

## The Tale of the Wandering Cloak - A Pennsic Narrative (Long, but worth it I assure you)

T'was Sunday evening of Pennsic 38 (2009); all the of the Pennsic Championship tourneys having been completed earlier that day. While shopping with my wife Gwenllyen, my son Martyn & my daughter Noelle, I realized that I had left a pouch on the rapier table containing small coinage and incidental tokens. Upon returning to the rapier tent I encountered Lady Ailanor OMalley. She was there, finishing up her duties as Rapier Marshal on Duty and confronted me with a big smile on her face; quite cheerful and excited. "Max! Max!" she cried, "Look what I found just lying about!" and she preceded to hand me a gorgeous, woolen mantle. The size and weight were just perfect for a rapier soft parry device and upon unfurling it completely, and admiring the crenellated edges, I saw the evidence of Ailanor's glee. Each dag had a blue Tyger head, superimposed on a golden rapier. The very symbol of the East Kingdom's Order of the Golden Rapier, an equivalent award to the Middle Kingdom's Order of the Bronze Ring. "Max," pleaded Ailanor, "I'll only let you take this if you promise to return with a good story about how you found its owner."

Henceforth is the story.

I draped the mantle roguishly over my left shoulder, displaying the Tygers proudly. Upon returning to my family who were shopping near the barn, I encountered Sir Don Antoino Patriquin. "Maaax. What do you have there?" inquired Antonio. "Beautiful, isn't it my good friend? Is it yours?" I asked, hopefully. "No. It's not mine, and I'm not sure whose it is" answered Antonio. "What are you planning on doing with it?" Antonio inquired further. "Ransom isn't beneath me, Antonio" I answered. "You Bastard" was his response as we parted company.

I continued shopping with my family, but encountered no more Eastern brethren to facilitate finding the owner of the wonderful cloak. With shopping complete and the sun creeping lower in the sky, I guided my family past the food sellers, out onto the Serengeti to the North Gate, with the Sharc Pit as my destination. There, I was confident of finding someone who could identify the cloak. The Sharc Pit, to the uninitiated, is a formidable encampment where many of the best rapier combatants of the East Kingdom, and their friends, reside. We approached the camp, entered it, and interrupted that ever so common fireside game of "Pass the Brass Hat." (I kid you not. The Sharc Pit has so many Barons and Baronesses now; Nataliia, Mercedes, Fergus, et al; they can actually spend an evening playing "Pass the Brass Hat". Of course imbibing various liquid refreshments aids the merriment).

I hailed the camp, "Greetings Sharc Pit. Could one of you help identify the owner of this lovely cloak?" Many recognized it instantly, readily identified the owner as Don Andre l'Epervier, and all were wondering as to what my intentions were. I stated "My intentions are pure and honorable." The Sharc Pit responded, almost in unison, with, "Sure, Max." So I reiterated my earlier statement of, "Ransom isn't beneath me" and inquired where the best place to return it to him might be. Someone mentioned in passing that the entire Order of the Golden Rapier was meeting with Their Majesties of the East at 8 pm on Tuesday and with much glee and merriment everyone agreed that I should appear there to return the cloak.

As I exited the Sharc Pit I encountered Don Alain Longship. He greeted me with the expected, "Maaax. What do you have there?" I reposted with, "Beautiful, isn't it?" After an infinitesimal hesitation, "You Bastard" escaped Alain's lips.

Monday afternoon, while shopping with Martyn, I was informed by a member of Andre's household (his name, I must regretfully admit, I forgot) that the cloak in question was a gift from his household, and several members of said household assisted in its assembly. I was also asked how long I intended be the caretaker of Andre's cloak. I mentioned that there was a "gathering" Tuesday night at East Kingdom Royal that I would be attending. That apparently not uncommon phrase of "You bastard" was once again uttered, and we parted company.

Tuesday afternoon Martyn, Noelle and I were sitting on the small patch of grass across from the post office, each enjoying a frozen dessert, when another member of Andre's household hailed me (and one again, his name escapes me). "Maaax. I've heard that you have something of Andre's" he stated. "I can neither confirm nor deny such a rumor" I responded. "Maaax. Please just reassure me that he'll leave Pennsic with it in his possession" he pleaded. "Tuesday night. He'll get it Tuesday night" I reassured him. There was a long pause and when my friend spoke once again he said, "Max. I probably shouldn't be telling you this {JACKPOT!} but I got a little story for you about that cloak."

