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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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The Society of American Fight Directors

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The Cutting Edge

DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY & SAFETY OF STAGE COMBAT



Maestro Boushey, Fight Master Emeritus

Maestro David Boushey, founder of the SAFD has requested and been granted the rank of Fight Master Emeritus. As an Emeritus Fight Master he will no longer be teaching SPTs, but may adjudicate them and may teach Master Classes at any level, including regional workshops and the NSCW. He made the request of the Governing Body and the College of Fight Masters earlier this year and it was made official on July 9th at a ceremony during the NSCW. Fight Masters Charles Coyl, Drew Fracher, and Richard Raether presented him a beautiful broadsword; custom made for David by Lewis Shaw-truly a mere token of the thanks of the Society for his many years of invaluable service and leadership. The Maestro graced the hall with a moving speech recalling his first days of stage combat, his motivation to start this Society, and his intention to form the *Frances A. Boushey Teachers Training Memorial Scholarship*. He was met with a thundering standing ovation that lasted and lasted and there was nary a dry eye in the house. Many of us owe him a great debt not just for our training, but also for the countless ways in which the Society has enriched each of our lives. Through this organization endless friendships have been formed, professional relationships have been fostered, and more than a few husbands have met their wives and SAFD families are growing. But, this does not mean that you have seen the last of the Maestro. One person in attendance at his announcement told him that they were going to miss having him around, and he responded "When you least expect it, that is when I am likely to turn up!" that's something we're all looking forward to. Congratulations, David!

Member Representative Elections

Let Your Voice Be Heard- Vote!

It is once again time for the Member Representative Elections, your chance to help select the individual to represent you and the members in your category. Below are the candidate statements from each person running, in the interest of fairness, these statements are printed in alphabetical order by last name for each category. Each candidate was first nominated by a member of the SAFD, and then chose accept that nomination- so you can be assured that they are all eager to get to work and fully prepared to serve. This year the election ballot will be mailed to you at the end of October and will list only those candidates that you are eligible to vote for based on your member classification. All ballots must be received no later than November 30, 2003 to be considered valid. For your convenience, on-line voting will also be available for the entire month of November. The ballots will be tabulated by December 10- at which point those representatives who have been selected will confirm their acceptance of the position. They will then take office beginning on January 1, 2004 and will serve a three-year term. So, please take a moment to review the candidate statements and then cast your ballot by November 30.

Read the candidates statements on pages 2-4

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Advanced Actor Combatant/Actor Combatant/Friend Representative

Robert Radkoff Ek

I have been involved with the SAFD since 1992. It will be an honor and a privilege to serve as the Friend/AC/AAC Representative for the SAFD. My goal is to be your voice for the SAFD. I wish to express your views as Friends, Actor Combatants and Advanced Actor Combatants with the Governing Body. Your input is vital to the growth and future of the SAFD. There are always going to be shifts within the Society. As your representative I will stay abreast of future discussions and proposed changes and keep you informed. I openly encourage you to contact me if you have questions, comments or concerns. Fight the good fight!

Al Foote

For the past two years I've worked to provide better "customer service" to the SAFD's largest segment of membership – us! Here's a partial list of what I've been working on with the Governing Body: — Changes to the P&P to make it easier for students to renew their skills proficiency for individual weapons. — Working to expand the NSCW to additional locations in order to serve more students in different areas. — Personally helping members whose memberships or SPT results have gone missing or are not receiving publications. I'd like to continue representing our needs within the organization. Thank you.

Certified Teacher Representative

Mike Mahaffey

I would like to represent all certified teachers and speak on our behalf at the Governing Body meetings. We are a wonderfully diverse group with many years of experience, and I would be honored to represent our views. I would also like to enhance our communication with each other with CT-only discussions at regional workshops. We can discuss topics from the banal (for example, getting through the new SPT procedures) to advanced pedagogy questions. We have a tremendous breadth of knowledge and we owe it to the SAFD, our students and ourselves to embody professionalism and expertise in stage combat.

Neil Massey

I feel one of the most important traits of a good Member Rep is communication. My goal as CT Rep would be to improve communication between Members and the Governing Body so issues could be discussed thoroughly, and between Members as a group so that we can share the immense knowledge base we have. Continuing Education for CT's has been kicked around for a long time, and I would like to find ways to make that happen. Serving as CT Rep Proxy this summer was a positive experience for me and I hope to continue to serve in that capacity.

Paul Steger

I am very pleased to accept the nomination for CT Representative. I have been an active member of the SAFD for 15 years. The CT is an integral part of the organization's mission to foster excellence in performing staged violence. The SAFD has seen dramatic changes at the NSCW where Certified Teachers are teaching Master Classes, Renewal Tests, and now Skills

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Proficiency Tests. These developments have come from our voice being represented in collaborations with FD's and FM's, and the Governing Board. I would continue that collaboration with the rest of the membership by diligently representing the concerns and needs of the CT community.

Fight Director Representative

J. David Brimmer

I was going to begin "My fellow Fight Directors", but thought that might be sending the wrong message! Most of you know me, I've been a member for over 15 years, a regional representative for nearly 10, and the co-coordinator of the Summer Sling for the past 7 years. My platform is simple, I have no agenda. I believe the job of Fight Director Representative is to do exactly that, represent you, the Fight Directors. If elected, I will bring your questions and concerns to the governing body, and make sure your voices are heard. Thank you for your consideration.

k. Jenny Jones

Ladies and Gentlemen, it would be an honor to serve the SAFD and your interests as FD Representative. As the Professional and Academic Industries increasingly recognize our work as vital ingredients of the artistic stew, it is important that we plant and water our seeds well. We need to remain dedicated to the SAFD's mission of the highest standards while cultivating a healthy future for ourselves as working professionals. We, and the SAFD have come a very long way, and shall continue to do so. As your Representative I would continue the efforts of the most wonderful and tireless Scot Mann; encourage the Professional Industry and its members to increase it's inclusion of our legitimacy, promote our principal role within the SAFD, and foster your needs and opinions.

