

THE AUTOCRAT'S  
FRIEND

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SECOND EDITION





# THE AUTOCRAT'S FRIEND

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## THE AUTOCRAT'S FRIEND

This is a publication of the Waste Paper Press and although written mainly by Jocelyn Crokehorne, it represents the talents, efforts and experience of many citizens of the Barony of Wastekeep of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. This is not a publication of the **SCA**, Inc., and does not delineate policy.

## HOW TO USE THE AUTOCRAT'S FRIEND

The Autocrat's Friend has two sections. The first is general information, and the second is laid out in checklist format, so you can check items off as you take care of them, or if they don't apply. This book isn't necessarily meant for beginners; even if you're an experienced autocrat, it's easy to forget details, in fact, sometimes it seems the greater the experience, the easier it is to forget! We suggest you go through each section that applies to your type of event as soon as you know you'll be autocrating, and check off the boxes next to the things that won't apply. What's left are the things you need to take care of.

Take The Friend with you to your next council meeting and get the council to help you check off as many items as possible. As your event approaches, keep the Friend by your phone and carry it along to meetings, events, and branch happenings, checking items off as you take care of them. Two weeks before your event, every box should have its checkmark. Any item not checked off by then represents a potential problem, which you may still have time to head off.

With any luck, The Friend will then have served its purpose, and whether it's your first or your fiftieth event, all will go well. There's just one other thing to remember; if you're relaxed, everyone around you will be relaxed, too. When things go wrong, don't lose your sense of humor - or, if you do, don't let it show! SCA folk are used to inclement weather, insect armies, and whatever else can go wrong. They may grumble, but they don't really blame you. The best way to be sure that your guests have a good time is to have a good time yourself. Good Luck!

## WHAT EVERY AUTOCRAT SHOULD KNOW

If you've never autocratted an event, there are some things you should know ahead of time. Unfortunately, any event must be planned (a minimum of two) months ahead, and though that may seem discouraging, the farther ahead you plan, the more people will be able to attend your event, and the easier your job will be.

The two biggest reasons for planning ahead are the kingdom calendar and The Crier (which draws out of town guests). To get a date on the kingdom calendar, you have to fill out a Date Request Form. If your event isn't on the calendar, and is found to conflict with an event that is, guess who wins? When you attempt to clear a date with the person acting as kingdom calendar, you may find that a lot of other people got there ahead of you. You won't be allowed to schedule an event which conflicts with another event held in your area unless you get the permission of the branch sponsoring it, and you won't usually be allowed to schedule an event which conflicts with a kingdom event. Besides - no one would come! During tourney season (May to September) it's almost impossible to find a free weekend; some branches plan their events over a year ahead.

Copy regarding your event must reach the Crier over a month before it appears in other citizens' mailboxes, which in turn should be at least a month before the event. And when your copy goes in, you must already have a date, a site, a tentative schedule, and at least some information regarding battles and contests which will take place, as well as what fees will be charged and everything else your guests will need to know, including a map! Thus, the minimum two months lead time. For an inexperienced autocrat, it's wise to allow three to four months lead time.

All site and security deposits should be paid with the branch's money. If you pay the site fee with your own money, be aware that you may not get it back right away. Some deposits have been returned to our branch as much as four months after the event! If you regularly use one site or sites with the same owner, you may be able to put down a permanent deposit and not have to worry about getting a check in before each event and back again afterwards.

This may sound like a bit of trouble, but remember, the expression "red tape" originated in the middle ages!

If you're holding a 'buffet' style potluck feast, you can disregard our references to "servers." If you're having a head table, however, or plan on presentations or entertainment being given during the feast, even if it IS a potluck there should be servers and a feast-o-crat. Otherwise....chaos.

# SECTION ONE

## HOW IT'S DONE

For the sake of discussion, let's imagine you've been asked (or volunteered) to autocrat an event which is several months away. These are the steps you might take to prepare (this scenario represents the ideal rather than the real).

**STEP ONE:** Read the sections in *The Friend* which apply to all events, and to the kind of event you want to hold. Check off the boxes next to items that don't apply to you (preferably in pencil or on a copy). If some responsibilities are delegated, write the person's name on that line who will be performing that task.

