

English Teacher Relives Medieval Times in SCA

By KARA COTA

Staff Writer

Grossmont College English teacher Sally Farris, 37, is involved in a very unusual sport. It isn't something commonly played by athletes of our generation. Instead, this sport relives early civilization of the medieval days. For over seven years, Farris has been an active member in the Society of Creative Anachronism (SCA), a non-profit educational organization designed to recreate the Middle Ages through archery, costuming, jewelry, cooking, woodworking, and combating in armor.

"It isn't fencing, that's kind of sissy because you wear something that weighs about one pound. I wear about 70 pounds worthy of armor. We hit each other with wooden swords that are slightly taped, but are basically equivalent to the weight of baseball bats," said Farris.

While attending graduate school, a friend introduced Farris to the SCA eight years ago. As a result, she believes this sport has taught her a great deal about self-defense while learning and enjoying the tactics of combating.

"The SCA is teaching me a lot of things.

I love fighting, but this is giving me intense focus if somebody is trying to hit you with a stick, a big stick, you don't think, 'Well, I have to get the laundry done,' or 'I have to pay my bills.' It teaches me to focus only on the problems in front of me. I worry a lot as a woman because one out of every four women are raped. Well, through this sport — I've also taken Karate — I feel more confident. Fighting has taught me three basic concepts: (1) Don't put yourself in a bad situation, (2) if you are in a bad situation, run; (3) if you're not able to run, then channel your panic into something that will save you life," said Farris.

"My sport is only a sport, but somehow my adrenalin system doesn't shut off when my competitors are trying to kill me. I really believe they are trying to kill me, and I try my hardest to prevent that from happening. I've learned so much about combat that I've never known before and that's wonderful," she said.

As with any other sport, risks are involved. Farris says she is fearful of getting hurt, yet she has suffered only minor in-

juries—a broken tooth, a mild concussion and several broken fingers.

"I'm always afraid of getting hurt. Then again I'm afraid of my car, getting involved in an accident. The knowledge is always there, so is the fear. I'm a very fearful person," she said.

"I can't imagine living without the SCA. The one thing I love about it is the people. As with any group, we have our share of weirdos. However, most of the people that I associate with are strong, caring, intelligent and fun to be with. They're a certain group of people that I can turn to during any hour of the day or night and absolutely trust with my life. I love this sport because of the camaraderie. Women don't often get a chance at that, except for having babies. Men take physical camaraderie for granted but I now have that and it's something I'm proud of," she said.

Farris tells her students about her hobby, mainly to prevent them from getting a stereotypical image of an English teacher.

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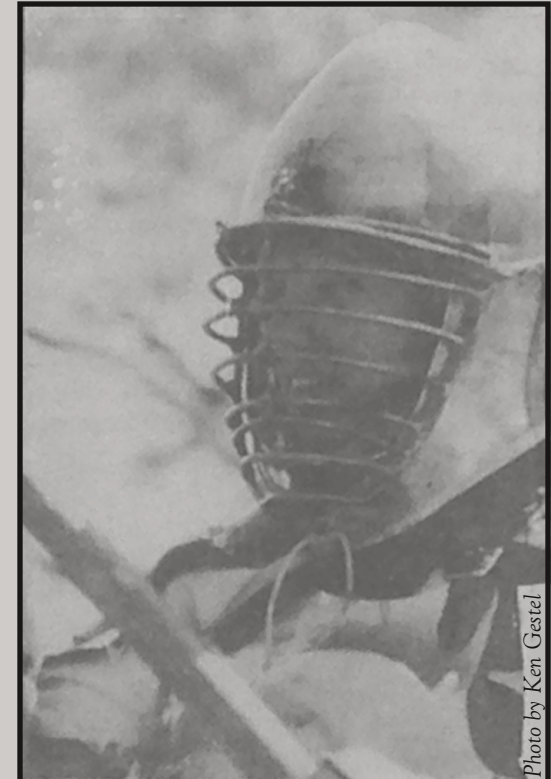


Photo by Ken Gestel

Sally Farris



Sally Farris hits her sparring partner Gregory Scott Saxton on top of the head, thus winning the joust.

Farris Continued

“It makes my students look at me as a person, rather than an English teacher. It lets them know that I’m out in the real world doing the things that I enjoy. I let them know I’m a little crazy too. I try to open up their world and acquaint them with the possibilities in life,” said Farris.

The Society of Creative Anachronism has about 20,000 official members. In San Diego there are two basic teams: The Abbey and Drafn. Farris, a Frafn member, travels to Arizona frequently to battle against other SCA groups.

“Our team usually fights about once a month officially. Every other Sunday we train out at the park. Our next big event is on March 21, at Potrero Park, where a mini-war competition will take place. My unit, Drafn, will be fighting bridge, castle, and open field battles. Anybody is welcome to come out and watch, it’s free,” said Farris.

The equipment for combat is mostly made by team members. Some metal armor can be purchased in the \$3,000 price range. However, carpet can be used for protection.

“We make a lot of our own equipment. I have a breast plate made of stainless steel that was made for me by a friend. He actually cut out the metal and pounded it in-

to my shape. My husband, Russell, also a member of Drafn, made me a helmet, just the size to fit me. The equipment can range from the very expensive to fairly cheap. It mainly depends on what you prefer. Rattan for weapons is easy to find; you just put duck tape over it and hit somebody,” she said.

Farris is the mother of two boys, Shawn, 15, and Bryan, 10. She believes the chivalry of Anachronism has taught them the concepts most parents would like their children to discover.

“The kids have grown up with the SCA. They were fairly young when I joined, so they probably don’t remember what life was like without it. They can’t fight until they are 18, but they have done things like lug gear back and forth, serve food at banquets, and help take care of people. My husband and I actually met in the battle line. We even had a medieval wedding,” she said.

“Five to ten years from now I’ll still be fighting. There’s no doubt about it. I want to fight until I’m 50 or 60 years of age. I want to keep in shape to be able to do so. Just like teaching, I love that too. I don’t ever see myself leaving either one. I love fighting and I absolutely love teaching. I want to do both forever.”