

KNIGHTHOOD CEREMONY FOR VAGN¹

April 3, 1993

[skip the intro speech about “in the middle ages there existed many orders of...]

KING OLAF: Master Gunwaldt, bring your squire before us.

GUNWALDT: Your Majesty, this is Vagn, who for three years has served me well. Today before your people I would release him from this service.

KING OLAF: You have our leave.

GUNWALDT TO VAGN: You have learned well and made me proud. For your work in the arts, al-Barran has rewarded you. For your service to the Crown, a great King rewarded you. You are a master of the sword and axe and spear. A king noted that by making you a Defender of the Stag’s Blood. You no longer have need of me, and I send you out into the world the equal of great men.

VAGN [turns toward audience:]

This my Master has taught me:

A man cannot be wise until he has endured the winters of his life.

A wise man must be patient, not easy to anger, nor loose of speech.

Neither rash nor unreliable in battle.

He should not lack courage nor be greedy for plunder.

He should never boast actions before he can achieve them.

He must hold back his promises until he has thought them through and has no doubt, for a man’s word is a gift from the gods.

And a wise man must contemplate destruction, his and those around him, for the final joy of life is to welcome death in battle, to be carried over the sea by the raven, to be devoured by the wolf, to be toasted by Odin’s own.

This my Master taught me.

VAGN [turns from audience and addresses Gunwaldt]:

This is a great gift you have given me, Master, for these words I have taken to heart and made my own.

Now I too would like to give you a gift, my most prized possession, this symbol (Vagn holds up over his head the squire’s belt) of all that I hold to be true.

With sorrow for all that was and will be no more,
and joy for here and now and what will be.²

GUNWALDT TO KING OLAF: My King—here now stands Vagn,
a free man without debt to any.

KING OLAF: Vagn, you fought with your shipmates and countrymen at Estrella, as you have many times and in many lands before, by my side and at your master’s.³ We offered then to raise you to the level of our finest, the Chivalry. You stood vigil there at Estrella, where many advised

¹ Most of this is the ideal—what we intended to say. People did better than 95% on saying what they meant to say. Some things have been changed to match what actually happened.

² Lord Bjarni, Vagn’s brother, composed this section..

³ Olaf added “by my side and at your master’s” as he went. Good phrase.

you and learned your heart.⁴ Now We will hear your will in this. Will you accept knighthood from Our hands this day?

VAGN: If Your Majesties still find me worthy.

KING OLAF [nods or gestures to the herald to call Order of Chivalry]

JALUT: Our Undoubted King, Olaf, calls these men to come before him:⁵

Master Baldrich (Balderian Boulderbane)

Sir Johann von Hohen-Staffen [*Johann had been there earlier but had left.*]

Sir Avram the Jew

Sir Stefan (of the Wanderers)

Sir Douglas (MacAndrew)

Sir Olaf Bearcrusher

Sir James Arthursson

Master Odan (av Halogaland)

Sir Michael (die Zauberzunge von Essen)

Sir Daved (Schmuel ben Rachon)

Sir Lavan

Sir Artan

Sir Thorsvald

Sir Johann von Balduinseck [*This Johann too had been there earlier but had left.*]

Sir Kragon (of Land's End)

Sir Berold (Blackwolf de Gilbert)

Sir Robert of the Mountain

Sir Haroun (ibn al dh'b al Abyadh)

Sir Rutnor (Rotbart von Rothenbert)

Sir Needham (Bledsoe)

Sir Gareth (of Gryphon's Nest)

Sir Gregor (von Munchausen)

Sir Haakon (av Jorvik)

Sir Robert (Glendon of Auk)

Sir Torin (Tornwaldt)

Sir Ian (Domhall)

*[already up there: Olaf, Leif (Crown Prince), Gunwaldt
parentheses on the list show what wasn't actually read out]]*

QUEEN JEANNE: Our newest knight, Sir Giovanni, was asked to speak.
We wish to hear his words.

AELFLAED: Your Majesties, Master Giovanni is in a foreign land doing great service, but he has sent these words, by his own hand: ⁶

I, Master Giovanni, having taken counsel with other members of the Pelican,

⁴ Olaf said, "And you learned your heart." Some of the mistakes were as good as the original lines.

⁵ "His Majesty therefore calls forth..." is what was said.

⁶ Ælflæd messed this up some (Sorry, Giovanni!) and said "Sir Giovanni" but the speech covers it over. (At the end as I rolled it back up I said "These are the words of Master Giovanni di Sienna.")

do this day speak on behalf of my Order. Vagn has grown in noble grace and virtue and has shared these attributes with others. Further, Vagn has consistently given of himself and of his time freely, helping all who are in need. These attributes that Vagn has displayed show him to be a worthy individual for any award. I do affirm that Vagn is a true Peer of the Realm.