**STEP TWO:** Take your ideas for sites, contests, competitions, etc., to your branch's next council meeting. Ask the officers, guild representatives, and other citizens if they have any ideas or would like to sponsor (provide judge and prize for) any competitions. Ask if there will be group business to conduct there, such as court or meetings. Ask for the names of those willing to act as hosts for crash space (if it will be needed), and how many guests they can accommodate. (Be sure to bring *The Friend* to this meeting for reference, and so you can mark off more boxes.) Ask the guild's approval for any expenses you foresee. (if you decide at the last minute to decorate the hall with evergreen garlands from the florist, and haven't received the council's approval in advance, you should be prepared to pay for them yourself should they fail to approve it later.) Call around till you have obtained promises for sufficient crash space.

**STEP THREE:** Reserve your site and pay the deposit (if required).

**STEP FOUR:** Send in your Date Request Form, asking Kingdom Calendar for the date. Provide an alternate date (and even site) if possible, and fill out every blank you possibly can. If it's incomplete, it'll be sent back. Keep a copy of this form for your records.

**STEP FIVE:** Read the requirements for Crier copy, even if you've submitted copy before; requirements change, and you may have forgotten something. Draw a neat map to your site, black ink on plain white paper, and neatly type ALL the event information you possess. Show it to your council (or seneschal if time is short) for approval, and send it to *The Crier* and your local newsletter. You may want to send copies to the newsletters of nearby branches, too.

**IMPORTANT.** In your event copy include the name of your branch (it's NOT automatically added by the editors), the name of the event (neither is this), the mundane name of the site, city (or nearest city) AND state (never assume it to be

obvious; it's a big kingdom), site hours, price of admission, weather conditions, liquor laws, contests, activities, camping (or other site) hazards that can be expected, and the date or dates of the event. These things won't necessarily be obvious, as many people seem to expect. Include your names (SCA and mundane), phone number, and an alternate contact if possible (get the alternate's permission BEFORE you do this), who can take and relay messages for you. Please include the distances to the nearest stores, gas station, and hospital (if possible) as a courtesy to your guests.

You must also include a note to the editor saying which months' issues of the Crier you want the copy run in. **If** you don't designate this, you can't complain if it doesn't appear. Keep a copy of everything you send for your records.

**NOTE:** Don't send these submissions by registered or special delivery mail without the receiver's permission.

**STEP SIX:** Call Kingdom Calendar and the editor of The Crier to make sure they received your submissions, and that all is well. If they haven't received them, now you know why you're supposed to keep copies. Show how patient you can be; mail them again. (Of course you've left yourself plenty of time, right?) If (or when) all is well, go to..

**STEP SEVEN:** Attend the last council meeting before your event, and check back with everyone who promised you something.

**STEP EIGHT'** Do whatever you have to do to get the rest of The Friend's boxes checked off no less than two weeks before your event.

**IMPORTANT:** Keep receipts for your event-related expenses. You'll have to make a report to the branch reeve after the event.

*That's all there is to it. If you're an organized type person, you'll probably wonder why people think it's such a big deal to autocrat an event, and if you're a disorganized type person, you'll probably still be surprised how easy it was. People are willing to help more than you might think.*

**IMPORTANT:** If there's going to be a feast, DO NOT attempt to run the kitchen as well as the rest of the event. This is NOT a viable option. Running the feast is a job in itself. If your feast-o-crat would like information on running feasts, recommend reading the Known Worlde Handbook's chapter on feast-o-cratting, and/or contacting the kingdom cooking guild (The Black Kettle); they have some excellent publications on the subject.

*If things haven't gone well ... If someone else was supposed to be autocratting, and suddenly ducked out, or if your branch impulsively decided to have an event next*

*month, or if you suddenly realized that you've let things go too long, don't despair. The following instructions were made just for you:*

**(PANIC) STEP ONE:** If you heard you were suddenly an autocrat at a council meeting, find, beg, or borrow a copy of The Autocrat's Friend, and get the council to help you check off boxes in the sections which apply to all events and to your type of event right away, while you've still got the council there. If the decision wasn't made at a council meeting, and there's no time to hold one, get on the phone. Find out what it takes to get the council's approval on events, and do it. Contact everyone you can think of and pretend you're at (non-panic) steps two, five, seven, and eight simultaneously (it can be done in a pinch).

