



**Editor's Note:** Greetings all subscribers, old and new! This article is a sort of take off from my usual subject. I think you will all enjoy anyhow. It describes my experiences at Great Western War VI. For those of you who haven't been to War, it may give you some valuable insights. For those SCA subscribers, I hope it brings happy memories of a good event. This article will also appear in the Renaissance Herald very soon! Until next time, anon.

### *Great Western War VI or How We Made Merry at War..*

The event was held at Prado Park in Chino, California October 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>. I attended from Thursday through Sunday. We were blessed with mild weather and lots of grass. Makes one wonder why there are no Faires on this site, it seems to have great potential. I was able to attend as a merchant and brought a booth helper with me.

As many of you know, an SCA event is very different than going to faire. The first and most important difference is that it is held for the amusement and edification of the participants – not the general public. There are no street parades, no ale stands, and no shows. One needs to be in garb 24 hours a day from the start to the finish of the event.

The appeal of this kind of event consists of a very large group of people from all over the Western U.S. interested in the Dark Ages to Renaissance Era re-enactment. In the Merchant's Row, the vendors carry a wide variety of merchandise; one can find handmade armor, amber jewelry, and kid's boffer swords to name just a few items. Competitions, classes on everything from period dye techniques to rapier use are available constantly throughout the event. Plus, there's the fighting! Imagine a few hundred really big folks (a goodly number of them are females) clad in realistic armor staging battles over a castle, hilltop or on the tourney field. It is really something to be seen! In the evenings, the social atmosphere is one of revelry and camaraderie, bardic circles abound, feasting is one of the pleasant ways to pass the evening with one's household (read: like a guild).

Firmly planted in the center of Merchant's Row, one is usually in the middle of all the action. Over a four day period, in the evenings and in between working at my booth I tried my hand at joining in a drum circle playing tambourine; these folks were so patient with a rank amateur, my hat is off to them! Later I attended a Bardic Competition and again was encouraged to participate – it may have had something to do with showing up wearing masks - hee HEE - so we did an improvisational piece on the Black Plague. What fun!

Saturday, I volunteered to work at the Rat Races. Again it was a blast! We were then invited to feast with some new friends and old where I worked up the courage to attempt speed chess (someday I will learn how to play correctly). The next day we watched some of the fighting and managed to learn some new songs (bawdy ones of course). I was able from time to time to watch some of the dye demo – it was happening right across from the booth, how convenient. We generally had a wonderful time. I made new friends and got to play with some of my old ones from previous year's acquaintance. All too soon, it was Sunday afternoon and time to go home. Somehow, packing is always harder than setting up.

I highly recommend anyone who is a true lover of the Renaissance to try at least one good sized SCA event. Go with a circle of friends or better yet, join into an already established group. These events bring a unique aspect of re-enactment and education that enhances the faire experience. All in all it is always a valuable experience.

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