

Games and actors enliven the festival

Continued from cover.

The food is handled by T.N.T. Specialties, Forbes said, a company separate from TRF.

An independent may also try to set up shop, for \$1200 for the six-week festival. But like the artisans, they must be approved — the food must be from an authentic Renaissance recipe.

The festival will have 38 food booths this year, an increase of 20 over last year's 18.

The 149-acre festival grounds are also the home of about 300 costumed strolling minstrels and performers.

Some of the performers are salaried professional actors. Another group is paid "very, very low," Forbes said, and rely on tips from pleased passers-by. Still another group is "tips only."

A group from the Drama and Dance Departments of Sam Houston University will also be on hand. The money they earn is donated to a scholarship fund.

"The performers are watched and judged every day," Forbes said. This is to see if they are doing their job properly, which will decide whether they are asked to return.

And then there are the Renaissance games, which can be played for a fee, usually about 50c. Most of the games are operated by charity groups.

Jacobs Ladder, a rope ladder with three-point balance, that looks easy enough to climb up and down, can be won by climbing the 10-foot slanting rope and ring a bell.

A patron may be placed in the Stocks for not knowing the King's colors. To get out and avoid public ridicule, the offender must be kissed by a virgin.

Much of the profit, Forbes said, is plowed back into the business for the next year.

"It took the first three years to pay for the beginning one," Forbes said. "The last couple of years have been successful enough to pay for things."

"Things" include \$20,000 for the Newmarket Race Track. Five thousand dollars was spent for "operations" and \$15,000 is for prizes for the races this year.

Fifty thousand dollars was spent for the theaters, Forbes said.

"Some costumes and props had to be replaced, some props which are used up each week have to be paid for.

"There are also salaried players that have to be paid."

There are three theaters: the Actors Podium, the Newcastle Theater and The Globe, built in true Shakespearean fashion.

Also included in the theater budget are "grants" given to musicians that wanted to purchase authentic instruments, but didn't have enough money.

The King's Garden and Mews and the grounds were also refurbished, to the tune of \$70,000.

New trees were planted, hot house roses grown and tropical bushes and hanging baskets and flowering plants were placed next to the booths and at the gates.

Besides the entertainers and artisans, the "food people easily number about 300 and the race track employs about 200. And that's not counting guards, ticket people, parking attendants and about 50-100 costumed garbage collectors," Forbes said. "We've given a lot of people jobs."

The festival rights and grounds are owned by "King" George Coulam who is "Sovereign" and his brother "Prince" David Coulam, who is "Sovereign of Coins."

The grounds are six miles north of Magnolia. Take Hwy 6 South, to 105 East (Conroe) and then Hwy 1774 South. The festival is every weekend through Nov. 4, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For "about \$20, you could have a really good time," Forbes said. This includes entrance fee, food and drink, tips and "\$2 for a roll of film."



Photos by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.



The Texas Renaissance Festival is a chance for anyone to become a character they've always wanted to be. Elroy Forbes says he is "King Henry VIII. I also do PR (public relations)." The theme park can hold its own perils as two sword swinging

swashbucklers show. Even though it was a heated battle, both walked away. This year, over 38 booths will hold food stuffs, all authentic 15th century, of course. "Beuff Ribs" is a specialty.