



A medieval road race.

photos by Pat O'Malley

to the feeling of the area. That's exactly what they're paid to do. Many of them are college drama students and other extroverts who enjoy getting stared at a lot.

I work at a couple of the games on the site, encouraging people to "Fight the Knight" or play "King of the Log." Those two games are run by the Society for Creative Anachronism, and in exchange for providing the labor and otherwise hanging around looking medieval and being courteous to everyone, the organization gets to keep the proceeds.

Entertainment is practically non-stop on two or three stages spaced about the site. There are brass quintets, belly dancers, a wisecracking comedy fencing duo and gypsy singers. Roving about the grounds are even more. Jugglers, rope-walkers, sword swallows, singers, beggars, they are all personable, friendly, talented, and they all want your money. As much of it as you will give them.

I hate to keep going back to the money, but that is what the TRF revolves around. While it is a lot of fun, and a learning experience and

all that, it is essentially a money-making proposition. And everyone joins in the enterprise.

Many a cute girl paid minimum wage to sell food or drinks bolsters her income and bustline with stuffed dollar bills. Many a costumed stroller will stop and pose for a picture and gladly accept any tip they receive.

There are some things, however, that bother me. Take the bathrooms, or "privies." A vast number of portable toilets are trucked in every year to accommodate the beer-soaked crowd, and each strategically placed group has one or more attendants. These attendants hold cameras and other things, keep track of which toilets are empty and generally keep things moving by shouting through the doors phrases too embarrassing to repeat here.

But the question remains: How do these people get these jobs? I find it hard to believe that someone writes the TRF and says, "Dear Sir: I would like to work in your toilets. Resume enclosed."

A typical workday starts slow, as only the most hardy arrive at the crack of 9 a.m. If the weather's even halfway decent (Saturday was a

real laugh — it rained as hard there as it did in Collee Station. Sunday turned out pretty nice, though) a gigantic crowd is usually there by 10:30 or so, and it doesn't start thinning out until at least 5.

Late in the afternoon, another problem surfaces: the drunks.

Many a hearty reveler stays until the sun is low in the sky, drinking anything he can get his hands on. A full day of "The National Beer of the Texas Renaissance Festival" takes its toll. These people are a little difficult to get along with, especially if you're a pretty girl. The drunks show little mercy, though, being obnoxious to everyone as they flow back toward the main gate and their (shudder) cars for the long drive home.

When your day starts at 5 in the morning, going home is a welcome event. The TRF closes down faster than a snake-oil salesman when Sunday evening rolls around. It's back to the real world, where all the kings and knights and dukes and jongleurs and courtesans go back to being secretaries and accountants and music teachers and, yes, even Aggies.



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