Scot Mann

It has been an honor to serve as FD Rep for this term and I'm excited about the possibility of serving as your representative again. As FD Rep it is my duty to bring the concerns of the Fight Directors to the Governing Body where your voices have helped clarify and improve the Policies and Procedures of the organization over the last two years. We are making great strides with the professional performing and stage directing unions, as well, and it is my desire to continue this effort through a new SAFD Union Registry and increased involvement for Fight Directors within the various unions.

Ricki Ravitts

Why accept the nomination for FD Representative? To serve. The Society as a whole, and Fight Directors especially, have given me much - new perspectives, great camaraderie, impassioned arguments, marathon meetings, and many empty ibuprofen bottles. I'd like to give back where I can. To represent. FD's are a varied bunch. Without a personal agenda, I must solicit your opinions, inspirations and needs to be your authentic voice. To promote concord. - Raising standards, not barricades - Honoring past achievements, while embracing innovation - Enhancing our standing in professional, academic and community settings - Encouraging realistic solutions and idealistic goals

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Fight Master Representative

Drew Fracher

It is my pleasure to seek the office of Fight Master Representative for a second term. I appreciate the support and confidence my fellow Fight Masters show me with this nomination. I will endeavor to continue to do the right thing and be a voice for all of us on the Governing Body. I think that the organization is poised to move ahead in a variety of positive ways and I pledge to represent you all as we do so. Our voice is important and I will make sure it is heard in a fair and equitable manner. Again, thank you all for your continued trust and support.

Dale Girard

If elected, it would be my honor to serve as the unified voice of the College of Fight Masters. Working in theatre, film and academia, I believe that I have insight into many of our needs. Further, my time in, and away from, the SAFD political arena has reemphasized the value of being a team player. As FM Rep., my goal would be to represent our collected membership, strive to expand the reputation and standing of the SAFD, and work to further develop the honor, reputation and professional standing of the College of Fight Masters, inside and outside the Society.

Remember...

- This year the election ballot will be mailed to you at the end of October and will list only those candidates that you are eligible to vote for based on your member classification.
- All ballots must be received no later than November 30, 2003 to be considered valid.
- For your convenience, on-line voting will also be available for the entire month of November.

Do you want to help out the organization?

Of course you do.

(subtle, ain't we?!?)

Serve the organization by writing an article for *The Cutting Edge*.

Send inquiries and submissions to: cuttingedge@safd.org



Richard Ryan is welcomed as the newest Fight Master

The College of Fight Masters is pleased to announce that Richard Ryan has been granted the rank and title of Fight Master. Richard has made his mark in the academic and professional community and we're delighted to be able to honor his efforts in this way. Richard has been a member of the SAFD for many years, becoming a Certified Teacher in 1992. He serves as the Vice Chair for the British Equity Fight Directors Register, as the President of the British Academy of Stage & Screen Combat (as well as being a founding member), and is the 'Master-at-Arms' to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. He has staged fights for theatre, opera, film and television with an extensive international body of work- not the least of which was a live show in Thailand featuring a battle with eighty actors and four elephants! Richard is currently serving as 'Swordmaster' on the Warner Brothers movie, 'Troy'. Please join us in congratulating our newest Fight Master!

The SAFD Reaches for a New Look!

By Julia Rupkalvis, Ph.D

Keep an eye out for a new look for the Society. After input from Capsule, a branding consulting firm who donated their time to the SAFD, and our own input, we're heading toward a more consistent and appropriate visual look for our publications, graphics, and web site. Brands are not simply products or services...brands are the sum total

of all the images that people have in their heads about a particular company and a particular mark.

Our logo isn't changing, although the colors used to display it might. At this point, we've decided on typefaces and a general color scheme. Our next step is to solidify our colors and to create an additional logo with just the initials, SAFD. We have a rather long name and there

are places where graphically the initials alone would be more appropriate. And, in this way, we remind the general public who and what the SAFD is...and it's not the San Antonio Fire Department!

If anyone is interested in becoming involved in this project, please contact Julia Rupkalvis, the society's Executive Director, at ExecDir@safd.org.

Check Out Your Shiny New P & P!

The SAFD Policies & Procedures has been updated to reflect the changes that resulted from the Annual Governing Body meeting this July. Please feel free to check them all out by visiting the Members Only section of the SAFD website at

www.safd.org/members/login.asp.

Once you have logged into the Members Only section, click on Forms and then on the P & P.

Regional Reps kept busy by reporting on you!



By
Richard Lane

The **Pacific Western Region** is comprised of California, Hawaii, Nevada and Arizona. The membership out here stays very active with workshops, choreography and performances, some areas busier than others. Nevada sees the SAFD National Workshop every year, which is reported on separately. Hawaii is the site of the Swords-N-Surf hosted by Dueling Arts International. California is the home of Hollywood and "the industry," where "stage combat butts" up against "stunts." And Arizona, which has 15 SAFD members, didn't get any reports into the Regional Rep for this report - we look forward to hearing from you each soon!

Alaric Toy is currently in a production of *Taming of the Shrew* as Grumio and its Fight Captain at *Diablo Valley College*. And oh yes, Alaric went to the National Stage Combat Workshop this year.

Todd Loweth is keeping busy at *The Laguna Playhouse*, choreographing the fights for their production of *Romeo and Juliet Together (And Alive) At Last* by Sandra Fenichel Asher. Todd's last production with The Laguna Playhouse was about high school wrestlers and the problems they face - on and off the mat. The show is called *The Wrestling Season* by Laurie Brooks. The entire play is acted out on the wrestling mat, with all the actors joining in physically. It's a fight show

from beginning to end. Todd is finding it challenging and rewarding working with these youngsters. "They are truly some of the most dedicated combatants I've ever worked with." When not doing the fight thing, you'll find Todd performing as "Mick Jagger" or in the studio with **Christopher Villa** recording a CD with our band *The Personas*. "Life is good in Hollywood! I continue to teach and learn!"

Scott Leva

(www.precisionstunts.com.) is a Stunt Coordinator/ 2nd Unit Director for film and TV. He recently finished a film with Christian Slater *Alone in The Dark*. Scot was the "Action Wire Coordinator" and has been busy mainly in the stunt arena. Mr. Leva's biggest claim to fame in films as far as fights to-date was the Fight Coordinator on the original *X-Men* film. "Things are good. Work is great."

