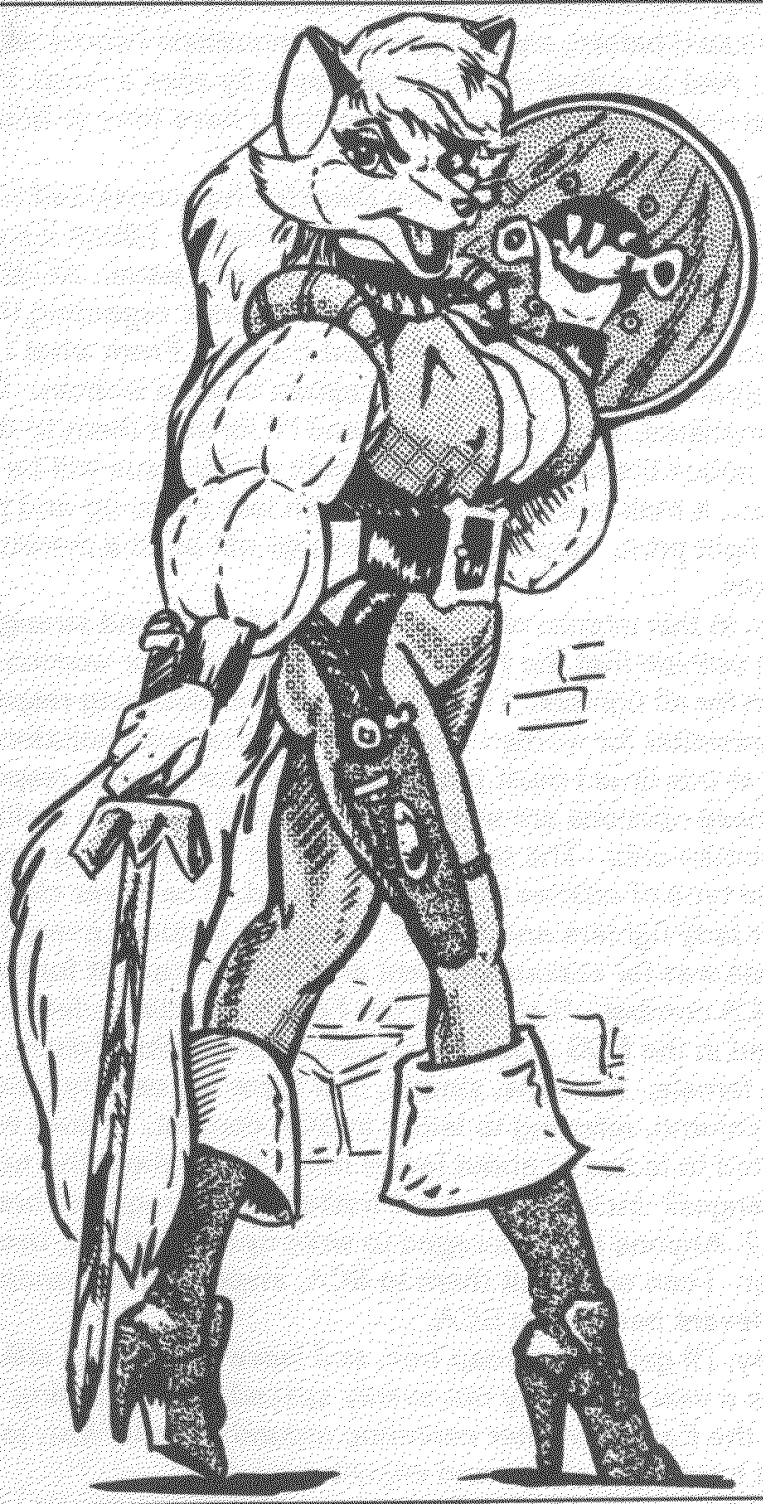
# FLOWER OF SOUVENANCE

## #4 LETTERS FOR THE FALCON GENTLE

Information for the Lady Fighter and others

$3.00$



EXCLUSIVELY A PREMIER SERIES BY BLACKFOX

VIXEN'S KEEP: THE GAGE

# From the Editor . . .

Greetings! Originally this was supposed to be the anniversary issue of the FOS , unfortunately several things came up. It seemed I had to wait forever for enough information to come in to pad a good issue. I have decided not to do this again, as many people think this means I am out of business. From now on I will go to press whether it be a small issue or micro sized, those of you who subscribe deserve a more reliable time schedule. Also, my lord won crown, as I have said before, and despite good intentions I could do nothing on this newsletter. And as a final note of brain capacity after a reign, I volunteered for our kingdom chronicler position. So now that I have time to breathe, here we are.

Some good things, Lord William Blackfox has consented to run a first time publication in the FOS, "Vixen's Keep, The Gage". I think it's great! The first section will run in this issue, followed by one each issue. Another SCA artist has talked to me of running a period based comic regarding the travels of a merchant train through the Middle-east and Europe. From what I understand, it's sort of a melodrama with the security captain being a woman. Comments are always appreciated, send them to me, and I'll forward them to the artists. Also, you may notice the new format. The bulk of this issue will be done by electronic scribe. It makes it easier to print with less paste-up and no hassle with articles in light print. Hopefully misspellings will be at a minimum, as well as other mistakes.

Finally, in this interim of time I have had friends and strangers once again voice the opinion that the FOS should not be only for women, but should be a publication for all fighters. I have also had overwhelming response to it for being only a newsletter for women and their problems, with solutions on and off the field. I feel at this time I must put an official editor hat and respond in this way: Both of these opinions are wrong. I do not feel that I am limiting this newsletter to women only. The only thing keeping it from being a newsletter for all fighters is the type of articles that are submitted. The cover clearly states "information for lady fighters and others", I feel this includes everyone. Originally the purpose was for encouragement and mutual support for ladies in combat, any SCA combat. "Letters for the Falcons Gentle" refers to, as is previously stated in the FOS , loosely the species Peregrine Falcon, more specifically the female. It means, simply, that there are usually letters, mostly in the editorial column, referring to ladies in SCA combat. It does not mean they are restricted to ladies or about ladies only. What about the new SCA wide marshallate changes? Including, but not limited to, the required breast protection for women? Anyone is encouraged to write upon anything, that's what editorials are for. I can only limit them to SCA, involving no mundane influence unless it has relevant bearing on SCA.

Anyway, I'll get off the soap box, and leave off saying I still intend to print four issues a year, probably not evenly spaced, one centering around Pennsic War in the East, the other centering around Estrella War, in Atenveldt. Fight well, fight hard, fight clean, and enjoy!!

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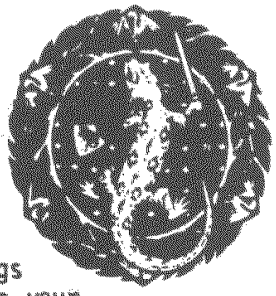
Sir Hilary of Serendip



## TALKING TO YOUR SWORD

You only need one opponent for SCA combat, and you shouldn't be holding it, wearing it, or standing on it. And there is a real and constant risk of getting outnumbered before you start - your sword, your armor, your own body and the ground under your feet can slow you down and sap your strength before anyone swings a stick at you. Your sword can either lead the conspiracy or be your staunchest friend. Its mass and speed lend it a sort of sentience, and if you ask for things it does easily, it will help you; if you don't, you'll have to argue with it all the time to force it into places it doesn't "want" to go.

Finding out what your sword wants is a matter of muscle sense and conservation of energy. The knowledge makes every move more effective - and the lack of it keeps all but the strongest and most determined fighters out of the top rank. It has to be learned rather than taught, and people rarely try to share it, because it's hard to translate muscle sense into words. The explanation given here is based on years of personal demonstrations - my own and my teachers' - but it's doubtless still far from perfect. I'd be pleased to correspond with anyone who wants to work with these exercises, in the hope of improving the descriptions for another draft. . . .

### A. INTRODUCTIONS

1. **Meet your willful sword.** Hold a sword out at arm's length, and open your hand. You will instantly see the basic and burning desire of every sword - to dive for the ground and hit it, hard. (Don't let it get your foot.) This seems silly and obvious, but there's power here: just because it's off the ground, a sword is full of potential motion and force. With practice, you can add your sword's force to your own strength, instead of having to use your strength to overcome it.

2. **Meet your strongest muscles.** Stand flatfooted, facing forward, and use your belly to swing your hips back and forth around a center point. Keep your weight balanced evenly on both feet and your head still, and relax your shoulders - if you do this right, your arms will swing out from your sides as you turn, like ropes tied to the end of a stick. Whether you punch a keyboard or sling hundred-pound sacks for a living, your lower trunk and legs have to have your strongest muscles, because they carry <u>you</u> around (along with whatever you're toting in your hands). Just think how big a person would have to be, to have upper arms the size of your waist or thighs. . . . It makes sense to bring your great muscles to bear on your sword, rather than struggling along with the lesser ones.

3. **Meet your long, sharp hand.** Reach out and touch something with the blade of your open hand, that is, the pad of muscle along the edge under the little finger. You'll find you can touch anything you can reach, without looking directly at your target - your hand has been on the end of your arm for a long time, and you know everything you need to know about the way it moves. Now, take hold of a sword, stand about 30" further away from your target, and make the same hand movements you did before. The blade of the sword will hit exactly the same places you touched with your hand, because that's what a sword is: a long, sharp hand. You'll have instinctive control over your sword from the beginning if you trust the blade of your hand and let your sword blade follow it.

NOTE: If your sword seems too heavy, switch to a lighter one before you go on; a pound and a half is plenty. A cross-hilted shortsword or broadsword that balances 3-5" out on the blade is the best bet. Avoid a sword that balances inside the grip - although it's lovely to hold (it will snuggle into your hand like a kitten), all it wants to do is thrust, and it will act bored and sluggish in these exercises.

## B. MOVING YOUR SWORD

**1. Overhand circles.** Hold your sword aloft like a general leading a charge, then let your hand drop loosely to your side, blade first. Relax, so that the sword swings up behind you - it should have enough momentum to traverse almost a full circle, pulling your arm up behind your ear. As it hits the highest point of its arc, move your swordside hip forward enough to make the sword go over the top and fall down in front of you again. Repeat, until you can swing a series of smooth, effortless circles. Your arm should be neither tense nor limp, just alive.

**2. Figures of eight**

a. Arm. Start with a series of overhand circles, and feel the weight of the sword change in your hand. Note how heavy it is at the bottom of the swing, when it's moving rapidly, and how it seems almost weightless as it goes over the top. As it goes through the weightless point - the **"free spot"** - rotate your forearm so the blade of your hand turns about 45° across your body. If you don't fight it, the sword will swoop down on a diagonal and trace a circle around the other side of your body, rising to a free spot near your offside ear. Let your hand turn 45° in the other direction when it hits that free spot, and the sword will return to its starting point. Use your hips to get through the free spots. Repeat, until you can draw a series of sideways figures of eight, with a minimum of muscle behind them.

b. Hip. Hold your sword horizontal, with one hand on the grip and the other near the point, and your elbows close to your sides. Stand facing forward, with your feet about shoulder width apart, and your weight balanced between them. Trace a forward circle with your swordside hip, letting your shoulder go with it so that the hand on that side punches out and forward and then gets pulled back by the movement of the hip. Keep your weight even, and don't let your head move. (Yah, it's almost impossible, but not quite. Keep at it.) Then trace a circle with the offside hip and hand, and alternate so that you slither through a series of flat hip-swivels. (It's a lot like belly dancing. In fact, Sir Andrea of Clear Mount once held a revel spellbound for half an hour, doing fighting exercises in a borrowed outfit and lots of veils. No one guessed who she was or what she was doing.)

c. Combined. Let go of the sword point, and set the hand on the grip back to drawing eights around your body. Keep your wrist steady, and get the turns you need from your forearm. You should be cutting an "x" in the air with the blade of your hand (and sword), keeping your weight balanced and your head still, and using your hips to keep your arms moving. It's almost effortless when you're doing it right. Play with your sword: Switch from eights to circles and back. Try thin eights and big, fat, looping ones. Do them fast and do them slowly. Try them with the sword in your off-hand. Move your empty hand parallel to the one holding the sword. Run most of the loops from shoulder to hip, but try the reverse as well. Pay attention, noting where the sword moves easily, and where it seems to catch. Experiment gently until you're sure of the free spots, because your sword will cheerfully turn 180° for you if it's in a free spot, but will try to tear your arm off if you ask it for more than a minor vector change anywhere else.

**Listen** to your sword. Listen with your muscles, because it speaks in movement rather than sound. It has the rattan-sword business down pat, and will teach you a great deal if you pay close enough attention. In general, the more comfortable you are, the better you're doing, but here are a couple of checkpoints:

* Make sure the whole sword stays in front of the plane of your body, that is, the line made by imagining a water-carrier's yoke along your shoulders. If the tip is sneaking around behind your back at the bottoms of the loops, you can correct it by keeping your thumb on top while the sword is rising, instead of letting your hand turn either palm up or palm down.

* Make sure that your hips are doing the work Almost all the forward and back component of the figure of eight comes from the hip turning the shoulder girdle - the upper arm moves only about 45° ahead of the plane of the shoulders and back to that plane during the cross-body loop.

## C. LETTING YOUR SWORD MOVE YOU

**1. Single steps.** Get the combined figures of eight going smoothly, then pick up your swordside foot as the sword enters the free spot on that side of your body. If you catch the right moment, momentum will pick you up and carry you forward one small step. Swing a couple of eights in place to get used to the idea, then pick up the foot again. This will eventually inch you around in a circle, pivoting on the offside foot. When that gets dull, pick up the offside foot as the sword gets to the free spot on that side, and try pivoting in the other direction.

**2. Continuous walking.** Reduce the number of stationary eights until you're taking a step with each loop of the sword, alternating swordside and offside feet. The cuts should cross at about eye-level, and each foot should hit the ground just after the sword passes your eyes. Almost all the forward movement should come from the momentum of the sword, not from your leg muscles. If you've got this right, it feels as though your sword is alive and pulling you along.

