

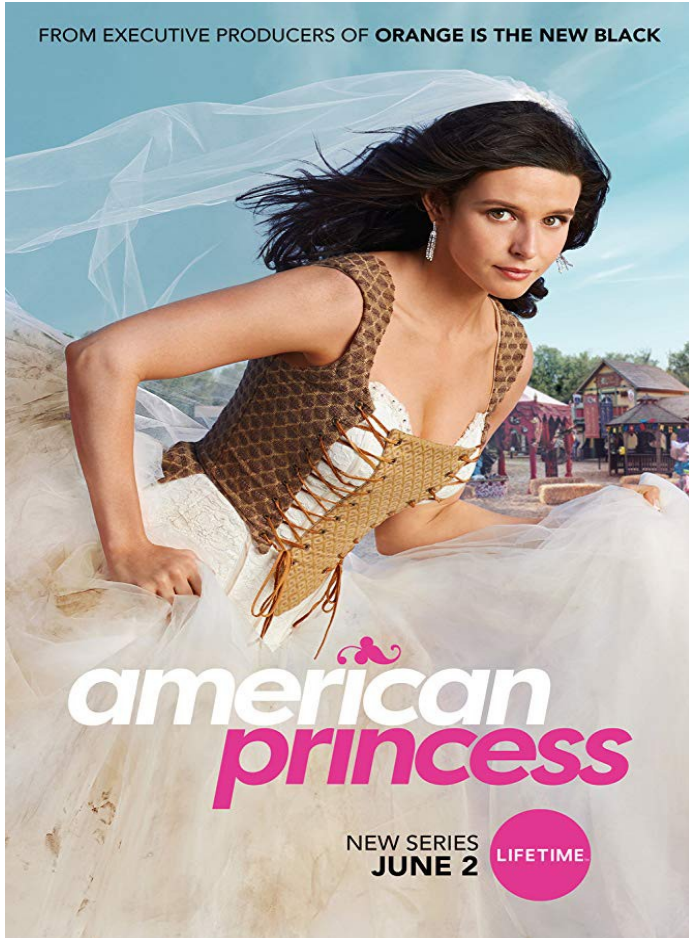
Benevolent Order of Scurrilous Monks

Abbot's Report

Winter Solstice 2019

Mainstream Media Merriment!!

In the Summer of 2019, a television series about renaissance faires debuted on the Lifetime Channel. *American Princess* told the story of a young lady from a well to do family who ran away from home and



became a rennie after having had a very bad wedding day. Our Abbot enjoyed watching the entire series on a questionable internet website. The TV show gave a generally positive depiction of our unusual lifestyles. We saw mud beggars, pub wenches, a rat catcher, a drunk monk, peasants, royalty, knights in shining armor and plenty of et ceteras. Lascivious romantic adventures were highlighted for the sake of ratings. The TV viewers who are inclined to be shocked and outraged sent Emails and wrote letters to voice their disapproval. Awareness of renaissance faires increased throughout the general populace and festival attendance may have increased a bit. The series ran for 10 episodes and was canceled after the end of its first season. For those who have not yet

watched, *American Princess* is still viewable by searching the World Wide Web.

Brother Where Art Thou Looks Displaced

American Princess may have had something to do with increased awareness of sexual harassment in the renaissance festival industry. Complaints and lawsuits popped up at festivals in Sterling, Kansas City, Minnesota, Colorado and elsewhere. A five day court case in Colorado was particularly interesting because we have a first hand report from Brother Where Art Thou (Al Craig). Al has worked at renaissance faires for forty years as a musician, a crafts person and as a crafts coordinator. His consulting business, InterActive Crafts Management, strives to bring the differing and, often conflicting agendas of management & participating artists together under the umbrella of their common goals of increased quality & profitability. He recently wrote: *I appeared in Federal court in Denver this year and was certified as an 'expert witness' on renfares. It was a complicated case involving a tarot card reader, Michelle St Michael, and the Colorado Renaissance Festival. The sexual harassment case was tried under title seven of the Civil Rights Act. I was hired to do a couple of booth appraisals.... and an assessment of The Colorado Renaissance Festival as a viable market in which to invest. Then I was flown out to Denver, and I was put up in a downtown hotel with all expenses paid. As an entertainer, testifying in court was a great experience. The room was huge and the jury was across from me.....an audience! The place begged for a chuckle, or some sort of levity. The majority of my time was spent trying to explain to lawyers (and a jury) why, in God's name, anyone of sound mind would EVER sign a contract with a ren faire. The attorneys were confused. That may have had something to do with my explanation of the contracts. I said, "Basically, to do a ren faire, you have to sign a contract where you commit to make a long term investment in your own business by making a capital improvement on another person's property. Then you agree to pay them a yearly fee to*

