

Far West Tidings



September: Anno Societatis XLVI

Official newsletter of the Palatine Barony of the Far West

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About the cover:

Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius revolutionized European concepts of world geography when he printed his atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, in 1570. The image above reproduces a detail of his map, *Maris Pacifici*, printed in 1589, including the lands known to us as the Far West. Additional reading on the subject of historical maps of the Pacific region can be found at:

http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/pacific/pacific-ocean/pacific-ocean-maps.html

The **1456 Gutenberg** font face is used for titles throughout this issue. This font is available for free download (for PC or Mac OSX) at:

<http://www.dailyfreefonts.com/fonts/info/4241-1456-Gutenberg.html>

Contents

Palatine Baron and Baroness	1
Baronial Officers	1
Branches	1
From the Baronial Chronicler	2
From the Baronial Hospitaller	2
From the Baronial Webminister	2
From the Seneschal of Battle Rock	3
From the Seneschal of Golden Playne	3
Awards	4
Events	4
“In Service to the Dream... Daily” (Adam de Ansetleah)	5
“On searching for medieval rules of play for the ancient game of Hnefatafl” (Wilhelm Meis)	6-7
“A Refutation of the Myth of the Giant Medieval Warhorse” (Siobhan ni Seaghdha)	8-9
“Women Warriors: Myth or Reality?” (Siobhan ni Seaghdha)	10-18
“Golden Hall of Battle Rock” (Wilhelm Meis)	19
“Chivalry in the Current Middle Ages” (Wilhelm Meis)	20-21

Palatine Barony of the Far West



Palatine Baron and Baroness:

Palatine Baron of the Far West – Otto Spilman
Baroness of the Far West – Katharine d'Aquitaine

Baronial officers:

Seneschal – Magister Klement St. Christoph
Chancellor of the Exchequer – Lady Thomasina de Buckley
Golden Peach Pursuivant (Herald) – Lady Thomasina de Buckley
Knight Marshal – Lord Black Harry Adams
Minister of Arts & Sciences – Baron Otto Spilman
Hospitaller – Lord Bjørn Ølfúss
Web Minister – Baron Ii Katsumori
Chronicler – Lord Wilhelm Meis
Chirurgion – [Vacant]
Scribe – [Vacant]

Active branches:

Stronghold of Battle Rock - Okinawa, Japan
Canton of Golden Playne - Thailand
Stronghold of Shielded Harbor - Sasebo, Japan
Stronghold of Vale de Draco - Tokyo, Atsugi, Zama, Yokosuka & the surrounding area, Japan
Stronghold of Warrior's Gate - Korea

Former or inactive branches:

Stronghold of Empty Isle - Diego Garcia
Stonghold of Eternal Winds - Misawa, Japan
Fortaleza de Islas de las Velas Latinas - Guam, Tinnian
College of St Phillip - Philippine Islands

It is also worth noting that there are members in China who have not yet organized a local branch. For more information about that, please contact the Seneschal.

From the Baronial Chronicler:

Greetings unto Their Excellencies and the populace of the Far West!

I would like to sincerely thank all who contributed content and support to this issue of the FWT, and renew my request for more content! It takes a barony to make a great publication, and we have a very good one, but it could be even better! We can improve our newsletter by providing even more articles, artwork, songs/poems, recipes, etc., and by including a few words from each officer of the barony, as well as each local Seneschal. As our barony continues to grow and develop, our newsletter should develop as well, so please keep those content submissions rolling in! Thank you all again for all your many wonderful efforts, and I hope you can forgive my feeble attempt at chronicling them.

In Service,

Wilhelm Meis, Chronicler

From the Baronial Hospitaller:

Greetings to the populace of the Far West!

By the grace of his Excellency Baron Otto, I have been chosen to become the Baronial Hospitaller. I hold this Baronial officer position close to my heart as without recruitment, there would be no dream to service in the SCA. I encourage all local group Chatelaines to actively seek out new members and encourage everyone to recruit whenever possible. The continuous recruitment of new members around the Barony will ensure the continued success of our dream here in the Far West and will be in keeping with Baron Otto's best wishes. I hope to see the Barony of the Far West grow as much as possibly but especially throughout each groups native population. This game we play is fun, share it with everyone, not just the people you are used to talking to. I encourage the use of membership tables/drives, sign up sheets, translators, and fresh ideas to keep group numbers up and things going. I look forward to a exciting time as the Baronial Hospitaller and hope that the Barony will try its hardest to ensure that our members are happy, new members are welcome, and we keep the dream alive.

Yours In Service,

Bjørn Ølfúss

(Trey Carson)

Baronial Hospitaller

beermanisgood@gmail.com

From the Baronial Webminister:

Greetings to the populace!

A very bare-bones site is up in a private testbed--I am still looking for comments:

<http://usjhrs.org/FarWest/>

This would be a placeholder that I am hoping to get to Kingdom in order to open a very basic webpage under the kingdom address until we can get someone with real Drupal skills to design something more permanent and updateable. As such, this has been designed to get people to the information, but without a lot of bells and whistles.

In addition, Lord Bjorn has expressed an interest in taking over the position, which would be a great help as I am getting ready to leave the Barony; though I am willing to continue helping, I do not know what my life will be like for the next few months, and any assistance in these matters would be helpful.

In service,

Ii Go-i Katsumori

From the Seneschal of Battle Rock:

Sadly, my time as Seneschal of Battle Rock is drawing to a close, but this past year has been one of my proudest, and will be the stuff of legends for many years to come. Since its beginning long ago, my SCA experience has been one of the most richly rewarding pursuits I have ever undertaken. I have learned so many diverse arts and been touched by so many people of all walks of life, but none of it has been more meaningful to me than my time here on Battle Rock. During my time here we have grown from only five members to a stronghold of about 30 members, we have weathered typhoons, earthquakes and tsunamis, answered the call when our neighbors to the north were struck by disaster, and when two of our fellow SCAdians in my home shire of Crystal Mynes (Joplin, MO) lost their homes to the Great Wind, we responded with care packages to ease their burden and brighten their gloom. Here on these foreign shores, where we seemingly reinvent the SCA day by day in the face of formidable language and cultural barriers, we have ventured beyond the security of the gates of the stronghold to bring the wonder and joy of the SCA to new peoples, both here on Okinawa, and on the Asian continent. We have touched the lives of so many people! The stronghold of Battle Rock has been, without doubt, the most creative group I have ever had the pleasure of knowing in the SCA, a creativity that is evident in the way we have brought our favorite hobby with us, so far from home, and made it work here on these borrowed shores, and every step of the way, we have done it our way. May Battle Rock never lose that spirit, and may her motto ever ring true:

FLVCTVAT NEC MERGITVR!