**3. Circles**

a. Standing. Go on guard - that is, stand sideways, looking along your shield-side shoulder - and swing the sword in flat circles over your head. Get most of the rotary motion from your hips, with as little from your arm and shoulder as you can manage. Your swordhand should be palm up when moving across your body and away from you, and palm down on the return, and should move straight out and back in like a piston in a cylinder. (But don't let your elbow lock straight! That wrecks the joint.) Meanwhile, the tip of your sword should trace a long, smooth oval, tilted just far enough from the horizontal to avoid smashing into your forehead.

b. Forward recovery. Once you get comfortable with flat circles, pick up your swordside foot when the sword reaches the furthest extension of your arm. Done properly, this will pick you up bodily and pivot you around your shieldside foot, so you wind up on guard facing the direction opposite the one you started in.

c. Backward recovery. Ditto, only pick up the shieldside foot just as your arm reaches full extension. This will pivot you around your swordside foot.

d. Spinning walk. Alternate forward and backward recovery, and you spin like a dervish while gliding forward, impressing everyone with your splendid coordination.

## D. TRAVELLING TOGETHER

The value of these exercises comes from doing them a lot - figuring out how to get through them is only the beginning. There is much to be learned that isn't even hinted at in this brief sketch. By going over and over these moves, especially the ones in paragraph B.2.c and any variations on them that occur to you, you create an environment wherein your nerves and muscles can find the easy ways of helping a sword get from here to there. Once you grasp that, on the nonverbal level where your body lives, you can add all the power you please without wasting any of it or hurting yourself. Master Raymond the Mild (who taught me the figure-of-eight exercise) called it "non-violence", saying you should be as mild and gentle as possible with your own body, and save all your power and violence for your opponent.

The moves described here don't look much like combat, but they bear about the same relation to a fighting style as an alphabet does to a language. At least one is a "word" all by itself: the flat circle introduced in paragraph C.3.a is a Bellatrix snap; all you do is speed it up and hit something before your hand turns over and starts the recovery. But the direct use of the moves is less important than the way they fit together into larger patterns, whole sentences of attack and defense. They free your sword from the drag of your own muscles, by allowing your body to learn what doesn't need to be done. After all, when you fight tense, you fight against yourself. And you only need one opponent. . . and you shouldn't be looking out through the bars of its helm.

# Mistress Kyriel of Windhover Cliff

Just as there are notable similarities between stage fighting and fighting in the Society of Creative Anachronism, there are notable differences. This presentation will be concerned with stage fighting as it evolved in the Colorado Shakespeare Festival during the twelve years I was personally involved in the program, and SCA fighting as I have observed it over the past two years.

The major differences between theater and the SCA are weapons, armor, time and the ultimate goal being pursued. Where the SCA uses rattan with padded points or standard sport fencing blades, theatrical swords may range from authentic reproductions to modern foils, but are always metal. Where fighters in the SCA must be properly armored, their defenses need only approximate period authenticity, and may be of a single period throughout a fighter's career. Theatrical fighters, on the other hand, are rarely armored effectively and almost never masked, and they must fight in clothing not of their choosing, which changes with each production and which is rarely available to them during practice sessions.

SCA fighters can learn at their own rate of speed, progressing over a period of time to a high degree of technical capability. Fighting actors have a strictly limited rehearsal schedule, with weapons usually not available for private practice. The goal of the SCA fighter may be honor and chivalry, a title or prize, or the simple joy of combat. The goal of the theatrical fighter, while it may (and often does) include joy of combat, is a performance before an audience which, once the run of the play is over, will never be repeated.

Turning to similarities, theatrical and SCA fights are both deeply concerned with the safety of the participants. At the same time, both attempt to create a sense of realism. There is a third similarity which, if not unique to the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, at least is not at all common in theatrical fencing programs, and that is the practice (or sport) of free fighting, which is to say, non-choreographed fights. This, of course, is what most SCA fighting is all about.

At the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, which I will hereafter abbreviate to CSF, the development of free fighting added a few refinements. Weapons became more authentic, especially in blade width (no more modern foils) and quality of construction. Points and edges were blunted, some padding (plastrons) was required during practice sessions and bouts, gloves were provided or required and in special circumstances masks were allowed. Additional access to the weapons was provided by fencing classes outside of regular rehersal times, and public demos were scheduled to allow more formal "bouts" to occur (simultaneously publicizing the CSF, of course).

While the CSF worked with swords of a more authentic weight and width than is customary in the SCA, costuming was not usual for free fighting. More emphasis was placed on authentic style and less onr hitting with authentic force.

Participation in the fencing program was not limited to actors whose parts called for use of weapons, although they were required to attend. Other company members, including a significant number of women, were welcome, and several continued over a period of years. At least 4 CSF Fencing Masters learned their trade in this program during the 1960's and 1970's.

Assuming that most of you are acquainted with the SCA fencing program, or will be before the day is out, I'd like to tell you about the CSF, and how and why its particular style of theatrical fencing was created.

In 1961, while preparing for the summer's CSF production of King Lear, Fencing Master Lewis Soens met Lt. Col. Jim Jackson of the U.S. Air Force Academy. Soens, an English professor at C.U. , and experienced in modern sport fencing, had become interested in foil, epee and sabre while studying at Oxford. Jackson's graduate work at Stratford-upon-Avon had given him access to historical material on fencing in Shakespeare's time, and he was able to acquire a case of rapiers and daggers which were blunted reproductions of weapons in the Tower of London.

Soens continued and expanded Jackson's work on recreating authentic use of the the Elizabethan swept-hilt rapier, ordering a number of period fencing books and manuals for the library at C.U. He saw an opportunity to use CSF fighters as guinea pigs, and chose the formal combat between Edmund and Edgar which occurs in the final scene of King Lear as a demonstration of Jackson's weapons and the techniques which resulted from their extensive research.

Many of the basics of Elizabethan rapier and dagger work had to be deduced from the manuals, which were generally directed at more experienced fencers. Gentlemen of the period learned their ABC's at such Salles d'Armes as Bonetti's school in Blackfriars, and Masters of Fence were not about to publish beginning instruction books which might reduce their clientele.

Soens was fortunate in his Edmund and Edgar, Michael Moriarty and Andy Davis. Both actors were dedicated, moved well and shared a delight in combat for its own sake. The following season, Moriarty (who has since achieved considerable recognition in his field, winning an Oscar, an Emmy, and a Tony in the same year) played Tybalt in Romeo and Juliet. Continuing his work with Soens, he bacame such a formidable fighter that he literally frightened the actor playing Mercutio off the stage during a rehearsal.

As a peripheral comment, my involvement in weapon work came about almost by chance. I was cast as Goneril, Edmund's mistress, and the director, Jack Crouch, wanted me to be very close to the fighters during the duel. Because I am nearly blind without my glasses, it was necessary for me to learn the entire fight, so that I could tell from gross body movements were the blades (which I could not see) were headed. In attending all rehearsals of the fights, I became interested in working with the weapons myself, which led ultimately to my appointment as CSF Fencing Master in 1968.

The factor which led to CSF's sport-fighting activity was a grass and stone stage open to the weather. We soon found that exact choreography could not be depended upon when footing was uneven, or slippery from rain. It was necessary that actors learn how to handle attacks from unexpected directions, or with altered timing, how to deal with a slip or fall, and how to return to the blocked fight after something goes wrong. All of this had to be accomplished without dropping character or interrupting the flow of a production, but the main purpose was safety rather than realism. It was theorized that if the actors learned to fight they could protect themselves naturally and automatically in potentially dangerous situations.

Over the next year or two, a set of ground rules was developed which allowed "free fighting" (as it was called) to proceed both as a necessary exercise and, for those especially interested, as a sport enjoyed for itself alone.

Because actors must perform without masks, head attacks were a problem. Soens did not want his fencers to rely on masks, and in any event, modern fencing masks would not stop a full thrust. Head thrusts were, therefore, not permitted. Cuts could be made, but only as threats; the blow must not land. A head thrust was acknowledged as a point when the undefended blade was stopped by the attacker no closer than a foot (12") from the head. One result of this restriction was a limit to the force of such cuts. Even threats were permitted only to experienced fighters, and with prior agreement by both combatants.
Masks were used for early head cut practice sessions, but not in actual fighting.

Because blows below the knee tend to be awkward and unimpressive theatrically, they were not used (except in comic fights) either on stage or in free swordplay. While sword and buckler fighting is not the subject of discussion, it would be well to note here that the restriction on lower leg cuts caused a variation in CSF buckler (or shield) work that was not authentic. Head cuts were more often used against the shield in free shield and buckler fighting than against the dagger.

The most important difference between SCA and CSF fighting lies in the element of contact. In CSF style, the aim is to direct a full thrust at the opponent which is stopped or "finishes" approximately an inch from the target. A larger distance, 2 or 3 inches, is a miss; an actual touch is a negative point. As in the SCA, fighters are bound in honor to acknowledge good "potential" hits. As in modern sport fencing, no differentiation is made between a hit which would kill, one which would maim, and one which would only scratch, and no incapacity of limb is presumed. Bouts are for a predetermined number of points, usually 3 to 5 to win.

Cutting strokes and weapons are handled a bit differently. While it is preferable that cuts not land, it is far more difficult for the attacker to stop a cut. At the same time, cuts with blunted weapons are less likely to be lethal, or severely damaging, than are thrusts. A cut that lands lightly, therefore, is allowed, and a cut stopped close receives double points. Cuts that land hard, like thrusts that land at all, result in points off.

Body protection is limited to a plastron and sleeves or a fencing jacket; masks may occasionally be used for practicing head cuts but not for combat.

The only weapons used for free fighting by the acting company are rapier and dagger, and sword and buckler. Occasionally, very experienced fighters will use a battle axe or other "exotic" weapon, but such weapons are not recommended except in controlled situations. On stage, fights with such devices as mace, morning star, halberd, bill, quarterstaff, and even sandbags on poles have been carried out, but always as blocked (or choreographed) as opposed to free fights.

It is not uncommon for a free fight to oppose rapier and dagger against sword and buckler. As a rule, sword and buckler fighters use more cuts than thrusts, and rapier and dagger fighters vice versa. One technical problem sometimes arises if the stage rapiers are not made of good, tempered steel; they tend to bend after a

few hard whacks at a tough shield or buckler. In the production of Shakespeare's plays, however, shield and buckler is presumed (on textual evidence) to be the weapon of the commoner and rapier and dagger, that of the nobleman. Required single combats between commoner and noble are few.

The rapier and dagger were used in most of the English history plays of Shakespeare which involved fighting - King John being the exception. Because Shakespeare's plays were set in his own period, some curious anachronisms occur. Any of the plays, if costumed as they would have been in Shakespeare's day, can and indeed should have all noble characters using a basic rapier and dagger technique. A good average length for stage use would be 40" overall, weight about 2 pounds, 10 ounces with swept or cup hilt (plain). The dagger would be 21", weighing one pound, eight ounces, with ring or triangle guard, to match. The ring guard, by the way, is not a thumb loop, but rather a knuckle protector - evidence for this is in the ricasso, where a thumb depression is often found on the opposite side from the ring. More details on both may be found in the black notebook, which contains designs for a convertible stage rapier and dagger, and some supporting research on dimensions.

The sword and buckler technique has a wider potential. Used in Shakespeare's time by commoners and servants,

"And that same sword and buckler Prince of Wales;"
(I Henry IV)

it was the basic weapon/defense in the earlier plays - King John (1200) and the Greek and Roman plays. The shield or buckler could vary in size, shape, and decoration, with a round style most useful in the CSF. Made literally from garbage can lids, they were effectively solid, smooth-edged, and protected the vulnerable elbow. Covered with fake fur, they became barbarian; painted with heraldric motifs they were medieval. The buckler swords were plainer than rapiers, a little shorter (42"-44") and heavier. Because the technique was based primarily on the cut, sword and buckler fighting tended to be noisy, and hard on swords. Covering bucklers and figuring a quick way to straighten bent weapons went a long way toward solving both problems.

In researching the use of weapons in and prior to Shakespeare's day, Soens found that single rapier was only beginning to appear. The weapons most likely used or referred to in the plays were relatively heavy, compared to those of the latter part of the 17th century, and far heavier than modern sport foils, epees and sabres. Blade parries were less convenient than the accustomed dagger, and would have been slightly slower and more awkward for any but the exceptional fencer. Accordingly, we used the single rapier and the blade parry sparingly, and when used, it was only by a charcter who would have special expertise. In free fighting, single rapier techniques were used by pre-arrangement by fighters of several seasons' experience, but not as a matter of course. Individual moves were sometimes blocked into the major stage fights, for variety.

In Elizabethan times, the English style's reliance on the cut - a basic sword and buckler technique best described by George Silver in his Paradoxes of Defense (1599) - had almost entirely given way to the Italian schools, because the newer thrusting weapons and style were killing people and winning prizes. Giacomo diGrassi wrote his True Art of Defense in 1594, Vincentio Saviolo, His Practice in 1595, and Rocco Bonetti, who maintained a Salle d'Armes in Blackfriars probably taught many of the actors for whom Shakespeare wrote. French style, as described by Henri de Saincte-Didier in his Traicte in 1593, was almost indistinguishable from, and superceded in England by the Italian. Silver could best be described as a die-hard.

The Spanish style employed by Tybalt in Romeo and Juliet was a separate technique, quite distinctive, effective in a fighter with a very strong wrist, but not representative of the mainstream of period fencing. One or two of our fencers used it with devastating results, and others would use it occasionally to vary their attack or, as a defense, to distance an opponent who presses too close. In Spanish style, the sword is held full out, arm extended, palm up, and there is much wrist work. It is thoroughly discussed in The Shakespeare Quarterly reprint of Soen's article on Romeo and Juliet.

Footwork was basically circular, the combatants circling each other counter-clockwise. Within the circle, attack and response moved back and forth, so that the pattern was rather like a sunburst. To a certain extent this was period; the fighter's stance was frontal, not sideways, and movement tended to be toward the sword arm, or with the sword arm leading. It was kept a basic pattern in the CSF because it gave a certain predictability to the proceedings (useful in a complex battle) but more importantly because it covered more territory. On the huge Mary Rippon stage, before the "disc" and some tree planting reduced its size, presenting a full scale battle with 3 - 6 pairs of fighters was a real problem. The more space occupied by a single fight, the fewer fighters were required to maintain the illusion. Changes of direction were used at will, but the basic motion always returned to counter-clockwise.

