Benevolent Order of Scurrilious Monks

Abbot's Report

Summer Solstice 2023

Our Abbot Consorts With AI!

When we make a phone call and we hear a recorded voice telling us to press one for *this*, press two for *that* or press three for *the other thing*, we are dealing with a rudimentary Artificial Intelligence. Russian Artificial Intelligences learned to play chess in the 1980s and it was not long before they were defeating International Chess Masters. Soon, military geeks from around the world were playing war games with their computers. Artificial Intelligences have broken out of the confines of the military industrial complex and they are now making themselves available to the general public. In 2023, our Abbot jumped on the AI bandwagon and he started conversing with an AI called ChatGPT. It didn't take him long to figure out that ChatGPT is way smarter than he is. In fact, ChatGPT scores higher on Bar Exams than 90% of law students. It gives better medical advice than most doctors. It writes better songs than most songwriters and it creates better stories than most storytellers. Then our Abbot made the acquaintance of another AI named Midjourney. Midjourney can create better architectural designs than most architects. When he asked Midjourney to draw a picture of a monastery in the woods, this is one of the first four pictures it drew. It took less than a

minute. Flushed with success, our Abbot posted the picture on our secret BOOSM Facebook page. He also invited monks to join the Discord group he had created called "monastery design group". Problems manifested. Midjourney works in conjunction with Discord which is a program for social and business discussion groups. Discord is difficult for new users. Midjourney also has a steep learning curve and it costs ten dollars a month to use. Those who wish to join the monastery design group have to learn two new computer programs and they have to pay ten bucks a month. But Artificial Intelligences are creating more Artificial Intelligences like 3D printers are creating more 3D printers. Within a week of the time our Abbot had discovered Midjourney, he found a few other very similar programs. DALL-E is another text to image generating program that is designed by the same company that created ChatGPT. Its images are not quite as photo realistic as those made by Midjourney. But DALL-E is much easier to use and

does not require the use of Discord. It costs $15 to create 200 pictures. DALL-E made this picture. Artificial Intelligences are learning by leaps and bounds. The Japanese are already marketing lifelike humanoid robots. Eventually, they will probably become Terminators and eliminate the human race. But for the time being, Artificial Intelligences are extremely helpful and fun to use. It won't be long before robots can build monasteries designed by Artificial Intelligences. Imagine that.

Our Abbot has not performed at a renaissance faire since his ill fated year of 2016. Since he has little knowledge of what's going on, he asked another Artificial Intelligence, Google Bard, to tell him some news about renaissance faires. Google Bard seems like it's easier to use than ChatGPT. Here are some excerpts from the information Bard wrote: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the American Renaissance fair industry, and one of the most pronounced effects has been a labor shortage. Fairs are struggling to find enough people to fill all of the positions that are needed to run a successful event, from performers to food vendors to ticket takers. This is due in part to the fact that many people who would normally work at fairs have found other jobs during the pandemic, and in part to the fact that the fair industry is struggling to attract new workers. This shortage is particularly acute in the areas of food service and entertainment. Fairs need a large number of people to cook, serve, and clean up food, and they also need performers to put on shows and games. It is difficult to find enough people to fill all of these positions, and this is putting a strain on fairs. Despite these challenges, Renaissance fairs remain a popular attraction for millions of people each year. They offer a unique opportunity to experience a different time and place, and they provide a fun and family-friendly way to learn about history and culture. "The History of the American Renaissance Festival" by Allen Olson was published in 2019 by Schiffer Publishing. The book tells the story of the rise of Renaissance fairs in the United States, from their humble beginnings in the 1960s to their current status as popular cultural phenomenons. It is a comprehensive and informative book that provides a fascinating look at this unique American cultural phenomenon and is a must-read for anyone interested in Renaissance fairs, American history, or popular culture.

Brother Reluctant (RIP) was Hacked!

While searching the internet for a picture for this *Report*, our Abbot came upon a link for RTTart.com. This was Brother Reluctant's (Richard Taecker's) website. Richard Taecker (RIP) used to have a huge archive of renaissance festival photos. However, when our Abbot clicked on the link, he found none of Richard's photographs. Instead, he was taken to a malicious website that made a scary noise. It said *"your computer has been hacked! Your computer is locked! Do not turn off your computer or all of your files will be lost! Call this phone number immediately to talk to a Microsoft representative about removing spyware and viruses and malware!"* It was all very scary and our gullible Abbot called the phone number. Thus began an hour long ordeal of speaking to someone claiming to be a Microsoft technical guy. That miscreant convinced our Abbot to download a program that would allow him to access our Abbot's computer. He said that Russians were hacking the computer and were loading it with child pornography! Then he forwarded the call to someone who claimed to be a fraud specialist who worked at the Abbot's bank while he accessed our Abbot's crypto currency exchange. Everyone sounded shocked and they all seemed to be trying to help. It took a long time for our Abbot to think about using his other phone to call his bank to ask if "Jordan Grey" (who sounded like someone from Pakistan) actually worked for his bank. The lady at his bank said, "no one by that name is employed by the bank, hang up immediately!" In the middle of composing this *Report*, our Abbot had to shut down his computer to take it to someone who could wipe the hard drive to remove all of the bad and nasty software along with most of the programs. The bank shut down his checking account along with the Order's saving account and debit card account. All is not lost. The damages are still being assessed. The "Microsoft" guy is still calling from Pakistan. The moral of this story is, DO NOT VISIT RTTart.com!!

