



the knight life

Some know Chris Pugh as a lieutenant with the Staunton Fire Department while others know him as "Sir Black Wolf." Sword strapped to his back and horn in hand, it is the latter persona that calls visitors to the stage at Natural Chimneys Regional Park.

"Ladies and gents, he calls out. "Harkin to the sound of my voice!" Calling to the participants, he carries out just some of his duties associated with coordinating the Stone Tower Glenn Renaissance Faire conducted at the site in June.

"We did the first fair here in 2001," Pugh later explains.

"We conducted eight fairs here in four years," he says. "Three years away and now glad to be back." The renaissance fair conducted in June of this year marked the festival's return to the site near Mount Solon after a couple of years being held elsewhere.

"Hope it becomes a tradition," he adds, before pointing to the stone towers that give Natural Chimneys its name.

"After all, where else can you be on a field like this with a castle like that," he adds.

In his personal life, Pugh has been working with his alter ego "Black Wolf" for the past several years.

When he begins talking about his the knightly persona, his medieval brogue deepens.

He allows the essence of the knight within the freedom to emerge.

"I started at it (renaissance re-enacting) when I was 15 years old," he explains, "so it's been a day or so."

"My inspiration for this is the old movie, 'Knightriders,'" he says.

He speaks of the 1981 movie by George Romero about a group of modern-day jousters who re-enact tournaments on motorcycles

"That inspired me as I've always looked up to history, especially medieval and renaissance."

Ancestry also played a part in encouraging his desire to bring the middle ages back to life.

"I'm Welsh," he says.

"It's good to know one's history," he continues. "It sets one's way in life."

Pugh looks around at the sights of the renaissance faire, seeing through the eyes of Sir Black Wolf.

"This has always appealed to me," he says, speaking as the knight. "That sense of honor ... that code of chivalry."

"It is something terribly missing in today's society. It should be the basis for everything we do."

Because he dreams of one day making a living during what he loves, Medieval Fantasy Co. was born.

"We co-host renaissance festivals for clients," he says, "as well as birthday parties, other festivals, weddings, sales and so on."

He even teaches arms instruction in the use of swords and other medieval weaponry.

"It's a family affair," he says. "My wife helps run the business. The daughters help as well."

Will it always be just part-time work?

"My lady dear already does it fulltime," he says. "My turn comes in about three more years. Knock on wood."

— **Mike Tripp, photojournalist**
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