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# SEEING U.S. HIGHWAY 97'S GHOSTLY BEAUTY

BY MAKENZIE WHITTLE • For The Bulletin

I rarely find myself traveling up U.S. Highway 97 to Biggs. When I do, I don't have much time to stop and take in the area that surrounds this long stretch of highway that splits the state down the middle. At first glance,

driving north from Central Oregon, the route seems to offer few points of interest besides a few quaint, small towns and miles of stark, treeless rolling fields of sage, grass and windmills along the way.



The large barn in Shaniko is easy to see, its large, white letters beckoning travelers to take the turn off U.S. Highway 97 and visit the small ghost town.



The old service station at Kent is famous for regional photographers, thanks to its proximity to the main highway and its retro Orange Crush sign.

But looking a little further beyond your dashboard, you will find a quiet, wondrous beauty among the seas of brush and wheat, relics of the past that still stand, sometimes rusting, deteriorating, or fading into our state's history. The 136-mile ribbon of asphalt from Bend to the Columbia River offers a chance to see ghost towns and abandoned buildings juxtaposed against the modernity that brings brilliant backdrops to both budding and professional photographers whether you sport the latest mirrorless camera or just click with your iPhone. For me, having recently upgraded my camera, I had been looking forward to playing around with it on this route for a while, snapping one of my favorite "ghost" towns of Shaniko and finally getting a shot of the infamous (in Oregon scenic photography circles anyway) Orange Crush Gas Station in Kent. and formerly booming communities quieted in the early 20th century. Europeans settled in the area in the mid-19th century, and thanks to the arid climate, a handful of homesteads and buildings endure. Shaniko is one of two towns along this highway given the "ghost" moniker by various publications and the Secretary of State Office website, which has a great rundown of Oregon's entries with that distinction. Many of these places still have people living there, albeit small populations, making the spooky qualifier seem premature. Shaniko is possibly the most famous of these ghost towns. It lies about an hour north of Terrebonne in northern Wasco County. The town is more of a pit stop for tourists these days than the bustling center of the sheep industry at the turn of the 20th century. Now a few shops open seasonally for travelers to grab a bite at the cafe, peruse the small museum or just walk the wooden boardwalks of the community. See **Highway 97** / B9



The hamlet of Kent can be seen in the distance from U.S. Highway 97 as one travels north from Central Oregon. Large grain elevators can be seen for miles before reaching the town.

# Staying sharp

Wield a sword like its medieval times with The 1595 Club's Bend chapter

**BY IAN HAUPT**  
The Bulletin  
When the local chapter of The 1595 Club meets on Tuesdays in the Bend Masonic Lodge to duel, there are certain rules to follow. Each participant must stay within the marked boundary. Opponents must take turns attacking and defending each other's cuts. And a point is given to the first swordsman to strike the other. An advantage of two points wins the match. Another is that one must not leave themselves vulnerable while attacking the legs of their competition. At the group's first February meeting, instructor Erik Artzt introduced three new attendees (not including this reporter), to this specific format of swordfighting, what they call a skirmish. Except for a few brief reminders, the trainees caught on quickly, and each participated in multiple skirmishes. At one point while dueling, a newbie lunged forward to swipe at the knee, while his opponent hit the newbie's head. Artzt stopped the skirmish to give the point and match to

**If You Go**

**What:** Swordfighting from the age of pirates — historical fencing practices and competition  
**When:** 5:30-7 p.m. Tuesdays  
**Where:** Bend Masonic Lodge, 1036 NE Eighth St., Bend  
**Cost:** Free for the first month, sliding-scale dues after  
**Contact:** [bend1595.com](mailto:bend1595.com) or 541-241-6742

the more experienced swordsman. Although both had struck, only one received a point. Artzt explained that in a duel with real blades, it would be considered "suicidal" to make such an attack. One would be putting themselves in a position where they are likely unable to block a cut to the head or neck. So, as to best replicate the conditions of a duel to the death, a swordsman concedes a point and receives a warning. An attack to the leg is fine only as long as the swordsman doesn't leave themselves defenseless. While in a mock duel with a plastic saber, it may seem like an obvious strategy to get the first hit on an opponent, but one must account for the repercussions of an enemy with a sharp iron blade.



**Andrew McCollum, from left, leads a drill while Jeremiah Elliot, Chance Dahms and Michael Dinsmore follow. The swordfighting class is held Tuesdays at Bend Masonic Lodge.**

"If you have a sharp sword, I'm going to want to be really careful," Artzt said. "I'm not going to want to approach you first of all. But if you throw a strike at me, I'm not just going to ignore it and hit you at the same time. I'm going to block that strike before I try to counterattack" During my hour and a half with the Bend chapter of The 1595 Club, this idea appeared to be key — accepting the pretense, the make-believe aspect of the craft. Only then can one engross themselves in the art of it.

