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Updated: Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Knights hew to truth with combat demonstration

Two members of the Moses Lake-based Knights of Veritas visited Sager Middle School to show off age-old techniques.

By Roy Elia of the Union-Bulletin

In its four-year history, the Moses Lake-based Knights of Veritas had not made an appearance in the Walla Walla Valley.

That was until last week, when director Eric Slyter and assistant Christopher Stucki staged a demonstration of knightly combat for about 50 seventh-grade students at Sager Middle School in College Place.

Slyter has involved himself in medieval practices, research and variations of swordplay for 10 years. He has performed as part of the Seattle Knights group, which appears at Renaissance Faires and the like. He said the Knights of Veritas set themselves apart from other groups that perform medieval recreation ``because we don't pose with fictitious names, or put on plays and historically catered performances." Techniques used by Slyter and Stucki are historically correct, a cohesive and complete fighting system.

Techniques used by Slyter and Stucki are historically correct, a cohesive and complete fighting system.

``A big part of what we do with our presentations is contrast theatrical

movie combat with historical techniques, and we draw from historical sources for these rather than using made-up modern combat systems that weren't designed around being effective," Slyter said. ``We use techniques that were documented and well practiced over a wide area and period of time. We primarily deal with the central European tradition, which was well known from the 1300s to the 1600s. These were the techniques of Master Liechtenauer." Johannes Liechtenauer devised a system of combat based on what he experienced during his travels throughout Europe in the 1300s, according to the Knights of Veritas' Web site. The influence of Liechtenauer's fighting system was evident in Europe for 250 years, according to the Web site.

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Drawing from these historical techniques, Slyter and Stucki created demonstrations of how the methods work and why.

The demonstration begins with a sequence of combat techniques without armor, then with armor to illustrate how the techniques change. A full-speed version is given, followed by a slow-motion version of the same movements with explanation.

Knights of Veritas incorporated Jan. 1 of this year as a nonprofit educational charity, Slyter said. They have traveled as far south as Longview, as far north as Bellingham and Oroville and as far east as Sandpoint, Idaho, he added.

Their local appearance was brought about in part by Kay Mueller, Gaining Early Awareness Readiness for Undergraduate Programs site director for the city School District.

``I was looking at the social studies curriculum and trying to find something that



Eric Slyter (in purple) takes a long sword strike from the strong end (closer to the handle) of Chris Stucki's sword and watches as his weapon yields to the greater positioning. Slyter and Stucki are members of the Knights of Veritas of Moses Lake. U-B photo by Jeff Horner



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would enhance it," Mueller said `` and add more hands-on value to what they (the students) are learning."

Students Kirby Miller, Michael Schumacher and Cassie Cate came away impressed.

`` I thought it was going to be pretty boring, like the guys that do jousting in the park," Miller said. `` It was much better than that."

`` I thought it was cool," Schumacher said. `` (They) showed some cool moves. I learned about the armies they had back then."

`` I enjoyed it," Cate said. `` It was fun, interesting. They made it funny and cool."

Based on the response, it appears a return visit is a real possibility.

`` I've already heard feedback from one of the social studies teachers that hopes we can do this every year to tie in with the lesson," Mueller said. `` I think that would be a fabulous idea."

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