



Royalty and Pirates Collide at First Ever “Ren Faire” at Camp Niwana

[Tyler County Booster](#) (11-21-13), 8B.

Queen Isolde and her retinue entered the land of Niwana, heralded by Brenethor, to start Tyler County’s first annual “Ren” Faire, an East Texas take on the Texas Renaissance festivals, Saturday, Nov. 9.

From the shadows, disdain hung in the air, as the Pirate Queen Autumn Blaize and her band of cutthroats lurked, having made landfall early, with little respect for the well-to-do royalty.

Roaming among them, swordsmen, squires, merchants, mercenaries, heralds, and a few artisans and unclaimed visitors tried to stay clear of danger. The broad meadow allowed several stage areas, while around the meadow’s edge vendors in period clothing offered hand crafted rings, curios, clothing, candles and other crafts.



All visitors entering the gates of the kingdom had to declare one’s allegiance at the start to one Queen, Isolde or Blaize, receiving a bracelet to identifying one’s allegiance, drawing one immediately into the Medieval world.

“Argh mate,” a pirate exclaimed, “there be the stench of royalty about.”

“Yonder,” a Royal Guard said, “Your highness! Stay clear. The criminal pirates have no place here.”

The Great Wokanda, story teller, (Darby Kethan, executive director of Camp Fire Southeast Texas), has led the rejuvenation of Camp Niwana for several years ([CampFire.org](#)). She used open-ended props to retell a few fairy tales like Princess and the Pea and Cinderella, enchanting all. Ashby the Gardener (Barr Houston), the summer season camp director, kept an eye on the Goblin’s Grove where the youngest visitors could search for goblin treasure and were rewarded in their quest with garnered jewels of roped pearls and gold.

Kethan teamed up with Creative Director Sir Tristan (Tom Rocap), founder of Sovereign Scrolls, a Live Action Role Play group with steampunk elements, to cohost what both hope to become an annual Renaissance Festival, and his LARP group comes to Niwana once a month ([SovereignScrolls.com](#)).

The energetic and friendly hostilities kindled plenty fires as Kethan hoped the inspirational fun of the Renaissance will help raise interest in the Camp Niwana ([CampNiwana.org](#), 409-200-0331).

In the photo below, Texas Rep. James White is center giving his support to both the Ren Faire enthusiasts and Camp Niwana, impressed with the hard work and creativity. To his right is Kethan, and to his left is Queen Isolde and the Pirate Queen Blaize, the two usually hostile groups agreeing to a parlay for the sake of a lowland newspaper scribe.



Brenethor, aka John Britt, hailed from Vinton, La., yet in character was a part of Crimson Moon chapter within the Kingdom of the Wetlands (Texas and La.), one of 13 kingdoms within larger Kingdom of the Burning Lands assumed in the non-profit Amtgard (AmtgardInc.com). Sophisticated manuals help govern all the kingdoms and chapters and participants nationally with the common goal of education in the Medieval and ancient cultures, focusing upon combat systems and the arts and sciences of the time within family-friendly atmosphere.

Queen Isolde (Erin DeLeon), an art student at Lamar, was attended by two knight escorts. One, Sir Zecks (Seph Wolf) helped protect the queen and run errands. Later in the day she would be the queen in a living Chess game, Brenethor officiating.

Look, the Pirate Queen (Rachel Beck), Morgan Sea Wolf (Joe Wolf), Zandor (James Frisby), Drake Roberts (Keith Davis), and their Cabin Boy (Cameron Doucette) have crossed the plain near the Living Chess Board for some food and grog, near where the royalty had settled for nourishment.

In his teal surcoat, Sir Tristan (Tom Rocap) in a booming voice called out options for his queen, “My Queen! It appears they have Funnels of the Cake and several kind of dog. What is your pleasure, your royal highness?” The Lemonade Stand vendor had hotdogs and chili dogs to complement freshly squeezed lemonade, and no alcohol. Fancy Nancy was there to provide face painting.

The live action did not appear staged, but rather as though one had been transported back into a foreign port where old hostilities brewing. Sir Tristan, head of the Royal Guard,



continued his grudge match with exiled Sea-Wolf (Manfred Wolf) in sword play.

Later in the afternoon, Queen Isolde won the live Chess match, and the pirates were banished from the realm, Pirate Queen Blaize vowing revenge.

Sir Nexus (Benjamin Braddock) had been coming to these for 15 years, in leather and armor on his chest, arms, and shoulders. He was a Teutonic Knight and, as he says, “I am a part of all the groups and have come to fight.” Hawk Loneman (Jesse Carter) from Inferno Pass based in Roger’s Park, Beaumont, came to match skills in battle, but was also a scout and an expert in archery and other weapons of the era.

At dark the finale included fire breathers and fire spinners lit up the afternoon, which in a profound way brought together the visions of both Sovereign Scrolls and Camp Niwana. The “fire” invigorating the live-action exhibitions while at the same time illustrating the very motto of the national Camp Fire creed, dedicated to helping youth “Light the fire within.”