



So, Visitor, you would be told of the North Woods, eh? Very well. Bide but a minute, then, and hear my tale.

Once upon a time...

In 1969 a group of science-fiction fans in Lansing, Michigan decided to form a branch of the newly-formed Society for Creative Anachronism. It is written elsewhere that the final push to get the group started took place at a Hallowe'en party which was well-attended by guests wearing medieval garb.

It is also said that some in that same city, who shared similar Fannish interests, began referring to the group as "SCA (pronounced 'skah') -- The Thing That Would Not Die."

More than twenty-five years later the "Thing" is still very much alive, thank you (as is the North Woods custom of baronial meetings more commonly known as "Things"); and while the terms "SCA" and its derived adjective "SCAdian" are commonly used in the Midrealm to this day, the words are spoken with affection rather than derision.

In those early days of the Society it was common for the first group formed in a state to automatically become a Barony. Before settling on "North Woods" the group also tried the euphonious name "City of the Lance" (or "...Singing Lance"?). Not long afterwards, the Barony would gain the unofficial nickname "The Lost Barony" due to a mixup in communication between the SCA headquarters in California and the North Woods.

The group held its first event on May 2, 1970 (ironically upon the same day that Tre-Girt-Sea held its first event, Crown Tournament) and its second on October 31, 1970. It was at the latter event that a tournament was held to determine the Baron of the North Woods. The finalists were Iriel of Brannoch and Thorvald inn Grimmi; and while the first would later serve the Midrealm as King, the latter remains Baron North Woods to this day.

It was on this same day that a Sacred Tradition of the North Woods was, however unintentionally, begun. Links of brass wire designed to hold up a swag lamp were instead made into the chain given to Thorvald at his knighting. This chain Thorvald passed to Merowald, and from Merowald unto Gareth; and thence to Rolac, Coley, Aldric, Elestron, Kenneqrae, Brusten, Garagchan, Mrehton, Andrew (Greencloak), Eliahu, Fern, Wolfgang, Forgon Aurelius, Einarr (Dunwulf), Osrice, Brannos, Stephen, Reynard, and its current holder Ranthulfr. Of these twenty-three holders only Andrew never lived in Pentamere (but it was the holders' wish he be granted the chain anyway); Reynard, though knighted in the Kingdom of Atlantia, was adopted onto the chain many years later as a mark of his great service to and love for the Barony.

Thorvald's influence caused North Woods to style itself a Viking barony which would pride itself on considerable martial prowess. A number of fine fighting households have stood beneath the banner of the Wolf: Dreadnaught, Darkyard, Ironwolf, Drachens-knecht, Refsheim, and Argus among them.

If Thorvald swayed the Barony toward martial matters, another would lead the North Woods to pursue the Arts with equal fervor. It is said, "At one time, the North Woods was populated by half-starved, unkept barbarians. Then Caellyn arrived; and soon the North Woods populace was transformed into a group of well-fed, clotheshorse barbarians." It amazes many 'latecomers' to learn that Caellyn y'Vearn Fitzhugh was not made a member of the Order of the Laurel for the cooking and feast planning for which she is justly famed -- but, instead, for poetry. This triple peer has never been known to content herself with excellence in a single

aspect; she has been known to the Midrealm as Queen, Chronicler, Mistress of Arts, feast planner *par excellence*, costumer, calligrapher, illuminator, weaver...the list goes on. Her influence rings through the North Woods from the tradition that Laurels should be multitaled to the one that a feast is not successful until the last diner has been rolled, well-sated, out the door. It is justly said that at one of her Coronation feasts even the Beggars' Guild skipped the third course in order to leave room for dessert...