**(PANIC) STEP TWO:** Send in a Date Request Form and Crier copy with apologies (but if you've missed the deadline, no amount of apology will get your article into the Crier). If you've missed the Crier deadline, get the copy camera-ready yourself, get it copied, and mail it to every branch which might conceivably be interested in attending or willing to publish the news. If your own budget allows, or the council approves the expense, you might send copies to individuals you hope might come. Your event must be published in a newsletter - see "The Mays and May-Nots" chapter regarding SCA events. If it isn't possible to get your event copy into a newsletter, you'll have to consider whether you want to hold your event as a private party (See "The Mays and the May Nots" section for more on this subject).

Panic is not the best or easiest way to get things done, but it can work. It works best with an autocrat who knows the ropes (and the sites, and the branch's policies).

## THE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN DEPARTMENT

**ALTERNATE SITE:** If the unthinkable should occur, and your site suddenly ceases to be available, there are several things you must do.

First, call your local officers, other council members, and friends, and notify them of the change. Call, or, if time allows (be generous!) write to every chronicler and seneschal in your vicinity. Get out The Friend, and see if the answers to any of the questions in your sections have changed. If so, do what you can to fix it. The day of the event, go to the ORIGINAL site and post a sign with apologies and directions to the new site. Though it may be scant comfort, sometimes the very same event the autocrat thought was a disaster is the one remembered with the most fondness by the guests. And you'll have a quite story to tell around the fire when it's all over!

**SCA SANCTION:** Another unthinkable, which deserves mention is the cancellation of an SCA event in mid-stream. If the seneschal or his or her designated stand-in feels the event is proceeding contrary to SCA or mundane laws, and his or her best efforts to control the situation have failed, he or she may withdraw the SCA sanction from the event. He or she can't make people leave, but will urge them to do so. You can help by getting into your mundane clothes and assisting with the breakdown of camp. Should this happen, both the seneschal and the autocrat will be asked to provide a detailed written report on what went wrong and how it was handled. This report will be reviewed by at least the Steward and the Board of the directors of the SCA.

**NO-SHOWS:** It seems inevitable that if you run enough events, sooner or later you'll be faced with having counted on someone who didn't show up. The only advice possible in this situation is;

- 1) Wait a while, in case they're just running late,
- 2) Don't get angry - they may have a good reason,
- 3) Try to work around them (if they were bringing the eric, borrow a rope to lay on the ground), or
- 4) Take the responsibility to fix it yourself )go or send someone back for the eric or for materials to make a new one, for example). This situation needn't spoil your event unless you let it. Unless they were bringing the food.



## THE MAYS AND THE MAY-NOTS

You may charge admission to SCA events, but not in order for any person or persons to make a profit. That is, you may divide the anticipated costs by the number of anticipated guests, add enough to help defray your branch's operating expenses, and charge accordingly, but all money left over after event costs must go to the branch. Keep in mind that people are more likely to attend events without a large site fee. They generally travel a long way to get there, and it's an expensive enough hobby as it is. Unless there's food provided and prepared, or it's a truly magnificent site, a good rule of thumb is that anything over eight dollars is excessive. If the event costs will be too expensive to be off- set by site fees, the branch may be willing to pay the difference. Seek the approval of the council before publishing the site fee to be sure you've included all expenses in your estimate, including the costs to the branch.

If your group is short of funds, you might consider an event where a donation is asked in addition to the site fee, a benefit for a particular project, a group yard sale, or an auction or raffle (there's a greater chance of success if you let your guests know in advance that they'll need some cash). There are a few ideas for things you might raffle or auction in the "Ideas" section.

The **SCA** has liability insurance, and as long as your event meets the criteria below, it will qualify to be covered. **All SCA** events must:

- 1). Be sponsored by a branch of the SCA,
- 2). Be registered with the seneschal of the sponsoring branch,
- 3). Be publicized at least to the membership of that branch, and
- 4). Be conducted according to SCA laws, by-laws, and traditions.

Events that will have long-term impact on the society (armigerous award presentations, for example) must be published in the appropriate kingdom newsletter, giving the date, time and place.