She is tossed by the waves but never sinks.

In Service,
Wilhelm Meis
Seneschal, Battle Rock
A.S. XLV-XLVI

From the Seneschal of the Golden Playne:

The Canton of the Golden Playne is going slow but we are going strong. Our new recruits sent word of mouth and their friends from universities started showing interest. Now people are trying to come early so they can first get to borrow the gorgets and other armours. We had at least 50 fight clips every week where I would have to cut and edit till morning. Unfortunately, cost of membership has always been an issue. These boys would prefer to spend money on armour than the THB 1,700.- membership fee. it is understandable and we do not rush them. Even without them, We still have many authorized fighters to participate in the official events.

It is tragic that our most beloved Baron Ii and Lady Abe will soon return to the States. We will lose the current gathering place, practice ground and event location. Most of all, we will miss their kindness.

We would not be the way we are today without them. They are truly the best.

Our current goal is to register our group with the Thai government and become an official samakom of Thailand. The next goal is to find a new gathering place and practice ground. We would love for any SCA member who come to visit Thailand to please come show us a good blow in the head. Yes, I am talking to You, my Lords.

Please come share your wisdom in our facebook group. Search for us under "SCA Thailand Canton of the Golden Playne".

Regards,
Grimr Korn
Seneschal of the Canton of the Golden Playne

Awards

XXIV Baronial Birthday event on Battle Rock (18 June 2011)

Kingdom awards of arms presented on behalf of Their Royal Majesties Marc and Patricia:

- Lady Þórunn Mánisdóttir (Johanna of Battle Rock) – Award of Arms

Kingdom honors presented on behalf of Their Royal Majesties Marc and Patricia:

- Doyle of Battle Rock – Queen's Guard

Baronial awards presented by Otto and Katherine:

- Aodhan MacRaibert of Rome – Order of the Empty Shell
- Bjorn Olfuss – Order of the Attic Helm
- Pipa Follywolfe – Order of the Empty Shell; Order of the Burdoned Bouget
- Rothri de Ross – Order of the Empty Shell; Order of the Tempest Tossed Traveller (Or)

Baronial honors presented by Otto and Katherine:

- Adam de Ansetleah – Far West Support
- Aodhan MacRaibert of Rome – Ginger Flower
- Bjorn Olfuss – Bard of the Far West
- Ryan of Battle Rock – Coronet's Appreciation
- Michael Shieldbreaker – Coronet's Appreciation

Feast of St. Augustine event on Battle Rock (20-21 August 2011)

Kingdom awards given by Their Royal Majesties Marc and Patricia:

- Adam de Ansetleah – Leaf of Merit
- Isabeau of Warriors Gate – Rose Leaf
- Wilhelm Meis – Leaf of Merit

Kingdom honors given by Their Royal Majesties Marc and Patricia:

- Aodhan MacRaibert of Rome – Queen's Guard

Events

Recent Baronial Events

XXIV Baronial Birthday – Battle Rock (Okinawa, Japan) 18 June, 2011

Feast of St. Augustine – Battle Rock (Okinawa, Japan) 20-21 August, 2011

Upcoming Baronial Events

Coronet Tournament (Heavy) – Golden Playne (Thailand) 22-23 October, 2011

Coronet Tournament (Rapier) – Vale de Draco (Tokyo, Japan) April, 2012

XXV Baronial Birthday – TBD June, 2012

In Service to the Dream... Daily

by Lord Adam de Ansetleah

Many new members of the Society for Creative Anachronism find themselves overwhelmed by the myriad of topics of interest that the society can encompass. So many things to learn, read, watch, make, research and participate in, that it can sometimes be like drowning in a turbulent sea. Trying to participate in every activity, attend every social gathering or meeting, attend every event, join every guild can be a daunting undertaking to say the least. Perhaps a different approach to being “in service to the dream” can help to accomplish at least some of your desires as well as help you, the new member to the SCA, remain focused and motivated about living the dream.

The key to staying motivated and becoming involved is.....Do something to live the dream every day. That’s it! All you have to do is “experience” something every day. This technique is actually easier than it sounds. It’s not difficult. It’s actually a very rewarding experience. Not only will it help you to find you niche, but it will also help you to remain focused or re-focus your efforts toward living the dream.

So how in the world do you live the dream daily? It can be as simple as thinking about life as it would have been in the middle ages, when you have a spare minute. It can be as simple as watching a movie with a medieval theme. It can be as simple as surfing the internet for topics concerning the time of antiquity. How far you decide to take this technique is completely up to you. The SCA is an organization that is volunteer participation. That’s the key, to get involved you must become involved!

There are many thoughts on how to accomplish this technique. Many members strive to become “purest”, which is a true art in its self. How did they achieve this? They lived the dream daily. So, take this thought, watch a movie, read a book, do some research on the internet and then take a minute to reflect on the information that you just absorbed. Say to your self, can I build that? Can I learn that? How would I do it? When and where would it have been used? How did this “thing” evolve in to today’s modern society? What project should I undertake this week, this month? What event do I want to become involved with in the next six months? Don’t look now, but you are living the dream!

On searching for medieval rules of play for the ancient game of Hnefatafl

by Wilhelm Meis

I have been looking into the problem of the "original" set of rules (or at least a very old one) for this medieval Scandinavian board game over the course of the past several years. Unfortunately, some of the best clues we have into the rules of play of medieval hnefatafl come from the (much later) notes of the Swedish botanist Carl von Linné, better known as Carolus Linnaeus, who in 1732 recorded a related game which his Saami hosts in Lapland called "Tablut". I am somewhat hampered by geography here in the Far West, but if I ever find my way back to Sweden, perhaps I can take a look at Linnaeus's original notes. The best I have for now are James Edward Smith's 1811 translation of Linnaeus's notes into English (*Lachesis Lapponica*, Vol II, pp.55-58), and John C. Ashton's 2010 reconstruction, which gravely impeaches the accuracy of Smith's translation. Fortunately for us, digitized copies of both works are available on the web. Other methods of gathering clues into how hnefatafl was played include looking to literary evidence found in the medieval Icelandic sagas and eddic poetry, and looking to the several archaeological finds, including game pieces, tafl boards and board fragments found throughout Scandinavia, northern Europe, the British Isles and Iceland.