These are the words of Master Giovanni.

QUEEN JEANNE: Good Mistress Genevre, speak to us of Vagn's knowledge of the arts.

GENEVRE: Your Majesties, as a representative of the Order of the Laurel, I do affirm that this man will honor and support the arts and sciences of your kingdom, as he practices them himself. He has made clothes for himself, fighting tabards for himself and others. He has made armor for himself and others, and has done some work in leather. Then there is of course his mead. You may be assured that as a peer he will support your kingdom through the arts and sciences.

QUEEN JEANNE: Worthy Sir Artan, will you confirm this man?

ARTAN: I speak today for my order, the Knights and Masters of Arms of the Outlands. I have met with my brothers and sought their good council and would have you know that they wholeheartedly support this elevation. For myself, I would say that I have traveled much of the known world, and I have met many great knights—men such as John Bearkiller and Raymond the Quiet—and I would place Lord Vagn among those men. When a knight from the Outlands travels to a foreign realm, he carries with him the honor of the Outlands upon his shoulders. There is none whom I would rather have bear this burden than Lord Vagn. To paraphrase the words of Countess Ælflæd, Your Majesties have many knights, but few who are so knightly as Lord Vagn.⁷

KING OLAF: We are most satisfied. Bring forth Lightning.

Vagn, before these our Knights, and before all our people here assembled,
Do you now swear by all that you hold sacred, true and holy
that you will honor and defend
the Crown and Kingdom of the Outlands?

VAGN: This I do swear.

QUEEN JEANNE: That you will honor, defend, and protect
all ladies, and those weaker than yourself?

VAGN: I will with all my heart.

KING OLAF: That you will honor your peers, of the Chivalry,
of the Laurel, and of the Pelican?

⁷ Artan wrote this, spoke it nearly word for word from memory, and furnished the transcript afterwards. He left out “*much of [the known world]*” and said “foreign kingdom” instead of “foreign realm.”

VAGN: Always, your Majesty.

QUEEN JEANNE: That you will conduct yourself in all matters as befits a Peer, to the benefit of your own good name and for the glory of the Outlands?

VAGN: I will until the last day of my life.⁸

⁸ Vagn's responses were not scripted; we got them off the videotape later.

KING OLAF: Having heard your solemn oaths,
We, Olaf and Jeanne, by right of arms,
King and Queen of the Outlands,
dub you for honor, for duty, and for chivalry.
Arise, Sir Vagn,⁹
and may God dispose you to high honour in all things,
making you an upright man in thought, in word, and in deed.
Be thou true and faithful.

THE BELT

LAVAN: Your majesty, this belt I made by my own hands, and the hand of Lord Bjarni Kenhelm. It is fashioned so that all may know the man who wears it.

QUEEN JEANNE: The white belt symbolizes honor, and your knightly rank and station.

THE BABY KNIGHT CHAIN¹⁰

(Sir Torin had the chain, and handed it to Olaf.)

KING OLAF: Let this chain pass hand to hand among these knights,
whose hands and lives have created it.

(Olaf held the chain in his fist, holding it out to Gunwaldt with it out in a position for Gunwaldt to accept it in the flat of his hand. Gunwaldt gestured for the king to give it to Haakon, who had stayed on the dais to hold the sword of state. Olaf shook his head slightly without looking away from Gunwaldt, and Gunwaldt took the chain.)

GUNWALDT: In my heart I hold the words of a skald much greater than I.
By your leave I will try to give them voice.

In tournament and on battlefield
oft have you shown swordmight
but fully should all know
it is not this which makes a knight
More important are these three:
spirit, honor and chivalry. ¹¹

⁹ The set-up was that the king and queen were two steps higher, so he was already standing. This is just for the record, for someday when they make a movie...

¹⁰ For the benefit of our non-Outlandish readership, there is a chain made of one link of each of the knights' chains, used for knightings, and by the newest knight until the next knighting.

¹¹ This verse is by Master Ark of Ringholden

Not for foe, not for friend
should the bond to duty break.
Word which lives on tongue, in heart,
an oath of lifesblood undertake.
what binds a man unto a king
can honor or dishonor bring

The strength of arm and back and sword
Must not be stronger than this word
Which given here before all men
will live and guide you now and when
some other kings this chain command.

Then Vagn, Stoutheart, may you stand
Honored, at the king's right hand.
The Outlands hale and mighty be
where kings of lesser lands may see
that such as you will stand them down
in service to the Outlands Crown¹²

KING OLAF: This chain symbolizes duty, and your bond to the Crown of the Outlands.
It is a heavy burden.¹³

SPURS

KING OLAF: Sir Robert Glendon of Auk, you have travelled from afar to honor this day.¹⁴

SIR ROBERT: Aye your Majesty, that I have; though no distance would be too great for me to honor Sir Vagn. He has always been my brother in word and deed.
I have spurs made by my own hand, the spurs needed to control the great steeds of war. They are a hallmark of the knight. Wear them honorably and proudly, Sir Vagn. Let them never be put from your body in disgrace.