If your branch isn't yet an SCA branch, or has slipped from grace, your event can be sponsored by any other branch willing to take the responsibility to be sure SCA laws and bylaws are upheld, have the news printed in the Crier or other newsletter, and provide a seneschal or seneschal-designated officer to attend.

**PRIVATE PARTIES:** You may hold a non-SCA event, but be aware that no SCA awards can be given, no official court can be held, SCA waivers are invalid, officers have no authority, and no insurance coverage is available. There seems to be some confusion about 'official' and 'unofficial' events. There's no such thing as an unofficial event. Either an event is SCA, or it's a private party. You may have all the private costume parties you want, but you shouldn't advertise them as "unofficial SCA" events,

nor use the SCA's reputation or references to obtain a site or gain special consideration. If you want to advertise a private party in an SCA or branch newsletter, be prepared to pay for the space required, as would any other advertiser.

## COURTS AND OTHER DIPLOMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

You may invite the King and Queen of An Tir to any event. Don't be afraid to ask. Remember that they're expected to visit a great many branches during their reign, and their schedules can be hectic. It will greatly increase the chances they'll visit if you;

- 1). Ask well in advance (they begin accepting invitations almost the minute the crown is won),
- 2). Be flexible - ask them to more than one event, or to an event for which the date is negotiable, and;
- 3). Ask in person. A face to face invitation followed up as soon as possible by a written invitation seems to have a greater chance of success than a written invitation alone. If you ask them in person and fail to follow up, however, their only memory may be of that nice person they'd like to visit, if only they could remember who you were! Remember, they are the center of a constant flurry of activity, and may have weighty matters on their minds (or may just be confused from meeting so many people).

Don't be shy just because your branch has never received a royal visit - this may actually increase the possibility they'll try to come.

It's a great pleasure to host their majesties, and in this section there are some hints that'll make you feel more secure about what to do while they're with you. Having survived a great many visits by royalty, I can assure you they are uniformly helpful, gracious, and understanding. Fortunately, they also have a sense of humor, and they seem to enjoy visiting their people as much as we enjoy having them.

At any SCA event their majesties, if present, may wish to hold court. At a baronial event, the baron and/or baroness may wish to hold court. If their majesties are present at a baronial event, it's possible they may both wish to hold court, and will themselves decide how it will be done (who will go first, etc). If neither their Majesties nor their Excellencies are present, or don't wish to hold court, the seneschal may wish to hold a seneschal's court. If the seneschal doesn't wish to hold court, you may hold an autocrat's court. You may use this time to make announcements about the site, competitions, hand out prizes, etc. You may not, of course, hand out any awards unless your rank entitles you to do so.

No matter who is holding court, you should arrange with the court herald to get a few minutes of court time. At court, it's customary to ask their Majesties (or their Excellencies) permission to address the populace before speaking. Don't talk forever (courts are long enough as it is), but introduce yourself, tell your guests where you can be found, who is in charge of lost and found and where he or she can be found, explain

any special hazards or precautions, and announce any schedule changes (which there will be!).

A rug and/or pillow for kneeling will be needed for the courts of royalty (who might bring their own) and/or landed barons and baronesses. For any court, chairs which are period looking, or with a period-looking cover (fur, fake fur, cloth) should be provided. You may ask their Majesties and their Excellencies if they will be bringing chairs for court, but don't assume they will do so.

**HEAD TABLE:** The ranking nobility resident to your branch should be seated at the head table (at a baronial event, this would be the baron and/or baroness, even if local citizens of higher rank are present). It's up to them to decide who else will sit at the high table. Customarily, visitors of their own rank or higher might join them if space allows. If space is limited, the highest-ranking guests are usually asked first. There should be at least one person (or couple) from the local branch at the high table, even if no nobility is available. If you're short on local candidates, consider the seneschal, other officers, and the tourney winner and his or her inspiration, probably in that order. In the absence of nobility, the seneschal is usually considered the ranking resident.

**NOTE:** Each course of the meal is usually served first to the head table, then to the remainder of the hall.

The autocrat and/or hosting **SCA** branch should provide candles or lanterns for the high table. Particularly if the recipients of this honor are informed at the last minute, they may not have come prepared with period lighting. Candles on tall (but stable!) candlesticks or enclosed lanterns are easiest for the servers to work around. Incense-type candles in holders will do, but there's a danger that servers or guests could become the victims of personal combustion. **A** tablecloth should also be provided unless the table looks in period. If banners will be hung, leave a space for royal and/or baronial banners in case they are brought along.

