

Effortless English

howl: n. yell, scream
thudded: v. hit, pounded
in unison: adv. at the same time, together, in harmony
braced: v. held
giddy: adj. nervous
tendrils: n. lines, tentacles
wiry: adj. thin with muscles
clad in: v. wearing
scale: n. scale armor
strode: v. walked (confidently)
cackling: v./adj. laughing (loudly)
goose bumps: n. bumps on skin (caused by fear or excitement)
butt: n. bottom
rattan: n. a plant similar to bamboo
advanced: v. moved forward
adrenaline: n. a hormone, a body chemical (released by fear or excitement)
awe: n. amazement
anachronism: n. something out of place in time/history (doesn't belong to that time period)
oddballs: n. strange people
medieval: adj. middle ages period
strap on: v. put on, wear
outlandish: adj. dramatic, fun & creative
hyper-intelligent: adj. very smart
geeks: idiom. smart uncool people
hammish: adj. too dramatic
buffs: n. people who like something, fans
misfits: n. people who don't fit in with normal society
to succumb: v. to be beaten by, to surrender to
drudgery: n. boring work
affair: n. experience, event
revolves around: v. focuses on
centerpiece: n. most important part
implies: v. says indirectly, suggests

First Battle

Publish Date: April 25, 2007

by AJ Hoge

A **howl** from the opposing army..... swords **thudded** against shields... thunder beat **in unison**. Hearts pounded. I gripped my sword... and **braced** the shield against my shoulder. **Giddy tendrils** raced through my gut and chest..... a wild grin broke upon my face. I began to bounce.... knees spring-like.....standing on toes. A racehorse in the gate.

A wild shout went up to my left..... I turned to see a **wiry** warrior **clad in** sparkling **scale** and a green cape..... carrying a coffin shaped shield. He **strode** the front of our lines, turned to our enemies and threw insults against them, "Cowardly vermin of Trimaris, prepare to die"... he shook his sword and our army let out a **cackling** howl. **Goose bumps** spread across arms and belly..... I thudded the **butt** of my (**rattan**) sword on the inside of the shield.... our lines **advanced**.

The enemy continued drumming their shields, and likewise strode forward. Full of **adrenaline**, eyes wide with **awe**, muscles tense as steel..... I approached my first battle... almost forgetting that none of this was "real". No one would die. No one would kill.

This was my introduction to the SCA, or the "Society for Creative **Anachronism**". The SCA is a collection of **oddballs** who dress in **medieval** clothing, **strap on** armor, and beat each other with wooden swords. They also dance, sing, and create works of art. The group is a collection of **outlandish** creatives, **hyper-intelligent geeks**, talented artists, **hammish** performers, history **buffs**, academics, poets, social **misfits**, and folks who simply refuse **to succumb to the drudgery** of being "normal". I was a member for nearly ten years.... and loved every minute.

The heart of the SCA is the weekend "event"..... an **affair** that **revolves around** a number of semi-historic activities, usually held at a state park. Typically, a battle or tournament is the **centerpiece** of the "event". My first battle was small by today's standards..... each army had only 100 people. The group now hosts battles which involve thousands of participants... the largest is held annually in Pennsylvania, in August, and is known as the "Pennsics War". As the Pennsics example **implies**, SCA groups and events are spread throughout the United States. In fact, the group is growing internationally, especially in Europe. There are also groups in Japan and Korea.

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patchwork: n. a loose collection

guild: n. a trade group, a union

full-fledged: n. complete, total

counter-society: n. alternative society, alternative culture

monarchy: n. a government ruled by a king or queen

clans: n. large extended families, tribes

persona: n. personality, character

stunning: adj. amazing

nerves: n. nervous feeling

intensity: n. power

manic: adj. super-energetic

meticulous: adj. very careful

accomplished: adj. successful

embracement: n. acceptance

eccentricity: n. weirdness (harmless strangeness)

camaraderie: n. friendship, feelings of friendship

jubilant: adj. very happy

defiance: n. rebellion, disobedience

tedium: n. boredom

abandon: v. leave, neglect

for its own sake: idiom. for enjoyment only

profound: adj. very important, very meaningful

nurture: v. take care of, help grow

essence: n. central part, most important part

The SCA divides the US, and the world, into a **patchwork** of regional organizations, called “kingdoms”. Georgia, for example, is part of the “Kingdom of Meridies”, which also includes Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. North and South Carolina are the “Kingdom of Atlantia”. California is in the “West Kingdom”. Each Kingdom is further divided into local groups, called Baronies or Shires.

The function of local groups is to host events, welcome newcomers, and teach medieval skills. Skills include arts such as calligraphy, jewelry making, wood-working, and costuming; craft arts such as armoring & blacksmithing; performing arts such as medieval dancing and singing; and martial arts such as hand-to-hand fighting and archery. Most groups host a weekly business meeting and various “**guild meetings**” to practice these arts.

Since I joined, the organization has expanded tremendously and is now a **full-fledged counter society:** with its own government (a **monarchy-** with rulers chosen by combat), its own economy (some members make a full-time living selling their arts), and its own social system (a system of titles, **clans**, knights, and nobles). Every member of the SCA develops an alternate **persona:** a medieval character they become during events.

The combined effects are **stunning**. At times, I felt I’d been transported back in time. My first SCA battle produced all the **nerves**, all the excitement, all the **intensity** of entering a “real” battle: pounding heart and **manic** energy and fear of being “killed”.

For some, the SCA is an exercise in living history. Many members are **meticulous** researchers- **accomplished** experts in a chosen discipline of history. Others join the group for its unique social characteristics-- its **embracement of eccentricity**.... its community and **camaraderie**. But for me, the SCA was an act of **jubilant defiance:** an enthusiastic refusal to surrender to **tedium**.

I did not, and do not, want to **abandon** the creative flow of childhood. I am convinced that play.... fantasy and creativity **for its own sake**... is a deep and **profound** human need; one we, as adults, must **nurture** and maintain. Play is not an escape.... it is a celebration. Play is the **essence** of creativity.

We, as adults-- for the sake of our happiness and our souls, should re-discover it.

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