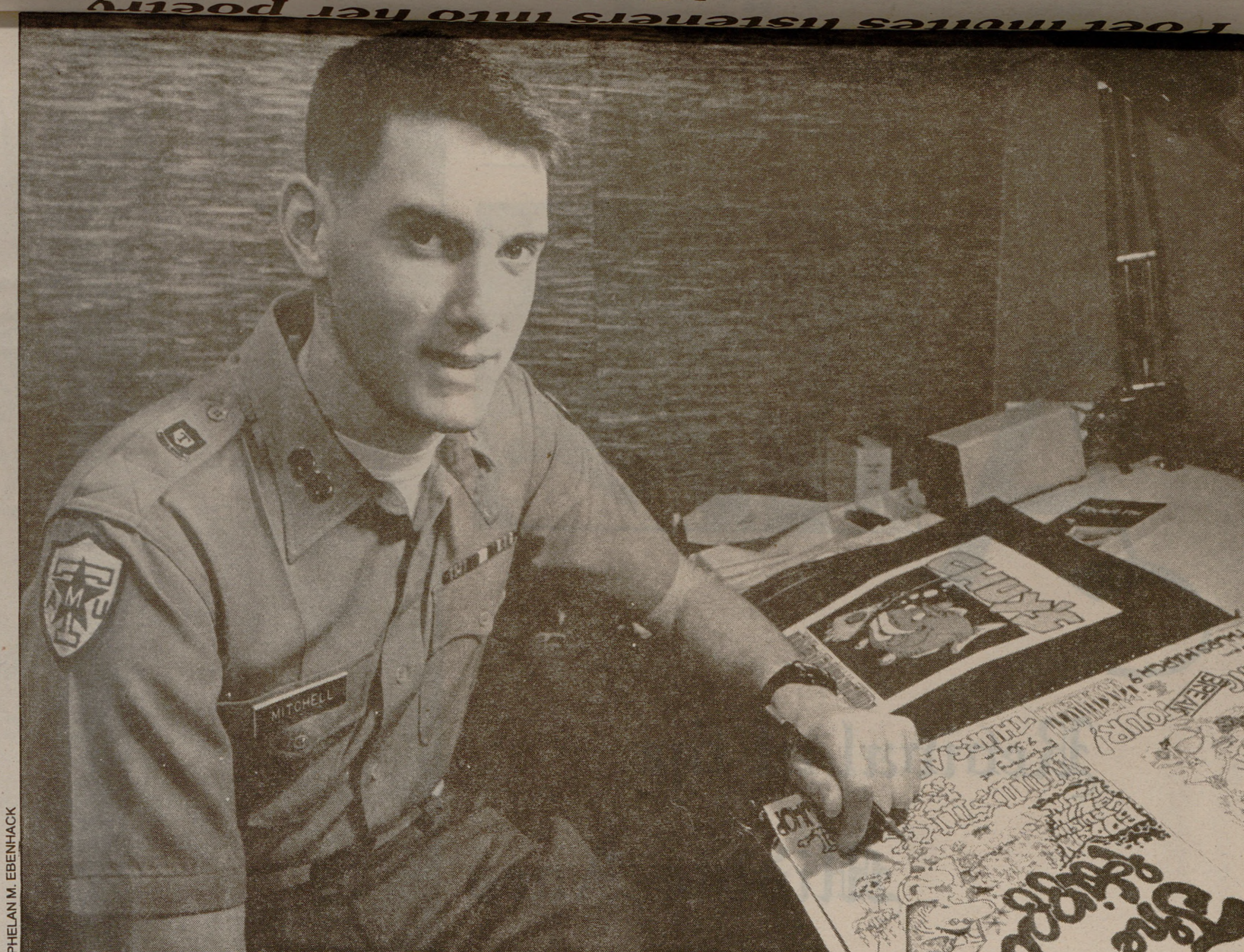
Most everyone agrees that SCA provides an escape from the everyday world — a world of tests, work and war.

But Heath adds, "SCA isn't just about names and garbs. It's about getting involved with the history and learning about it."

Michael Farlow, Deputy Seneschal and public relations representative for SCA, says all A&M students and local residents are encouraged to join. Anyone wanting more information about activities can check What's Up listings or call Farlow at 268-7737. Dianna Hunt, the Hospitler in charge of new members, may be reached at 822-3194.



PHILAN M. EBENHACK



Kyle Mitchell draws illustrations and cartoons in his spare time.

Student looney over 'toons

By Terri Welch



As the other children stood around and admired his drawing of a cross-eyed cowboy, Kyle Mitchell says it was then that he realized he had a special talent.

A senior journalism major from Austin, Mitchell is a funny and creative illustrator who discovered his abilities at a young age.

"When I was about 9 years old, I lived in Las Vegas," Mitchell says. "My mom signed me up for a cartooning class at a community center. That showed me I could draw."

It was not until high school that Mitchell began to pursue his talent.

"I drew political cartoons and a comic strip known as 'Jalapeño' for my high school newspaper," Mitchell says. "I also drew for the year-



book." "Jalapeño" was a dragon in high school who encountered everyday situations, and Mitchell says the character had more or less his personality.

But it was the political cartoons he drew in high school that earned him high honors and a journalism scholarship.

Environmental issues prove to be a strong theme in most of his more recent drawings, and Mitchell says they serve a good purpose.

"I did that because I feel strongly about the environment, and it was a good chance to get my name on a piece of published work," he said.

The Austin American-Statesman ran "Soapapilla Tex," a litter control comic strip by Mitchell, for two weeks. The idea was to educate school children about recycling and was part of the "Keep Austin Beautiful" campaign.

He also has drawn three comic books which keep the environment in the spotlight.

"Commander Cleanup and his sidekick Jet Lag were also part of the 'Keep Austin Beautiful' campaign," Mitchell says. "These comic books were distributed to schools Life Style magazine

around Austin."

His most recent comic book and its main character "Beach Buddy" encourage and educate school children about beach conservation. Different companies are being approached to publish the book, he says.

Mitchell does not limit his illustrations to environmental efforts.

"I once drew a giant valentine card for a friend to give to his girlfriend," he said. "I've drawn many T-shirt and flyer designs."

Mitchell also has drawn medical illustrations for a chiropractor to use at a college seminar and created "Spitfire," a dragon to help curtail drug abuse.

He says he doesn't really have one favorite piece, and the most fun he has had working was at CC Creations in College Station.

"The atmosphere was the best, and I got to cartoon," he says. "I had a lot of freedom to do what I wanted."

Currently an intern at Graphic Concepts, an advertising agency in Bryan, Mitchell says he knows he wants to be involved in commercial art eventually.

"My biggest dream is to have my

own comic strip or to start something like Looney Tunes," he says.

His inspirations have come from illustrators of diverse backgrounds. The creativity of Walt Disney and the Disney animators intrigue Mitchell and influence his work.

At age 8, he bought a book by Preston Blair, an animator for Hanna-Barbara.

"Blair did a lot of the old Tom & Jerrys and Droopy Dog. He was really the thing that got me started drawing," Mitchell said. "I started copying his work and trying to get his style down."

He says his mom has encouraged him the most, and he prides himself on having taken only one art class.

"I'm proudest that everything I've learned, I've taught myself," he says.

He really puts himself into his work. "I act through my characters," he said. "Sometimes I'll be drawing an expression and I catch myself making the expression."

To other aspiring illustrators, he says, "Do what makes you happy and always be critical of your own work. Keep your sense of humor and let your art be your outlet."