

Middle Age Chivalry in Tyler County

by Michael G. Maness, www.PreciousHeart.net.

“Lay on!” yelled the war games marshal, and a hundred-plus men and women engaged in full-contact Middle Age combat, many dressed in armor for close quarter fighting and a few in more nimble attire for the archers.

On November 15-18, Jones Country was transformed yet again into a huge camping ground for several “kingdoms” as they planned for the 35th Autumn Melees. The Barony Bordermarch of the Kingdom of Ansteorra hosted another battle between the two kingdoms of Ansteorra and Gleann Abhann, what the Barony calls “BAM: Bordermarch Autumn Melees,” and this particular one is hopefully the first of many “BAM: War of the Rams #1.” This so named because a ram’s horn is on Bordermarch’s “device” (or coat of arms) and a ram is on Gleann Abhann’s device, hence, “War of the Rams.”

Ben and Liz Lee are the founding Baron and Baroness of the Barony Bordermarch (Bordermarch.org).

Last year in “War Games in Tyler County – Medieval Style,” we detailed the sophisticated structure (Booster, 12-8-11).¹ Nineteen kingdoms of The Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) grew out of a 1966 Berkeley University gathering and has grown to over 60,000 worldwide (SCA.org). They come to live the Medieval life.

There are other regularly scheduled SCA wars around the U.S., like the Pennsic War, Gulf Wars, Lillies War, and more.

The deeper meaning of the SCA fellowship is not easy to explain, so we will contrast it with what it is not. It is not a Texas Renaissance Festival (TexRenFest.com), though early Renaissance living is a part. The Renaissance embraced only a small portion of the end of the Middle Ages and ushered in an age unto itself. The Middle Ages (476-1500) began with the Fall of Rome and ended with the beginning of the Renaissance (1453-1600) which was heralded by the Fall of Constantinople, the



¹ See article, War Games in Tyler County – Medieval Style by Michael G. Maness, (www.TylerCountyBooster.com, 12-8-11: 2B & 6-7B), www.PreciousHeart.net/message/SCA-2011.pdf.

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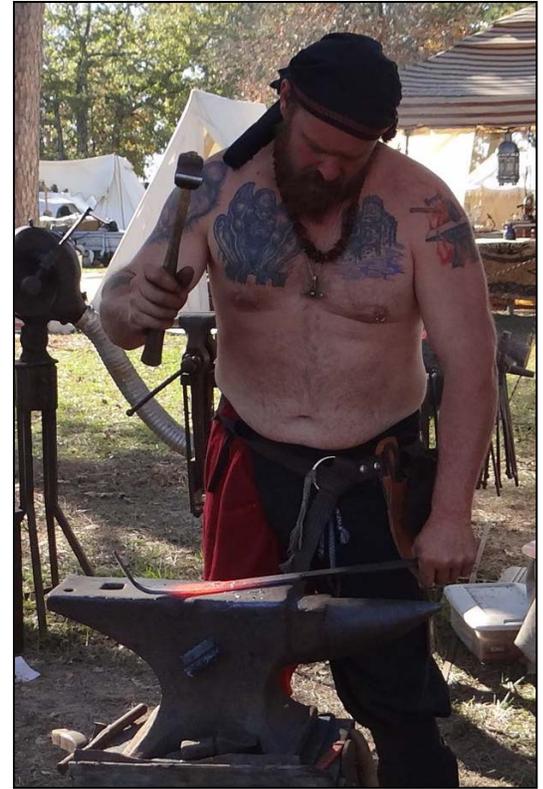
invention of the printing press and the great explorations. The Renaissance festivals are open to all, and Texas hosts the largest with eight weekends with themes like the Bavarian Forest, Scottish Highlands, Pirates, Halloween witches and fantasy fairies, and even a thousand-year pre-Renaissance classic Roman Bacchanal. So “Renaissance” has lost a lot of its meaning in these festivals and has become more a banner for exotic costume festivals, some loosely connected to history and others fantasy.