As a means of giving the actors a way to get back into a blocked fight after an unforseen complication, all fights on stage began and were spaced out every few moves with a 4 beat thrust-parry, thrust-parry. This "feeling out the opposition" has period roots and made it easier to stage extensive battles without the time demands of a fully-choreographed "star-turn" battle. Examples of the latter would be the already mentioned Edmund/Edgar combat in King Lear, as well as Macbeth/Macduff, Richard III/Richmond, Tybalt/Mercutio and, probably the most famous of all, Hamlet/Laertes. Studying the major duels in Shakespeare produces clues to Elizabethan fencing and stagecraft. Remember the Shakespeare plays you may have read or seen - how many times has the leading man been defeated in a fair fight on stage? Macbeth? killed offstage; Hamlet? poisoned; Hector, in Troilus and Cressida? taken by Achilles' gang of Myrimdons; Mercutio? skewered by Tybalt when Romeo interfered; Coriolanus? killed by a mob of Volsces. Scholars believe these parts to have been played by Richard Burbage, who was also known to be a splendid fencer. In Shakespeare's time, stage duels were not blocked, but rather were actually fought, ad lib. Whether Shakespeare thought the audience, as familiar with skilled and inept fencing in its day as we are with good and bad quarterbacking in ours, simply would not believe it if Burbage lost, or whether Burbage refused to let himself be beaten on stage is not known for certain. I prefer the former explanation.

One of the most difficult things to master in CSF free fighting, and one of the real differences between SCA and CSF fencing, is the limitation on style imposed by period. Indeed, we found it easier to teach non-fencers than those with a background in modern sport fencing ; in SCA, of course, both weaponry and style are close to, and fighters can benefit from knowledge of, the modern sport. Time, in the CSF, was short, and the process of unteaching techniques which simply did not exist when Shakespeare was writing, often took extra class sessions. Some of the "modernisms" not used in Shakespeare's day, if used then only rarely, were sideways stance (duellers faced each other much as old syle boxers did), one-directional forward-and-backward movement, small delicate blade work and the backward-held left hand - which leads to mention of the dagger.

The Elizabethan rapier was a weapon of offense, and its accompanying dagger- often "en suite" with it, or of matching design - was the weapon of defense. It was held well to the front, point at the opponent's eyes, so that by moving up or down in a simple quarter-circle, it would deflect an attack coming from above or below. The dagger as defense is almost a separate entity, concerned with the point of a thrusting weapon. It can move independently of the sword, or in conjunction with it, for a combined attack. Its usefulness against the cut is limited, but combined with footwork and an agressive sword arm, it can function satisfactorily, even against the powerful buckler sword. Other things being equal the thrust is both faster and more lethal than the cut - one of Soen's maxims was "Take a cut if you must to deliver a thrust." In a pinch, substitutes for the dagger could always be found - glove, cape, torch, (very dramatic on stage) or even a bystander. The technical problems associated with rattan weaponry make dagger use for defense almost impossible, primarily because it relies for its strength on the leverage of deflecitng the weak end of a thrusting blade; a rattan sword padded for thrusting does not really have a "weak" end. As to the other side of the coin, use of a standard medieval main gauche (left hand) dagger against a modern sport fencing blade is rather like swatting flies with a baseball bat. The lightness of sword blade makes it almost impossible for the fighter, no matter how willing to be "authentic" to slow it down appropriately.

A word about stance and nomenclature might be useful here. In an attempt to separate Elizabethan style from the modern fencing experience of some participants, terms in current use were played down or avoided. Certain words from period manuals were, at the same time, quite useful. A few of these may be of interest.

STOCCATA refers both to a stance and to a particular attack (below the dagger). There is some evidence to indicate that it was used for the Italian style in general as well. This we used as the basic body position. The sword hilt is held near the right knee, arm loosely straight,point toward the opponent's chest, back straight, knees bent and balance centered, allowing movement in any direction. The dagger, as usual, is fully forward and pointed at the opponent's eyes. The sword is held lightly, with a cocked wrist, and is thrown forward much as a softball is pitched.

IMBROCCATA is an overhead attack position, used in CSF free fighting for head thrusts, upper body cuts and variety. Without the head thrust restriction, it would be more frequently used. The hand is held over the head, knuckles left, point at opponent's eyes. The dagger might be lowered a few inches to clear the points, but is essentially as usual.

INTRATA is a medial position, sword at waist level and relatively straight (parallel to ground). It is most often used in a compound attack, rarely as a basic stance (or guard). From it the single rapier guard is derived - sword at $45^{\circ}$ both across the body and toward the opponent.

While the straight back and bent knees of Stoccata carry over as a well-balanced way to move in whatever direction is needed, one specific move was often used in the CSF's generally clockwise pattern and that was the volta, quite simply a change in direction by crossing the right, or leading, foot over (in front of) the left. This was frequently combined with Intrata for an attack under the dagger arm, made possible by the attacker's use of his dagger offensively to sweep the opponent's blade to the right as the volta carries the attacker in a reverse direction.

What, of all this, might SCA fencing gain from the CSF experience? Perhaps SCA fighters can give some thought either to using somewhat more authentic weapons or using the weapons they have (that is, light, modern ones) in a more authentic fashion. Given the compromises with actual realism that are accepted in the SCA, why not consider using the near-miss approach for a rapier-and-dagger technique from the era before cavalier, combined with physical reactions appropriate to any injury presumably sustained?

The style of fighting which would result would have several potential benefits. First, it would enable fighters to experience the use of an actual metal weapon of proper weight and balance. Second, fighters would gain a (hopefully) healthy respect for the point of a thrusting rapier which sometimes seems lacking in bouts with foils. This, in turn, would increase the authenticity of the experience. Third, the SCA would be provided with a small cadre of fighters would could do safe, effective, dramatic and reasonably authentic blocked or free-fight demos.

Practicing the skill is enjoyable, and the resulting weapon-handling experience should carry over to work with both heavier rattan and lighter foils.

## Sir William the Lucky - Kingdom of the West

One of the good points of our sport is that everyone is in it together: no division based on age, weight, gender, or even disability—if you fight, you potentially fight any other authorized fighter.

The sport is still young enough both to be undergoing visible development and to be one which a vanishingly small fraction of the participants grew up around. Therefore training and practice are much more important to success than the advantages conferred by strength, fast reflexes, or even natural talent. <I remember watching a 14 year old, (short, thin, glasses, the very image of a bookish non-athlete), who had been training for 6 months totally overwhelming a 21 year old, (6' tall, 200+ pounds—looked like a college linebacker, which he was!), who had only been training for 6 weeks. I also remember that the hardest blow I had ever taken in 19 years of fighting was delivered by a little Asian lady with arms like matchsticks—and, having used better technique than she was used to, she didn't think it was hard enough.) Accordingly, I think the preferable future will be one where a lady knight is no more worthy of special comment than a knight who happens to be black, or Asian or physically handicapped. I know individuals in all three of those categories who fight and who have been knighted, and nobody seems to think it noteworthy. Yet members of racial minorities are a much smaller percentage of the Society's membership, having fewer ties to Western European culture, and are by now less common than ladies among the fighting population. And while someone who takes up fighting despite a physical handicap, (even one as obvious as missing one leg from the hip!), may cause admitting comment for doing so, his eventual knighting will depend on how well he fights on the field, not on "how well he fights, considering his handicap."

It is going to take time, and numbers, to get ladies to this point, but progress had been made. August XVI was the last time someone took exception to knighting a lady on grounds of gender. And even he had no difficulty in saying, "Of course she fights well enough, that's not the question." —he just opposed ladies fighting on principle. (Fortunately for him, the ladies present in the chivalry meeting were patient with his foibles.) These days,(at least in this kingdom, I have only the vaguest of rumors on the situation elsewhere), Gender is not an issue among the chivalry, and rarely is among unbelted fighters. A newcomer who makes a negative, (or even surprised), comment rapidly discovers that the prevailing cultural attitude is, "Of course ladies fight; why not?" and "Of course ladies get knighted."—both in tones of "what could be more natural and obvious?" What a difference a decade makes! Over 3/4 of the unbelted fighters here (probably 7/8) joined when there were already ladies among the chivalry—it's the only situation they've ever known.

Probably we will not reach the point where ladies fight in the same numbers as the gentlemen for a long, long time. This has to do with the attitudes of the larger culture in which we are raised. The larger culture is now changing, so that it is no longer grounds for shocked comment if a woman is athletic and good at a sport. But this is only a matter of making life a bit easier for those who are so inclined; it is another big step to the point where little girls are actually encouraged to not only participate in some sports, but to compete with boys. That will require not only that their mothers (usually) make a

change in their attitudes, but that the boy's upbringing change so that their egos are not shattered if a girl beats them at something. I'd guess another 20 years or so, (i.e. about another generation), before the larger culture makes it that far.

As far as lady's knighting being special, I think everyone's knighting is special. Even those who are already peers, and who might be expected to be a bit blase' about being up in front of the thrones, get choked up and seem to be walking on air for the next few hours (or days). And even those who had such an abundance of assets, (natural talent, speed, strength, etc.), that they achieved the necessary fighting level with, relatively, little travail do not, in my experience, feel that knighthood is no big deal and should opened up more widely. (The discussions tend to be over whether the required level is rising too fast, not whether it ought to be maintained at it's current level or lowered.)

## ART CREDITS:

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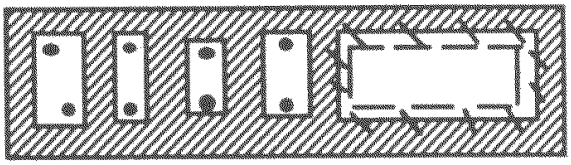
## Basic Strapping Techniques by Darkwater

In last issue I said I would write a little more in detail on some strapping techniques. With the fervor of last minute armoring for Estrella still fresh in my mind here are some hints.

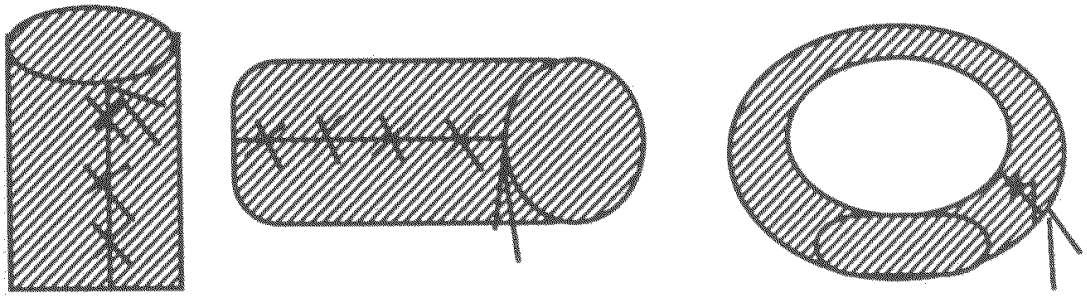
Most strapping depends on the size of the area to be covered. Some good hints on more information can be obtained from books on archaeology finds in what ever period you are armoring for.

The most common form of strapping isn't really strapping at all. It consists of a large piece of leather or heavy duty canvas with plates riveted or sewn into pockets.

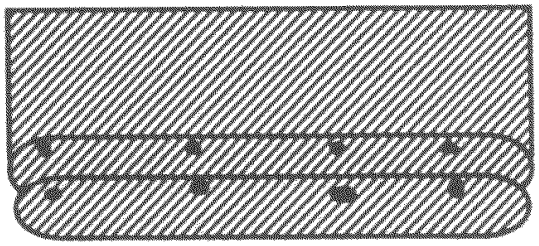


This is used for the bulk of breastplates and leg harnesses because of it's strength in the stress involved in these areas, and the usual size of the plates involved.

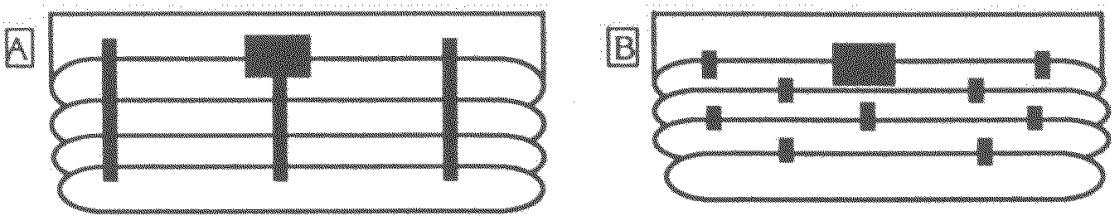
The least effective form of strapping is loose lacing. Although in some places it can be the optimum for movement allowance, (ie rearbraces, vambraces, gorgets, inside of cuisses), and somewhat solid protection, for the larger to medium areas it can be more of a problem. For attaching legs to belts, tying breastplates together and supporting large and heavy items like pauldrons they can break at the worst moments, or at any moment for that matter.



Some people, when trying to make articulated forms of armor, make the mistake of cutting the pieces very carefully, then riveting them onto each other, not seeming to realize this will not allow for the movement they are looking for.

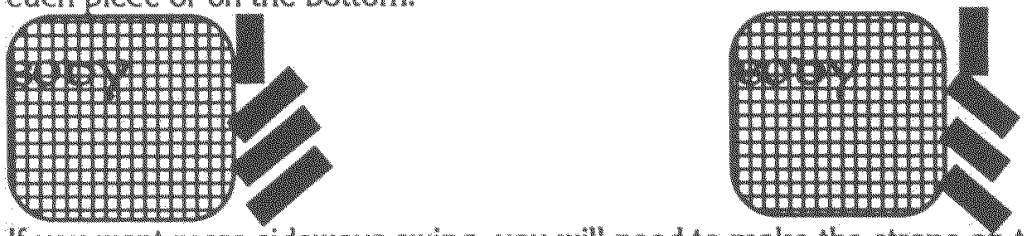


When looking for this range of movement there are two forms of strapping one can use.A)There is the continual strap section with two to five of them running the length of the piece, and B)there is the alternate short strapping which requires more pieces to be as strong, but can allow for more sideways movement if necessary.