For **Bob Goodwin** SPRING OF 2003 was busier then he wanted it to be, "Be careful what you wish for..." Bob wrapped a SAG feature film, *Untitled Thriller*, which had fights, gunshots and a wire gag (a stunt double hanging from a third floor, fire escape by a pair of handcuffs). He was able to cast two of his students, Chris Torres and Scott Donovan, for the stunt double and wire work. It will probably go straight to DVD/video, but who knows? Another SAG feature, *Fast Sofa*, Bob stunt coordinated (a car crash and fights) has been released. It stars Crispin Glover, Jennifer Tilly, Jake Busy and others. Then Mr. Goodwin was asked to help cast, train and fight direct a new AEA production written by Will Kern (*Hell Cab*) titled *Shakespeare Kung Fu*. The fights consisted of shao-lin and t'aiji swords; chi saa, butterfly knives and chi gerk (sticking legs) of Wing Chun; the knife and empty hand fighting of Kali. It was performed at the *Gascon*

Center Theatre. It closed in May. Also in January Bob began working on *R & J* for *Moorpark College*. He rented Lewis Shaw's well-made swords from Scot Mann. As is always the case, they were safe, beautiful and aesthetically correct. Bob was pleased he was able to appoint a fight captain that had just attended the 2002 NSCW, Dustin Szany. The play was directed by Eric Auguzstiny. A review stated, "The star of this play is the fight choreography." *The Fantasticks* was billed as, "This is not your momma's Fantasticks." The fights were more realistic, at the director's request, rather than timed to the music. The director, Valerie Mayhew (writer/producer of televisions *The Fugitive*) wanted a more intense duel to enhance the story, much to the chagrin of the musical director. Once again, Bob was able to suggest one of his students, Chris Sullivan, for the role of Henry. The play toured to different theatre/church venues and ran for three weeks in April. Film Fighting Workshops, July 2003, held at *Loyola Marymount University* attained an international status with the attendance of two students from London. One, Ms. Georgie Smith is a student of Richard Ryan. The 2004 workshop in July will be a seven-day event with more industry workshops and new, evening events. This year's instructors included Mr. Goodwin (Katana and Kali), Roberta Brown (Small Sword), Anthony DeLongis (his system of sword work), Chris Torres (Hong Kong Fighting) and Eric Betts (Hollywood Kung Fu and gymnastics). Bob also taught Martial Art/Kali and Beginning Sword For the Camera courses for the second year at *Loyola Marymount University* in the spring of 2003. For the past nine years Bob has taught, four weeks a year, for *Camp Bravo*. *Camp Bravo* is a performing arts camp for High School Thespians. "Being a professional educator, this

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is my way of giving back to the theatre community.”

Ernesto Bustos is choreographing for *Woodcreek High School*. The fight/sword scene he was hired to direct for CSUS Alumni's summer show (*The Illusion*) was whittled down to pistols at ten paces. It was too late in the game to try and pull something off safely. Ernesto reports his ego was crushed and he cried up until they handed him a check for services rendered. Funny how making a deposit into your checking account can make the world seem a better, happier place.

Charles Currier and has worked with Payson and Julia for years. He 'certified' in 1984, got 'recommended' by David Leong in 1986, and performed a re-cert in 1992. Since then he has been fairly busy in the industry in Los Angeles, and has managed to maintain a somewhat up to date knowledge of SAFD developments. "This year I got my act together and paid my dues, so I could rejoin as a friend - and I am very glad to be back!!!" Charles just teamed up with Payson to choreograph a *Taming of the Shrew* staged by elements of the well-regarded *Zoo District Theatre Co.* in LA, using multiple locations in the Orpheum, a massive 1920's theatre in downtown Los Angeles. He also just arrived in Morocco to train 1200 actors, stuntmen, and specialty extras (literally active duty Moroccan infantry), for a great deal of mayhem in Oliver Stone's upcoming *Alexander* starring Colin Farrell. He will be working with Julia Rupkalvis and military advisor Dale Dye, and the film will be shooting until Christmas at least. Phalanxes, chariots, spears, swords, shields, slings, bows, and fighting elephants; what's not to like?

In May of 2002 **Mark Bedell** (www.MarkBedell.com and www.KrackerjackEntertainment.com) retired from a 17year long run in

professional touring theatre. He figures 5,000+ performances in 12 states were enough for anyone. He's moved from Maine to L.A and is choreographing staff, sword and martial arts fight scenes regularly. As an actor/stunt-fight performer Mark has had the opportunity to work on fight scenes with big-time fight coordinators like Art Camacho, Eric Betts, T.J. Storm and Jim Vickers and with Stuntman Hall of Fame-r Lee Diebold who, at 70 years old, can take falls better than anyone Mark's ever worked with. You may have seen Mr. Bedell leaping over Bruce Willis in *Tears Of The Sun* (he was the helicopter gunner) or saving Bruce's butt at the end (the F-18 pilot). Mark is still working in Theatre but only as a playwright and consultant. His plays are currently being produced in North Carolina and in Washington state (where an entire season of my plays is being discussed). He'll be training the actors in Washington as well as teaching a 5-day stage combat intensive to teens at the *Academy of Children's Theatre* next June.

Mike Mahaffey writes: "I'm in LA now! Holy cow! New town, same region. I recently choreographed *Henry V* for the *Knightsbridge Theater*, as well as stunt coordinating two short films for the *University of Southern California*. I've also been appearing as a headliner in the *Southern and Northern Pleasure Faires*, where I perform the "Swordsmen-enfranchised" *Bold and Stupid Men* show, with best wishes from David Woolley and Douglas Mumaw."

Payson Burt reports that the *Los Angeles Fight Academy* continues to offer weekly classes in the San Fernando Valley. Last May LAFA hosted a Military Boot Camp for Actors - with Captain Dale Dye as instructor. Payson was part of the stunt team for *Secondhand Lions* which was filmed in November of last year and will open in September. He was one of 4 sword

specialists working under Stunt Coordinator Walter Scott and Sword Master Anthony DeLongis. During the summer, Payson traveled to Boulder, Colorado to work as Production Fight Director for the *Colorado Shakespeare Festival*. The season consisted of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hamlet*. Also, he guest starred in the TV series: *Scene of the Crime* as rapist/murderer Oba Chandler which aired in mid June. Lastly, Mr. Burt has just joined the faculty of the new Hollywood branch of the *American Musical and Dramatic Academy* (AMDA) which opens it's doors at the end of September. Payson will be teaching along with Robert Hamilton who is moving from NYC, where he was teaching at AMDA's NY campus.