One other word on the needs **of** royalty and landed barons and baronesses; speak to them (before the event, if possible), and ask if they have any special requirements you should be aware of. They may want to camp with or near their retainers, have special privacy requirements, need court heralds, pages (a page can be any willing soul, usually a child, in a reasonably authentic costume, well-mannered, and unobtrusive), babysitters, couriers, etc. If you wish, you may ask them if they would like to judge contests or hand out prizes, but don't assume they will want to do so. If your branch wishes to present their Majesties with a gift during their visit, you may wish to warn them in advance. Inquire as to the royalty's likes and dislikes. It would be thoughtful to provide them with drinks, ice, and snacks.

**SMALLS AND PETS:** You may have other special visitors at your events, such as children or pets. The laws of the kingdom of An Tir set out some rules about pets and

children. Your branch may also have regulations regarding their treatment and behavior, and so may your site owner. If so, include an explanation in your event copy. You may want to have some special children's activities or contests (see the "Ideas" section). You may run a smalls' boffer tourney, but there must be an adult on hand to marshal, there must be an area roped off for the event, someone to run the lists, and you must have the support of the local marshal, as weapons and armor have to meet certain standards, just like the big kid's toys. Older, responsible children may act as marshal's assistants/field heralds.

**CONFLICT.** Since this section is called "Diplomatic Considerations," there's one other thing which should be covered here; conflict and/or lack of support from someone or ones. If there's a person (for the sake of discussion, though it could be more than one) whom during the planning stages seems determined to gum up the works, rain on your parade, and toss a wrench repeatedly into the plans, first of all (though you may be tired of hearing it by now), don't get angry. This person may well have the best interests of the SCA at heart, and he or she may do this to everyone. And there is something you can do about it, which is practically guaranteed to succeed; enlist their help. You can't possibly do everything anyway, so the next time this person shows an interest in some aspect of the event, ask them to take it over. If they think too much is being spent on prizes, ask them if they could be in charge of coordinating the contests and overseeing the purchase of prizes. The reason this isn't guaranteed is because a lot depends on how you ask it. Ask nicely. "I think you're right to be concerned..." "I hadn't thought of that..." or "I'm glad you brought that up..." are good lead-ins. Some good clinchers might be, "You're the only one who seems to know how this should be handled...", "I was hoping I could get you to help me by taking charge of {that thing}, though I realize you are busy...", or "How would you like to be in charge of {that thing}; we could use your expertise...". If this person has "a stake" in making it work, has a dog in the race, as it were, it'll be to his or her advantage to make your event succeed. If your problem concerns more than one person, enlist the strongest, or the one who appears to be leading; the rest will probably follow.

it may help head off some of these conflicts if you ask the right people the right questions in the correct way the first time. For instance, if you're planning a feast, speak to the head of the cooking guild (or whoever is the cooking authority in your branch) first. If you want to have archery, find out who usually runs archery activities in your branch (the marshal will know), and discuss it with them. If there's no one who seems to have a 'claim' on some type of activity, ask at the council meeting if anyone has any suggestions. If no one volunteers, ask for help. . If you do this correctly, you should find that there's practically nothing left for you to do!



## CHOOSING A SITE

If you're using a site, which the SCA uses often, or has used before, you probably know pretty much what to expect from it. If not, here are some tips.

First, check the section "Every Event," to get an idea what you should be looking for in a site. Be very honest with the owners of the site as to what you need and what kind of activities you plan. It may take them aback, but not like it will when they come upon it unexpectedly. Ask ahead of time if you can hang banners, put up pavilions, erics, port-a-potties, etc. Should you have any difficulty convincing a site owner of your industry, legitimacy, or integrity, your seneschal should be able to provide you with one or more letters of recommendation from other site owners (which have hosted either your branch or some other). The kingdom seneschal can provide these if none are on hand.

