

# Teenagers going back to the Middle Ages at Medieval Fair

Zounds, gadzooks and all that other medieval tommyrot, what's going on at Indian River High this Friday?

They'll be jousting and wearing chain mail, waving colorful banners, supping on period foods and talking Olde English trash.

Have the students lost their senses and joined some elaborate gang? Are they taking over the school? Nope, they're having fun and are, gadzooks again, *learning* about history.

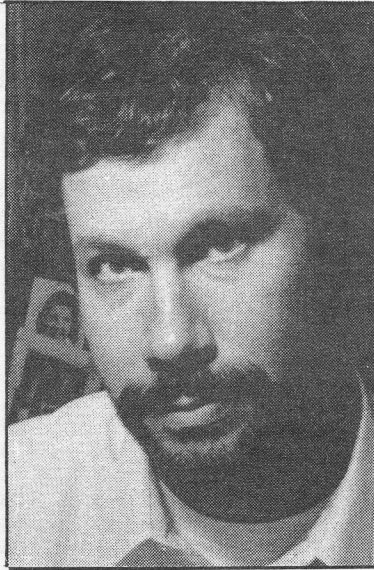
Thanks to innovative history/social studies teacher Tom Farley, also known throughout the state and beyond as a first-rate singer/songwriter with two recorded releases to date, his ninth grade students are gaining knowledge about the Middle Ages by, well, *being there*.

Farley and another Indian River High School faculty member, science teacher Tracey Fone, have organized a Medieval Fair taking place Friday from 6 until 9 p.m. inside the school at its commons area and cafeteria.

Although Fone teaches science, she helped organize the fair because of her membership in the local chapter or "kingdom" of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a nationwide role-playing organization of people interested in all things pertaining to the Middle Ages.

The society regularly holds period fairs at schools, parks and other public places showing off their skills in jousting, swordplay, courtly romance, period literature and diversions.

"The kids will be able to check out what life was like and soak themselves in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages," Farley said. "We're having society members from various *kingdoms* from the southside and the Peninsula to help us with the fair. The last three years we held the fair during the



**Indian River High School teacher Tom Farley will immerse his ninth-grade students in the world of knights, damsels and castles.**

day but we've changed the time this year to early evening so we can get more members of the society to come out and participate."

About 75 ninth grade students in Farley's world history class will participate alongside members of the society.

Farley said his students will engage in heated chess and backgammon battles, read flowery poetry and literature, let fly stout and straight arrows during archery demonstrations, stage thought-provoking morality plays and create colorful heraldic designs on homemade wooden battle shields.

"We're trying to create a total medieval atmosphere," Farley said. "We'll even have the place lit by candle light, no electricity."

So, do all these knight-moves really help educate?

Farley gives a hearty "yea, verily" to that question.

"It does make an impact," he said. "It gets the kids into a different kind of socialization, one that teaches. It doesn't take them long to fall into the period and enjoy themselves while they learn. This pulls a lot of things together and all the information about the period starts to make sense to them. And getting members of the society to participate is a real plus. These people really live the stuff. It's almost like getting knowledge from a primary source."

Society members will exhibit displays of chain mail (flexible armor made of adjoining metal links), armor, herbal medicines, art work, quilting and tapestries. They will also hold exhibitions and demonstrations in medieval dances and hand-to-hand combat.

Farley said he'll bring his guitar along but he'll have to be content to either play variations of "Greensleeves" or get guidance from society members.

"Yeah, I may need to learn some songs of the period," Farley said with a laugh. "I don't think songs like 'Hey, Good Lookin' will work."

But his other entertaining teaching techniques have worked.

Besides this fourth annual Medieval Fair, Farley has taken his students to Washington, D.C. to view the National Cathedral, he's assigned projects where students design their own tombs, pyramids and castles and he's had his students engage in classroom debates tackling important issues of any particular historical period. He also has ideas that will link his students to the past by using technology of the present.

"I'm thinking of having my students do a video," Farley said. "I'd like for them to do a Medieval Evening News. Now that would be fun and informative."

Forsooth, where do I sign up for Farley's class?