Ah, Coronations. North Woods certainly has rejoiced in a great many of them, since fully a third of the reigns of this Kingdom have been or are to be sat with a member of the Barony (or North Woods Knight) as reigning sovereign and/or consort. Let us pay tribute, here, to Iriel and Morna; Thaid (later Tadashi); Merowald and Gwendolyn; Beearengear; Dagan and Armida; Rolac and Lindanlorien; Catherine; Finnvarr and Caellyn; Merowald and Kirsten; Eliahu and Elen; Fern; Reynard and Brynhildr; Ariake; Brannos and Rebecca; Her Royal Majesty Valthiona (who now dwells outside the Barony, but who has never left the North Woods' heart); and Their Royal Highnesses Tarquin and Ailene.

North Woods would not long be the only group in Pentamere (as the lower peninsula of Michigan became known). Its Canton of Three Hills (Kalamazoo) and Canton of the Roaring Wastes (Detroit) were both founded in 1971. The first of these Cantons would leave North Woods upon the establishment of the Barony of Andelcrag in 1976. As a token to replace North Woods' "lost" canton King Albert granted North Woods the right to bear the Middle Kingdom arms in canton upon its Baronial arms. The next canton, the Riding of Hawkland Moor (Pontiac), was founded in 1982, and the incipient Canton of Brackendely (downriver area of Detroit) in 1991. It looks likely that Altenburg (Mt. Clemens) will shortly establish itself as an incipient group. Recently Roaring Wastes applied for its own elevation to Baronial status; and it is hoped and expected this will soon be granted...though history will likely not repeat itself so far as the Baronial arms are concerned.

For many years only one Baronial award was granted by the Barony of North Woods: the ancient and honorable Order of the White Wolf. Members may be recognized by a patch bearing *azure*, a wolf's head *erased argent*. For many members of the populace this is the first award granted them, well predating their Award of Arms. More than one set of reigning Royalty has been startled by the Barony's granting each new member to the Order a traditional, full throated howl of welcome (and equally startled by the Barony howling joyously at the Baron as he enters Court).

A few bear the Augmented White Wolf, which adds a sword Or clenched in the wolf's jaws. These gentles -- Aldric, Drew, Einarr, Stephen, Brannos, Tarquin and Colum -- earned this honor by serving as Baronial Champion.

In 1994 a second Baronial award was established, this a true Award in that it may be given many times: the Award of the Northern Star. There are three divisions of this award: Argent (martial arts), Or (arts and sciences), and Gules (service). The twist the North Woods put upon this award is that, although the Baron may grant the Star where and as he sees fit, the recipient is then *obligated* to go forth and seek the next to be so honored -- then to extol that one's deeds to the Baron and populace in a later Court.

At another time you may see fit to honor us by attending the traditional North Woods events, which number one and one half.

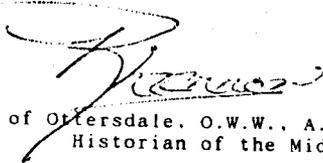
(Why one half? North Woods and Roaring Wastes customarily alternate as hosts of the area Twelfth Night celebration.) With the coming of spring the Squires begin feeling their mettle and in turn seek to test the metal of their sworn liege lords; from this is born the Squire's Revolt, which is highlighted by a knights-versus-squires melee and the usual (Caellyn-inspired) stuff'em-till-they-cry-for-mercy feast.

While the White Wolf is a most cherished and prized creature in these North Woods, it might surprise you to know that some consider the pink flamingo to be a (rather cheeky) Baronial mascot. Then again, depending what you know of the North Woods, learning this might not surprise you at all. Seek ye the Autocrat to learn more of this matter...if you dare.

For the nonce, this ends my tale. But ere you leave me, Visitor, hear this and know it for truth: If you be a friend of the Midrealm Dragon, we bid you freely enjoy your stay in these lands of the North Woods.

But if you be that Dragon's foe, it would behoove you to remember the Baronial motto:

Beware the Wolf.



--Rhianon of Ottersdale, O.W.W., A.N.S. (gold)
Historian of the Middle Kingdom

cover by Terrie Smith Wooten

Happy Silver Anniversary to the North Woods and its people!