Andre had a beat-up old cloak that he loved to fight with. As a gift from his household, upon becoming a member of the Order of the Golden Rapier, they chose to duplicate Andre's beat-up cloak and create the gorgeous cloak that was currently in my possession. Someone took Andre's old cloak from his fencing bag to create the pattern and returned it 3 weeks later. When Andre found his old cloak once again in his bag, his fellow rapier combatants and household members convinced him that his old cloak had been in his bag all along and that he must have just overlooked it. When Andre did receive his new cloak, which was just before Pennsic 2008, he fell in love with it. He carried it around with him all day, performing his Pennsic Rapier Duties while carrying it, and even slept with it. His OGR brethren and the members of his household started to call him Don Linus.

Before we parted company there on that small patch of grass, I was also informed that Andre had yet to admit to anyone in his household, including his wife, that he had misplaced his beloved cloak.

Later that afternoon I encountered Baroness Mistress Dona Mercedes de Califia. She informed me that the East Kingdom Royal gate guards were expecting me, and that I was welcome to "interrupt" the OGR meeting any time after 8 pm. I was also informed that Andre had finally admitted that he misplaced his cloak, and that he was aware SOMEONE had it, but did not know whom that someone might be.

I had already informed Lady Ailanor of the success of my investigations, and had arranged for her to meet me at the barn at 7:30 pm so that she might accompany me to East Kingdom Royal and see firsthand the culmination of events that she initiated. She brought with her, her friend Gertrude Krumpf. Also accompanying me was Martyn & Noelle, and Lady Ariel the Fairhair, a campmate who had heard updates of my investigation each evening and wasn't about to miss out on the finale.

Halfway to East Kingdom Royal we encountered Don Caine Ramsey who was late for the meeting we were about to crash. I waved the cloak at Caine, told him where I was headed and received the now traditional, "You bastard" as a sign of his approval.

My presentation to Their Majesties of the East was well received. I apologized that it took so long returning the cloak because I had wasted my time looking for a Don Linus instead of Don Andre. In the end I returned the cloak to Andre and we were all invited to return to East Kingdom Royal one hour hence for their populace party and where we would receive much liquid refreshment. We did and we did.

I had thought that the tale of the cloak had come to an end that evening, but as you may have noticed by looking ahead there is yet more to this story.

On Thursday, after the rapier woods battle, where the Middle Kingdom fought alongside the East Kingdom, Martyn and I were sitting, cooling off, and we happened to overhear a remark along the lines of "and so continues the saga of the wandering cloak." The mention of a cloak piqued my interest and so I looked for the source of the conversation. I saw a group of East Kingdom rapier combatants, and in their midst who should I behold but Don Andre. I spoke up and asked, "Andre! Would that have anything to do with you?" Andre looked in my direction, shook his head and stated, "Oh yes, Max. Just wait until you hear this." Andre wandered over to where Martyn and I were sitting and relayed the following information.

It appears the Prince of the East Kingdom; who may have been at that Tuesday OGR meeting and who may also be in Andre's household; received word of "The Wandering Cloak." Andre, it seems, has been given a task that must be completed at the end of the Prince's reign as King of the East. Andre must travel to every region in the East Kingdom, organize and teach a class on fighting with cloak, select the best student from that class, present them with their very own cloak, and impart unto them the importance of keeping said cloak always in one's possession.

As Andre departed he said, "Thanks, Max."

I do not think he was being sincere.

THL Warder Maximilian der Zauberer

Kapitän of HMS Kunterbuntesschiffmitlilasegelnundorangebemalt

"Keyn man zo tump sal seyn wenne das selbe fechten brenget pyn"

"No man should be so dumb that his own fencing brings him injury"

- Hanko Döbringer (1389) as translated by David Lindholm (2005)

"Don't be Stupid"

- KRM Max (2002)

Have syllabus, will travel

- Historical Swordsmanship

- Medieval Timekeeping

- Prestidigitation (both good and bland)

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