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Bus Operator Jim Pieper, at right in chain mail, wields shields and swords during weekend practice battles of the Legio VI Victrix Society. *Photos courtesy of Jim Pieper.*

Div. 15 Bus Operator Enjoys Time Off By Reenacting Early Roman Life, Battles

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(March 4, 2010) When he's not transporting Metro passengers safely across town, Div. 15 Bus Operator Jim Pieper enjoys reenacting 2nd century Roman life as a member of the Legio VI Victrix Society.

The unique and growing Los Angeles-based organization allows members to recreate Roman life complete with lessons in Latin, home-sewn costumes, authentic food and historically accurate weapons and artillery used to reenact famous battles that occurred during AD 122-138.

"Joining the group was easy," says Pieper recalling how one day he happened to meet one of the group's members during a visit to a Victory Boulevard computer store.

Pieper had already enjoyed participating in Civil War reenactments, and says he was looking for a new hobby after the disappointment of having his Civil War days "fizzle out" after members moved or



couldn't participate anymore.

"I just wanted something different and this is really different. It's fun. You go out there and portray Roman soldiers. You get out of this century, and are able to live through a different period," he said.

Complete with authentic Roman soldier garb, Div. 15 Bus Operator Jim Pieper says reenacting the battles is the highlight of his membership in the Legio VI Victrix Society.

The Society not only allows members to study, feel and taste early Roman soldier and civilian life, members also work to educate the public about Roman history by performing reenactments at schools, festivals, and informally at the Getty Museum.

Pieper says members dressed as Roman soldiers diligently play their role by walking around the Getty, answering questions about daily life in a typical Roman Army legion of almost two thousand years ago.



Strategic infantry formations replicate the battle scenes that occurred during the 2nd Century when Roman soldiers defended Hadrian's Wall.

To date, Pieper says the most interesting part of his experience has been reenacting the battles to defend Hadrian's Wall, located in Northern England, against the "barbarian horde."

The original Legio VI Victrix was stationed at the Wall after earning a reputation as one of the Roman Army's most reliable legions, seeing service in Spain and along the Rhine River.

Named after the Emperor Hadrian, the 80-mile long wall was built over a number of years starting in AD 122 and marked the northern-most boundary of the Roman Empire. Portions of the stone and timber wall still stand and provide a tangible link to the past for countless classical history buffs.

To further authenticate their monthly "battles," Legion members - complete with Roman garb and artillery - practice at Griffith Park staging tactical movements complete with military marches, a catapult and a variety of 2nd Century props.

Pieper admits, sometimes battles result in minor injuries since "real" swords are used, but members are careful not to cause any serious harm while they enjoy performing on an outdoor stage.



Onlookers can't help but stop to check out the battles reenacted by Legio VI Victrix Society at a neighborhood park.

One scene might involve a soldier charged with collecting leeches, while another could depict the life of a Roman guard on duty at placed at one of the many gates in the Roman Wall.

Members research every detail of their respective roles, while each is expected to create an actual persona unique to the period complete with costume and dialogue.

"I'm actually supposed to make my persona story and be judged during an upcoming competition," he said, adding that, on occasion, he's had to borrow some material from other members.

As rooted in the ancient past as they may be, Legio VI Victrix Society members have their feet firmly planted in the 21st century when it comes to generating interest in their pastime.

One has to smile, wondering what the Emperor Hadrian would have thought of their website and Facebook page.

