



The 10th Annual Texas Renaissance Festival

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Once upon a time (for lack of a better lead and because all good fairy tales start that way), for nine autumns in a magical land, the Renaissance King has declared that the people of twentieth century Texas are welcome in his world of sixteenth century England.

Now the tenth year has come and the King has sent his royal messengers through the land with a call to the people.

"It's time to eat your fill, to drink what you will and to make merry with the pretty maids," the messengers said. "Those are the things that make life worth living."

This is the tale of two scholars, Geoff and Melissa, who set aside their texts to seek the land from which the couriers came — the land that promises over-indulgence in food, frolic, brew and bawdiness.

School books were tossed, camping gear was packed and the short drive to Plantersville (The King's choice for the Texas

Renaissance Festival) began.

They left their car in the parking lot that seemed as crowded as the ones at their beloved institution of higher learning. Joining the crowd that had journeyed miles to see the Texas Renaissance Festival, Geoff and Melissa approached the gate to pay the \$10 fee of admission.

Although the King is a generous one — he does consider the almighty dollar.

This was their first trip to the land and the expressions on their faces gave it away. They were greeted by a multitude of royal figures, bawdy wenches, colorful children and characters of all kinds.

"Aye, fair maiden and kind sir," Womba The Fool said. Womba is out of the story of Ivanhoe and he roams the street of the New Market Village.

Dressed in a blue headress with horns, a harlequin gown and tights, he is something between a mime and a clown. Ah, but a smart clown. He uses his foolery to survive.

Womba begins his tale of kings and queens of England. He picks Melissa from the gathering crowd, spins her around and dubs her Queen Elinor. The Fool is known for bringing out the actor in everyone — he's agile and energetic and adapts from family shows to bawdy ones.

Hand in hand, the two scholars move on from the stage to the Gypsy Camp.

"Your fortune? Tell your fortune?" the gypsies shout. Happy dancing, lazy lounging — this is where the vagabonds live.

The band of gypsies has raggle-tagged to the Festival in wagons heavy with baggage, children and women. Protective of their privacy, the gypsies have a clever way of dodging a straight answer.

It is said that if you ask twenty gypsies the same ques-

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The Renaissance Festival is populated with a variety of odd characters including jesters (opposite page) and ogres (above, left). If you stop for a second to watch them, they may rope you into one of their skits or gags. You can also get your face painted (left) at one of the many face painting stations scattered throughout the festival grounds. Photos by Bill Hughes.