use your investment, and they can, at any time and for any reason, refuse to renew your contract and then they can take your investment away from you.” This seemed to be a puzzlement to everybody. Michelle's attorneys tried (unsuccessfully) to argue that all vendors at a show are actually employees and not contract labor based upon the facts that they are

told when to show up, when to shut down, what to wear and how to speak. It is an environment, they claimed, that is more restrictive than almost any other profession, short of military service. (The photo shows Brother Where Art Thou looking displaced while wearing his court costume in his downtown hotel room.) The attorney for the Colorado



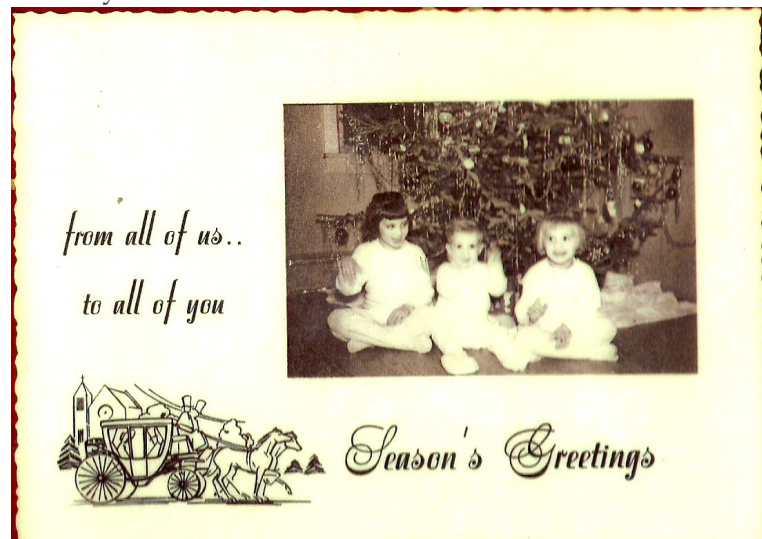
Renaissance Festival was comedic in his lack of understanding of traffic flow, patron/vendor ratios, front footage, shop lines, booth evaluations, appraisals, & depreciation, or how to present himself to the jury in a way that was not arrogant & condescending. He did, however, know that, in Colorado, Title Seven is only applicable if the complainant is an employee. Contractors are not employees. Employees can sue for sexual harassment but contractors cannot. It was quite the experience and, actually, quite a good time. Even though Michelle lost the case, her team did prove that the Colorado Renaissance festival is 'an employer' (a claim that they denied). She also has added to the case history & possibility that Colorado may, in the future, include contract labor as being covered by title 7, so that the Colorado and Pittsburgh shows can be sued under title seven as an employer.

Abbot Failed to Report!

Our Abbot failed to publish and distribute an *Abbot's Report* on the last Solstice. That hadn't happened in thirty years. Very few noticed. The hard drive of Brother Donald's computer crashed days before the Summer Solstice. The Order's mailing list, corporate legal documents and publishing software were all lost. All of the lost files were later recovered at great expense. A couple of monks actually collect old *Abbot's Reports*. Apologies go out to those who will have an empty space where the Summer Solstice 2019 report should have gone. In a vaguely related story, our Abbot is no longer required to report to his probation officer and he is now free to travel about the country. His pot possession case was dismissed.

Abbot's Loss Results in Order's Gain!

It has been a year of change. Hard drive data was not the only loss that our Abbot suffered in the Summer of 2019. He also lost his two older sisters. Joyce Hickling died on July 8, 2019 at the age of 71 and Carol Heller died two days later at age 69. They lived hundreds of miles apart and had not been in touch with each other for a couple of years. Their nearly concurrent deaths seemed like a remarkable coincidence. Both sisters had been showing signs of memory loss and dementia. Our Abbot is not far



behind. The photo shows Joyce, Donald and Carol some time around 1955. Joyce grew up to be a dairy farmer and a mother of two and Carol would spend forty years working in a seafood restaurant and fish market. Carol Heller died without a will and so she inadvertently ended up donating more than sixty five thousand dollars to the Benevolent Order's Monastery Building Fund. It was, so far and by far, the largest donation that the Benevolent Order has ever received. **Please remember us in your wills. I was Carol's LEGAL Brother.**