Smith's translation is undoubtedly problematic for a number of reasons. First, Linnaeus reportedly did not understand the Saami language of his hosts, and had to piece together what rules he could glean from watching the game in play. Naturally, this would inevitably result in an incomplete set of rules, leaving many ambiguities (even a quick look over Smith's description on pp.55-58 shows that these rules leave many unanswered questions). There is also the problem of translation. Linnaeus took notes apparently intended for his own use, written in a mish-mash of Swedish and Latin with many omissions and abbreviations that left his journal entries incomplete and very difficult to translate from the perspective of anyone other than himself. I also wonder how faithful are Smith's copies of Linnaeus's sketches, and how accurate were the originals? If only Linnaeus could have taken some Polaroids!

Of course, the vague and tantalizing descriptions offered in the Icelandic sagas are even more problematic. They offer only scant clues into the rules of early forms of hnefatafl, sometimes in the form of deliberate riddles. "What is that beast all girded with iron, which kills the flocks? He has eight horns but no head, and runs as he pleases." (Gestumblindi's riddle from *Hervarar saga*) This riddle and its answer have also seen conflicting translations into English. The answer has been translated as "It is the húnn in hnefatafl. He has the name of a bear and runs when he is thrown." or "It is the húnn in hnefatafl. He has the name of a bear and escapes when he is attacked." The former translation has been proffered in support of the use of dice, as a six-sided die has eight corners (i.e. "horns"); while the latter has been read as a reference to the king, whose eight horns may be his eight defenders. Or is it possible that his "eight horns but no head" could be a reference to a simple wooden king piece with notches carved in the top to form the "eight horns" of his crown? Suggestions of dice persist on the basis of such clues, but no clear evidence has yet been found to indicate that dice were ever used in tafl games.

It's difficult to say what the old rules stated, and in all likelihood they left much to local variation. Several boards have been found in various locations around Scandinavia, the British Isles and northern Europe, but with so many variations as to suggest several subclasses of tafl games. Several playing pieces have also been found, some dating back to the early Middle Ages, but no complete set of tafl pieces has yet been found, so it is virtually impossible to determine with any degree of certainty what game was played with the game pieces that have been found.

The "Tablut" game described by Linnaeus and Smith is a little different from hnefatafl, in that there is no indication that the corner squares had any particular significance, and Smith's rules #3-5 clearly indicate that the king escapes to the edge, not to the corner. Rule #11 indicates that the "throne" is hostile to the king, so if he is on a square adjacent to the throne and surrounded on the other three sides, he is captured. The other descriptions given may suggest that the "muscovite" camps are also hostile to the king (though perhaps not universally hostile?), but this is unstated. Ashton goes a step further to suggest that the king's throne and the muscovite camps alike are not only hostile (pieces can be captured against them), but once a piece that starts on any of these spaces has left his refuge, he cannot return there, and that no piece may cross over any of these refuge spaces.

The layout of the board can offer some clues, such as whether or not the corner spaces are distinctively marked, which could suggest that the king escapes to the corners, rather than the edge, and may further suggest that the corners are also hostile. Interestingly, the pegged Ballinderry board has etchings only around the central "throne" and corner spaces, clearly indicating they had some special function. A runestone in Ockelbo, Sweden indicates a center square and four corner squares in its simple depiction of two men at taflplay. Other archaeological finds have unornamented corners, such as the board fragments found at Gokstad, Wimose and Coppergate (York) - though in fairness we can't be entirely sure what game was played on the "tafl" side of the Gokstad board. A medieval Irish poem "*Abair riom a Eire ogh*," attributed to Maoil Eoin Mac Raith, describes an Irish tafl variant called *brandub*. The passage, quoted in full, states (translated into English):

The centre of the plain of Fal is Tara's castle, delightful hill; out in the exact centre of the plain, like a mark on a parti-coloured *brannumh* board. Advance thither, it will be a profitable step: leap up on that square, which is fitting for the *branan*, the board is fittingly thine. I would draw thy attention, o white of tooth, to the noble squares proper for the *branan* (Tara, Cashel, Croghan, Naas, Oileach), let them be occupied by thee. A golden *branan* with his band art thou with thy four provincials; thou, O king of Bregia, on yonder square and a man on each side of thee.

Of course it would be impossible for any of the corner spaces to be "occupied by thee" if the king need only escape to the edge, so escape to refuge spaces at the corners is safe to assume of *brandub*. It seems that while tablut and some Danish variants only require the king to escape to the edge, others (including some Irish, Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic variants) require he proceed to the corner.

Some of the best resources I have found on medieval tafl variants include:

- Ashton, J. C. (2010, August). Linnaeus's Game of Tablut and its Relationship to the Ancient Viking Game Hnefatafl. In Larry Swain (Ed.), *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe* (Issue 13). <<http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/13/ashton.php>>
- Bell, R. C. (1979). *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations* (Revised ed.). New York: Dover Publications, Inc. ISBN 0-486-23855- 5. LCCN 79-051819.
- Helmfriid, S. (2005, April 23). Hnefatafl: The Strategic Board Game of the Vikings. <http://hem.bredband.net/b512479/Hnefatafl_by_Sten_Helmfrid.pdf>
- Murray, H. J. R. (1951). *A History of Board-Games Other than Chess*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0198274017. LCCN 52-003975, OCLC 1350513.

May Odin's wisdom guide your pursuit of knowledge of hnefatafl and other medieval tafl games.

Regards,

Wilhelm Meis,

Companion of the Leather Mallet of Calontir, Order of the Rose Leaf of the West

A Refutation of the Myth of the Giant Medieval Warhorse

Siobhan ni Seaghdha, OP

The education system perpetuates a number of myths about the middle ages. Among them are that women had no rights, armor was incredibly heavy, men averaged 5'6" in height and all warhorses were huge – in excess of 17 hands.

Research into the breeding and use of medieval horses, and the warhorse in particular, would indicate that horses in excess of 17 hands, while existent, were not common.

The most significant problem encountered when attempting to determine size is that frequently records say “a large black mare” with no other descriptors. Large is such a tenuous term. If I own Shetland ponies, a 15 hand Arab might seem large but if I own thoroughbreds, the Arab might seem small. The first use of the term “great horse”, according to Davis (pg 88), is in an edict from Edward I in 1252 in which he decrees that anyone with land worth a value of L30 should keep a great horse (and its armor) ready for war. Again, ‘great horse’ does not tell use the actual size of this type of horse.