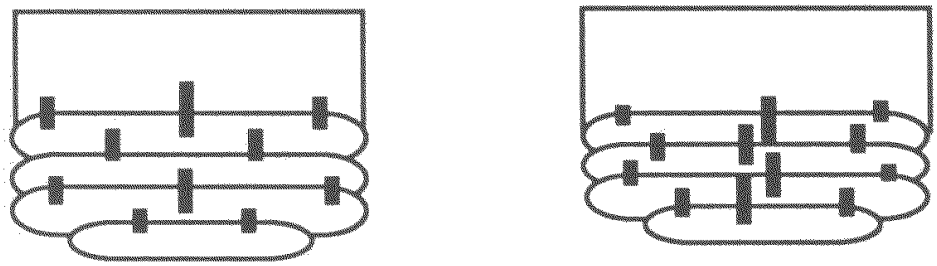



When doing either of these keep these things in mind. The more stress the piece will be under, the more straps you will need.

The uppermost lame of the articulation will need to be secured to the major piece it will be hanging from with a central large strap to support the weight of the lower ones. Do you want the lames overlapping on the top of each piece or on the bottom.



If you want more sideways swing, you will need to make the straps on the outside edge only a small amount shorter than the more central pieces. If you want less of a sideways motion and more of a central range, you need to make the side straps smallest, graduating up to the center ones. In doing this you will need to compensate for major gap-o-sis. This excess spreading to the lames you are attaching to each other will be reduced if the piece is going to be attached to a solid form, ie your torso, with straps attached to each side.



The best way to experiment with these is on workable, but unimportant pieces to get the experience before putting permanent copper rivets or iron rivets into something you want to last a while. The more holes you punch, and the more times you make a mistake and have to correct it, the weaker the pieces will get, and the worse it will look.

Hopefully this will help even a small amount. Next time I will show some patterns we have collected over the years, and if possible give the books to get them in, for creating compound curves in hardened plastic and thick leather for knees, elbows, gauntlets and such.

Lady Gunhilda of Ansteorra

I guess I'm writing this to encourage other lady fighters who are just starting out and may be getting frustrated. As acting knight marshal for the Shire of Mooneschadowe, my favorite saying is; "Don't worry, it'll come with time and practice."

It's true. Some people have a natural talent for fighting. They have an instinctive grace for bashing people's brains out. Others have to work at it. Hitting people with heavy sticks just doesn't come naturally to some of us. Me. I was born a clutz. One of my former boyfriends once told me I have the manual dexterity of a Yak in labor. It was not the sort of thing one usually tells a girlfriend on a date, and the fact that he mentioned it in such unique terms serves to illustrate just how uncoordinated I really am.

This did not deter my interest, however, when I first heard about fighting in the SCA. I have always loved reading fantasy. As a kid in middle school I wanted to grow up to be Eowyn of Rohan. Of course, I would have steeled for being Joan of Arc, or Athena Goddess of Wisdom and War, or Brynhilda the Valkyrie. But it wasn't until my senior year in high school that I first heard about the SCA...and Sir Cyf of Ansteorra. A real, honest-to-gosh lady fighter?! In this world?! I couldn't believe it.

I was hooked after that. I clearly remember my first time in armor. It was all borrowed, of course, and it didn't fit properly. I was extremely proud of myself, anyway, despite the fact I knew that I looked silly. The local Knight Marshal, Squire Hildebrandt Von Tiel, (who is now a knight),took me out onto the field and showed me how to hold a sword and shield. He threw some shots at me, slowly, and I feebly tried to block them. He'd throw a shot. It would hit my head. And then I would move my shield. I didn't manage to block a single shot all evening, but it was fun. I was in armor. Holding a shield. Holding a sword. Getting beat up by a Squire...!

In the ensueing weeks and months, Hildebrandt never said a word about how badly I was doing. People kept encouraging me, telling me to stick with it. There were times when I wondered why I did. Those were the hot summer days when I wore jeans instead of shorts because people would see the bruises on my arms and legs and ask me if I had been in a car wreck, (It's true!). I knew I wasn't very good. But people stayed behind me, and I persisted. I eventually made a joke out of it calling myself "Hilda Bell Von Pell" because everybody I fought would "ring my bell" at will.

I did improve. But it was a very slow process. I got to where I could throw a decent leg shot. I got to where I could, sometimes, avoid being killed for a respectable length of time. my morale received quite a boost when a close friend asked me to be the champion for his wife since he didn't fight. This gave me a cause to fight for, and provided additional incentive to stick with it.

After about a year I made my fighting debut at the University of Oklahoma's yearly Medieval Festival. This is a very big SCA demo. I was very nervous because I hadn't fought many different people, and I had never fought in a melee. I didn't want to make fool out of myself in front of the whole crowd, and I knew I probably would if I got out to fight.

My friends, however, were not about to let me watch the fighting from the safety of the sidelines, as I had originally planned. Near the end of the day,

when the fighters were starting to get tired and the crowd had thinned out just a little. I was told to armor up.

They literally had to push me out on to the field, However, when I realized they had set me up to fight Duke Inman. I, like many other newbies, held the man in complete awe. His Grace had been warned that I was a newbie and told me that we'd just exchange a few rounds for practice. He also told me that I didn't have to fall down unless I wanted to. This saved me considerable embarrassment because he promptly proceeded to kill me several times in rapid sequence.

I did my best to defend myself and try to fight back, but it seemed impossible. But then, when my helmet was still ringing from the last kill, His Grace fell down to his knees. I froze, thinking he'd slipped. I stepped back waiting for him to get up. He didn't. He stayed there. Finally, in a somewhat exasperated voice, he said,"Good leg." My heart stopped.

It's a terrible feeling-to be standing there at your first fighting event, in front of a fairly large crowd, staring at DUKE INMAN on his knees in front of you-and you suddenly realize that you haven't the faintest idea of how to kill someone on the ground.

I belive the phrase running through my mind at the time was,"Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit, oh shit...What the Hell do I do now?!!" A couple of friends were over on the sidelines frantically trying to catch my attention so they could demonstrate, but I didn't notice. "Come on!" Inman said,"You can do it!"

I tried. I tried three times, and only stepped on him once. As I was backing out the third time, he rose up and clunked me on the head, and I went rolling in the dust. The crowd cheered. Inman told me as I walked off the field that I'd actually hit his leg three times, but only the last had been hard enough. I stuttered something in response and let my friends lead me off.

Since then I have improved even more. I've had a couple of major setbacks: shoulder surgery one year, a dislocated knee cap 7 months later. (I did the latter doing a dance at a revel, incidentally. As I said, I'm a clutz.) I am currently squired to the man who threw those first shots at me four years ago when I couldn't block a single one. I still have a long, long way to go, but I have also come a long way. I've had a few moments of triumph, and many moments of despair. But I haven't quit. And I'd like to encourage any other lady fighters out there who might be just as lousy as I was when I started fighting to stick with it just as well.

Someday, SOMEDAY, you'll have that moment of glory that will make it all worthwhile. It may not be something big. It may just be doing a particularly spectacular death. It may be pulling off your first successful spin shot without falling down in the process. It may be killing the Prince with a visor shot because he got sloppy during fighter practice. (A friend of mine, who has been fighting for less than 3 months did that recently. The Prince took her seriously after that.) It may be taking Duke Inman's leg. Whatever the case, there will come a time when you'll say to yourself, Yeah, it's been worth all the bruises and soreness and frustration.

I'll never forget watching one very short lady fighter facing godzilla on the field during a tournament. He was, quite literally, twice her height. She was using a mace and he was armed with a sword. She couldn't even reach his head. But in the middle of the fight, when he was all over her, she jumped

straight up into the air, whipped her mace over the top of his shield and walloped him on the top of his head as hard as she could. He went flying. It was one of the prettiest shots I've ever seen. And I've never forgotten it. It was inspirational. Ladies can fight. Ladies do fight. Ladies will fight. It just comes with time and practice.

## The Fighting Distaff
## By Hrh Trimaris Elspeth MacNaughton

Many new fighters in the SCA are women. Why? Did women in the Middle Ages fight? While an excellent overview of Women Warriors can be found in TI #61, so much more lies hidden in the dusty realms of history.
First- why did women fight? Sometimes to protect their homes, or to be with a lover/husband ; for honor, for God, and for least of all, greed. Secondly, where is this information about women fighters? Why is it not recorded in the history books? There are several reasons. Unless you were a ruler or a conqueror, no historian bothered with you unless you were exceptionally noteworthy. Women, as a matter of course, did not train for warfare as the men did. For a woman to train as good as a fighter was directly against the laws of feudalism and the church. Lastly, those goodly monks who recorded so much of history were aghast at the sight of the delicate and weaker sex out there hacking and slashing and getting terribly gory. Even so, there have been many noteworthy ladies of varied fighting skills that have been noted. Almost every country had, at some time, a grand dame of exceptional courage and valor.
(With all due respect and admiration to those fighting ladies of China and Japan, I am limiting this article to the European theater).

Queen Boudicea (Bodicca, etc.) of the Iceni had no quarrel with Rome. Indeed, her husband, Progutagus, had left half of his kingdom to Nero in attempt to placate the Romans. The other half was ruled by Boudicea. Only when the Romans abused her and brutally raped her two daughters did this lady rise up in revolt. Tall, commanding, with long blonde hair, Boudicea directed her troops in the capture of three major cities; Colchester, London, and St. Albans. Seventy thousand Romans perished in the bloodbath, some under the scythed chariot wheels of the Queen herself. The main Roman army, under Seutonius Paulinus, was in Wales crushing the Anglesey Druids. He immediately hastened back, and with ten thousand troops subdued the irate Celts. The courageous queen drank poison rather than be exhibited in Rome.

In 421 AD Eudocia (Athenais) married Byzantine emperor Thedosius. After a first visit to Jerusalem in 438, she returned for good in 443 to spend the rest of her life building formidable fortifications. Her favorite subjects in the poetry she wrote were Church history and past Roman military campaigns.

During the Dark Ages, there are many tales of women warriors, especially in the Norse culture. One such lady was Thyra of Denmark, wife of Gorm the Old (860-936). While her husband was away she managed the kingdom and built the "Dannevirk", an enormous rampart across Southern Denmark, to keep out the Germans. The end product of her labors was a wall 45 to 75 feet high and 8 miles long.

Just across the continent in England fought Aethelflaed, sister of Edward the Elder and daughter of Alfred the Great. As ruler of the Mercians, she and her brother fought the Danish invaders. Between 910 and 915 she built 10 fortresses and restored the defenses. Warwick and Stafford still stand. She also restored Chester, and personally arranged an alliance with the Picts, Scots, Britons, and Anglo-Danish Northumberlands. She herself conquered most of Eastern England for her brother. In 917, in a joint attack with Edward she captured the city of Derby and twelve months later, Leicester. She died in June before the end of the campaign, but had done well enough to insure that her brother became the most powerful ruler in Britain. (It is interesting to note that an Anglo-Saxon man gave to his wife, as a dowry, the following items; oxen, a horse and a bridle, a shield, and a spear or sword. She was told that she would share both her husband's hard work and peril.)

Ancient Slavic tradition of this time tells of women warriors who carried off men in bags, and the Ukraine had a strong tradition fo training women as warriors.

This brings us to the most powerful lady of the early Middle Ages, Matilda of Tuscany. She is known as the Countess of Tuscany, the Markgravine of Tuscany, and more importantly, "La Gran Contessa". She was heir to a vast holding; from the north slopes of the Apennines to the foothills of the Alps. She wore armor and carried arms from the age of fifteen onwards, and oftimes led her troops in the struggle against Henry IV of Germany. She did this in aid of Pope Gregory VII, a compatriot and fellow Tuscan. In fact, her castle of Canossa was the site of Henry's famous penance in the winter of 1077. She late came to the Pope's aid again when Henry attacked Rome, but even the brave Countess and her troops could not stop him. She made three marriages, the last one a political alliance to a 17 year old boy when she herself was 40. She eventually encouraged Henry's son Conrad to rebel against his excommunicate father in 1091. When she died, she left vast holdings to the Church. She died in 1115.

A contemporary of Matilda's was Sichelgaita, a Lombard Princess. This lady was the wife of Robert Guiscard (the Weasel). She followed her Norman adventurer-husband into battle all the time-truly a Valkyrie. She is described by her contemporaries as tall, imposing and muscular. The Byzantine historian, Anna Comnenus recounts of this lady, "when dressed in full armor the woman was a fearsome sight". While attempting to put a stop to fleeing soldiers of her own troop during a battle, Sichelaita bellowed at the top of her lungs. When they ignored her verbal commands, she seized a spear and routed them back into formation.

The next noteworthy lady is Ermengarde of France, who was Countess of Narbonne in the 12th century. For fifty years this capable lady ruled her lands, (as her husbands expressed no interest) and led her troops. She led the French Royalist party against the English in Southern France and fought numerous wars in defense of her own territories. On top of all this she was a great patron of the troubadours, a protector of the church, and a great arbiter and judge in difficult cases of feudal law.

Crossing the border from the 12th century to 13th century is that grand lady, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Wife of two kings, (Louis of France, and Henry II of England) she was famed for her Courts of Love. Her fearsome learning and sharp political

mind caused Henry to lock her up for 14 years. Even so, she was a keen and capable tactician, holding lands for her son John in France. In time, she was besieged by her grandson Arthur, but held firm even at the age of eighty.

This is also the time of the "glorious" Third Crusade. The time of Richard Coeur-de-Leon and Salahdin. But you can bet there were fighting ladies there, European monks, however, failed to note these ladies, and it was up to the Moslem historian, Imad-ad-Din-al-Isfahani to record the particulars. He tells of "Frankish " women, in armor, charging into battle, secure in their belief that by dying in battle they would win a place in Heaven. Foremost among these was a Frankish Princess (alas unnamed) who led her own knights into battle, charging at their head. She apparently maintained the cost of these knights as well. Like his Christian counterparts, he was absolutely horrified at the thought of women in battle, let alone in armor.

During the 1300's many ladies donned armor and took up arms to defend their homes while their lords were away. One such English Countess, aware of Edward III's arrival and his weakness for a pretty face, had her servants delay and entertain the king until she could divest herself of her armor, bathe, dress and perfume herself to properly greet the king. Two Scottish ladies who defended their respective castles were the Countess of Buchan and Dunbar. The Countess of Buchan defended Berwick from Edward I so successfully, that when he did finally take it he hung the countess in a cage from the ramparts of the city for his soldiers to mock.(So much for Chivalry!) The second lady, "Black Agnes", the Countess of Dunbar, defended Dunbar from Edward III in 1338. The Buik of the Chroniclis of Scotland records the event:
"Trewe ladis without blik or blame, Ay to hir prince, but only falt or cryme, Into that house was captane, all that tyme.
Richt manfullie, as it were rysht weile kind, Agane thame all the hous sche did defend.
The defending of castles is best summed up in the words of Alice Knyvet, wife of Sir John Knyvet, who said in 1461, "She preferred to die in battle than be slain by her husband for giving it up.

