

Weekend Warriors

- **With sword and shield in hand, these employees recreate a medieval world.**
by Christina Esparza

(May 24, 2002) Sword fighting and crossbow shooting. Calligraphy and candle making. While learning these lost medieval arts and recreating Middle Age battles, some MTA employees are giving a different meaning to the term "weekend warrior."

Two such employees are Gateway Division 10 Assistant Transportation Manager Susan Harvey and Central City Division 1 Transit Operations Supervisor Thomas Mattocks. They belong to the Society for the Creative Anachronism, a 50,000-member group dedicated to bringing the Middle Ages alive.

"It was started a little over 35 years ago in the city of Berkeley," Harvey said. "Some people had a medieval theme wedding, and they had games. Apparently it went over so well, somebody said, 'Well, why don't we do this again?' Thus, it was born."

Mattocks learned about the SCA about 13 years ago while reading an article in the Los Angeles Times titled, "10 Fun and Interesting Things to do During the Summer." People on weekends would get dressed in medieval garb, fight fake wars and have celebrations.

"I thought, 'Interesting, these people dress in funny clothes and beat each other up. OK, that's not for me,'" he said. "Three months later, I actually saw one of the events where all the women were dressed up and the men were carrying swords. I stopped, got some information and got involved in it. I got drawn into it a little at a time."

About 2 ½ years ago, Mattocks introduced Harvey to the society.

"My husband passed away a little over three years ago, and after a while Thom said, 'Look, it's time for you to get out, meet people, get a life,'" Harvey said. "So he brought me to some events and I found them fascinating."

Find your inner Middle Ages persona

Modern-day medieval fighters use rattan, a bamboo-like material, to make fighting swords and hammers. They also have padded armor that protects the kidneys, neck and face. Members of the society create their own personas, rather than assuming an identity of an actual historical figure, and the wars fought are not reenactments.

"You can't be Henry VIII," Harvey explained.



▲ Central City Division 1 Transit Operations Supervisor Thomas Mattocks is dressed as Lord Cedric Myles Madoc, Esq., his persona in the Society of the Creative Anachronism.

You, too, can be anachronistic on the weekend: Discount tickets for the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, albeit Elizabethan, are available at MTA's [Employee Center](#).

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▲ Gateway Division 10 Assistant Transportation Manager Susan Harvey shows the dress she wears as Cassandra O'r Gwaun, her persona in the SCA.

"This is as if the Middle Ages were still happening. The wars themselves are various scenarios that are set up. We differ from the Civil War [reenactments], where no matter what you do, the North wins. With us, we don't know who wins."

Not only does the society recreate the Middle Ages by "fighting" wars, its members also learn medieval arts, including calligraphy, leatherwork, woodwork, making soap and swords, among other things.

"I made my belt, my wallet and my key chain," Mattocks said.

By being required to study in order to develop their personas, the SCA has helped Mattocks and Harvey learn a lot about history. Mattocks, for instance, wanted to incorporate the Mongols' invasion of Europe in his persona's history.



▲ Sword used in SCA wars are made of rattan, a bamboo-like material.

PHOTOS: Christina Esparza

A different historical perspective

"In the United States, we don't cover that history," he said. "There's a lot of things that other peoples and other nations should get a lot of credit for that we don't know because we never teach it here in the U.S."

Learning history, Mattocks said, also helps understand the present.

"You get a better understanding of some of the conflicts going on today, especially in the Middle East," he said. "They date all the way back to this period of time. There hasn't been a period of time where there hasn't been unrest and it's all dated back to this period in history."

Harvey sees the SCA as a nice, educational getaway.

"You learn so many new things. I've always been one to want to learn," she said. "I get away from work, I get away from pressure. I get to be with

friends, spend a lot of time outdoors. There's almost nothing you can't learn here because everybody is so willing to teach."

"There's a lot of camaraderie, a lot of sportsmanship, a lot of teamwork," added Mattocks. "It's like a giant family. You get out of it what you put into it. I don't see any reason to quit, period."

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