Julia Rupkalvis, along with Charles Currier, is in Morocco working on Oliver Stone's new movie: *Alexander* starring Colin Farrell and Sean Connery. Julia is the Sword Master for the production - and personal instructor for Colin Farrell (eat your heart out ladies!) Both Julia and Charles are involved with training 15,000 Moroccan army extras!

This past June **Tiffany Burris** assisted Gregory Hoffman and Aaron Anderson at the *Dueling Arts International* workshop in Hawaii. Currently Tiffany is working on some fights for the *Age of Chivalry Renaissance Faire* in Las Vegas. She is choreographing a fight for the apprehension of a criminal who will be tried and then hanged. They will also be performing a number of fights on the Hanging Jester stage including some Shakespeare, some original, and one fight on horse back. Last week Tiffany choreographed a fight for a belly-dancing troupe that took place as part of the dance. It looked amazing in that medium and was very well received.

Richard Lane recently choreographed the ballet version of *Zorro!*

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with sword-fighting and whip-cracking, for *Smuin Ballet*, to music by Charles Fox. He also choreographed *Bay Boy* (yes, the one from the Weekly World News) and *Ragtime* for *TheatreWorks* where he is the resident Fight Director. Other smaller productions include *Hamlet* for *Center Rep*, *Macbeth* for *Ukiah Players*, *Romeo & Juliet* for *San Francisco Shakespeare* and *Don Juan*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for *Marin Shakespeare Festival*. Richard's book, *Swashbuckling: the Art of Stage Combat & Theatrical Swordplay* has now entered its second printing.



By
John Cashman

Greetings from the South East Region!

CT John Cashman is still teaching bi-monthly workshops in Orlando. Planning is underway for a SPT test to be offered in Orlando next year. He's also teaching a SPT test for a private group in Gainesville, Florida.

AA/C Adam McLean is starting grad school at VCU this year. He just choreographed *Richard III* and the touring *A Midsummer Nights Dream* for the *Richmond Shakespeare Festival*. He also did a film documentary for WNET out of NY about slavery -whipped a girl locked in stocks. It was filmed in Historic St. Mary City, Maryland and airs next spring. "Very fun!"

Chuck Martin, AAC, was a teaching assistant for Lewis Shaw in Baltimore for a 12 week AC course

from Jan-Apr. He also re-upped in three weapons and added two more (up to eight now). Also did stage combat training and fight choreography for the following: *As You Like It*, *Shakespeare in The Parque*, Washington, D.C. *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* and *Macbeth*, at *Tapestry Theatre Company*, Alexandria, VA, *Death Trap* at *Heritage Theater Company*, Bethesda, MD. He performed in *Macbeth* (see above) as MacDonwald and a murderer.

In January, **AC's Steve Lada, Al Myska** and **Chuck Martin** jointly won the 2002 Washington Area Theater Community Honors (WATCH) award for Outstanding Stage Combat Choreography for *Romeo and Juliet*, *Elden Street Players*, Reston, VA.

CT Michael Kirkland directed and choreographed the fights last spring for the *Regent University* future noir production of *Hamlet*. Revived the same production for the *Christians in Theatre Arts International Networking Conference* (CITA) hosted by Regent University last June. Interviewed Wm.Hobbs in London and Michael York in Hollywood for upcoming articles on the 30th Anniversary of the release of Richard Lester's *THE THREE MUSKETEERS*('73) And *THE FOUR MUSKETEERS* ('75).

CT Michelle Ladd usually lives in Los Angeles, has her permanent address in Alabama, but was last heard of in New Zealand until November working on *Return of the King*.

Stefan Sittig has remained very busy in the Washington, D.C. area, having recently created fights for *Polaroid Stories* at *The Studio Theatre* and *Kiss Me Kate* at *ACT III Theatre Company*. He will be staging violence for *Falling Water* at The Kennedy Center in September. Check out his website at www.stefansittig.com for more information.

CT/FD Scot Mann has taken a position as Associate Professor of Movement and Acting at *The University of Southern Mississippi* after a year as combat instructor for MFA/PAT program at the *Alabama Shakespeare Festival*. While at ASF Scot choreographed violence and coached movement for *The Venus Di Milo is Armed!*, *Twelfth Night*, *Iago*, and *Othello*. Other recent choreography includes Shakespeare's *R&J* and *King Hedely II* for *The Alliance Theatre*, *Cymbeline* for *The Georgia Shakespeare Festival*, and *Romeo and Juliet* for the *Clarence Brown Theatre*.

Areas Outside the U.S.



By
Richard Ryan

2003 has proven to be a good year for many of the SAFD members abroad.

In true Aussie style **Felicity Steel (A/C)** has spent most of the year traveling. In this case, from workshop to workshop including the fight directors' workshop at the Celebration Barn in Maine and The Society of Australian Fight Directors Inc National Workshop. She's says "One of lessons learnt among the hundreds of wonderful lessons to be learnt at the Celebration Barn was 'Do not waist one minute on talking to the fear, that is definitely time wasted and at the Barn, you certainly don't have a minute to waste on none productive or none fun activities. The variety and magnitude of the projects achieved during those two weeks is intoxicating." She

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sends her regards and good wishes to the extensive family who study the art of ... 'of being in the present moment, in action, without tension...in this world'.

In the UK, we had a visit from **FD K. Jenny Jones** who was over to teach a Masterclass and SAFD President Chuck Coyl who was over to adjudicate SPTs.