Often, it is assumed that earlier period warhorses were smaller, around 11 or 12 hands and that later period horses were larger, around 18 hands. Fifth century Sarmatian burial sites yield horse skeletons of up to 15 hands in height (Equis, pg 22). Bones of horses found in a Roman fort in Scotland (Equis, pg 25) were from horses from 11 to nearly 15 hands. The 1st century Chinese considered any horse over 13 hands to be large and so carefully recorded the importation of the Farghana horses whose average height was 16 hands (Gladitz, pg 107-8). Clearly horses of modern size existed in antiquity.

On the other hand, Gladitz reports that 13th Century Mongolian burial sites (pg 90) have produced bones of numerous horses averaging 12-13 hands with one bone from a horse of 15-16 hands. Bones from Germanic horses of the 9th century averaged 13 –14 hands (pg 131) and in ‘medieval’ Russia, 13 hands (pg 135). Small horses were clearly common in later periods.

Horseshoe size can tell us something about the size of a horse, if not its shape or use. Hyland (Warhorse, pg 86) examined Norman horseshoes from Hastings located in the Museum of London. The average width was 4 ½ inches. She compared them to modern shoes used on a stocky 15.1 hand mare and discovered that one set fit exactly and most of the others were a close match. Davis (pg 77-8) also examined horseshoes. The shoes from England in the 9th century averaged 3 7/8 inches. Ones from the late 11th century averaged 4 inches wide and those from the late 14th century averaged 4 3/8 inches wide. It may be assumed that average horse size from the 9th to the 14th centuries (at least in these geographical areas) was perhaps 14 to 15 hands. I personally own a shoe dated in the late 15th century from Germany which is 3 7/8 inches in width – again, there is no way to determine what the horse was used for.

Horses were called by usage and area, not by breed names. A rouncey is a riding horse, a destrier is a war horse. A Spanish horse, in period, is a horse from Spain, regardless of its particular size or shape. A great horse is a large (by comparison) horse, not a breed.

In the middle 1500s, King Henry VIII promoted 3 acts of Parliament to increase the number of horses available for military use (Davis, pp108-109). The first, in 1535, decreed that every owner of an enclosed park (area for animals) should keep 2 mares, able to foal, who stood at least 13 hand high.

The second Act, in 1540, decreed that certain shires and districts were required to place stallions of no less than 15 hands in with free-roaming mares. The term 'shire horse' for a large, heavy horse came into being with this Act. The last Act, in 1541-2, decreed that persons of certain social statuses had to maintain at least 7 riding horses of at least 14 hands each.

In several of her books, Ann Hyland remarks on the fitting of bardings (horse armor). She had the opportunity to try some extent examples on a variety of horses, from drafts to her 14.2 hand Arab mare. The armor fit best on her stocky mare (The Warhorse, pgs 9-10). In addition, she notes that the Royal Armouries at Leeds, England, use a 15.2 hand Lithuanian draft mare as the model for making statues for their displays of horse armor

Using the records of measurements of ships and barges used for horse transport, Ms Hyland (Warhorse, pp 145-6) estimated that the average war horse of the early 13th century would have been approximately 15 to 15.2 hands and fairly stocky.

While much research, especially in burial sites and war fields, remains to be done, it seems clear that the common existence of a huge draft-style horse for use in war during the middle ages is a myth. Indeed, most modern draft horses average 15-16 hands. Only the Clydesdale, Shire and Percheron tend to be larger (17 hands or more). The Anglo Norman, Dole, Groningen, Kladruber, Frederiksborg, Ardennes, Dutch Heavy, Jutland, and many other modern drafts all average around 15 hands.

I end with a list of draft and heavy riding breeds (Horses and Ponies) extant in the middle ages and their current average heights. All of these breeds are 'stocky'.

Friesian – about 15 hands – may have been developed from horses brought with the Romans. Known to have been used as warhorses in our period.

Boulonnais – About 16.2 hands – may have been developed from horses brought by the Romans. French used in the Crusades. Prior to the 17th century, there existed a smaller type, about 15-15.2 hands, known as the 'fish cart horse' which was more prevalent. It has since declined in popularity.

Schleswig –Also known as the Holsteiner (German) – 15.2-16 hands. In existence since the 14th century and known to be used as a warhorse.

References

Davis, R.H.C., The Medieval Warhorse, Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1989

Gladitz, Charles, Horsebreeding in the Medieval World, Four Courts Press, 1997

Hyland, Ann, The Warhorse: 1250-1600, Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1998

Hyland, Ann, The Medieval Warhorse: From Byzantium to the Crusades, Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1994

Hyland, Ann, Equus: the Horse in the Roman World, Yale University Press, 1990

Spector, Joanna, Horses and Ponies, Usbourne Publishing Ltd, 1979

Women Warriors: Myth or Reality?

Did medieval women pick up weapons and fight? The answer is an unqualified yes. Did women who were not royalty fight? Still an unqualified yes. Did they fight as regular soldiers, rather than as simply ‘defenders of home and hearth’? The answer is still yes, but certainly not without qualifiers.

Numerous books have been written which mention royal women who led their troops in defense of their homeland or to defend or gain a throne. Some of them led by being a symbol to rally around and some fought side by side with their troops. Likewise, there are numerous accounts of other noble women taking up arms to defend home and legal rights. Since this information is readily available, I will not dwell on these ladies. What I have attempted to find out was if women, particularly European women, were commonly a part of armies as regular soldiers and whether they entered tournaments and/or became knights. What follows is the result of my admittedly incomplete research.

We’ll start with a brief review of early periods, generally prior to 1000AD. The numbers in parentheses are the reference materials for that section.

Amazons, Sythians and Gladiators (6), (14), (18), (19)

Generally speaking, early (prior to 1000AD) European periods included women as warriors more commonly than later periods. During the Roman Empire, women fought in the public arenas, both as free women and as slaves. They competed in the opening of the Coliseum in AD 80. According to Juvenal, it became fashionable for women of the nobility to train and fight in the arenas until Emperor Alexander Severus, in AD 200, issued an edict which banned all women from gladiatorial combat. While the Romans do not appear to have left records regarding women in their own ranks, period historians frequently mention women in the ranks of their enemies, especially those to the north of Italy.