Two warrior-queens round out the 14th century. The first was Queen Jadwiga of Poland (1371-1399). Queen at 16, she was obliged by her marriage contract to the pagan King of Lithuania, Jagiello, to help in the mass conversion of the Lithuanians. She also, by peaceful negotiations, managed to contain the dangerous Order of the Teutonic Knights. She led her armies where there were border disputes and was capable of successful military action. She helped found the University at Cracow, and died in childbirth at age 28. She is revered in Poland as a great ruler and a saint.
The second great queen was Margaret, who became Queen of Denmark by election, then Queen of Norway. She served Norway-Denmark as a capable ruler, and in 1387 claimed the crown of Sweden. She invaded in the same year, defeated the reigning King, Albert the Elder, and kept him prisoner for six years. In 1398 she passed the triple crown on th her nephew, Erik of Pomerania. She died suddenly in 1412 and of her it was said, "No ruler who came after Margaret was equal to her".

No discourse on women fighters would be complete without that familiar standby, the Maid of Orleans. Jeanne d'Arc has been addressed in history books as a stupid

peasant girl, a religious fanatic, or a zealot. She has been diagnosed by modern doctors of having everything from bovine tuberculosis to tinntinnitis, causing her "voices". Wether she was truly inspired, had actual visions, or was a mere political catspaw is up to the individual's choice. But hard facts still exist. Jeanne, or Joan made her first appearance at Blois in 1429 in white armor on a black warhorse. She was of robust build, and could ride a horse without a saddle, and perform manly exercises with ease that young maids were unaccustomed to. She used a lance skillfully and gracefully, and carried a small battle axe and a sword. The French admired her professionally. When the army officers ignored her, Joan left, took command of the troops and led them off. The officers hastily followed. She was utterly fearless in battle, and was wounded three times, including the neck and the heel. She personally supervised battle tactics, and led the French to several surprising victories. In 1431 Joan was captured by the English, condemned in a mockery of a trial and burned alive at the stake. She was 27 when she died, not 18 as is commonly believed. (The age comes from Joan's confession). The King of France, Charles, whom she had helped set on the throne, refused to aid her at all.

The fifteenth century closes with one of the most revolutionary generals of the Renaissance; Isabella of Castile (Isabella la Catolica). Known more for her promotion of Columbus, this woman has long been overlooked by all the historians as a capable general. Brighter, stronger, and more ambitious than her husband, Ferdinand of Aragon, it is she who is largely responsible for the outcome of the Moorish Wars. She had the physical stamina to live on horseback. She rode all night if necessary. In fact, she had a miscarriage during one night's wild ride, but still directed operations (from horseback) the next morning for the reconquest of invaded territory. She personally directed the siege of Granada, and could oft times be seen, superbly mounted, in complete armor. She not only ranks as a good general, but as a great quartermaster as well. She brought in Swiss mercenaries to train troops, built roads for the passage of her artillery (which she imported), arranged 80,000 pack mules for supplies, planned routes, introduced the first field hospitals, and formed a regiment of field messengers. She controlled rations, developed artillery, engineers, and infantry in her army. Her influence on warfare was "profound and enduring". Of this great Spanish Queen, one humorous comment of the masculine minded lovely Isabella remains. She said,"four fine sights are a soldier on the field, a priest in the altar, a woman in bed, and a thief in the gibbet."

Perhaps the last great Renaissance Prince was Caterina Sforza (1463-1509). An incredibly beautiful woman, she was the illegitimate daughter of Duke Galleazzo Sforza of Milan and the niece of Ludovico Sforza. She was lily skinned, blonde haired and blue eyed, and her history, is at the least, tempestuous. Fleeing her husband's assassins, she made her way to her fortress at Forli. When said assassins threatened to kill her children, whom they held hostage, if she didn't surrender, she gave them her famous reply. Climbing up on the battlements, she hiked up her skirts and cried out,"Fools! Can you not see that I can make more!" She then avenged her husband's death in a bloodbath, and took to running the state. Her beauty attracted Giovanni de Medici as a second husband. (Their son, Giovanni delle Bonde Nerre became a famous condottiere). Left a powerful widow at 36, she was the ally of both Milan and Florence when Cesare Borgia attacked in 1499. Milan surrendered to him; Florence took a "wait and see" attitude. Her

# Vixens' Keep™

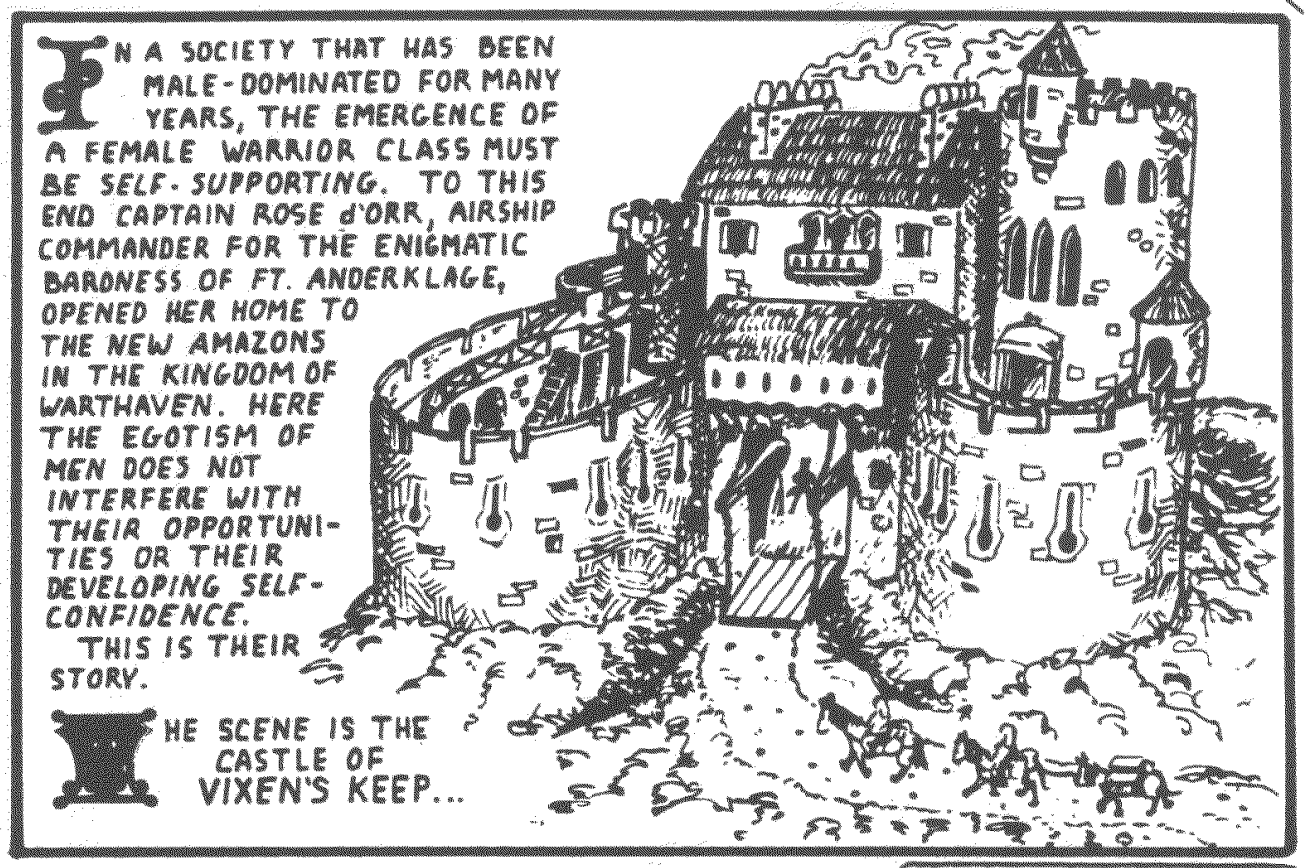
by H.L. Wm Blackfox

Special Insert

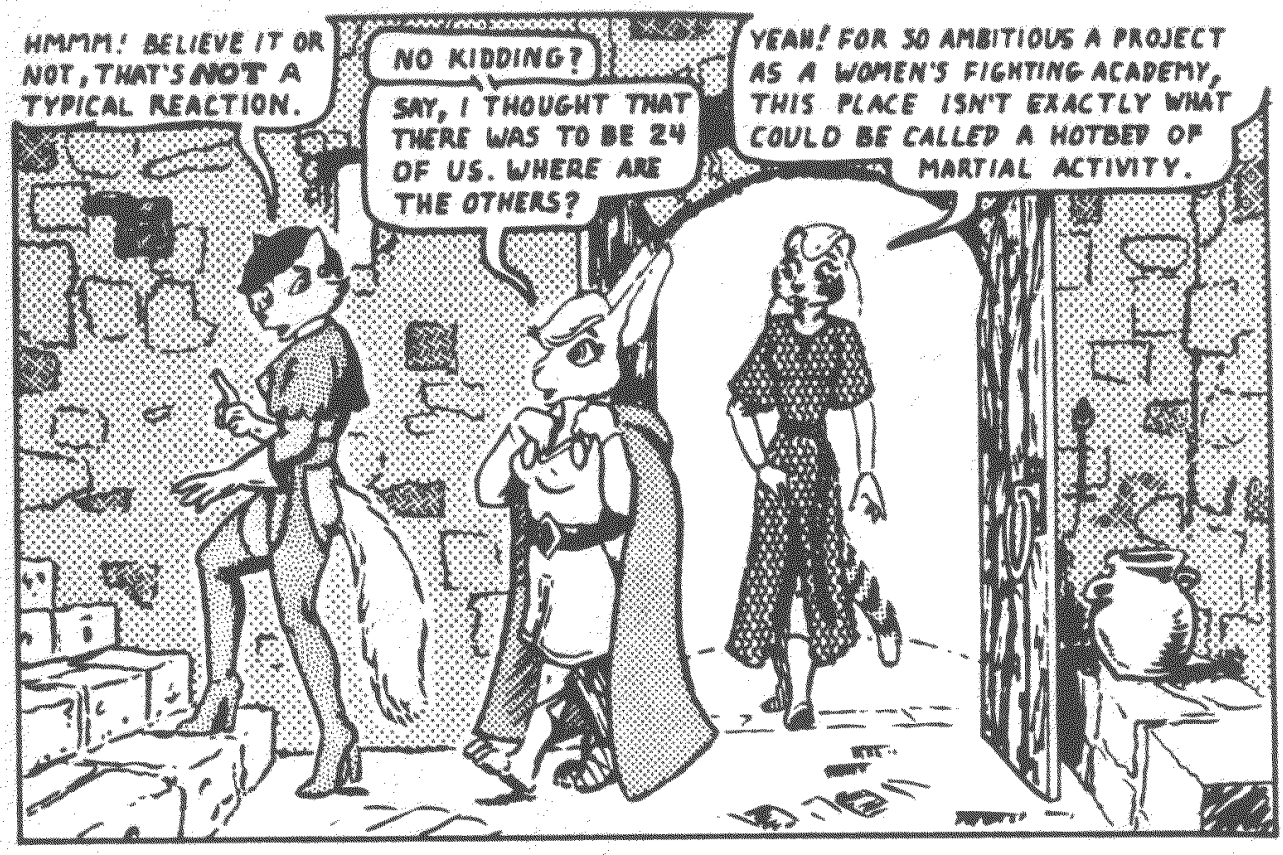
IN A SOCIETY THAT HAS BEEN MALE-DOMINATED FOR MANY YEARS, THE EMERGENCE OF A FEMALE WARRIOR CLASS MUST BE SELF-SUPPORTING. TO THIS END CAPTAIN ROSE d'ORR, AIRSHIP COMMANDER FOR THE ENIGMATIC BARONESS OF FT. ANDERKLAGE, OPENED HER HOME TO THE NEW AMAZONS IN THE KINGDOM OF WARTHAVEN. HERE THE EGOTISM OF MEN DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH THEIR OPPORTUNITIES OR THEIR DEVELOPING SELF-CONFIDENCE.

THIS IS THEIR STORY.

THE SCENE IS THE CASTLE OF VIXEN'S KEEP...