A/C Ian Prater has just had 4 solid weeks of workshops teaching at the *City Lit* summer school and the 10th BNSCW, both in London. He has also just received his call-up papers to join the Macedonian Army of *Alexander the Great* and will be heading out to Morocco at the end of August for three weeks of boot camp under Captain Dale Dye, Commander of the Foot Companions and Julia Rupkalvis (SAFD Exec Dir). Kit list includes running shoes, floppy hat and mole-skin to prevent blisters but no distractions or frivolous instruments of communication or entertainment allowed. Have fun Ian!

Pippa Winslow-Rolandelli A/C is having lots of fun with all kinds of theatre. She says "The groups I've been working with here have enjoyed sharing my limited experience in stage combat". She had the chance to pass along some of FD Scott Mann's bull whip expertise to Petrucio in *Kiss Me Kate* and also choreographed her own drunken brawl in *Guys and Dolls* in which she played Sarah and choreographed a production of *Fiddler On The Roof*. She has just started rehearsals as Carmen in *Carmen, the Musical* and is looking forward lots of passionate acts of violence as well as a lovely death.

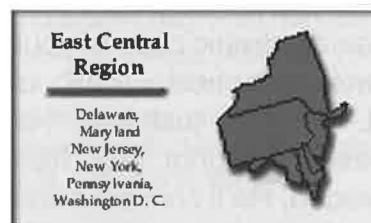
A/C Janet Lawson has continued her studies and served as an intern at the intermediate/advanced workshop at the 10th BNSCW.

Case Ash (Friend) through his company ? *Productions* has had

clients that have included employees of Carton Television, BBC and major U.S. studios – for the purpose of teaching ancient Chinese fighting systems, and to develop new ways of producing on-screen combat. He is in collaboration with the *Bandura Project*, a feature, and the *Continuity Project* (being shot in Australia, Thailand and UK) where he will get the opportunity to show his directorial skills.

Bret Yount (CT) has fight directed *The White Devil* for *Colchester's Mercury Theatre*, *Blown for Theatre Royal*, Plymouth and *Neville's ISLAND* for *Theatre Royal*, York. Bret is currently working as Assistant Swordmaster to new FM Richard Ryan on the Warner's Bros Film, *Troy*.

For **Richard Ryan** it's been a busy if not exceptional year, the high-points of which were being appointed Swordmaster for the Warner Brothers Movie *Troy*, scheduled for release in May 2004, and having the honour of being inducted into the college of Fight Masters.



By
Dan O'Driscoll

This past spring **CT/FD Greg Ramsey** was busy teaching a series of stage combat workshops in addition to opening a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, plus an original adaptation of *Dracula* at Mount Hope Mansion in Lancaster. The summer finds him busy as the Artistic Director and Fight Choreographer at the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire.

In an August press release - Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival Artistic Director **CT/FD Jack Young** was named the new Head of the Professional Actor Training Program (PATP) at the School of Theatre at Ohio University in Athens. Mr. Young has agreed to continue as PSF's Artistic Director and work with The Festival's Board and staff through the transition to new leadership.

CT Joe Travers announced the results of the April 6th SPTs at SWORDPLAY in NYC: BROADSWORD: Adam Alexander, **Carrie Brewer**, John Crefeld (EAE), Nathan Decoux (EAE), **Jared Hoffert**, **Michael McGuire**, Allison Langs, Daniela Rapp, Cat Schaefer, Mark Silence and Kriota Willberg. KNIFE: Catherine Dellingham (EAE), **Jared Hoffert**, Daniela Rapp (EAE) and **Mark Silence**.

Michael McGuire writes, "The successful passing of the broadsword SPT on April 6th marks my sixth current certification with the SAFD, qualifying me to apply for 'advanced actor/combatant' status. I've been a member since '99. (I think **Jared Hoffert** also reached this status as of last week). I performed the role of 'Young Siward' and choreographed the fights for Shakespeare in the Wild's production of *Macbeth* performed this past May in Manhattan."

In May and August, The Lady Cavaliers held stage combat workshops to raise funds for WOMEN-AT-ARMS 2003. In June - they presented a staged reading of a new play, *BOUDICA* by Jeffrey Fiske, with **CT/FD Ricki G. Ravitts** and **Mark Silence** in the cast. On August 21st, they presented An Elegant Evening of Duels, with fights choreographed by John Ficarra (new FDC certified instructor) and **AAC Robb Hunter** of Combat Incorporated with featured duelists: **Barbara Brandt**, John

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Ficarra, **Robb Hunter**, **Denise Hurd**, Judi Lewis-Ockler, Maggie Macdonald and **Laurie Miller**.

On May 11th (Mother's Day) - students of NYU and Fights4 participated in a SPT at NYU's Abe Burrows Theatre. **CT/FD J. David Brimmer** and **CT/FD Michael G. Chin** presided with **FM/FD Chuck Coyl** as the adjudicator.

This summer - **Andrew Smereck** performed as Friar Laurence in **ROMEO & JULIET**, as produced by the Blunt Theater Company. This modern production was set in war-torn Baghdad.

Boomerang Theatre Company began its new season in June with Shakespeare's **HENRY IV, PART ONE**. With fight choreography by **Andrew Blasenak** - this Equity Showcase was performed outdoors in parks throughout New York.

The 7th Annual Summer Sling sponsored by Fights4 was held successfully from August 21st through the 24th at New York University.

Congratulations to those SAFD members cast in the 2003 Performance Company of the New York Renaissance Faire in Tuxedo, NY! **Robin Flanagan** (Director and

Fight Captain), **Jared Hoffert**, **Steve Kraus**, **Chant MacLeod** (Writer and Director), **Clark McCasland**, **Dan O'Driscoll** (Writer and Fight Director), **Emily Rouch**, and **Kharyn (Kat Pedini) Schaefer** (Director).

AAC Ray Rodriguez was the Fight Director and played Long John Silver in a **TREASURE ISLAND** production for Moosehall Theater Company for their Inwood Hill Shakespeare Festival. The show ran July 23 thru Aug 9th and also included in the cast: **FD/CT Robert 'Tink' Tuftee**, **AC Mark James Shryver** and **AC Zorikh Lequirde**.

