



Italian rapier sword-fighting techniques are being practiced by, from left, Jay Glenn, Bart Buckenthal, Clare Glenn and Rocky Rockefeller at the Annapolis Recreation Center. — Photos by George Hagegeorge/For The Baltimore Examiner



Jay Glenn, right, effectively stops a blow delivered by Bart Buckenthal, of Edgewater, as they practice dueling with Italian rapier at the Annapolis Recreation Center in downtown Annapolis.

Where brain meets brawn

By Dan Collins
Examiner Correspondent

Looking for someplace to give both muscle and gray matter a workout?

The Mid-Atlantic Society of Historical Swordsmanship was founded in April 2000 by Annapolis resident Larry Tom, a 57-year-old devotee of what he calls Western martial arts.

"Ten years ago, there was a growing movement in the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe to resurrect the historical manuscripts on the use of the swords as a combat weapon. I wanted to explore the historical roots of swordplay," Tom said, taking it upon himself to form MASHS.

"At MASHS, the range spans 500 years — from German long sword — based on 13th century manuscripts — to 17th century Italian rapier, 18th century French small sword and the Italian dueling saber of the late 1800s," Tom added.

Members range in age from teens to 40s and are personified by the father-daughter duo of 16-year-old Clare and 43-year-old Jay Glenn of Parkville.

"I liked that they focused on an academic level. I saw the precision and discipline to what they were doing, so I got up the guts and joined," Jay said.

Clare had tried the swordplay of the Society for Creative Anachronism but "liked the personalities, the discussion at MASHS — you can't go back and ask a fencer of the Renaissance, 'what did you mean by this?'" she said.

MASHS has about 40 members and splits its time between the Annapolis Recreation Center and the Mount Clare Mansion in Carroll Park. MASHS provides weapons for practice "though you can outfit yourself for less than \$100 or as much as \$1,000," Tom said.

You don't have to be a Rockefeller to enjoy historical swordplay ... unless, of course, you are MASHS member R.J. Rockefeller of Crofton.

TO LEARN MORE

Visit MASHS at www.mashs.org.
For books, visit www.chivalrybookshelf.com.

"I love the camaraderie — everyone has an open mind, and all are fantastic sports," said Rockefeller, whose book, "Shakespeare Swordmaster," is due out sometime in 2008.

The book offers a look at the wisdom of Vincentio Salviolo, the 16th century swords expert of Shakespeare's plays.

Fellow MASHS member Tom Leoni is author of "The Art of Dueling: 17th Century Rapier as Taught by Salvatore Fabris."

Clare and Jay both agree it is the combination of the academic with the athletic that makes MASHS appealing.

"You've got the academic, but you also get to slam people with swords. That's cool, too," Jay said.



Italian rapier sword-fighting techniques are practiced by student Clare Glenn and instructor Rocky Rockefeller at the Annapolis Recreation Center in downtown Annapolis.



Italian rapier, sabre and short sword lie in the foreground during medieval long sword practice.