

On the Importance of Voice Heralds

By Donal Mac Ruiseart, Conch Herald

Upon accepting the job of training and instruction for voice heralds and taking the traditional title of Conch, I reflected on what goals I had for this office.

One is to encourage the practice of heralding and improve its quality and prestige.

From what I've heard so far, there are many good voice heralds in Atlantia, but there can NEVER be too many; so I hope to be able to recruit more as time goes by.

I've already had conversations with gentles who feel that voice heralds, especially those who don't do much "book heraldry," are not given much attention by the members of this august College. I suspect there may be a sense among many that heralding (the vocal side of our craft) is less important than heraldry (the "book" side).

While I will not try to rank heralding in relation to heraldry, I will very strongly point out that heralding is a very important art. Voice heralds are among the most visible (and certainly the most audible) of officers. Their importance should not be overlooked.

No other officer has the implicit and explicit responsibility to be the voice of the Crown or Coronet.

No other officer has the right to wear Royal or Baronial arms undifferenced. (More about that later.)

A good voice herald can make the difference between a brawl in the backyard and a chivalric tourney.

A good herald can make a Court move more smoothly, enable those in attendance to understand at least some of the proceedings, and add the element of pageantry which is a good part of the Dream.

In Britain, the practice of law involves two professions: The solicitor who does research and prepares a case, and the barrister who presents the case in court. Some may consider the barrister's job easier than the solicitor's, but their fees are comparable. The professions are complementary, mutually supporting. In the US, the single profession of attorney handles both phases of the craft, and there are those who specialize in one or the other phase, and there are those who do it all.

So it is in the College of Heralds. There are specialists in many of the areas of this office. There are those who specialize in names, those who specialize in armory, and those who specialize in heralding. There are those who do some of all, or some of some and all of others. Like the SCA itself, the College is a big tent held up by many different supports, all of which contribute to its functions.

Don't sell the vocal heralds short. They - we - are the ones everyone sees and hears.

On the Proper Garb of Heralds

This is the "later" to which I alluded above.

Until fairly recently, few heralds in Atlantia wore actual heraldic tabards. The standard for many years was the green tabard with the heralds' badge, the crossed gold trumpets. A dozen or so years ago, Baroness Clare de Crecy created heraldic tabards for the heralds of the Baronies then extant in the Kingdom. I believe that worthy lady also made one for Triton. Thus began the adoption of proper tabards in this noble realm.

Atlantian custom, which has existed for some time, holds that only THE herald of a branch can wear a heraldic tabard bearing that branch's arms. All Atlantian heralds can use the **Atlantian ensign tabard**.