KING OLAF: So may you for a long lifetime, Vagn.

THE SWORD

KING OLAF: A knight needs a sword.

SIR DAVED SHMUEL: Your Majesties; *[to Vagn:]* the sword is a gift from Master Gunwaldt Gulbjorn, a man who loves you, respects you and reveres you. The scabbard is my

¹² The last three verses are by Mistress Ælflæd of Duckford

¹³ This last line was added on the spot, in response to Vagn having said softly, "It's heavy!" We all only heard "It is a heavy burden," and that's where it came from.

¹⁴ This was part of the half-scripted section. Olaf's line was written and Robert knew what it was going to be, so he had the opportunity to create a response to match it. We didn't know Robert's response in advance.

work by his commission. Please accept it from our hands. [Gives it to the King.]

KING OLAF: The sword of a knight should be drawn only for just cause.
Your duty to keep it sheathed in peace matches your duty to draw it in battle.

VAGN: Give me leave to draw it in peace now, to swear my fealty upon it. ¹⁵

QUEEN JEANNE: Vagn, know now that your fealty is like the keen edge of your sword.
Be it ever true.

[So VAGN kneels,¹⁶ the king and queen hold the sword, and he swears]:

I will use this sword as though it were Your own.
I will be true in word and deed.
I will make it my duty to serve the King and Queen of the Outlands
as long as ships glide and shields flash.¹⁷
I, Vagn, do swear this oath on my belt, my chain, and this sword.

KING OLAF: We accept your oath, and pledge for Our part
to serve the Outlands first and always,
for the good of all Our people,
borne up by the service of those such as you.
By the Crown of the Outlands We swear this.

VAGN [sheaths his sword, saying]
May these oaths live in this sword forever.¹⁸

BUFFET

KING OLAF: Stand before us now as a Knight in fealty.
Take this blow with the strength of a Knight, Sir Vagn.
*[and Olaf walked out toward him and said "I put on all my rings just for you," and
people kind of laughed. When it got quiet again he said:]*
Let this be the last blow that you do not answer.

THE SCROLL

KING OLAF: Let our words be sounded throughout this hall.
[pseudo-Viking for "let the scroll be read"]

JALUT: *[read the scroll]*
["escort him from the presence" speech]

¹⁵ "Your Majesties, may I now draw my sword in peace, to swear my fealty upon it?" is what was said.

¹⁶ If he had knelt he wouldn't have been able to reach the sword, but it was the original idea...

¹⁷ This made Genevre cry.

¹⁸ What he actually said was "May these oaths in this sword live forever" which is also kind of nice.

THE CAST:

Olaf and Jeanne, King and Queen

Jalut, Herald

Gunwaldt, a master of arms in the king's service

Vagn, the candidate for knighthood/new knight

Several Knights (playing themselves)

Ælflæd of Duckford / Giovanni di Sienna, Pelicans [Giovanni was at his first board meeting] \

Genevre le Tisserande, a Laurel

Artan MacAilin, a Knight

Lavan Longwalker, belt-bearer (and artisan)

Daved Shmuel, sword-bearer (and scabbard maker)

Robert Glendon of Auk, spur-bearer (and artisan)

Mistress Sarah de Montgomery, calligraphy and illumination

Mistress Genevre le Tisserande, embroidery and construction of white tunic

Thora, pants

Lord Bjarni, belt-making and writing

Sir Creon the Artisan, Master of the Laurel, leather tooling consultant extraordinaire

CREDITS:

Draft by Ælflæd of Duckford, following planning session involving Vagn, Gunwaldt, Lavan, Bjarni, Thora and Ælflæd.

Oath re-write following discussions with Olaf and with Vagn.

Vagn's speech to and about Gunwaldt by Lord Bjarni Kenhelm.

Verse during the passing of the chain: Verse I by Ark Kazad; II-IV by Ælflæd

Olaf's response to sword request by Vagn.

"As long as..." phrase in fealty ceremony from Icelandic Law.

Speeches by Genevre, Artan, Giovanni, Lavan, Daved and Robert are their own words.

There was no one who had heard or read the entirety of this before it happened. The parts had never been put together before that night, so even those who were familiar with most of it had surprises to hear.

We got names of people in who weren't even there. If Gunwaldt had been a squire, we could have gotten his master/knight's name in (consider for future usage). Giovanni wasn't there but his name was said four times. John the Bearkiller and Raymond the Quiet were named.