Now we dare not criticize the adventures under the banner of Renaissance Festivals. For some attendees the festivals are more than a hobby, more than a weekend party, and become a subculture. Many subcultures exist in the U.S., like the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in the Black Hills of South Dakota (SturgisMotorcycleRally.com). There are weekend cyclists and others who adore everything Harley. I have many friends that enjoy them all.

Yet, heartily, what distinguishes the SCA is the “living” of the Medieval life for a weekend striving toward authenticity. In other words, the SCA has no public ticket booths, for it is not an observation sport like a football game. Rather, the SCA is a “participant activity” where all pay an event gate fee. Members wear period clothing and live with most of the conveniences of modern times hidden out of view. If first-time guests happen to come by – like a reporter – they are expected to wear period clothing. The SCA usually has a few sets of clothes to loan, and first-time visitors also pay an event gate fee like the members.

The SCA is more serious than the October-fest parties. While welcoming guests, the SCA is less about spectators and more about inviting others to become member-participants. If the SCA advertises, it is for prospective members to become participants to join in “living” history for a day or weekend. One cannot fight in a battle or engage others in activities without certification.

Importantly, the SCA has no goblins or mutated figures. One does not merely “dress” like a crusader or knight or tradesman, because “rank” must be earned.



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One must be a part of a kingdom and a barony within that kingdom, and usually what one wears often indicates one's status. The attire, colors, and crests of one's kingdom often are calculated to help tell one's individual story.

Even the children remain children. There are no child fairies and no little ones sporting angel wings.

The SCA stresses and awards authenticity! To live as authentically in the Middle Ages as possible. With the textile and armor, with the war games and the arts, there is Medieval fellowship. Space is given for the king and queen, obeisance for higher rank, and courtesy, curtsies, and a code of courtly honor. Really, all of the best one could hope for around a King Arthur's round table or in his Kingdom of Camelot.

Adults adopt a persona and "register" their name. No one is allowed to take a historical name. So there is no Richard the Lion Heart, though there are many lion-hearted men and women.

Some light-hearted men and women too.

Leaders often serve two roles, a secular role in managing the finances, publicity, logistics, or public relations and then their SCA role of a ranking position within the "kingdom" of which they are a member.

Take Sven, for example, a.k.a. in real life Todd Perkins. Maybe 6'3" who is pictured in front of the castle wall after a melee. His dark red belt means he is a squire who attends to a knight who teaches him in a fealty agreement, and the lessons go both ways.

On the lane of craft workers, the dying of yarn can be seen, later to be woven into clothes. A forger beats metal into swords. A leather shop has hides to sell (saw no slaying of cows though – whew!). A woman molds and fires clay into cups, bowls, and tankards. A shop specializes in handmade armor and chainmail.

The kitchen was sponsored by Master Ihon Vinson McFerguson and Mistress Isabeau Quiquadon, a.k.a., John and Terri Hirling, who hold the title of Baron and Baroness,



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from having been past the Baron and Baroness of Barony Stargate (from Houston). Food for the warriors and others included several entrees like seven-bean soup and lintel soup and homemade bread. Outdoor Middle Age cuisine with a smile.

On the beautiful horses are Eule Van Haginbald and Chretien D'Aille, a.k.a., Steve and Dawn Hemphill. Steve is riding a huge 17.1 hand chocolate-moose Friesian/Percheron named Tinker Bell. They were part of the ring-jousting equestrian games.

Kneeling by the castle wall was the big Thorguard Innsvarti, a.k.a. Mark Burns, with the huge ax! Another photo shows him with helmet off by some of his clan. Notice the lion crest on his chest which means he has achieved his persona in SCA. Certainly looks the part too!

If you think you might be interested in next year's Middle Age chivalry in Tyler County, feel free to email some of the members at BorderMarch.org.

In the evening, once more, they gather around the camp fires to share, dare we say, war stories.

