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KURT GERHARD
STUDENROTH

The Order isn't some flamboyant performance troupe for hobbyists and weekend warriors, Studenroth says. "Going anywhere becomes this weird thing," he adds. "Try ordering a drink at bar with a sword in your hand."

Any street gang covered in clanking armor, wearing medieval helmets that hide their faces completely, is bound to create a zone of marvel as it traverses downtown in tight formation on a weekday afternoon.

Workaday Eugeneans step aside to grant wide berth. Some cheer them on.

One pedestrian looks up from his iPhone long enough to register the collision course he shares with steel and leather man-mountain James. The man's expression says "What the ..."

At Townshend's Eugene Teahouse a boy jittery with nerves asks if The Order will pose with his girlfriend long enough for him to snap a picture for his Instagram. Surprisingly, Studenroth and James oblige.

"It's part of the iron price," they joke flatly.

The other reason The Order thought twice before agreeing to be interviewed is that too often people

miscategorize and underestimate them, taking them for Society for Creative Anachronism pranksters or Comic-Con types, Studenroth says.

"These people cannot come to terms with what we are," Studenroth says, notes of pity (not self-pity, mind) in his voice and gesturing toward the herds of synthetic fleece-clad yuppies glued to computer screens seated all around them. "People think this has something to do with Monty Python."

James nods in agreement.

The scar beside James' left eye reminds him always how lucky he is to have vision in both eyes after a duel fought many years ago "with sharps" (sharp swords, instead of blunt practice blades) in Kaiser.

Herzog and Studenroth are marked with similar flesh wound mementos.

"I'm always fighting," Studenroth says. "When I write poetry, I'm fighting. I treat everything like a fight. Living is a type of fight."

Something about his precision of movement and speech signal that Studenroth might actually be a time traveler

from long ago, coping as best he can with culture shock amid the relentless thrum of a digital age.

Laid off almost a decade ago after the economy collapsed, Studenroth is an out-of-work draftsman who pursued machining at Lane Community College for a short time but ultimately dropped out. That's about when he decided to be a knight.

Formally trained for almost two decades in 14th-century Italian and German longsword technique, Studenroth says: "I always felt like a kid pretending to be a swordsmen. I decided I didn't want to pretend any more."

When his great helm arrived in the mail, bespoke by an armorer in the Czech Republic, Studenroth put it on his head, handed his friend a heavy steel sword and invited him to "ring the bell" with all his might.

Studenroth suffered a minor concussion, he says, but was impressed with the helmet's durable make. Years of wear and tear have pocked Studenroth's red great helm all over with ugly gouges.

Studenroth glories most in The Order's modern Dark Age lifestyle. The extent to which The Order mingles with