Expand your SAFD Directory Information - Post Your Résumé

By Geoffrey Kent

Calling all résumés! The SAFD has recently approved the posting of résumés to the website for certain members. If you currently have a "pop up" window on www.SAFD.org this means you- that generally means all SAFD Governing Body, Certified Teachers, Fight Directors, Fight Masters, and Regional Representatives. This résumé storage provides you with another place to pro-

mote yourself as well as a location in cyberspace for theatres to gather information on members in their area.

To get your résumé posted, simply toss an e-mail to Geoff Kent at jefe@thefightguy.com with an electronic copy of your résumé attached .PDF is great. Word is just fine. He can even decipher Mac files as needed. He'll convert it and toss it to the webmaster and voila! If you do not have an electronic copy of your résumé you can snail mail a

paper copy and it will be scanned into PDF for you. Simply drop them in the mail to Geoff Kent, 3047 West 47th Avenue, #512, Denver, CO, 80211. Please take a moment to participate in our growing presence on the world wide web. Future expansions to SAFD.org are planned -Stay tuned to the Cutting Edge for details. Note, participation is not required and résumés will not be posted without your permission.

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The Fight Crew of 1992

By Richard Ryan, Fight Master

This past summer, a group of us marked 10 years of being recognized as Certified Teachers with the SAFD. Having not seen most of my fellow 1992 TTW graduates that I worked, sweated and at times bled with, I ventured forth to Las Vegas, as is my normal summer habit when the SAFD is in town. Unfortunately, I didn't see most of my classmates even then, as my time at the reunion was short. So, with little real time to exchange life, death, war and/or professional stories, we were all asked to write something about our work and ourselves since we received this official stamp of approval as Certified Teachers of Stage Combat.

A reunion is basically a marking of time and most frequently, if not always recorded and acknowledged in numbers, so without getting too personal, nor indulgent, and also keeping in mind that these past ten years have primarily been about work in our strange and heightened little world of theatrical fighting arts, this is my tell of time and some numbers that may, or may not accurately reflect these last 10 years past.

In the summer of 1992, fourteen hopeful neophyte teachers gathered in Las Vegas to begin intensive training and evaluation that would change their stage combat careers, and lives forever. After three grueling weeks of fighting and studying under the tutelage of Fight Masters J. Allen Suddeth and Drew Fracher they emerged, give or take the odd probation, brand spanking new SAFD Certified Teachers.

In the cauldron that is the Teacher Training Workshop friendships that were to last the years were forged and although not all have seen each other as frequently as they might like the bond between them is still strong. So July of 2002, they decided to have a reunion at the scene of

the crime.

There was much talk of how their particular TTW was the toughest and of the occasional wrongs but predominantly the talk was of the fellowship that they felt with each other and the SAFD and any other who had experienced the TTW.

Naturally conversation turned to what we had done over the years and the seed for this *Where are they now?* article was born. So where are they now?

Michael G. Chin pursues an acting career as well as teaches stage combat full-time at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City.

He serves as NSCW Coordinator and in 1998 started a professional actor/combatant training school, Fights4 with fellow Class of 1992 alumni Tink Tuftee. He has taught at regional workshops in London, Louisiana and Chicago and has served as NSCW coordinator for the SAFD for the past 5 years.

A long time student of martial arts (Shaolin Long Fist) he has been seen as a major influence in the use of Quarterstaff to reflect transcultural influences and to that end he has taught staff classes throughout the US and also in the UK.

Robert 'Tink' Tuftee started a professional actor/combatant training school, Fights4 with fellow Class of 1992, alumni Mike Chin. He has taught at regional workshops in London, Louisiana and Chicago. He recently appeared onstage as Rochefort in *The Three Musketeers* for the New American Theatre, alongside fellow Class of 1992 alumni John McFarland, directed by FM Richard Raether.

Michael Kirkland served as Head of the Theatre Program at Galveston College and as Producing Artistic Director for the Upper Deck Theatre,

the college's semi-professional theatre in residence, from 1989-1995. He was extremely active as an actor, director, teacher of stage combat and fight director in the Houston area at such venues as the Houston Shakespeare Festival, the Houston Shaw Festival, the Houston Negro Ensemble Theatre, and the Houston Grand Opera (where he staged the violence for the world premier of "Harvey Milk" and world-wide touring production of *Porgy and Bess*.) He also taught combat at Houston Community College and staged fights at Austin's Capitol City Playhouse.

In 1995 he and his family pulled up stakes and moved to Pennsylvania, where Michael took a position at Kutztown University teaching acting, directing, voice, movement and stage combat. Upon arriving, Michael immediately began to work at the local equity house in Allentown, PA—the PA Stage Company. He frequently worked as a guest artist at such venues as Muhlenberg Summer Musicals and Berks Festival Theatre. He also pulled double duty directing and staging the fights for a production of *Othello* at Lafayette College. Kutztown University also afforded the opportunity to direct several shows with fights in them from *The Rivals* to *The Servant of Two Masters*. While at Kutztown he served as Liaison for the Department's International Study Abroad Program with the Birmingham School of Speech and Drama. Trips to Birmingham and London resulted in guest and team teaching opportunities at both BSSD and with former TTW classmate and roommate, Richard Ryan at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Most recently, Michael has taken the position at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA, where in addition to chairing the Department of

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Theatre Arts, Michael will continue to teach courses in Meisner Acting Technique, Lessac Voice and Movement, Directing, and Stage Combat. He eagerly anticipates directing *Hamlet* in the spring of 2003—naturally, he's staging the fights (and rumour has it he may even play the role of Laertes this time around!).

"I am truly at a loss for words to describe what the SAFD has done for me personally and professionally. My training has opened countless professional doors over the years and I am proud to say that 10 years later several of the friendships I made—friendships forged in the fire of the TTW—are not only active, they have grown even deeper. The SAFD has not only shaped my career, it has shaped my friendships, my personal and professional relationships—my life."

Brent Gibbs, after attending the TTW, which he says he barely passed or at least survived, Brent has managed to keep body and soul together by working as Fight Director, Director and Professor. He worked for 10 years as Fight Director and 9 years as Director at the outdoor drama Tecumseh, located in Ohio. Back in his home state of Arizona he has worked as Fight Director at the local Equity house, Arizona Theatre Company, and for the Arizona Opera Company. In 1995 he was the first Fight Director to receive an Arizona State Theatre Award for his fight choreography in *Henry V*. As a director he has worked on over a dozen productions in the past ten years. He also wrote and directed a touring production called *Swordplay*, which introduced high school students to the action in Shakespeare through fights and scenes. He currently serves as the Artistic Director for the Arizona Repertory Theatre.