The Spartans and Athenians trained their girls in the art of war and encouraged their participation in competitive war games. Plato, in his Republic, stated that women should become soldiers if they desired although he later modified that in his Laws. Musonius Rufus (AD 30-101) advocated that women and men should receive the same education and training. Although he did not appear to go so far as to include training for war, he did indicate that differences in education should be based on ability and strength, not gender.

The Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the 5th century BC, tells us that the Greeks, having defeated the Amazons, were taking several boatloads of Amazonian slaves on the Black Sea when the slaves overthrew their captors and escaped. Landing on the shores of the Sea of Azov (northeast side of the Black Sea in the modern Ukraine), they intermarried with the nomadic horsemen called Scythians. Regardless of the truth of this history, the Scythians apparently included women as a matter of course in military endeavors. Twenty-five percent of the Sythian gravesites which have been discovered contained women (as determined through DNA testing). These graves had swords, spears, armor and other items of war along with more typical female items such as spindles and mirrors. Some of these graves indicated high status in that the woman was buried with a male servant and/or a horse. This was done to provide servants to aide the warrior in the afterlife.

What about the infamous ‘Amazons’? There has been a great deal of argument about whether they actually existed. De Paw (6) notes “There is far more evidence, both literary and archeological, than survives for other people, such as the Hittites or Massagetae, whose existence is unquestioned”. The original Amazons appear to have lived in Libya. Rock drawings have been discovered in Libya which

show women armed with bows. The Greek historians make mention of them often and report battling Amazons after the Trojan War. Numerous cities, attributed by period historians to the Amazons do, in fact, exist. In the city of Ephesus a temple to the goddess Artemis exists and is attributed to the Amazons.

Vikings and other Northerners. (4), (8), (11)

Strabo (100BC), Plutarch (102BC) Dio Cassius (49 AD), (Tactus, 60AD) all record the existence of women warriors in northern and eastern cultures with great regularity. Roman accounts of battles record finding bodies of female warriors on the battlefield. Thirty captive Gothic warrior women were paraded in front of Emperor Aurelian in 283 AD.

Saxo Grammaticus, writing his History of the Danes in 1200AD, mentions a number of fighting women in Denmark. Numerous other Danish women are listed in various histories as leaders of troops and 'sword maidens'. While some of them are daughters of kings, some of them appear to be just regular folk.

Saxon culture in 100 AD regarded women as equals with men. When marrying, men gave the women oxen, horses and bridle, shield and spear while she gave him armor or weapons. Graves of Teutonic women have been discovered which included armor, shield, lance, and sword. According to an article in the Times (8/22/00), DNA testing proves that two bodies buried with spears and knives, dated AD 450-650, were women. Other graves in England and Denmark have been proven to be women buried with swords and other armaments.

Cimbrian women (100 BC) rode in moving 'wagon castles' and shot arrows at the enemy. They would occasionally emerge from the 'castle' and fight with swords.

Mongols, Asians and Arabs (6), (7), (8), (11)

In Japan, squads of female cavalry are noted in the 11th century. The naginata, a curved Japanese spear, as been the traditional weapon of the women of the bushi class since the 15th century.

The Abkhazians, in Georgia, had a social order based on the ability to bear arms. Both men and women were trained in riding and in weaponry. These skills differentiated a free person from a slave. In 14th century Bohemia, John Ziska challenged Queen Sophia (widow of King Wenceslas) with an army of women. His amateur army, with the clever use of guile and strategy, defeated the Queen's professionals.

In the time of Mohammed (7th century) it was not uncommon for women to fight as regular soldiers and noble women had the same rights as men, including the right to wage war. As Islam grew in cultural and religious importance, women's status as equals declined.

Usamak ibn-Mungidh, writing in the early 1100's, mentions several women warriors. His cousin's mother arrived home dressed in armor with weapons at her side and chastised her son for wanting to flee the fighting with the Ismalilites. He relates the story of his grandfather's female slave veiling herself and rushing off to fight until he and his relatives joined her and drove off the enemy. Lastly, he tells of a woman named Nadrah who captured three Frankish men, one at a time, and brought them back to her home. After taking their possessions, she called in her neighbors to kill them. All of his stories are told with evident admiration for the women.

Attila the Hun (AD 450) had women in his army, as did the army of Genghis Khan (12th century) when he invaded the West.

During the Shang Dynasty in China (1850-1100BC), careful histories were kept and reflect a number of female warriors including Shih Hu's all woman army and in the 6th century AD, female household servants were instructed in the martial arts in order to better defend their masters.

Let's now move into strictly European history and discuss women fighters who lived between 500AD and about 1600 AD.

Tournaments (1), (3), (6), (8), (11), (17)

Many reference works cite 'a British chronicle' dated 1348 without giving further details. My thanks go to Brian Price (17) who provides us with the author, Henry Knighton, and the text, translated by G.H. Martin. This chronicle states that a company of as many as 40 ladies went from tournament to tournament, dressed and accoutered appropriately and participated in tournaments. Unfortunately, it does not list specifics of date, place or names and many researchers doubt its veracity (a medieval urban legend?). Nonetheless, there do exist at least three verifiable accounts of women participating in tournaments.

In the 14th century, Sir Richard Shaw wrote of fighting and besting a Flemish knight who, when the armor was opened, turned out to be a woman whose identity was never discovered.

Agnes Hotot of House Dudley (born approximately 1378AD) took up arms in the place of her ailing father and bested her opponent in a mounted duel. The family coat of arms show a woman in a helmet, hair disheveled and breasts exposed (apparently she exposed them after the duel to humiliate her opponent).

Pierre Gentien, a French poet of the 13th century, wrote a rhymed epic in which he names some 50 women who, in order to prepare for the Crusades, held and participated in a tournament.

The songs and tales of the time are replete with tales of unknown knights who enter tournaments. Could some of them have been women in disguise?

Knightly Orders and Warrior Nuns (8), (11), (16)

Whether women achieved knighthood in the same manner as the men is a bit murky. Certainly Knightly Orders were established for women and women were admitted into Orders established for men. Women took knightly titles which were the feminized equivalent of the male title. Nothing I was able to find stated unequivocally that women were knights in exactly the same way that men were. However, listed below is the information I was able to find.

The Order of the Hatchet was founded by Count Raymond Berenger of Barcelona in 1149. He wished to honor the women who fought in defense of the town of Tortosa against an attack by the Moors. One of the honors accorded to the members was precedence over men in public assemblies.