**A long history**  
Full-time martial arts instructor

Chris Chatfield formed The 1595 Club in 2002 in Brighton, a seaside town on England's south shore. The club has nine chapters in cities all over the world, including London, Milan, Seattle and Auckland, New Zealand. Members of the club study



Swords

Continued from B1 swordplay and the martial art of fencing in the cut-and-thrust military-style used in the 16th century. Teachings are based on the writings of Italian soldier and philosopher Vincentio Saviolo, from his book “His Practise,” published in 1595, from which the club takes its name.

While the club’s different chapters use a variety of weapons in their practice, the most common — and the Bend chapter’s primary weapon — is the cutlass. Unlike the blades typically seen in modern, Olympic-style fencing — the foil or the épée — the cutlass has a broad blade used for swinging, or cutting, and is much heavier than a modern fencing blade. When skirmishing, opponents take turns cutting and blocking until one strikes the other. Training exercises are done in a similar fashion, using a “tick-tock” method.

Chatfield has adapted this style of dueling, which is most closely related to the sabre in modern fencing, from Saviolo’s teachings to better suit a latter-day fun, competitive environment, while maintaining its historical roots.

And, as with most martial arts practices, there is an underlying ideology the club embraces to balance out the use of violence. Saviolo sums up this philosophy as “the more skill a man hath of his weapon the more gentle and courteous should he shewe himselfe.”

More sparring partners needed

As I arrived at the Masonic Hall, I noticed Artzt’s white Toyota Highlander was decked with a bike rack and cargo box on top. It has “Share the Road” plates. His poodle, Sherman, always attends practices with him. Looking much younger than 60, Artzt considers himself a typical Bend resident: He skis and rides mountain and gravel bikes. He works as a software developer for San Francisco company Fieldwire by Hilti.



Andrew McCollum, second from right, leads a drill at the Bend Masonic Lodge on Feb. 13.



Andrew McCollum, left, begins a skirmish against Chance Dahms, during a swordfighting class at the Bend Masonic Lodge.

Artzt is a longtime martial artist who started karate when he was 18 and continued into his 40s. He also co-founded another weapons-based group in Seattle.

He formed the Bend chapter five years ago when he moved from Seattle. He said it’s a hobby of his he can’t do alone. So he started the chapter, which has been small the whole time — usually four guys — in order to have people to spar with.

Artzt transitioned into this style of martial arts because it’s skill-based and injury-free. He wants to stay healthy for work and his other hobbies.

“I feel like I’m too old to

get punched in the head anymore,” Artzt said. He hopes to continue practicing and skirmishing for another 20 years.

The club holds competitive skirmish tournaments. This year, it plans to have tournaments run simultaneously in the United Kingdom, Milan and the Pacific Northwest as part of an effort to bring more people into historical fencing. Each area will host competitions and post results on the club’s website. For the Pacific Northwest tournament, Bend will host two competitions. Seattle will host four.

In last year’s tournament, Chatfield, who’s 58 and competing against many guys in

their 20s, was the undisputed champion.

“There’s something more to this art than just raw athleticism,” Artzt said.

Welcoming environment

The club doesn’t only skirmish when it meets on Tuesday evenings. Using Chatfield’s curriculum, Artzt taught the new students and I the eight different cuts and their accompanying parries. The other regulars helped us walk through them before the practice moved onto a footwork drill representative of what the British navy taught young men for deck combat.

With more than 40 years of training, Artzt leads the class with the demeanor of a seasoned veteran — less Inigo Montoya, more Old Ben Kenobi.

Andrew McCollum, Artzt’s second in command, has been with the group for four years, and said he really enjoys Artzt’s approach to Chatfield’s curriculum. When he first started, McCollum said having swords come flying at you with force took some getting used to, but the laid-back nature of practices and the mental stimulation of swordplay kept him coming back.

“You learn a lot. Everyone’s



Andrew McCollum, from left, watches as Jeremiah Elliot, skirmishes against Chance Dahms, while Michael Dinsmore looks on, during a Feb. 13 evening swordfighting class at the Bend Masonic Lodge.

really chill,” McCollum said. “There’s no ultra-competitive macho-ness.”

It’s also fairly affordable for an active hobby. Classes are free for beginners but after the first few practices sliding scale dues are requested. Artzt lends out helmets and swords to beginners. He said most participants can get started with equipment for \$50-60 and slowly acquire more as they go.

Take thy chance

After the four of us rookies had a fair grasp of the technique, it was time to try skirmishing. Artzt and McCollum, bringing out their helmets for the first time, faced off. Then another experienced swordsmen dueled McCollum. And so on until it was time for the newbies.

Artzt asked if I wanted to jump in. I declined. It might have been nerves. I was also getting over a cold and felt uncomfortable borrowing a helmet. (Always looking out for others, right?) A woman who had been once before took the spot offered to me. The rest of the group each got a turn, and Artzt made sure not to pit two beginners against each other.

After leaving the practice, I drove south along Highway 97 and spotted High Desert Fencing Club holding its own practice. The group may have been twice the size of the one I just left. All were dressed in full white with helmets. Unable to see myself taking up the sport and uniform, I felt like I had missed my initiation into swashbuckling swordplay.

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