Brent is an Associate Professor with the University of Arizona, School of Theatre Arts. He served for several years as the Head of the Acting Program. Among his col-

leagues at the TTW he was fortunate enough to befriend Mr. Richard Ryan whose kindness has allowed him to teach workshops in London and see war elephants in action in Thailand. This summer Brent will return for the second year to Amsterdam where he teaches a stage combat workshop for the International Theatre Festival. Among his most prized achievements is the fact that as a CT he has taught over 250 students and had only two who did not pass their SPT. The TTW has paid more dividends than he could ever have imagined and, looking back, it was worth every drop of money, sweat and effort.

Jean-Francois Gagnon has had the opportunity to work in cinema, television, musicals, and opera, but his main working area is the theatre. He says, "It's been a busy ten years." He has been teaching and doing fight choreography at the National Theatre School of Canada since 1992 and also been teaching Commedia Dell'Arte, that includes stage combat, at The Theatre department of Concordia University, since 1995. He also teaches at one of the main French theatre schools, Le departement de theatre du CEGEP Lionel-Groulx.

He also has been working on a lot of major productions in Quebec where he resides, like the *Just for Laughs* summer production. He has done the choreography for a production of *Les Miserables*, and unavoidably, most Shakespeare...twice!

This spring he directed and choreographed *Cyrano de Bergerac* and followed with fight direction for a big French Musical called '*Romeo & Juliet*' (yes, based on the bards story). He is currently a consultant on a project in preparation for 2004 with le Cirque du Soleil.

Jean-Francois is no longer active within the SAFD but is recognised as a Fight Master by Fight Directors Canada and represented them at the 2nd International Stage Combat Workshop in Tucson Arizona.

Nicole Harsh and her husband, Mike Sakuta, continue to travel and perform swordfights as *The Crossed Swords*. For the last 20 years they have performed regularly in the U.S. and Canada, including Renaissance Festivals in Michigan, Ohio, Georgia, Maryland, Florida, Alabama and New Orleans. They also teach stage combat and have been fight directors for 6 years of Georgia Renaissance Festivals and have choreographed fight scenes for several Atlanta-area theatrical plays. Recently, the duo has been hired to perform swordfights in such interesting venues such as Honolulu, Hawaii; Blackpool, England; Paris, France; Berlin, Germany; and Moscow, Russia.

Together they have also appeared, with swords and armour, on artist Larry Elmore's cover paintings for two Dragonlance books, *The Reign of Istar* and *The Cataclysm*, on the Cure Light Wounds card in the *Spellfire*™ game, and in a TBS documentary on Pirates. The duo also runs an online sword-selling business, www.swordmark.com, which offers many types of swords to collectors across the globe. When not sword fighting, Nicole has drawn over seventy-five pieces of 3-D Computer art, which have all been published in collectible card games such as *Galactic Empires*, *Star of the Guardians*, and *Wing Commander*. She has also written two stories about fictional knights and seven pieces of instrumental music published in the books, *The History of the Dragonlance* and *More Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home*.

Tina Robinson-Hansen is no longer an active within the SAFD and now lives in Copenhagen, Denmark where she is a teacher with the Nordic Stage Fight Society and represented them at the 1st International Stage Combat Workshop in London.

Gregory Hoffman works as a

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Theatrical Fight and Movement Director and Teacher, Tai Chi Instructor, Stunt Coordinator, Independent Producer and Filmmaker and Theatrical Director based in San Francisco.

He has been teaching movement, theatrical combat, and directing fights in Universities, dramatic academies, and theatres in Europe, and the United States since 1984. The resident Fight Director and member of the teaching faculty for the M.F.A. program at The American Conservatory Theatre, he is also the Founder and Director of Dueling Arts International Inc., a company which offers training in movement and theatrical combat and production opportunities worldwide. He has directed fights for over 200 productions, taught over 20 skills test and instructed over 1000 students. He is currently in post-production of a comprehensive educational video providing 32 hours of instruction on the theatrical sword fighting, titled, *And They Fight*. Currently he is also in producing and directing his first feature independent film, *Rite Spot, Wrong Time*. Throughout all this work he has averaged 200 days away from home, 25,000 miles driving and another 20,000 flying per year. He has resided (or rather paid rent or mortgage) in 8 different towns, lived in 7 different houses and 2 different Silver Air-Stream motor homes. He has worked in 8 different countries, 11 different states and too many cities and towns to remember. He has done so willingly and gratefully, and thanks all who have helped in some way along this vagabond freeway.

"The above is basically numbers, numbers, numbers...As these numbers accumulate, I have frequently asked the question; Are we, deluding ourselves in thinking that we are something other than what we are on the surface, people who are good at slinging steel and throwing bodies around in space, and who have acquired some educational title of respect, or are we, actually doing

something beyond what it seems on the surface?"

This question was answered for me recently by an e-mail from a student who attended a workshop stating how the experience, the training received, and the warm, supportive and positive attitude of the workshop staff formed and acted as a major turning point in her life. A life changing experience that will help her move on from some very hard times, something beyond a new skill with theatrical swords. So yes, our work as teachers can indeed be more than simply demonstrating how to wield swords, and throw illusionary punches. It is this single simple number of 1 that I feel most confirms that work that I and my fellow teachers and assistants have involved ourselves with is indeed more than it appears and in fact greatly worthwhile. One letter, one person, one life illuminating the fact that we as teachers have the continuing opportunity, and more so perhaps the continuing obligation to work beyond the simple expectations that come with being a Certified Teacher.

Personally, I am very happy and fulfilled with the vagabond life that this particular business has provided me. I feel that the people I have taught and learned from, met and worked with, and exchanged tales and shared time with, have in fact, for the most part indeed been very warm and big-hearted individuals and as such have provided me with a very large, if not remote family. I am grateful to have had the teachers that I have had, particularly those whose generosity stood out above and beyond, more grateful to have taught the students that I have taught, most grateful to work with the people that I most often get to work with, and in fact continually grateful that I wake up everyday with the opportunity to do the work that I get to do. One thought, one action, one experience can, in the end act upon 10,000."

