

focus

The Battalion, Thursday, September 27, 1979

Hast thou seen Magnolia?

Renaissance is revived

By BETH CALHOUN
Focus Editor

The Texas Renaissance Festival is Big Business.

"It's a theme park, like Six Flags or Astroworld," said Elroy Forbes, public relations manager for TRF.

"It's an atmosphere park," Forbes said, "but instead of rides and plastic, we have games. And instead of a midway, we have the artisans' booths."

In its fifth year, the festival has grown from 30,000 attending it the first year to 175,000 last year. Forbes estimated that 270,000 will attend this year.

"But we'll be happy with 250,000."

And with a \$7 entrance fee for adults and \$3 for children 8-12, the festival is taking in about "a million dollars at the gate" alone, Forbes said.

An additional source of income is the shop fee artisans must pay in order to sell their wares. The \$150 fee for the six-week festival is paid after the artist has been juried and approved by the TRF.

All of the craftsmen must be authentic. Candlemakers, glass blowers, weavers, dyers, calligraphers, bookbinders, woodcarvers, sculptors and leatherworkers. The list is almost endless.

The artist then builds his own shop, which must also be juried and approved.

"The shop fee is changed every year," said Larry Vickrey, a spokesman for TRF. "Next year, we may do away with it."

The booths number about 250, with about 400 artisans installed in them. Forbes said many times up to four craftsmen will share a booth to help defray costs.

Most of the shops are built by the artisans with material they furnish, Forbes said, but in some cases the artisans can use left-over material from booths built by the TRF.

If a craftsman is caught violating the rules, Forbes said, he will be asked to leave.

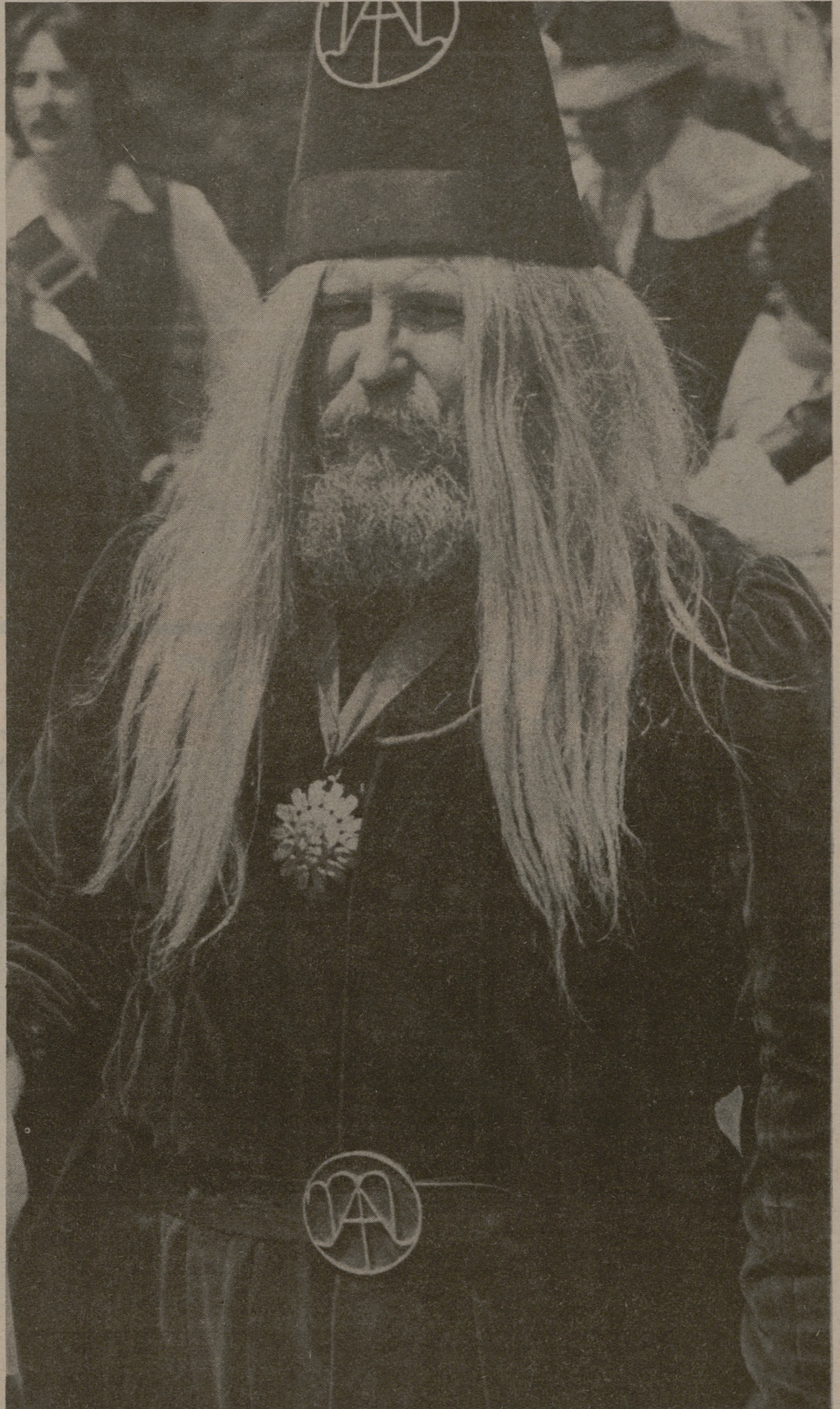
"Last year, we gave one about an hour to clear out." The artisan was guilty of selling someone else's work.

Besides the gate fee, a visitor could expect to spend anywhere from 50c to \$50 on food and drink.

"It just depends on how big an eater you are," Vickrey said. "If a person has a taste of everything, they could spend \$40-50."

Everything can include a turkey leg for \$2.25, broiled shrimp with rice for \$2.75, corn is 75c, or a pretzel for 50c.

Beer is \$1, a large soft drink is 75c, wine is \$1.50 and cookies and cream puffs, sundaes, apple strudel, and on and on.



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