

Grimes

Grimes County Edition

Grimes County > Features

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Bedias man adds authenticity to festival

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TODD MISSION — The four workers at McCoy's Armory yell out at passers-by in Scottish accents as they slam razor-sharp axes and swords into the counters during demonstrations.

A mother, walking her young son next to the shop at the Texas Renaissance Festival, sheepishly grins as one worker bangs an axe-type tool and offers her a "child-training" tool as it creates a loud thump when it hits the wooden table.

McCoy's Armory was just one of the many shops clamoring for patrons' business during the opening weekend of the 30th annual Texas Renaissance Festival, but the shop's owner said his store provides more than just medieval-style weapons.

But Edward McCoy, the proprietor of the shop, and his workers are quick to point out that their fascination with swords, rapiers and axes does not make them violent people.

Instead, they are students of the history behind the weapons and go out of their way



Eagle photo/Patric Schneider

Bedias resident Edward McCoy demonstrates the proper grip on an axe, one of many weapons he makes by hand and sells at the Texas Renaissance Festival. He says his swords, knives and axes are historically accurate, and he can spend hours each day explaining to customers the history behind each one.

- Agriculture
- Business
- Classifieds
- Columnists
- Community & Clubs

Faith & Values

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Obituaries

Police Beat

Schools

Sports - High School

Sports - Recreational

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Newspapers in Education

Obituaries

Opinions

Politics

Region/State

Schools

Sports

Subscriptions

Weather

to pass that knowledge to patrons at the shop.

“All of history has a bearing and interest for me,” said McCoy, a Bedias resident who works with computers during his full-time job.

In fact, McCoy has a story or explanation for just about every piece displayed on the counter and walls of his shop.

He picks up a sword about three-feet in length, sheathed in a black leather case. After telling people to stand back, McCoy gently flicks his wrist while explaining the counter-weighted handle does all the work.

“If the sword isn’t balanced right, your arm will get tired and you’d be wiped out in a battle,” he said.

McCoy said his fascination with weapons began at age 11 when his father made the introduction, and it then blossomed as he served in the Army in the 1940s and was stationed in Germany.

His hobby, McCoy said, allows him an escape from his regular life working with computers.

“There’s more technology [in these weapons] than there is in some computers,” he said. “And the progression of weapons is ongoing.”

Norath Tovaar has been working with McCoy for the past five years and said he’s still learning about the history of the weapons.

“I can sit and listen to Ed talk for hours and be on the edge of my seat the whole time,” said Tovaar, whose real name is Pete Mize and hails from Pasadena.

Like McCoy, Tovaar said modern-day firearms lack the intimacy blades offer when in combat.

“There’s a unique perspective when using a blade,” he said. “Firearms lack the consequential outcome of a blade. If I were to shoot someone at long range, I can’t see the shock.”

But Tovaar also reiterated McCoy’s sentiment that a fascination with the weapons and how they were used doesn’t make him violent.

“I have just always enjoyed this time period,” Tovaar said.

The same can be said for the shop’s customers. McCoy said most of the people who come up to look at his inventory aren’t well-versed in the history behind the weapons, but he doesn’t mind taking extra time to explain them.

On Sunday, a couple walked up to his shop and inquired about a sword. McCoy joined them in front of the counter and displayed how the sword was engineered to be effective in battle. The couple stood almost motionless, hanging on every word McCoy spoke.

Noted Tovaar, “He doesn’t mind doing that. He can go on for hours.”

McCoy said his shop is set apart from the others because most of the weapons he

sells are as historically accurate as possible. However, the popularity of movies such as “Braveheart” and “The Lord of the Rings” has resulted in a demand for replicas from those stories.

But he still prefers the historical pieces.

“The history is much more interesting than a movie script,” he said. “Don’t get me wrong, I like the movies, but they’re not historically accurate.”

McCoy’s passion for the weapons he sells is something he hopes his customers pick up on, also.

“They’re interested in owning a piece of history,” he said.

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