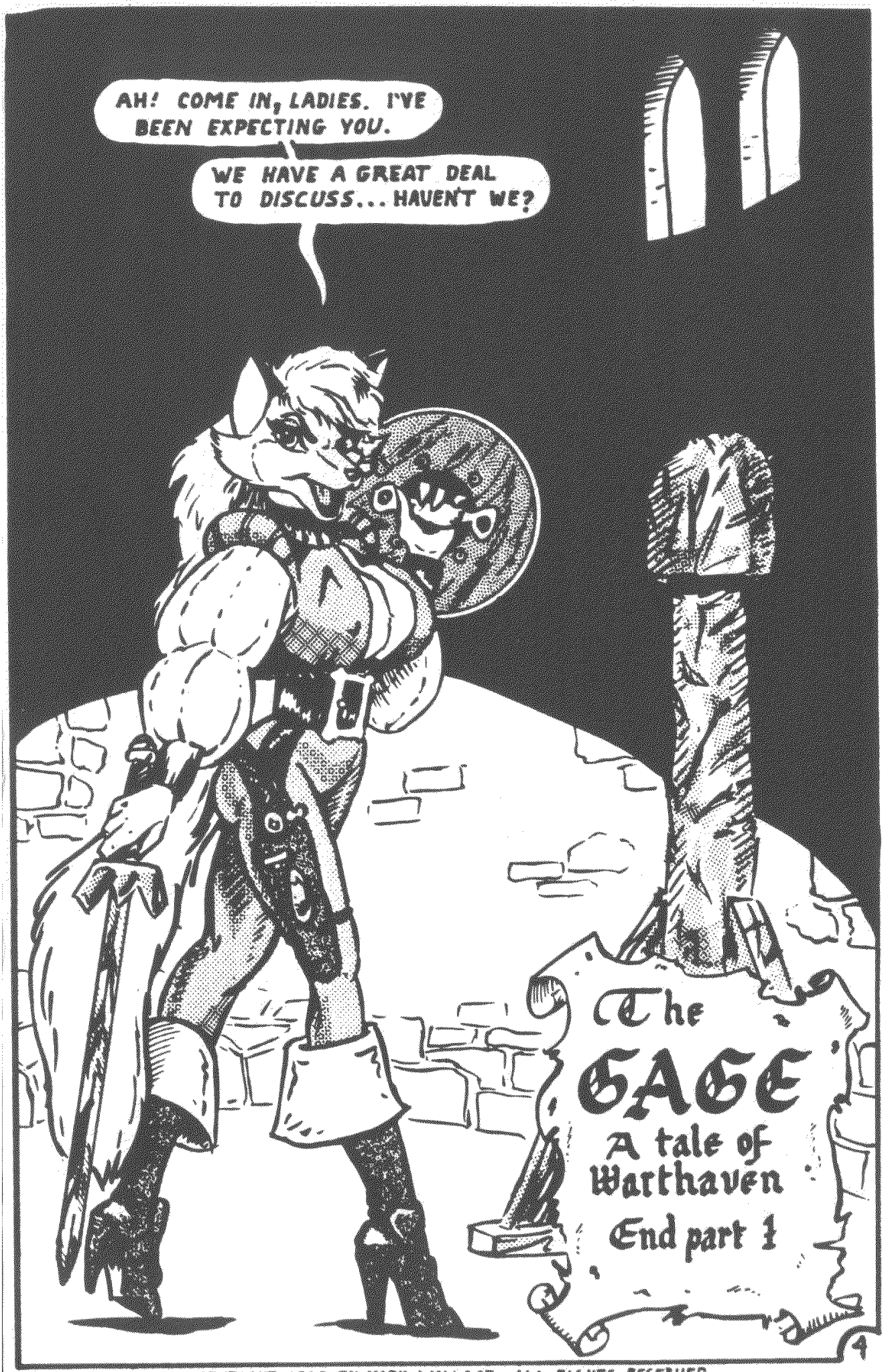


WELL MET, SHAUNA. I AM LADY ALIXANDRA von STREIFAN. PLEASE CALL ME "ALIX".
AND I'M LORELEI LONGEARS. NO ONE CALLS ME "LADY" ANYTHING.
WELL, I JUST HOPE THAT YOU WILL LET ME CALL BOTH OF YOU "FRIEND"!
OH! I SEE YOU'RE A SQUIRE! WHO IS YOUR KNIGHT?
SIR LEON de BOOPH. WE DID IT AT CROWN LAST MONTH.
AND DOES HE APPROVE OF YOUR COMING HERE FOR YOUR TRAINING?
WELL...
HE DAMN NEAR THREATENED TO BREAK HER ARMS IF SHE DID! HE DIDN'T EVEN SAY GOODBYE TO HER!
2


HMMM! BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THAT'S NOT A TYPICAL REACTION.
NO KIDDING?
SAY, I THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS TO BE 24 OF US. WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?
YEAH! FOR SO AMBITIOUS A PROJECT AS A WOMEN'S FIGHTING ACADEMY, THIS PLACE ISN'T EXACTLY WHAT COULD BE CALLED A HOTBED OF MARTIAL ACTIVITY.

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE THE FIRST TO ARRIVE. LOOK, ALL OF YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED PRESENTLY.
3

MY LADIES, PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE MY AUNT AND YOUR HOST, CAPTAIN ROSE O'ORR.

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castellan at Imola surrendered to the Borgia in just two weeks, and Caterina was trapped without aid in her fortress at Forli. Her own people of the city, terrified, welcomed Cesare, but still the lady refused to budge. During the ensuing siege Caterina could be seen; sometimes in armor, bearing her great sword, sometimes in sumptuous clothing, but always urging her gunners on. When the Borgia's guns finally blasted through the walls, Caterina was eventually captured by a Frenchman, but taken and ravished by Cesare. Her people contemplated "the great cruelties inflicted on our unhappy lady, Caterina Sforza, who had such a beautiful body." She was taken to the Vatican but the French pressed for her release in 1501. She died in 1509. Cesare also ran into difficulty with the city of Faenza, where the entire town, from priests to women, fought him off. Even Borgia himself was impressed.

In nearby Mantua ruled Isabella d'Este, educated as a boy and married to the Marquis of Mantua at 16. After his capture she ruled and held Mantua against the Venetians.

Lastly, from the 15th century Champion des Dames there are accounts of ladies in armor defending thier castle under seige, and from the Gothic Yale Manuscripts, in Lanelot du Lac the margins have ladies jousting with armored knights.

Another lady who deserves retelling of her tale is Jeanne de Flandres, Countess de Montfort and Duchess of Britanny. When her husband, Jean de Monfort was captured, she then acted with "the courage of a man and the heart of a lion." She rallied political parties to her 3 year old son, provisioned and garrisoned, fortified and built, and generally organized resistance. When Charles de Blois finally besieged her at Hennebont, she led a heroic defence, riding in the streets in full armor, astride a warhorse. She commanded her soldiers even under a constant hail of arrows, and ordered her women to cut off thier skirts so they could carry quicklime and hot oil to the battlements quicker. During a lull in the battle she left by secret entrance, took the enemy camp from the rear, destroyed half their forces, defeating the seige. She later planned battles and strategies, wielded her sword in sea battles and continued to work for her son and the succession.

Sadly enough, the wars took their toll on the noble dame, and she went mad. Locked up, she survived another thirty years. She is considered one of the most heroic and gallant ladies of the Hundred Years' War.

Sadly, the decline of chivalry and feudalism ment a changing attitude towards women, both on and off the field. By the 16th century jousts are reduced to a pleasant but dangerous pastime, and armor has reached it's zenith of weight and awkwardness. The woman's role shifts from being more of a commander to more of a common foot soldier and officer, but the shift was slow and did not culminate until the famous soldier women of the late 17th and 18th centuries.

Many historians include Queen Christina of Denmark amoung lady warriors. Even though she attended state councils at 14, she was considered brilliant, the Minerva of the North, she was pockmarked and had a hump on her right shoulder. She was educated as a prince, not a princess. She abdicated at 28, became a Catholic, and swashbuckled her way to Rome, where she founded the Arcaidia Acadamy and was a patron of Scarlatti. She lived from 1626 to 1689.

Far more dashing an individual is Catalina de Eranso, who in 1607 became "Francisco Hyula". Her career is colorful. She joined bandits, was shipwrecked, served in the army of Chile, fought numerous duels, killing her own

brother in one of them, and returned to Spain. Here she recieved a pardon from Phillip IV. Considered a handsome man and a ravishing woman, she travelled to Rome and so charmed Pope Urban VIII that he granted her Roman citizenship, the right to wear men's dress and the uniform of a cavalry officer. She fought as a mercenary leader, and needed a mule train to carry her wealth. She mysteriously dissappeared in Vera Cruz at age 43. Even today the Spainish remember her as a great lady, and tell their daughters to "be like Caterina."

Last, but not least, are the English ladies of the Civil War. Charlotte de la Tre'mville, Countess of Derby, proved to be a better soldier than her husband. She held her ancestral home of Latham House from the Parlimentarians, stole one of their mortars, and remained firm for three months until help came in the form of Prince Rupert. Honora, Marchioness of Winchester defended Basing House for over two YEARS. She and her ladies melted the lead shingles to make bullets. Mary, Lady Bankes, held Corfe Castle for almost two years, at one point with just herself, her ladies, her daughters and 5 men.

Should YOU be a lady who wishes to fight, go right ahead. There's plenty of examples of ladies who've wielded swords, pikes and rapiers!

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MATILDA OF TUSCANY

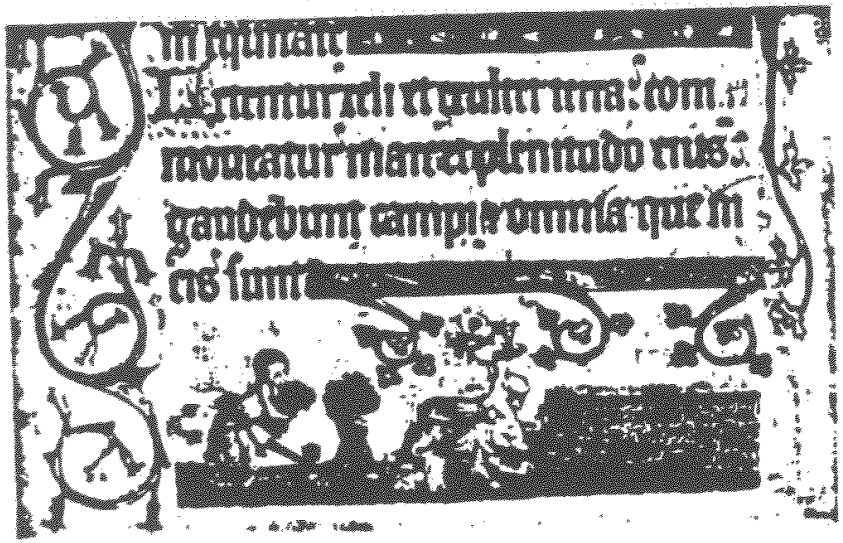


Fig. 12. Reaping, *The Luttrell Psalter.*
*British Museum, London; Additional MS. 42130, f. 172b*
*Courtesy, British Library Board.*

Fig. 13. Woman dismounting knight, Breviary for Marguerite de Bar.

*London, British Museum, Yates Thompson MS. 8, f. 224.*
*Courtesy, British Library Board.*

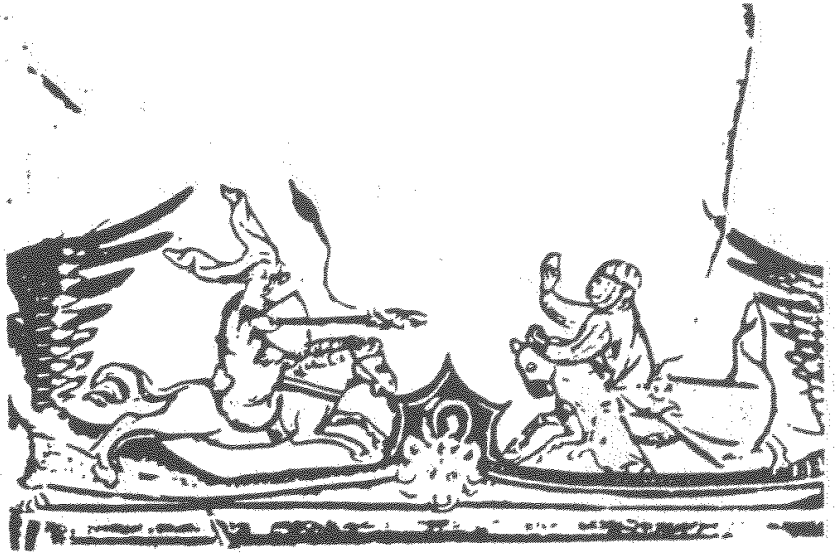


Fig. 14. Woman charging knight, *Lancelot del Lac.*
*Yale University Library, Yale MS., f. 328, fig. 709*

Fig. 15. Woman and Dominican tilting, *Lancelot del Lac.*
*Courtesy, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Yale MS., f. 100v, fig. 706*

## Persona Story - Mistress Aeruin of Meridies

My family had been trained to the spear and sword since the Morrigan herself first flew the length and bredth of Eire. Twas only a generation ago that a bishop's mother, (and queen), saw two women in a fighting rage so fierce she vowed to stop women by law from taking up weapons of iron; it seems ages since iron began to train me in its sharp, fierce ways.

Unlike many women in my homelands, I did not learn fighting from my mother, nor from my father. You see, my father twas the eldest son of the chief of our clan, the O'hEarain, "dreaded small ones" sprung from Niall's loins in the western portion of Eire. Of all my grandfathers sons, he was most likely to succeed to the chieftainship. Fierce he was in battle, with a shock of blonde hair as white as snow and as unruly as a puppy topping his skull, with white moustaches so long he nearly always strained his soup with them, and eyes as pale blue as winter's thickest ice. But, to keep the bishop happy, he could not teach me to fight, though he didn't forbid me from learning on my own.

I couldn't learn the sword from my mother, for I never knew her. You see, I was the firstborn of a set of triplets - one girl and two boys...She never recovered from the birthing. Because of my father's rank, we were fostered separately in the holds of nearby clans. Padruig took up the quill in the course of his studies, and these days works in the scriptorium at Kells. Caobhain studied law, and went as far as brehon rank in the courts of Munster and Mide. And I somehow found the time to try my hand at nearly everything, from ink and quill to harp and tale, and sword and shield. My adopted clan had no Scathac to train us, but she was as dark as Macha herself if you forgot a blocking maneuver in practice. Most of what I remember of childhood consisted of dodging either spears in the practice yard, wrestling with dogs and puppies or chasing roosters, sharpened quills, and forever tuning harp strings for the druid who was my teacher in things of the courts of my grandfather and many other tuathal kings.

We had been travelling by horse from Connacht to Ulster, under royal protection as it was, when my path took a turn that led me into battle and away from my homelands for lo these many years. Following the coast, we'd tied the horses to small bushes nearby and cooked freshly caught fish over a fire on the beach. There were only twelve of us, scarcely armored at all and not expecting trouble from the locals. I had the watch when it happened.

Never before had I seen such a boat. Its prow curled in a writhing serpent, slicing silently through the waves and out of the low fog that had covered the beach and my sleeping companions. It hissed icily as it was pulled up onto the beach. I smelled the strong scent of sweat, rusting iron mail, and leather as the men climbed over the sides of the boat and walked towards the fire, armed and ready for a raid! - though I was too shocked, surprised, and almost too young to know what was happening. I grabbed my harp and screamed like a winter banshee, and ran for the horses as my friends awoke.

We didn't stand a chance. Sleeping spearmen were cut down like dry wheat, though Conal gutted four of them before one split his head open with an axe. My fumbling fingers betrayed me and I couldn't untie the reins of my horse, as he was plunging in fear from the clanging of combat and the smell of blood so very nearby, so I climbed into the tallest bush and froze, in the hope that my harp wouldn't be spotted on the ground.