The Order of the Glorious St Mary was founded by Loderigo d'Andalo of Bologna in 1233. It was the first religious order to grant the title of 'militissa' to women.

Some military orders maintained convents. The women took the title of soeurs hospitalieres and undertook support roles. This was not a knightly class.

Supposedly, an Order of the Dragon existed which admitted women and, if feats of arms were achieved, they decorated their badges in the same manners as the male members of the Order. I have not been able to find any other details regarding this order.

In the Order of the Garter, 68 women were admitted between 1358 and 1488. Some were of royal blood or married to knights but some were neither. Again, it is not clear to me that their status was the same as that of their male counterparts.

Apparently Orders were established in the Low Countries which admitted only women. These women were granted the title of `chevaliere' or `equitissa'. After a probation of five years, they were formally dubbed as knights (militissae) by a male knight. The reference I have did not state if they engaged in feats of arms nor did it mention the names of the Orders.

The histories mention a number of warrior nuns. Frankly, this one really surprised me although, upon reflection, it really shouldn't have. The times were not always settled and the rule of law not always enforced. A community of women should know how to defend itself against brigands and invaders.

In 10th and 11th century Saxony, some abbesses are recorded as ruling with the powers of barons.

In 590AD, a warrior nun named Chrodielde attempted to overthrow Leubevre, the abbess of Cheribert. War ensued between the two and the Frankish king Childebert had to intercede. Reportedly it took great effort for the king to bring Chrodielde and her army of locals under control.

In 1265AD, the abbess of Notre-Dame-Aux-Nonnains, Odette de Pougy, challenged Pope Urban IV. He wanted to build a church on land which she thought belonged to the abbey. When he ignored her objections and attempted to proceed with the building, she responded by leading an armed party to drive off the work crews. Two years later, she did it again. Although he responded by excommunicating the entire abbey, the church was not built until after her death, 14 years later.

In 1477AD, Abbess Renee de Bourbon raised an army in order to attack a renegade monastery in Paris. She was on a personal crusade to end the excesses of the monasteries and convents under her domain. When she eventually prevailed, she made each nun and monk sign an oath of loyalty to her.

In the 14th century, Julia Duguesclin, nun and sister of the knight Bertrand Duguesclin assisted in the defense of the fortress of Pontorson.

The problem of warrior nuns became so pervasive that in 15th century Bologna a law forbade citizens from loitering near convents for their own protection! Various popes established decrees forbidding women from engaging in martial combat or wearing armor, again in an effort to reduce the power of these warrior nuns. This is one of the decrees which were used against Joan d' Arc. In 1563AD, the Council of Trent established that bishops had authority over nuns and their abbesses and could enforce it with military means, if necessary.

Although it is outside our period, it is interesting to note that in 1650AD, Philothee Benizelos established a convent in Greece. The women were armed and trained as fighters. She was so successful in attracting female students that the local government became uneasy at her growing power.

Crusades (2), (3), (5), (6), (8), (10), (11)

Did women fight in the Crusades? The European historians are largely silent although the Arab ones are not. Some researchers suggest that the reason for the European silence is political in nature. The Crusades were not generally successful. Having women in the armies might provide a temptation to sin thus bringing God's wrath down on them and causing the failures. Some period chroniclers blame the failure of the 3rd Crusade on the misconduct of women. Downplaying the participation of women may have been a way of avoiding the issue.

Queen Eleanor and her "Amazons" went on the Second Crusade. Although they went through a regular course of training as light cavalry and attained some proficiency in the use of arms, it does not appear that they actually fought in the Holy Land. In 1147AD, Eleanor and her ladies ignored the advice of the seasoned warriors accompanying them (and the strict orders of King Louis) one night as they prepared to make camp near Laodicea. Eleanor insisted that they camp in a different place and the party was attacked by Saracens. King Louis barely arrived in time to save them and suffered heavy losses. Eleanor and her ladies were retired to the castle of her cousin, Raymond, Prince of Antioch for the rest of the season.

Nonetheless, it appears that some women did fight in the Crusades. During the first Crusade, entire villages would leave for the Holy Land. A poem written to commemorate the party led by Godfrey of Bouillon describes companies of women armed with clubs. A palace in Genoa is listed as containing several light cuirasses which had been made for a band of Genoese ladies on crusade in the 1301. Apparently, according to letters written by Pope Boniface VIII, they were dissuaded from doing so. However, the exploits of other Genoese women on crusade against the Turks are recorded in these same letters.

An unnamed historian (8) in the 13th century is quoted as saying that "French women warriors in this period were either duelists who made themselves locally famous in France or hard-fighting crusader soldiers who usually died unidentified."

In the 1300's, the patron saint of Italy, Caterina Benincasa, like Joan d' Arc, heard voices and directed soldiers against the Muslims.

Women are recorded as being the armies of both Emperor Conrad (1191AD) and Count William of Poitiers (1101 AD).

At the beginning of the 3rd Crusade, in 1189, Pope Clement wrote a Papal Bull which forbade women from putting on armor or fighting in the crusades. It was largely ignored.

Some researches state that Arab historians may have had political motivations for recording European women as warriors. As propaganda, this would show that Europeans had less care for the virtue of their women than Arabs did. The numbers they report may be inaccurate. However, here is what I was able to find.

During the 3rd Crusade, Imad ad-Din and Baha al-Din (who apparently rode with Saladin) recorded their impressions of both Muslim and Christian woman warriors. They mention a 'woman from over the sea' who arrived in 1189 with 500 horsemen and sufficient support staff and who rode with her troops. They also mention seeing other European women who fought, some of whom could be identified at a distance and others who were only known as women once their bodies were examined. In 1191 they mention a female archer during the siege of Acre who was responsible for a number of deaths before she was overwhelmed and killed.

Ibn al-Athir also mentions women warriors fighting at the siege of Acre. He speaks of three Frankish horsewomen who were among the prisoners but not recognized as women until their armor was removed. He also mentions a number of Frankish women who challenged the Muslims to single combat.

Regular soldiers (2), (6), (8), (11), (12), (13)

Many women appear to have fought as regular soldiers. An anonymous sword and buckler training manual from the 13th century shows a woman named Walpurga in some of the drawings which demonstrate different stances. Nichols (12) discusses the period attitude towards sports and exercise. He points out that women were actively involved in vigorous sports including ball games, tennis, skiing and ice skating, tumbling, archery, horseback riding, hunting, and self defense.

