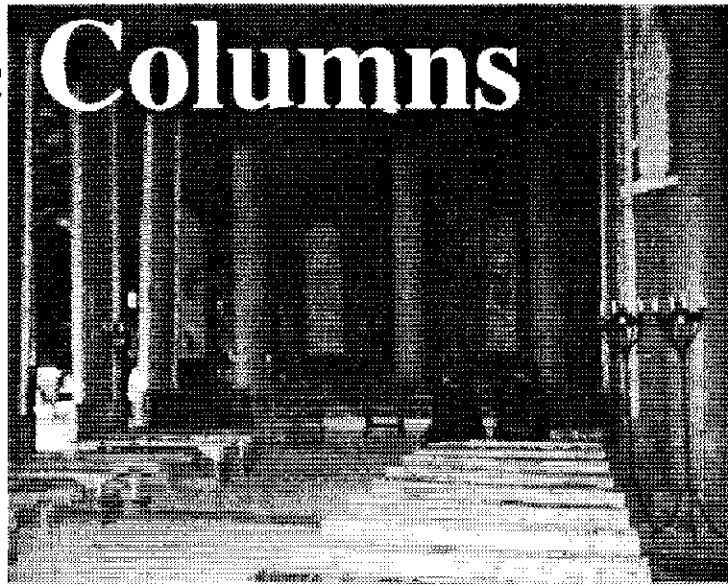


# The Columns



**At Left:** A calm moment just before the performance

**Below:** Merald Clark (Duke Merowald) applies faux paint to a sub-column.

**B**uilding the 11 columns that would form the nave of the cathedral also required as much time in planning as in actual construction. I agonized for weeks, trying to figure out what I could possibly afford to use as the 1,000 square feet of material necessary to cover the column frames. I kept searching the want-ads until I found an advertisement for *heavy truck covering fabric: like canvas, \$1 per yard at 12 ft. wide.*

I drove to northern Maine, where the snow stays on the ground until May, and purchased 110 yards. The roll of grey, rigid nylon fabric weighed about 400 lbs., and the owner had to lift it onto my little pickup truck with a crane. I burned out my new Skilsaw cutting it, only to discover that metal sheers worked better.

We then purchased 11 sheets of plywood and 44 2x4s. Hilary scrounged up about 50 – 12-ft. carpet tubes from local carpet dealers, many of whom throw the tubes out with their trash.

**Bases:** The 2-ft. bases, for the large columns, I determined, would have to be assembled at Pennsic. Otherwise they would have filled the entire U-Haul trailer. We made top and bottom pieces by scroll-cutting them from plywood, then we created three vertical “boxes” to act as legs for each base.

At Pennsic, we assembled the bases with sheetrock screws, and stapled unbleached muslin tightly around each base. Then Hilary, Sarah, Marie and several others applied a base of gray latex paint to the whole base. Marie and others followed this treatment with a faux speckling treatment done with sponges of light gray and black designed to make the columns appear more

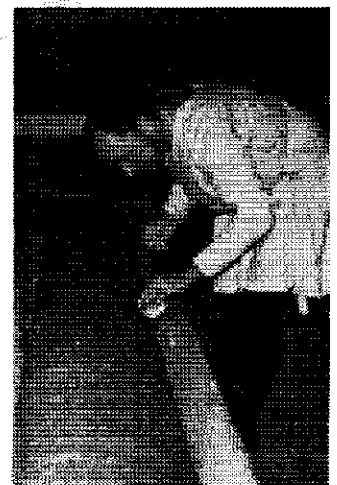
stonelike. With some helpful verbal instruction from Frederich, the effect worked very nicely.

**Main Cylinder:** Each large cylinder required four plywood discs as frame braces, all of which Arawn and I cut using a jigsaw. All told, we had to cut 77 of those little monsters. It was a very nasty, unpleasant job, which I hope never to repeat. The two discs on the ends of each column we screwed directly on to the ends of the vertical frame pieces, and we notched the middle discs to fit the frame pieces. They sat on properly spaced plywood blocks.

To create the vertical frame, I ripped each of the 2x4s lengthwise, until we had 88 sections. Then Corwin, Cormac and I screwed on strips of plywood (to serve as connectors and blocks for the spacing discs). Each column shaft, then, required eight 8-ft. framing pieces, 4 discs and 8 plywood blocks – to assemble.

To finish, we would, wrap the heavy fabric around each column and attached it with roofing nails to the vertical piece on the back side.

**Sub-columns:** Six of the main cylinders would also include three 14-ft full-round moldings made from carpet tubes. Arawn and I cut the tubes into 7-ft, 9-ft. and 5-ft.



# Columns (continued)

lengths. We then inserted smaller carpet tubes into one of each pair, to serve as a connecting sleeve. Each tube then received a base coat of gray latex.

On site, Merowald and others applied faux painting to each of these sub-columns as we assembled the sections.

**Trim, Moldings:** To make these columns look like something more than stale geometric shapes, we had to trim every cylinder and sub column at both top and bottom. To this end, I cut individual beveled boards with cutouts to fit on the top and bottom of each sub-column. Hilary and I then added round moldings of vinyl garden hose and painted the whole trim assembly gray.

At Pennsic, we also added sections of "soaker hose" to the top and bottom of every main cylinder, at the point where it met either the base or the top plate.

**Assembling and Erecting the Columns:** You may recall that I once discussed assembling and finishing the entire setting in the two hours before the performance. I would estimate that the column assembly alone at Pennsic required about 100 man/woman-hours. Hilary, Sarah and Marie assembled all of the bases and painted them (with help) while the rest of us put together the massive main shafts. As we assembled each column, everybody would stop what they were doing to do the "Iwo Jima" thing. They looked unbelievably big when standing vertical, and had to be tied to the nearest rafter for safety, although they would stand without support. On the two most peripheral columns, we hung the statues of Theodore and Melchisidek (holding our breath) on small eye-hooks screwed into the frame.

What took all day to raise, however, came down remarkably fast. When we struck the set at 12:15 Saturday, we had all of the columns on the floor in about 15 minutes. I turned to Merowald, in a moment of indecision. "Should I keep them?" I asked.

"You're the one who says it has to be gone," he said. "That's what gives it power. That's the mystery."

We tore the columns apart and discarded them. For the last time, our architecture would be temporary, although I decided then and there that my days of building temporary places had ended.



Raising the columns required at least three or four people.

**At Top, Above:** From left to right, unknown, Arawn of Glastonbury (one of my squires) and Hieronymous. That's Alaric, another of my squires, in the background.