

# Calvert County Times

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**IN COMMUNITY  
DRAGON BOATS DRAW  
A CROWD**

## Church Preserves State Sport 151-Year Tradition

Photo from Maryland Jousting Tournament Association

# Calvert County Jousting Tournament Still Going Strong After 150 Years

By Dick Myers  
Editor

The Super Bowl – 51 years. The Masters – 83 years. The World Series – 130 years. The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show – 140 years. The Kentucky Derby – 142 years. And then there's the Calvert County Jousting Tournament at 151 years.

This Saturday, Aug. 26 marks the 151<sup>st</sup> edition of the Calvert County Jousting Tournament at Christ Church in Port Republic. And, the tournament has run continuously except for one year during World War II, making it the oldest jousting tournament and putting it right up there in the ranks of sporting events throughout the country.

Jousting is indeed a sporting event, memorialized as the Maryland State Sport by a bill introduced in 1962 by St. Mary's County Delegate Henry J. Fowler, Sr., passed by the Maryland General Assembly and signed into law by then Gov. J. Millard Tawes. The honor was somewhat watered down in 2004 when the legislature bestowed the title of "State Team Sport" to lacrosse.

According to the Maryland Jousting Tournament Association, "Jousting is the oldest equestrian sport in the world. During the Middle Ages, it was a form of waging war, but with the invention of gunpowder, the art of jousting a man bodily from his horse, became outmoded as a battle strategy. The tournament field became a place of 'Sport,' and the knights turned their lances to the more sophisticated, skillful task of spearing small metal rings. Jousting became a civilized game of keen horsemanship, skill and sportsmanship with the development of 'The Ring Tournaments'."

The venue for the annual jousting tournament, Christ Church on Broomes Island Road in Port Republic, is no slouch when it comes to its own history. It is the mother Episcopal Church of Calvert County and its oldest continually worshipping congregation. The church is a three-bay-wide, five-bays-long, beige stucco-covered structure featuring stained glass in most of the tall paired round-arched sash windows.

According to Richard Dodds, the church vestry's junior warden and curator of Maritime History at Calvert Marine Museum, the earliest church records show a baptism in 1672. Dodds, who has done research on church history, said the existing main church building is the third on the site and was constructed in 1772. The cemetery includes the gravesite of former U. S. Representative Thomas Parran, Sr. The church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

Jousting is alive and well in Maryland says President of the Maryland Jousting Tournament Association Ron Vogel. "We are on the up rise now," he said and attributed it to the number of young people entering the sport. A prime example is last year's Calvert County Jousting Tournament Champion, 19-year-old Lily Fisher Flaherty of Lusby, who then went on to become the 2016 Maryland State Jousting Champion. She will be returning to Port Republic this Saturday to compete again.

Vogel got started in the sport at the age of 12. He said he was lucky to be part of the youth group that had a superior mentor, Mary Lou Bartrum, well-known in state jousting circles. But he got out of the sport for 30 years before returning. He's been back for 25 years.

Vogel described the Port Republic tournament as "One of the biggies." He said support for the sport is strong in Southern Maryland. There are 20 tournaments this year in the state; the other in Southern Maryland is at the St. Mary's County Fair.

People are attracted to the sport because it is so objective. You either spear the ring or you don't, he said. It also provides both sexes with an equal opportunity to compete and excel. That doesn't mean it's a piece of cake. "It's difficult to do," Vogel deadpanned.

The key to jousting success, Vogel said, is for the rider and horse to become one, so the rider doesn't even think about the horse so he or she "will focus on the rings."

Vogel thinks that over time the quality of the jousting riders has diminished probably because they devote less time to the sport and particularly less time to practicing for tournaments because of their busy life schedules. He said several decades ago, "the bar was higher."

The men in jousting are called Knights and the women Maids, harkening back to medieval times.

So how does it work? According to the Maryland Jousting Tournament Association, "Each knight gallops his horse down a dirt track beneath three arches, when he is called in turn to charge. Suspended from each arch is a metal harness ring wrapped with white cord. The track is 80 yards long. The first arch is 20 yards from a starting point and each succeeding arch is 30 yards distance from one another on a straight course. As the knight charges through the arches in a time limit of 9 seconds he attempts to spear the metal rings on his long, steel tipped lance. Rings vary in size from 1 3/4" in diameter to 1 1/4 of an inch in diameter. After each contestant has received 3 rides at 'large size' rings, those with tie scores are given one charge at rings a size smaller. If there are still ties, a smaller size ring is used until only the victorious knight remains in the contest."

The jousting field sits behind Christ Church with a permanent track that was eerily serene a week before the event, during a tour of the church and grounds for the County Times conducted by Senior Warden Nancy Zinn and Peter Cochran, a church member, who is also on the state jousting association board.

Cochran said the tournaments are exciting and competitive, with many of the four classes requiring dead heats, with ring sizes being lowered in each heat so they become no bigger than the opening of a Life Saver.

The annual tournament is an important fundraiser for the church, according to Zinn. The church



Lily Fisher Flaherty of Lusby, 2016 Maryland State Jousting Champion

grounds will be abuzz with activities in addition to the tournament. Included is a church bazaar that will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., featuring attic treasures, books, baked goods, toys, country store, pony rides, a balloon artist and face painting.

A country supper will be held from 2-6 p.m. (rain or shine) and will feature fried chicken, deviled crab and ham (choice of two), side dishes, beverage and dessert for \$20 for adults; children (ages 6-12) \$8 and children under 6 with a paying adult are free.

Music will be provided in the historic, air-conditioned church from 1-4 p.m., rain or shine.

The church grounds also contain an old, one-room schoolhouse that taught many area children until it closed in 1929. It has been lovingly restored by the Calvert Retired Teachers Association as a bicentennial project. The schoolhouse will be open for tours on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Christ Church is getting ready to welcome its third rector in the last 65 years. The Rev. Christopher M. Garcia has accepted the position of Rector for Christ Church. He will start on October 1, 2017. Fr. Christopher retired from the army as colonel after 25 years of active service as a lawyer in the US and abroad. He graduated cum laude from Virginia Theological Seminary and cum laude from Cornell University Law School.

The first joust begins on the grounds at noon. There is no admission fee, although donations are accepted. The church is located at 3100 Broomes Island Road (MD 264), just a short distance off MD Routes 2/4 in Port Republic.

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