Countess Matilda of Tuscany (born 1046AD) rode to war with her mother and fought for 30 years in the service of Pope Gregory VIII and Pope Urban.

Maria of Pozzuoli is written of in some detail in a letter from Petrarch to Cardinal Giovanni Colonna in 1343. She apparently was a highly respected woman who traveled and fought with the regular army, virginity intact.

In the late 1300s, Queen Valeska of Bohemia required all girls to serve in the military.

During this same time period in Italy, 30 women defended the town of Mugello until reinforcements arrived and Luzia Stanga was noted as a well respected cavalry swordswoman.

The Royal Armouries Yearbook 1997 contains an article regarding the Bridport Muster Roll of 1457. Among the 174 names of ordinary people are 5 women, three of whom came with equipment such as sword, buckler, bow, and/or body armor. The authors note that 39% of the names on the list do not have any equipment.

In the early 1400s, Jeanne des Armoises is listed as fighting at both Poitiers and Guinee. The Spanish gave her a fleet of warships and in 1439, she was placed in charge of an army. In this same time period, Bona Lombardi convinced her husband, Captain Brunoro, to teach her the arts of war. They fought side by side for many years and she saved his life on more than one occasion.

In 1518, a group of 350 girls were enlisted to construct and defend fortifications at the Protestant Garrison in Guienne, France.

In 1524, Ameliane du Puget led a troop of women who dug a trench known as the Tranchee des Dames (today the Boulevard des Dames runs along the place where the trench used to be). This act assisted in breaking the Siege of Marseilles in the war between the Constable of Bourbon and the King.

Dona Catalina de Erauso left a nunnery in 1596 and became a soldier of fortune.

Margarite Delaye lost an arm fighting in the siege of Montelimar in 1569 and Captain Mary Ambree is listed as assisting in the release of the town of Ghent from the Spanish in 1582.

Defenders of Hearth and Home (3), (8),

Christine de Pisan (15th century) wrote in Treasure of the City of the Ladies that it is necessary for women to be educated in the art of warfare and wrote a tactical manual entitled Feats of Arms and

Chivalry. David Jones points out in Warrior Women that castle defense requires a complex knowledge of capabilities of various units and strategy along with the ability to inspire confidence. This was especially true when the lady was not left with sufficient experienced troops to defend the lands and titles which were either hers by right or being held in her husband's name.

In 1240AD, the Teutonic Knights were beleaguered by the Prussians and took refuge in several towns. In Culm, most of the knights were eventually killed and the city would have been taken except for the efforts of the women of the town. They closed the gates, donned mail, and mounted the wall, spears in hand. The Prussians withdrew.

The women who fought in the defense of the town of Tortosa against the Moors were honored by the Count of Barcelona. (see Knightly Orders).

Lady Agnes Randolph ~Black Agnes~ (born around AD 1300) successfully held her castle for 5 months against the Earl of Salisbury in 1334. After each assault, she had her maids dust the battlements to show her scorn for the attackers.

The Dutch city of Harlaam, attacked by the Spanish in 1568, was defended in part by two sisters (Amarron & Kenau Hasselaar) who led a battalion of 300 women armed with sword, dagger and musket. Refusing to wear men's clothing, they wore light armor over their dresses.

Nicola de la Haye, daughter of the castellan of Lincoln, defended the town against several raids and was made the sheriff of Lincolnshire in 1216.

In the siege of Orleans, France (1438) women defended the town by pouring boiling oil, water, lime and ashes on the heads of the enemy. Three battalions of women fought in the defense of Siena in 1554. Women are also listed as fighting at the sieges of Pavia and Padua.

New World (8), (11)

We've all learned the history of Europe in the New World, right? Surprise, not only did educated folks know the world was round, women fought in the New World. Columbus mentions them in letters to Queen Isabella (herself a warrior woman). The Amazon River got its name after Captain Francisco de Orellana's encounter with women warriors on the river. Pizarro mentions them in his accounts of the Incas. European women also took up arms in this new place

Inez Suarez sailed from Spain to Peru in 1537AD to search for her missing husband. Upon learning of his death, she settled in Cuzco and re-married. She is recorded as fighting with him in his wars against the Arucanian natives.

In 1521AD, Cortez had both native and European women in his army. His wife, Maria Estrada, is recorded as being one of them and to have participated in the fighting. Beatriz de Pardes is also recorded as taking an active part in the fighting in what is now Mexico.

Duels (2), (8)

A noblewoman in the 13th century could either choose a champion to defend their reputations or they could fight the duel themselves. German law listed the procedure for a woman to challenge a man to a joust. In the record of one such joust (1228AD), the woman won. In another form of duel, the man stood waist deep in a pit. He was usually armed with a club with his left hand tied behind his

back. The woman had a 3-5lb rock inside a shawl. If the man won, he was to bury the woman alive in the pit. In other areas, this type of duel was reserved for accusations of rape. If the man won, the woman lost a hand. If the woman won, the man lost his head. In Bohemia, both parties carried swords but the woman had to remain outside a circle drawn around the pit.

Apparently many women were duelists in the late 1500's and into the 1600's. Although this is mostly out of the scope of our period, I offer a brief discussion for those whose interests lie there. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, accounts of ~Roaring Girls~ tell of women who dressed as men and roamed the streets. The King of England, in 1620, bade his clergy to sermonize against this behavior. A book entitled Roaring Girls, dated 1611, has a drawing of a woman smoking pipe and holding a sword on the cover. One of the stories it tells is of Mary Firth, also known as Molly Cutpurse. She apparently came into contact with the law on numerous occasions. In the mid 1600s in Peru, the exploits of Dona Ana Lezama de Urinza and Dona Eustaquia de Sonza, ~the Valiant Ladies of Potosi~ are recorded. The reference book The Sword and Womankind also lists a fair number of female duelists.

It would appear that non-royal/noble women did fight and that they fought in situations other than emergencies (e.g., defending their persons or home against bandits or invaders). Crusading women were frequently left behind when the army moved on. One way to stay with the army would be to be useful to it by knowing how to fight. Anyone (including myself) who has attempted to joust at the rings or quintain in the SCA or jousting societies can tell you that just being an experienced rider does not make one immediately a competent jouster or horseback fighter. It takes practice for both horse and rider. Having one but not the other will not result in competency. Since we have accounts of women fighting from horseback, we must assume that they practiced somewhere, even if the accounts do not mention it. Something that was normal (personal hygiene comes to mind) is frequently not mentioned by writers of a period. That does not mean it did not occur. I am confident that more information exists. We just have to go looking for it.

