SMITHING CRAFTS ALONG WITH WORDS

By Jon Nelson

Children watched in awe as a burly blacksmith forged rings out of white-hot iron and a woman with a charming Scottish accent told stories of metal workers from classical mythology. This scene repeated itself four times daily at the Gypsy Time Traveler show at the Kem County Fair.

"I thought it was very creative and original," said audience member Katie Metz after the show.

The topic of each show encompasses a broad range of storytelling from different cultures all relating to blacksmithing. As Christy Home tells the stories, her husband Michel Olson makes a variety of items using traditional metal working techniques. At the end of the show, the items made are raffled off to the audience members. Last year, they gave away 4,800 handmade items.

"I thought it was interesting when they were telling the myths," said Pat Aguilar when asked about her favorite part of the show.

The Gypsy Time Travelers describe their show as "edutainment" and "fabulous storytelling with live anvil accompaniment."

"We trick you into learning," said Home with a grin.

Although the act may present itself as a children's show, it's actually intended for adults.

"Adults really love our show," said Home.

The Gypsy Time Travelers was born almost 20 years ago in Columbia State Historic Park in Columbia, Calif. Originally the show focused on California Gold Rush related history, but expanded into different presentations based around storytelling and blacksmithing.

Home and Olson decided to pack up and take the show on the road, and this year is the couple's 15th year on the road.

The duo has 25 different half-hour presentations they put on for an audience which averages over 300 people. The show itself is given from a stage built into a rig that resembles a great wooden castle that the two have named Florence.

"It's constantly changing. I try to add more every year," said Home enthusiastically.

RODEOS FOR THE YOUNGEST COWBOYS

By Chrystal Fortt

Wool Riders is one of Kem County Fair's newest and exciting attractions.

Kids ages 6 to 3 years old weighed between 60 pounds or less signed up to ride wild sheep for their chance to win $5,000. Each kid got ready to take their turn by a man helping them climb on top of the sheep as their parents gave them encouragement. The riders that stayed on the longest won the sheep up for auction at the end of the race and the others received smaller prizes.

War member Stanley Behrens plays the harmonica during War's performance at the Great Kern County Fair on September 21.