

## Step into the Faire for a blast from the past Modern-day enthusiasts bring Renaissance flavor home

**ROBERT SCHOENBERG**  
Staff Writer

The Duke and Duchess arrived at the Renaissance Faire and immediately set to work assembling their Royal Tent below the apple trees in the field.

"The site was knee-deep in rotting apples, horse manure and horns," said Her Most Serene Highness, Princess of the Holy Roman Empire, Duchess Anne Wittlesbach of Austria, Queen of Bavaria.

The royals pitched in, along with the household guard, and cleared a spot for the tent. After all the labor was done, the tents pitched and servants dressed, the Duchess, draped in her own magnificent royal gown, resplendent in purple and gold, bedecked with ribbons and velvet, attended by her Captain of the Guard and her Confessor, made her entrance at the Faire.

The Duchess is Anastasia Byrd, temporarily working in the Physical Education Department, filling in for Sheri Schoenborn. When not scheduling basketball games or helping to unjam the computer printer in the office, she is a member of Saint Wolfgang's Bavarian Guild, a group of about 50 actors who attend Renaissance faires in the Northwest, California and Arizona.

Last Wednesday, the Duchess appeared at Jan Anderson's Shakespeare class with the Captain of her Guard and her Confessor, a monk who had taken a vow of silence. When encountered in Barlow Hall, the Duchess appeared regal in her royal gown, the captain appeared defensive and the monk remained silent and pious. When questioned, they answered in English dialect common to the Elizabethan period (1558-1603).

She made her costume herself. It took about 200 hours of machine work and 500 hours of hand work to make the gown. It is a re-creation of an Austrian-German style royal gown worn in the time of the Elizabethans.

"I've been doing costumes for a long time," Byrd said. "I've been sewing probably for 35 years. My grandmother taught me to sew when I was a small child. I've always liked to do costumes. About eight or nine years ago I started to do Renaissance costumes just because they're interesting historically and they're very elaborate. About a

year ago I started attending the renaissance festival in Arizona. My mom lives down there, so I go down there every year. I'm going down there next month to show off my new dress."

The costumes actors wear to the faires are as historically accurate as they can be, with many hours of research going into each design. She not only did her costume but also that of the Duke. She designs costumes for other actors in the guild.

"I took several resource books that I use, costume manuals and art books, and sort of pick and choose the design elements," she said. "The Duke's outfit that I made is a re-creation of a national German costume. His greatcoat is 20 feet around at the bottom."

Another group that is often heard about at these faires is The Society for Creative Anachronism or SCA. This group dresses up in full battle uniforms, chain mail and helmets and then go at each other with clubs in fields of battle.

"They do a lot of beating each other up," said Byrd.

"Renaissance people do dress up," she continued. "Our guild is based on actual historical people. Duke Albert and Duchess Honor were actual people living during the Renaissance. Their son Ernst eventually became a leader in Cologne, Germany. We have four archbishops; one is French, and I can never remember his name."

The actors, while appearing at the faire, must stay in character when in public.

The guild she is a member of is a registered franchise and can attend the many faires that are observed throughout the west coast. The Renaissance Pleasure Faires in California are some of the largest and oldest re-enactment faires in the United States. They were started in 1963 by Phyllis Patterson as a way of educating and entertaining people about history. They are part of a nonprofit organization known as the Living History Center.

The costume that Byrd wears weighs about 75 pounds. Staying in character can be stressful.

"When I get tired of being the Queen, or I just want to go off and play—as the Queen, I can't go anywhere by myself. I must always have escort. There is quite a bit of protocol."

So Byrd has a second costume to



Jessie Knight, Anastasia Byrd, and Joey Knight apply their acting talents to the re-creation of high Renaissance style, with diverse costumes to match.

TIMOTHY A. BELL / Clackamas Print

wear that is not so royal, "I put on another costume and I am known as the Ratlady." This character sells plague rats, sort of 16th century beany babies.

While at the faire the characters take part in ongoing play acting, skits, or what they call bits. At the last faire Byrd attended, an actor playing a Scotsman arranged that the Duke be kidnapped.

Plans were changed when the Duke's weight kept him from being easily spirited away. So the English pirate Captain John Flint changed plans and kidnapped the Duchess. The plan fell apart and the Duchess, "had him put in the stocks."

Also at the last faire, a new attraction was added: a tavern.

"The young man who plays my son,

who is an extremely good actor, he went over to the tavern and got drunk, and the gypsies took his vestments and spread them among themselves. They dressed him up as a belly dancer and sent him back to the tavern," said Byrd.

The Renaissance Faire in Arizona runs for two months on a permanent site. "It's 23 acres. It's huge. They have nine stages for entertainment going all day long."

At the faire they have a wandering Scotsman that provides insults on demand. "You give him cash and point at a person and have him insult them. It doesn't matter if you know him or not, he will go up and insult them. The more money you give him the more insulting he is."

“  
My  
grandmother  
taught me to  
sew when I  
was a small  
child. I've  
always liked  
to do  
costumes.  
”

Anastasia  
Byrd  
Athletic  
secretary

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