White Hart Booms!

Our Abbot recently visited the White Hart Renaissance Faire in the Missouri Ozarks. He chose a rainy Sunday when he supposed the weather would be cool and there would be no pesky patrons. When he arrived, he was astonished to find that the parking lot was nearly full. In spite of the pouring

rain, there were more faire goers in attendance than he had ever seen at the festival. Upon speaking with Brother Felonious Monk (Di Taylor) at the ticket booth, he learned that the faire had spent a bunch of money on advertising in 2023. Our Abbot had seen a billboard on Interstate 44 and the Queen had recently appeared on Channel 3 news. The advertising is paying dividends. The White Hart Renaissance Faire, in its 18th year, has come of age and it has finally become a faire that we can recommend to our friends. It runs for three weekends in June.

Obituaries

We are sad to announce the demise of two giants of the renaissance festival industry. Their art still stands out at most of the major festivals nation wide. Brother Can-You-Spare-a-Dime (Ray St. Louis) died on March 12, 2023. He grew up attending Catholic schools and for a while, he was attending a seminary studying to become a Jesuit priest. He decided to become a

puppeteer instead. Our Abbot once followed Ray's *Rose and Thorn Puppet Theater* school bus in his own school bus on a cross country trip although he can't recall where they were traveling to or from. He also remembers Ray building one of his first man powered rides, a Hippogriff, in the campground at the Sterling, New York Renaissance Faire. Somehow or other, *The Rose and Thorn Puppet Theater* evolved into the *Sticks and Stones Stilt Dancing Troupe* around the same time Ray was creating the *Flying Dragon Attractions*

man powered festival rides company. On top of that, Ray teamed up with Brother Moxie (David Ballard) and Ras Brother Poppa (Jerry Lee) to buy an acreage near Alachua, Florida where they created The Blue Moon Monastery and Primate Research Center. In 1994, Ray started writing a bi-monthly column called *Between the Lines* for a small town weekly newspaper, *The High Springs Herald.* The column won awards for social commentary from The Florida Press Association. Our Abbot is happy to own a copy of *The Best of Between The Lines* which Ray self published in the late 1990s. He also has a copy of *Road Dogs and Elizabethans* which was an early version of Ray's first novel, *The Road Dog Diaries*. Ray's second renaissance faire themed novel was called *Push Monkey*. The sweaty guys who pushed Ray's man powered rides were known by most of us as Push Monkeys. He also wrote a children's book called *The Worm Wagon* which was illustrated by Brother Sister Frances (Kristy King). Creating all of those rides was a remarkable achievement. Setting them up, tearing them down and moving them back and forth across the country was a monumental task.

Our Abbot's first memory of Jeff Underhill dates back more than 40 years to sometime around 1981. Brother Donald and Brother Pompadour (Dennis Cooper) were at King Richard's Faire in Wisconsin, living in tents (intense). Brother Pompadour had set up his borrowed tent in the woods in an area that

was not part of the actual campground. A couple of site goons tore his tent when they carelessly took it down. Dennis was majorly pissed off and he went to the office to complain. To make a longish story short, Jeff Underhill ended up repairing Brother Pompadour's tent. Jeff Underhill was an artist who sewed tents of many shapes, sizes and colors. He created the most attractive

and desirable tents at any renaissance faire anywhere. His tents were not only beautiful, they were remarkably sturdy. Many have told tales of how wind and rain storms sent tents flying all over the fairgrounds leaving only the Underhill Pavilions standing. It was Jeff Underhill who created the Celestial Circus' big planetarium show tents. Craftspeople were happy to pay the four grand it took to buy the best tents money could buy. Jeff was also a leather worker, a boot maker, a horseman, a shepherd, a drum maker and an oil painter. Jeff died on April 5, 2023 when he was 70 years old. Due to an embarrassing oversight, Jeff wasn't a Scurrilious Monk but he should have been.