With no other place to hide, my chances were not good. I considered all the horrible things those men would do to me if I was discovered, and remembered a small voice in the back of my head saying something about dodging like a cornered rooster...

As I had gathered earlier, it was only a matter of time before all my comrades were dead, and the raiders would be looking for me. A tall , red-haired man with blood on his hands and sleeves - blood of my friends and kin - was the first to find me, thanks to my harp. As the wind suddenly picked up, is made the strings sing and eerie howling cry, a mourning cry for my kin now gone from this land into the Hills of Faerie. The man looked a bit frightened at first, then realized he'd found what he'd been looking for - me.

"The harper's lass! She'll bring a fair price at the market in Birka. Come, help me get her out of this bush." I could barely belive my eras, but the strange red-haired man spoke my own language perfectly, though his companions mumbled in another tongue which I've come to know myself, after those many years in captivity. It eventually took three men to climb into the bush and shake me loose; in the process, I dodged as best I could, grabbed a knife, and blinded one before I was trapped and bound for the trip to Birka. My harp was taken as well; slave traders recognize trained bargains as such, and though I did my best to be unruly and uncooperative, they did not touch me throughout the entire trip.

A jarl bought me as a house servant and translator. They kept me away from the kitchen, since tales of my damaged captor soon turned me into a supposedly dangerous slave not to be trusted around knives and such things. My training in writing proved useful as a copyist and translator, and in a short while I could understand their words, as well as write them with some degree of accuracy. And in the long, dark days of winter, I found myself retelling the tales taught to me as a child, in their language, and played my harp for entertainment at feasts, or whenever I felt lonely. More than once, my harp allowed me to keep an amorous guest at bay with a mild sleep song; I had been too young to learn much of the things that all harpers know these days. And in secret, dark and quiet places of the jarl's house, I practiced dodging like a cornered rooster as I swung a shortened broomhandle like a sword when no one was around to see or hear me.

It had been five summers since my first arrival that the jarl gathered his huscarls for a meeting. Bringing the mead and food into the hall, I overheard plans for a raid on my homeland's again, as well as the problems of travel far from their homes. One of the drunker huscarls suggested bringing along the harper as a guide, since after all I'd been there once, and they'd never taken the trip. Strangely, all agreed-and I heard a rooster crowing outside. I hid my pleased smile behind the excuse of bringing more mead, and planned a way to finally take my revenge on the killers of my kin; perhaps not the same killers, but they'd pay the weirguild owed me for my family on the beach five summers before...

Sea travel is so much easier when not bound hand and foot. I told stories, and played songs all the way, lulling the huscarls and the jarl into a peace I'd seen them have only in sleep before. They even stopped complaining about having a woman on board before we were three days on the swan-road

towards my homeland. Weather held clear and windy, and by my estimations home was a lot farther away than they had guessed.

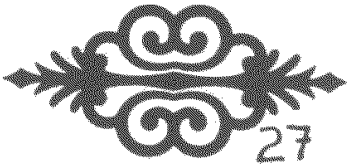
We made landfall on the thirteenth evening, by following an inlet up past some very rocky crags - Alba, in the Kingdom of Dal Riadia, cousins of mine and of Niall's kin, many miles from my origins but none the less home. Somehow, they allowed me to take my harp on shore as we camped for the night;many were suspicious that they grew sleepy sometimes when I played for them, but I never revealed that I'd learned, finally, the famous sleep song all harpers are to learn in their training. Never had I played more than three notes together of it in a practice. Never had I the chance to be so close to swords that could repay me the damage done to my kin...

I plugged my ears with some soft wool and began the magical song. One by one they nodded off, some dropping their food into their laps, others spilling mead from horns onto the ground. My possibilities for plunder and revenge seemed a gift from the Morrigan herself. Sleeping enemies may not fight much, but they bleed as well as waking ones do - and their kin took mine in much the same manner. Without another thought, I drew the jarl's dagger from it's sheath and hacked open the throats of every man in the crew. As they felt the knife enter, their eyes fluttered open with shock; I returned the look with one of ice, and dodged like a cornered rooster when they tried to draw weapons against me, before falling at my feet in pools of red life running from their throats.

When each had breathed and bled his last, I gathered their weapons into a large pile. The jarl's helmet, sword, ax, and dagger I separated for myself; I also claimed a coat of mail from one of the smallest men I'd killed. For a moment I thought of setting their corpses alight with fire left from the dinner flames, when I heard a voice and footsteps approaching.

The boy was only seven, and he spoke none of the tongues I had learned, but his eyes grew wide when he saw all the dead norsemen and my piles of weapons. I must have been quite a sight, surrounded by all that carnage, standing next to a harp and gripping a sword like I'd been bred to it. He stared for a moment, until I signaled him to approach. I handed him a norse hammer from one dead man's neck, a dagger from the pile, and wrapped them both in a strip of plaid cloth from the hem of my tunic. Somehow, he knew this to be a message, and he took the small bundle and ran like a rabbit across the rocks toward his tuath. In an hour, he returned with a great number of the clan on horseback. We took all of their things of value and let the sea, the eagles, and the ravens claim the rest.

Since those days, I have travelled widely, both on the sea and by land. My homelands of Eire I have visited many times, though I have never quite found my brothers, nor heard news of my father nor of my foster tuath. I have fought many battles with lowlanders, side by side with men since no bishop here has outlawed women from the sword. And, should the time ever come when I may have a daughter or son of my own to train, they will first learn to dodge like a cornered rooster...for those who can dodge, though they may not always win, will always survive to dodge again.



## Persona Story

My name is Finella nic Gormliatha (called Fiona), which means "White shoulders, daughter of bitterness" My mother Maeve gave me the first, I chose the last on my own.

I have no knowledge of my true sire, I know who my dam was and it is enough. My mother's croft was attacked by Norse raiders who killed her husband(I never knew his name) and raped her.

She was found by the fairy-dark wandering Bard of the fourth degree, Neill mac Gormliath, who comforted her and built her a cottage. There I was born.

Neill was the father of my heart, he taught me how to handle a blade, how to sing and tell stories, and how the world worked. He was a strange man, who shared his knowledge of letters with me and loved to wander among the standing stones and other sacred places of the ancients.

I met only one cross worshipper, and was not impressed, he was a wild eyed unwashed lout that called my mother a "whore" for allowing herself to be raped by the Vikings. She chased him off, and I threw rocks at him by way of criticism.

Then came the spring of my eleventh year, when the Vikings descended again. My mother grabbed me up and took me to the inner room of our cottage," Hide in the Souterrain." (cellar) she said.

But I stayed only a while, then found my dagger and went to protect my mother. She had hung herself from the roof beam by the bed.

I did not weep, I had not the time.

I waited behind the door and hamstrung the first raider in, then cut his throat. Then the chieftain picked me up by my collar and asked the others what to do with me. Half wanted my death. The others respected my ferocity.

Them the chieftain saw my mother's body and went to look at her face, and recognized her as a woman he had raped 12 years before. Since he had no living children, was a widower and this was his last raid, he told the others that he planned to take me to Normandy and adopt me.

In the same raid I was picked up in, they also abducted an herb or wise woman named Seamarie. I made Hrolf, the chieftain, buy her as my maid/companion, she was only five years older than me. She taught me all her skills in healing, brewing and poisoning. Hrolf became a little afraid of us.

Hrolf my "father" took us both on his legitimate trading visits, some as far away as the land of the Rus.

Then I was 17 years old. I met and married by right of Thor's hammer, a young red-haired raider named Aelfred. Since he had no steading of his own, he went a-Viking to win his fame and booty. I still did not much care for Norse, but I have always had a weakness for red-haired men.

I stayed at Hrolf's steading and nursed him during his last illness. During our two years of marriage I only saw Aelfred during the winter and fought off his enemies during the spring.

That is how I miscarried my first child, while fighting. I think I'm barren now, which is fine with me, as I have seen far too many women grow old before their time bearing children.

In the end, Aelfred won only a small plot of ground in Ireland for his

trouble. I told him not to raid there. Hrolf died soon after, I grew tired of caring for him and poisoned him.

And when his lay-about relatives gathered to live off of me if they could not overturn his will, I sold everything, freed Seamarie and became a wandering merchant and spaewife with her. I still long for Ireland, and I may return and look for Niell. This is the time before the Irish Brehons outlawed women in war, (mid-700's).

The Six Million Thaler Knight
by Stone of Stonecroft

The battlefield smelled of gunpowder, blood, and horsesweat. The Swabian knight walked his mount to the front of his troop. He creaked forward in the saddle, peering through the drifting smoke, looking for the heart of the enemy. He found it. Drawing his sword, he gave the command "A'greifen", and a clatter of hooves became an earth shattering thunder as he led his knights into the mouth of Hell. There came a flash, a shriek of pain, and he was fifteen pounds lighter. Those fifteen pounds were his sword, his gauntlet, and his hand.

For any ordinary knight, having one's sword hand carried off by a cannon ball would have the knight retired to sitting in the sun in the town square, telling stories to the children, and bowling with the greybeards. Sir Gotz von Berlichingen was no ordinary knight. He was a Swabian, an imperial knight, and a von Berlichingen. He was lighter by a hand, but there was still work for a true knight of the Empire. He had his armorer make him a new hand. And when that one proved less than perfect, he had a second one made. This one was crafted to hold and control a sword through an entire battle. Sir Gotz became the Bionic Knight, and has been in and out of trouble right down to the present day, (but more of this later).

Gottfried von Berlichingen first saw the light of day in 1480 in Jagsthausen, Swabia. His family was ancient nobility, the golden spurs were his birthright, and he was determined to be worthy of them, to be a knight of great prowess and of high chivalry. As a knight, he has not one, but four claims to fame. A magic number if there ever was one.

His first claim to fame came at the age of 24. He was defending the heir to the city of Landshut from a rival claimant. It was here that he lost his hand, and refused to quit.

His quest for Right led him into similar scrapes and feud throughout Southern Germany. He took on such powers as the City of Nurnberg, the Swabian Confederacy, and the Duke of Wurtemburg. He was twice outlawed by local warlords, and spent the best part of the year 1552 in the dungeon of Castle Heilbronn counting rats. As soon as he got out, he went back into the chivalry business.

In 1525 he got involved in the Bauernkrieg. This is his second claim to fame. He defended Right, not just the rights of nobility. In the cold reality of Renaissance Germany, he was an anachronism out of the play Camelot, and he made it work. The bauers were free farmers being forced into serfdom by the barons, (this was 1525 remember). The farmers held rights going back to the days of the Roman Empire. Under tremendous pressure from the nobility the farmers broke. They broke up a few barons. With steel, gunpowder, and Sir Gotz, they maintained their rights.

Then his Emperor called. In 1542 the Ottoman Empire threatened to engulf the Holy Roman. Kaiser Karl V called all true knights to oppose the invasion. Sir Gotz was in the forefront. Two years later, he was defending the Empire against the French.

His third claim to fame is that he lived to the ripe old age of 82. He fought the Turks at the age of 62, and the French at 64. He wrote his memoirs

in his 70's. He died at Hornberg Castle in 1562.

But it is his fourth claim to fame that still causes trouble today. If you get into an argument with a German, and if during that argument you look him square in the eye, and if you say "As Gotz von Berlichingen once said . . .", you will not be able to finish your statement, he will have driven his fist right through your face. What did Gotz say?

Well, it happened on day when he was defending a castle against a local king. In the dust of battle, the king's herald appeared, (in full blazon and trumpets), at the castle gates, **"His Majesty commands you to cease this resistance!"** Sir Gotz gave him the full benefit of his glare, then said clearly for all to hear, "*Majestat kann mich am Arsch lecken!*".

"HIS MAJESTY CAN LICK MY BUTT"

*References*
*Brockhaus Enzyklopadie, 1966*

*My friend Rudy Zitzmann, who, although not a Swabian, was in the German Marines and told me about The Quote.*

FROM The Age of Chivalry, 1969, National Geographic Society Book Service

"We cannot leave the Middle Ages without some reference to the role of women in this epoch of transition. In the Middle Ages women from the nobility had a very different position from the women of lower degree. Clotilde, the wife of Clovis, played a decisive role in the conversion of France to Catholicism, which of course was an event of radical importance in European history. When there was a weak monarchy and a strong nobility, in the confusion that followed women often fought to preserve their own estates. Widows, on behalf of their children, defended their fiefs when threatened by vassals and enemies with the strength of men.

"Eleanor of Aquitaine and Mathilda, wife of William the Conqueror, are women of this period who had great political importance. Both governed their own territories in their husband's absence. Ermengard of Narbonne, who kept her numerous husbands to the level of prince consorts, was a patron of the Church and of Troubadours; she fought valiantly for many years to defend her inheritance, and was often consulted in difficult feudal disputes. For sixty-five years Flanders was governed by two women, the two sisters Joanna and Margaret; Margaret's labors restored her country which had been devastated by war. Blanche of Castille, Louis VIII's wife, when she was made a widow, fought against the rebel noblemen in her land; she concluded the peace of Paris, and protected the Jews, and when her son St. Louis came of age, she continued to exert her influence on government; her daughter-in-law, Margaret of Provence, though she detested her, followed her example.

"Women took part in the first two Crusades: Isabella de Conches, Joan of Toulouse and many others. Women who competed with troubadours included Countess Beatrix of Die' and her daughters. Marie de Ventadour was as extraordinary a poet as Joan of Arc was a extraordinary soldier. In Paris one hundred and eight professions were exercised by women: They were weavers and traders, managers of great enterprises in international trade, miniaturists, doctors and embroiderers.

"The abbess Hildegard of Bingen considered that the decadence of the Church and society in the twelfth century was due to masculine weakness. For this reason, she started a feminine religious movement in the North, which was in the end defeated by the masculine philosophy which knows only one ethic for men and of men; the other half of mankind is considered only in so far as it is useful to men. Thomas Aquinas wrote 'Woman was created to help man only in procreation, because any other work another man will provide better assistance than a woman.' This was written while woman had the full burden of work in the fields and in the towns. In the late Middle Ages, when men took the place of women in several feminine occupations, German towns fell into a period of decadence.

