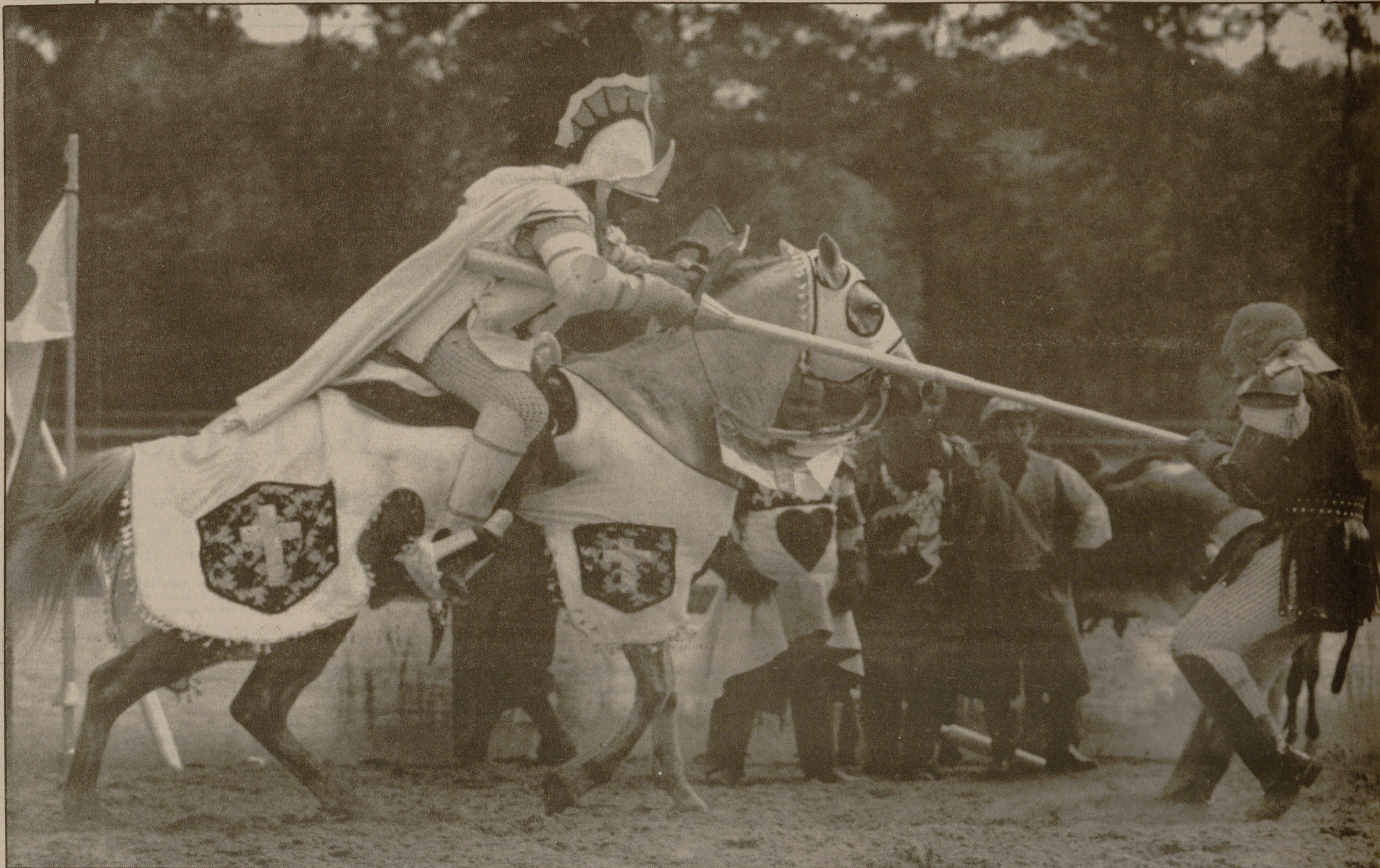


Carol Shannon, one of the more popular attractions at the Renaissance Festival, demonstrates to the audience why she earned the nickname "Boss Belly."

Joust!

Texas Renaissance Festival

1990



Sir Garrett Winston, the white knight, stabs Wolfgang Von Huber, the evil black knight, with his lance during the jousting match.

Each October, over 50 acres in the middle of Plantersville becomes home to the Texas Renaissance Festival, a convention of hundreds of entertainers, musicians, food vendors and artisans, all looking as if they had been plucked right out of the days of Henry VIII.

Everything about the festival has been part of an attempt to reproduce a Renaissance European village.

For instance, you can't walk through the festival grounds and not hear the distinctive musical sounds

of years gone by.

The Gypsy Guerilla Band is a group of four musicians who perform on period instruments such as the chorded zither and the hammered dulcimer to the tune of Renaissance, modern American, and traditional Irish folk songs.

Joyce Lillquist, who plays the chorded zither, refers to their musical style as "Renaissance aerobics."

Donald and Terry Hinely, two brothers from Denton, Texas, comprise the musical duo Glasnost, named for the semi-filled water glasses Terri plays to the accompaniment of Donald's guitar and vocals.

Other forms of entertainment include the ever-popular jousting event, held three times daily to near-capacity crowds.

Following the grand entrance of King Henry VII and his court, the jousts compete for the favor of a lovely wench.

Navasota resident Mark Shimshack, the evil knight, said he practices every other day during the year to avoid any injury during the actual performance.

Another crowd-pleaser at the festival are The Sturdy Mud Eating Beggars, Billy Billy Von Billy, Simon LeSlime, and Spiny Nodules.

The three mud beggars, who call their comic routine "The Greatest Show In Earth," throw, wallow in, and eat mud to the delight of festival-goers.

"Everybody eats dirt metaphorically," Von Billy said. "We do it literally and skip the middle man."

Other entertainment events at the festival include Merlin the Magician, the King's Royal Falconer, belly dancers, swordfighting, jugglers, play performances and numerous other attractions.

Food and drink at the Texas Renaissance Festival are an attraction in themselves.

The nearly 50 food booths at the festival serve everything from period delicacies such as turkey legs and apple dumplings to more modern fare such as pizza and frozen yogurt.

To beat the early-October heat, beer is a popular thirst-quencher.

Kim Fread, a worker in one of the many beer stands on the grounds, says her booth sells about 2,000 glasses of beer each day.

The Renaissance festival is also home to over 250 artisans, most of whom specialize in unusual arts and crafts items. Pottery, stained glass, musical instruments, toys, period hats and clothing, jewelry, hand-blown glass, leather, herbs, crystals, metalworks and wind chimes are a few examples of the multitude of items for sale.

The Texas Renaissance Festival is open from 9 a.m. to dusk every Saturday and Sunday through Nov. 18. The festival is about a 40-minute drive from College Station. To get there, take Highway 6 to Navasota, go east on Highway 105, then turn right onto Farm Road 1774, which will lead you directly to the festival. For more information call 1-800-458-3435.



Above left: To the delight of children and adults alike, 'Goth the Berzerker' (Wayne 'Tiny' Parsons), grunts and snorts his way through the crowd.



Above: The 'Red Knight' takes a swing at Wolfgang Von Huber, the black knight, in hand to hand combat during the jousting match.

Above left: To the delight of children and adults alike, 'Goth the Berzerker' (Wayne 'Tiny' Parsons), grunts and snorts his way through the crowd.

Story by John Mabry

Photos by Söndra Robbins