A couple of cautionary notes before I end. The references I have listed are secondary and tertiary sources. As such, I cannot guarantee their veracity. Many of them do not give much in the way of details, hence the truncated presentation of some of the data. Someday I hope to have the time to research this area more thoroughly, looking at actual letters and other documents. As a fighter and squire in the SCA, my intention was simply to discover if any information existed regarding non-royal/noble female fighters. Use what I have found to find out more and if you do, let me know! Please feel free to quote this article and to copy it as long as you give proper credit.

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The Golden Hall of Battle Rock

by Wilhelm Meis

Since ancient times
our princely lines
have conquered western shores
and proudly hailed
that phoenix sail
vert azure gules and or

We'll slay the foes
and take the field now
we'll lay them down one by one
their shattered bones
and tattered flags
beneath the phoenix sun

We'll split their shields
and crush their armour
the Battle Rock shakes beneath
as one by one
they each succumb
to our spearmen's reach

Since days of yore
the ancient lore
has sung our victory song
since Egil's scorn
had Bloodaxe borne
these shores we have held strong

We are outnumbered
ten to one here
though we pride ourselves the odds
we will take them
one by one
send them over to the gods

We will ever
fight for honour
hew our foes down one and all
until the time
when we shall dine
in Asgaard's golden hall

We are the sons
of ancient northmen
following the flaming hawk
proud we stand
and proud we'll die here
on the shores of Battle Rock!

Chivalry in the Current Middle Ages

by Wilhelm Meis

This brief analysis of chivalry in the Current Middle Ages is intended as a *discussion*, not as a lecture. I invite and encourage everyone reading this to offer their own opinions on the topic as well. I feel that it is through these interactive dialogues that we are able to keep these ideals alive and relevant to our activities, so I would love to hear YOUR thoughts on this or related topics, so please e-mail me or find me at an event and I will be happy to discuss with you how these ideals apply to our hobby. Also, please feel free to quote this article as you like. - WM

Ask 100 SCA members what the SCA is and you will get 100 different answers, but most of them would mention (or at least hint at) the ideal of chivalry as a guiding principle in a post-modern society. There is a great deal of emphasis placed on chivalry in the SCA, and it is the principal measure of an SCA member's worthiness to be recommended for most awards, although chivalry itself is invisible, ill-defined, and may be elusive at times. Our medieval and renaissance forebears found *chivalry* a difficult word to define, as is evident in Castiglione's 16th century *Book of the Courtier*, in which the entire book centers around a four-day discussion in the court of the Duke of Urbino of which qualities an ideal courtier would possess. More important to our purposes, however, would be defining what chivalry means in our current age, and identifying ways in which we can strive for that ideal.

I do not mean to suggest that there is any One Right Answer™, though there are some wrong answers. Turning to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, we find *chivalry* defined as ***the combination of qualities expected of an ideal knight, especially courage, honour, courtesy, justice, and a readiness to help the weak***. That's a lot to unravel in one word, and a high standard to live up to in any society. How can we possibly live up to all of that?

I think the first step is by staying true to ourselves. If we tell a lie, or harbor ambitions, or try to make ourselves look like something we are not, or even if we simply sit quietly and never express our true desires, we kill some part of the pure truth that resides within ourselves, that perennial crop which sustains our honor. Without being true to ourselves, our honor will surely die out. We can maintain inner truth, and irreproachable honor, by remaining true to our inmost essence in all we do (in mundane life as well as in the SCA and our other hobbies). We can express that truth by taking an active role in SCA meetings and discussions, to ensure that the group is meeting our needs as well as everyone else's, and if we want something to change, asking for that change directly. It means we make our opinions known at the appropriate times, take up our disagreements directly with the other party (preferably in private), and avoid gossip or talking behind each other's backs. ***Every lie, every rumor, every unfounded accusation, is a stain upon our own honor.***

Courage is also important, whether it be the courage to don armor and stand against a field of more experienced fighters, or simply the courage to speak up in a Populace meeting and voice your opinion. Courage gives us the will to maintain our honor and to do what is right, even if it is unpopular or involves self-sacrifice. When gossip comes to us, it takes courage to tell our friends that their words reflect poorly on themselves. When we are new and have a difference of opinion with the elder members of the group, it takes remarkable courage to stand up and make our opinions known, but people notice that, and they will respect you for it.

Courtesy is almost a foreign concept to our modern society. There is far more to courtesy than simply being polite at court or allowing others to be served first at feast. Courtesy also extends to the way we behave when no one is watching. Courtesy means always putting the needs of others ahead of your own, even if you think no one would ever know the difference. It means always covering your spearman, even if you take a headshot in the process. It means always making sure your buddy on gate duty gets to have some fun at the event too, even if you end up running troll during a really great [class/party/fight]. It means always showing respect for others, whether face-to-face, when their back is turned, or when their name is brought up in their absence. ***Respect given is respect earned.***

Readiness to help others is always a good thing. We have many members here in the Far West who are new to the SCA in general, so they are unfamiliar with the expectations placed upon us by the West Kingdom, or the intricacies of SCA corporate policy. It is up to those of us who know these things to help and guide our fellow members as they take on new responsibilities. It is also incumbent upon those members to make their needs known, but the elder members in the group must make ourselves available to provide any assistance that is needed, even if that assistance is not asked for directly. Sometimes a hesitation to do something indicates a lack of understanding of the task or of the related expectations. If someone looks lost, or they seem to be dragging their feet on something, take a moment to remember your first time autocrating or taking on an officer position, and offer a helping hand.

There are many ways we can display our own chivalric ideals in the way we conduct ourselves both in-game and in our daily lives, and in the process we will make ourselves, each other, and the overall group happier and healthier. First and foremost, if we stay true to our own honor, we have a solid foundation upon which to build all the rest of our hopes and dreams. Through courage, courtesy and service, we can maintain our own honor while at the same time ensuring a fun and fulfilling hobby for our fellow members. ***When we compromise our ideals, we defeat ourselves and do injury to each other.*** Stay true to your core values. Always.

FLVCTVAT NEC MERGITVR!
Wilhelm Meis