"In the courtly civilization of the twelfth century women had learned to sing and recite, to write poems and to philosophize; their lives were conducted on a high cultural level. But towards the end of the Middle Ages men believed women were empty vessels with nothing to say, who must be kept silent in church, in the family and in society. Forgotten were the times of the great abbesses and queens, of the great ladies of courtly life, of poetesses and

mystics-women had to accept life, men or poverty as they came. From time to time, however, a feminine voice would be raised, high and clear, like that of St Catherine of Siena."

"The only resource of most women was fashion, which at the beginning of the Renaissance was to become even more splendid, cumbersome and sophisticated."

## The Rules of Courtly Love by Andreas Capellanus

i Marriage is no real reason for not loving.
ii He who is not jealous cannot love.
iii No one can be bound by a double love.
iv It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
v That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
vi Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.
vii When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor.
viii No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.
ix No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.
x Love is always a stranger in the home of avarice.
xi It is not proper to love any woman whom one would be ashamed to seek to marry.
xii A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
xiii When made public, love rarely endures.
xiv The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; the difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
xv Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
xvi When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
xvii A new love puts flight to an old one.
xviii Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
xix If love diminishes it quickly fails and rarely revives.
xx A man in love is always apprehensive.
xxi Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
xxii Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.
xxiii He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.
xxiv Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
xxv A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.
xxvi Love can deny nothing to love.
xxvii A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.
xxviii A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.
xxix A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
xxx A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.
xxxi Nothing forbids one woman being loved by two men or one man by two women.

# BALLAD OF THE OLEANDER

(Haakon Haukarson)

CHORUS:

```
                Em      E6       Em                  G
Gaze upon root, flow'r, and branch,
Em            E6  Em
So lovely to see;
          E6       Em                  G
Gaze upon root, flow'r, and branch
Em          E6  Em
Deadly as can be.
                                              Em7
There are many bones leaching 'neath the sun
   C                    Em
To witness to the power
        E7(short)  Em
Of the lethal and delicate
G       D   Em
Oleander  flower.
```

Late at night, walking through the camp,
So demure and genteel,
When on her arm she felt a grip
As cold and as hard as steel.
"I have you now, my pretty one;
Do not cry out for your lord!"
"I won't," she said, and with a smile,
She fed him his own sword.

Tall and proud beneath the sun,
He stood upon the field.
With a sneer, he loudly cried,
"No shrub shall make me yield!
I'm the finest warrior in these parts;
No maid can face my wrath!"
Later all his friends agreed,
'Twas a fine epitaph.

So my lords, take heed of me,
Respect the lady fair
Who wears the oleander bloom
On her gown or in her hair.
Be not fooled by her lovely face,
Nor by her pretty clothes;
For the lady that you woo tonight
Is the dread Jerus'lem rose.

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## On the Birth of a Natural Daughter
## by Walter of Chatillon

The mildness of spring returns
When flowers in painted meads unclose,
And man on earth's new face discerns
A smile of sympathy for those
Who see in love a restful thing,
A banquet for the famishing.

Two seeming contraries are met
And mingle in one enterprise:
The more a man pays nature's debt
The more his family grows in size,
A concord of opposing strains
Gives rise at last to bearing-pains.

Others may sing love's old sweet song,
And doubtless Cupid grants them ease,
But when the dear plague know so long
Revisits me and wrecks my peace,
Then I have reason to deplore
The love-life of a bachelor.

And specially curse the day,
That day when all my woe begins,
When following nature's mystic way
I got a daughter for my sins;
Alas the day, how soon it would
See me confirmed in parenthood!

Yet thrive for father's sake, my lass,
That you may be a staff to him
When in complaining age he has
No other guide for eyes grown dim;
Tenderly mind him little one,
And you'll prove better than a son.

Translated by George F. Whicher

## Sexism/Racism Editorial - -Lady Magdalena van den Oost

I hope you will be able to use my letter. My companion believes my mention of racism is too radical for an American/SCA publication, but I believe we should be mature enough as a group to recognize the reality of mundane life and it's monsters. Of course, since your newsletter is already aimed at the fighting women it is already aiming at a public with it's eyes wide opened.—

In perusing a copy of a dear friends' Flowers of Souvenance I came across a letter by Lord Cadfan ap Morgan Godrudd regarding Gentlemen who refuse to fight Ladies. His points regarding domestic violence are well made and I respect his sensitivity in this area, however something about the letter bothered me and after much thought I would like to share the following concepts.

Domestic violence is a subset of abuse of power of the powerful over the dependent. Many women are the victim of this crime because of their dependence on men regarding childbearing and child raising. Partially they are conditioned to accept this by society but that does not make it right as my lord pointed out. Men who beat their wives are in the same group as those that commit child abuse, police officers who use excessive violence to arrest members of minority groups, the boss who get pleasure out of terrifying their employees with the threat of dismissal, and basically anyone who gets a kick out of watching those dependent on them or weaker then them squirm.

The ladies my lord meets on the battle field do not fall into this category of dependent. They have trained long and hard to overcome both psychological and physical barriers to meet him on his own ground and should be granted the respect of equal combat. Not to do so would be to infer that they are inferiors and must be treated as such.

When ever a man wonders if he is being sexist in his actions or comments let him replace the term 'women' with 'black'. After all would he refuse to fight or pull his blows if he were fighting a black male fighter because this fighter is from an oppressed minority and was once beaten by a white police officer over a minor traffic violation?

Lastly about disguising ones femininity on the battle field. If it bothers the male fighter to see an obviously female fighter and it distracts him, that is his problem, not the ladies. Why should she make it easier on him when life in general has made it so much harder for her to be there on the battle field then for him. She should be proud to flaunt her gender. Besides with the uneven odds as far as strength is concerned, that little psychological edge could mean the difference between 'life' and 'death' on the battle field. Why should she give that up to make it easier for those who had it easier to begin with? I took up fencing last year and certainly refuse to hide my generous chest and small waist to help me lose. However I did give up the advantage of being obviously pregnant because of lack of energy and lack of balance (I was concerned about my ankles) the doctor said it was ok with extra padding in the obvious areas. Making new gear every month would also be too expensive.

To the ladies who meet lords who won't fight you, tell these unchivalric gentles "thankyou my lord for conceding the fight to me I hope next time you will consider yourselve strong enough to meet me in combat" To refuse to fight a lady is not chivalry, it is saying that she is beneath you as an inferior, turn the tables on them and make out as if they are to weak to meet you, which they are psychologically.

I hope the men of the SCA will soon grow up enough to meet women on their own ground as equals. With the ever growing number of lady combatants it is these men who will soon be the anachronism.

## Shinai Editorial -Asa Birdsfoot House of Treebull/ Atenveldt

I was surprised and pleased to see several references to Shinai in the last issue of the Flower of Souvenance. Shinai is a fast moving, fun sport in which both sexes and all sizes participate. It requires a measure of skill, a steady hand, quick eye and an honest streak a mile wide. Just as in hard suit, if you have a habit of not taking your blows, someone will most assuredly find a way to jog your memory.

I feel fortunate to have several excellent and patient teachers who flatter and encourage me as well as knock me on my rear as soon as I get too cocky. They have really been great! All of the Shinai fighters I have met have been genuinely eager to help, offer aid, friendly criticism and praise. Being a female Shinai fighter at first was very unique. Whereas more and more ladies are taking up the battle cry in hardsuit, few have taken up Shinai. In a way though it has been a timely advantage and on occasion takes a guy off guard. Not for long, I admit, but still I relish those few surprised looks, when having been soundly killed, I remove my mask for a breath of air only to have a startled male fighter looking chagrined and hoping he didn't "hurt" me. And YES, sometimes you get hurt. There's nothing like a solid swing to the inner thigh to make a body find religion. Yet there is something oddly exhilarating about comparing scrapes and bruises, relating tales of how a particular injury happened and simply just the general feeling of comraderie as you share the days adventures basking in the glow of a job well done, win or lose.

It furthermore appears that Shinai is making a steady crawl out of the dark ages. As a relatively new fighter on the field, (one year), I have mixed emotions about it's emergence. I took up shinai as a means to become more active in the SCA and to feel more involved. Having never been good in the Arts and being somewhat of a tomboy, I figured it would be great fun. I haven't been wrong. However, (here's the big but...), I was amazed and confused at the amount of disdain my chosen field prompted from those who consider themselves the "real fighters". "Oh.., Shinai...", and then they fade off into the distance. Now that Shinai has gained a degree of respectability many have the air that now that it's here they may as well make the best of it. I'm sure it's been the same weary road over the last 20 years for all those who have tried to breathe new ideas into the lifeblood of the Society. All of us need to remember that every group stagnates without fresh input and great nations still fall that refuse to grow and accept change. Most important of all.....I'm enjoying myself immensely!

With memories of Estrella war not to far faded, I have a few things I would like to share with you. One was a meeting my Queen Tara called for. She asked all the lady fighters she could to meet after the days fighting in Club Argonia in the Outlands camp. Such a meeting I had not seen since the last Amazon household meeting.

The varied types of ladies inspired me, anywhere from a rather petite, pretty Laurel to a large masculine looking woman I had to look twice at before I was certain she wasn't a gentleman. We were all different, but we were all the same and held a comraderie because of SCA fighting. Or at least that was what I thought until everyone started speaking. The Outlands Queen started by thanking all who could make it, and said that it was basically a gathering so that we all could share views from different kingdoms.

A young, excitable young lady from An Tir started by saying what a wonderful thing it was, this combat and how she was specially trained and encouraged, for her area was rather lacking in ladies upon the field. Then ladies from Ansteorra spoke regarding their home shire and training techniques. It seemed to me that this was slowly becoming a "our kingdom is better than yours". Two ladies from Calontir, regular veterans from their famed shield wall, spoke on the equality of treatment to ladies and the large numbers of female fighters they have.

This was when it started to become confusing and interesting at the same time. Never had I been in a large collection of people that knew nothing of each other that were so polite in letting all views be heard, and all people with so very few interruptions. I tell you, even commanders meetings for any war with Crowns and generals were never this nice. But then something was said that I felt I had to get upon a soapbox about.

Estrella War has an award called the Oliander. It is for ladies who engage in combat upon the field of this war. Most ladies present who had not received this award were eager for the evenings court in which the favors and scrolls would be handed out. During discussion of this award a particular lady spoke up against the current tide of emotion.

She did not feel the award was warranted. Yes, it was very nice and so forth, but she had been a tourney [hence real], fighter for many years now and the award meant nothing to her personally, and it seemed rather pointless. In the silence that followed I looked to my Queen and Lady Regina, clearing my throat to speak. Lady Regina, myself, and the Household of Amazons, have worked rather hard over the past years since the Oliander was founded at the second Great Desert War. By ourselves, we had made sure the Order would be given every Estrella with hand embroidered favors, and scrolls. We had claimed no reimbursement for time and cost over the years, and had never questioned the fact that it was worth it.

I told her that this was my sixth Atenveldt/Caid War, and that in between I had done quite a few tourneys myself, but that I had esteemed this Order very high. It was not so much a pat on the back,"good girl, you've done a good job, hang up your armor you can call yourself a real fighter". It was started by the first female knight in the Society, Countess Trude Lacklandia as an encouragement to any lady to begin the path of the fighter. It is better outlined by example.

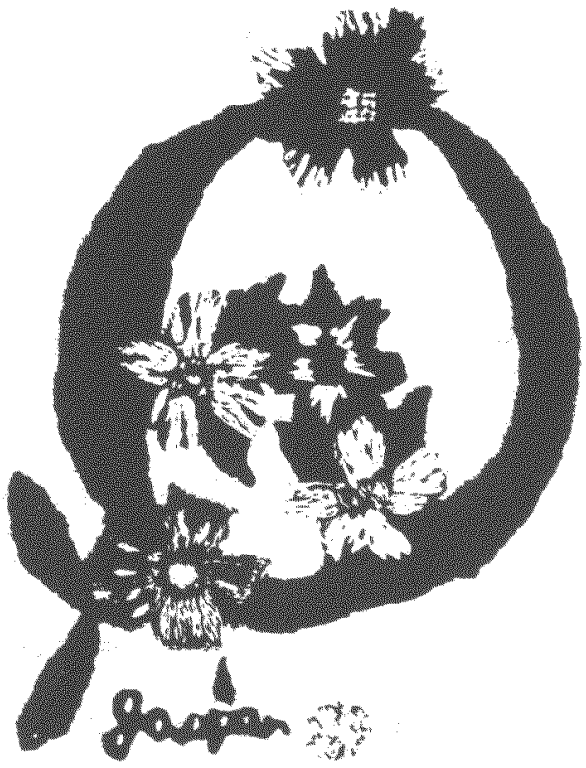
In my area alone we had at least four new women in armor for Estrella. All looked forward to getting their Oliander. After Estrella was over with they were so heartened by their favor, the fun on the field, the warstories, and following their Queen into battle they are starting to plan their tourney circuit. You cant get much better than that. Well, almost..

For those of us present to be made premiers of the Oliander, we were proud to be one of the less than ten to receive it. We were less three percent of the fighters. This year when all ladies who had fought at Estrella in heavy weapons came forward, including those who had received it before, there were close to eighty five. We had grown to almost fifteen percent of the fighting force. We were in tears to see so many. We were finally growing out of nonexistence to normalcy.

Maybe in time the Oliander will outgrow it's usefulness as needed encouragement. I hope so. But for now, we feel it is necessary. Here is a copy of the scroll from this year's Estrella, and a copy of my own Favor.

Please do not forget that as fighters and ladies we must be proud of what we are doing and try to expand our ranks as much as we can so we are no longer thought of as unique individuals, less than a handful in some kingdoms, but as an accepted fact of the tourney circuit and war. Let us also not forget that we must sometimes take ourselves with a grain of salt, and at the very least the ability to laugh at ourselves, and not take ourselves too seriously. It's supposed to be a game after all, and a fun one at that.

favor picture



Unto all who come by these presents, know that this lady has been admmitted to the order of the Oliander, traditionally given to those ladies who participate in heavy waepons combat at the Estrella War. Originally given at the the second Great Desert War to encourage the small ranks of lady fighters, the courageous ladies are awarded the favor of the Order embroidered with the symbolic oilander blossom, for like the oliander, these ladies are beautiful but deadly. A pink or white blossom may be added annually for each Estrella War they are able to engage in heavy weapons combat . Recognised this Estrella War X . XXIII, being 1989 in the common era.

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## Cymber Says - Just Say Yes!

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