Jamie Cheatham After certifying as a teacher in '92, Jamie proved he

could reach even higher heights in '94 by becoming a father, to his boy, Hayes. As a dad, Jamie continued working professionally in NY and regionally as a fight director and actor. Jamie continued to teach full time at AMDA, until he decided to get an MFA. He then found out why it's called a "terminal degree." Beginning in South Carolina, he withdrew, worked for a short time in DC at the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts (thanks to Michael Johnson), and finished at VCU (with David Leong). Jamie now holds a degree in Pedagogy, with an emphasis in Movement and Stage Combat (and insists on being called "master.")

He has just started a full time teaching position at the University of Wisconsin - Parkside, which is located about halfway between Milwaukee and Chicago.

John Cashman hit the road late in '92 with a touring ice show as an electrician, and with swords in tow and dropped in on every CT the tour bounced near. He also did some consulting work for a slapstick segment of the show which had some tumbling and flips in it and gained new experience by learning to do flips and rolls wearing a Roger Rabbit head on ice. In spring of '93, by luck, coincidence and a good word from his then girlfriend Willis Middleton, he was hired sight unseen as a last minute replacement for the debut season of the Pocono Renaissance Faire. He spent the next six months in Pennsylvania playing the drunken Friar (which he claims was "a real stretch") fight captaining, and assisting the SPT test.

He moved to Los Angeles with Willis to see what there was to learn in the film industry, just in time for the Northridge Earthquake. 1994 included trips to PA to choreograph a *Macbeth*, and then to KY to teach a SPT at *the Legend of Daniel Boone*. Back in L.A. he became Regional Rep, taught a few workshops and choreographed whenever the oppor-

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tunity arose. By '95 he finally got some film work when Willis and he were hired by Walt Disney as consultants/live action reference for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Willis and he were married in '96. In '97 he used his theatrical design background along with some contacts from "Hunchback" to get hired full time by Walt Disney Feature Animation in Florida as a Special Effects artist where he works today. By happenstance he animated most of the swords in the film *Mulan*.

Since then he has been teaching regular workshops, and ongoing classes when a space becomes available. He's gradually expanding the workshops into more frequent classes in hopes of offering a SPT test. He choreographs as his schedule permits and the opportunity presents itself.

As he looks back over the last ten years he says, "I don't have any regrets. Certainly the path I've followed has given me my wife and kids (Jackson born 1999 and Emma born 2001) whom I wouldn't trade for anything". He intends to continue teaching and choreographing, saying "I look forward to a future where swordplay will hopefully always be a part of my life, as long as my knees hold out. This art has given me so much in so many ways; I plan on taking advantage of it for as long as I can. After all, how many people who can say they met their wife in a crotch kicking class"?

Todd Loweth was unavailable to contribute to this issue.

Larry Henderson was unavailable to contribute to this issue.

John McFarland "I had only been a member of the SAFD for two years when I applied for the TTW and knew very little about the organization and it's members. More than the training one receives in the three-week intensive schedule, I came away with a new community of friends and colleagues. The ideas and skills shared over the years

since then have been invaluable in my professional life. In 1996 I helped co-found The Winter Wonderland Workshop in Chicago, the last five of those years I have been the Administrative Co-coordinator.

In 1998 classmate & colleague Richard Ryan, then President of The British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat, invited me to teach at the BASSC National Stage Combat Workshop. While there I completed the requirements as a Certified Teacher with the BASSC. As a Certified Teacher of both organizations I have been able to offer skills testing to my students that would give them recognition in both countries.

In addition to teaching at the NSCW and many SAFD regional workshops I have performed, taught and directed fights at university and professionally in cities from Portland Maine to Portland Oregon.

In 2001 I returned to London to teach at the BNSCW and to perform my first duties as an examiner for a Fight Performance Test with the BASSC. That year I was also invited to Barcelona Spain to teach at The First 'Castle' Workshop. Being a Certified Teacher and Fight Director with the SAFD has opened the world to me. Nearly everyday I am affected or supported by this family that I have become a part of."

Richard Ryan unhesitatingly acknowledges that the 1992 TTW in Las Vegas was a major catalyst in his development both as an artist and an individual. He arrived from the UK having no real idea of what to expect or whom he was going to meet at the TTW he found that it was both led and attended by very able people many of whom have become close friends.

He returned to the UK from the TTW enthused by what he had learned and determined to introduce a similar level professionalism in teaching standards that was lacking, at that time, to the teaching of Stage Combat in the UK. The following year he founded The British

Academy of Stage & Screen Combat, which has become the UK's leading professional stage combat teaching organisation.

He also, in 1995, co-ordinated the first ever International Stage Combat Workshop, bringing together teachers from the USA, Canada and the UK and students from around the globe, including Tony Wolf the founder of the New Zealand Stage Combat Society.

Considered by some, perhaps rightly, as an upstart in 1992 with only a couple of dozen professional fight directing credits he has become a leading UK Fight Director with nearly 300. He has become a mainstay of the British Equity Fight Directors Committee serving since 1993, and as vice-chair since 1997.

In 1996, over strong competition, he was appointed 'Master-at-Arms' to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art where he continues to teach. He also teaches at Marymount-Fordham London Drama Academy, which is listed amongst the SAFD's top supporting organisations and where he is proud to host, what he believes to be, the only regular SAFD SPT outside of the United States.

As an internationally respected fight director and teacher of stage combat he is regularly invited to give Master classes in the United States, Canada, Spain, Germany, France and Australia. He also has taught extensively throughout the United States- most memorably perhaps when he joined with TTW mentor J. Allen Suddeth to co-teach at the SAFD National Fight Directors training Program in Maine last summer.

He is currently working as Swordmaster on the Warner Bros film *Troy*, based on the Iliad, due for release in the spring of 2004. And has just been named as the newest member of the SAFD College of Fight Masters.

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- More Regional Reports
- And much, much, more!!

**Submissions for the
November/December issue
are due November 1st!**

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