Consider the following when site shopping:

- Weather at the time of year of your event
  - Bodies of water, lifeguard service, bathing dress requirements
  - Travel distance and road conditions
  - Dangerous plants, animals, and insects (some people have serious allergic reactions to bees, for instance, and should be warned if they're likely to be stung)*
  - Access control (how many mundane's are expected to share the site, and how much control will you have of mundane access)
  - Is there a good spot for a 'gate' to control access?
  - Whether open fire/flame are allowed
  - Number and **type of** bathrooms/showers
- Are pets allowed? Do they have to be leashed and/or attended at all times?
- Are there special hazards to children?

You must decide how much weight to give these considerations. If your site is wonderful in every other way, but covered with poison ivy, it's not worth it. If it's wonderful in every other way, but a long drive, you may still want to use it. See "Ideas" for ideas on how to find a site.

## CRASH SPACE

Gather up the names of those willing to provide crash space for your out-of-town guests. The easiest thing to do is, take a tablet or notebook and write the name of each potential host on a page. Speak to each, and after their names, write their preferences regarding the guests they'd prefer to have (smokers, non-smokers, pets, children, allergies, etc.), directions to their home, and the number of guests they can accommodate. When you receive calls or letters requesting crash space, you fill in the name of the guest on the page that has a host's name at the top (matching up preferences as well as you can), and by the guest's name, write the day and time they expect to arrive. Give the guest the name and phone number of his or her host. At least a week before the event, call each host and read him or her the names and information on the sheet. Take your tablet or notebook to the event with you, so you'll know what's still available for guests who didn't plan ahead.

It sounds like more trouble than it is. **If** you just get started right, it shouldn't be very hard. The nice thing is, those who have visited your branch before will most likely know someone they'd like to stay with, and will make their own crash arrangements. Ask those providing crash space to let you know if they accept any guests this way, so you can decrease the number of guests they can accommodate on your list.

Those providing crash space traditionally provide breakfast for their guests, but this isn't a must, so you should ask before committing them. Also traditionally, crash space consists of several square feet of floor; no one is expecting a bed, guest room, and private bath. SCA people usually bring all their own gear including linens and bedding, but extra towels, blankets, pillows, mattresses, or foam pads are always welcome and it's nice if you can offer them.

## AMENITIES

Here's how to figure out how many potties you need at any event. Flushies: For the first 150 people expected, you'll need 6 potties per day. After the first 150, you'll need 1 potty for every additional 40 people, per day. The "per day" is important! If you are expecting 190 people, you'll have to provide 7 potties, multiplied by the number of days your event will run. If it's to run from Friday afternoon till Sunday morning (2 days), you need 14 potties. You can get by with 1 for every 40 people **IF** they are pumped out every day.

**IMPORTANT:** No matter how many privies you have hauled in (or which are already there) be SURE someone will be on call to help if there should be a plumbing problem, or to do an extra pump during the weekend if they fill up. You may underestimate the crowd or get a statistical deviation, and once they're full, everyone's up that well-known and aptly named creek.

**AUTOCRAT'S BOX:** Your branch may want to invest in an "Autocrat's Box," a box or trunk containing things every autocrat needs, so not every autocrat has to obtain them. Things it might contain are listed here:

- Toilet paper
- Scissors
- Tacks
- Dish soap
- Serving bowls and spoons
- Dish towels/cloths
- Screwdriver
- Matches
- Serving trays
- Fire extinguisher
- First Aid Kit
- Paper towels
- Safety pins
- Scrub-brush
- Hammer and nails
- Carving knife
- Foil
- Candies
- Masking/duct tape
- Paper, pencil, pen
- Putty knife (to scrape up wax)
- Hatchet (for cutting kindling)
- Waivers

## AT THE EVENT

This section suggests some of the ways in which you may run your event. If your branch has its own way of doing things, don't give these tips another thought. They're only here to help!

**SIGN-IN:** Gate constables are generally paired - at least 2 on the gate at any given time. Check with them once in a while and see if they need something to eat, drink, light their post, write with, or to keep them warm. This is generally the toughest duty there is. Some of the things a gate constable might be asked to do are:

- 1) Collect site fees.
- 2) Hand out site maps, schedules - whatever you provide.
- 3) Direct people to the autocrat and/or seneschal
- 4) Warn of site hazards and changes since the copy was run. 5) Have site waivers signed (more about waivers below)
- 6) Sign people up on a roster for gate duty. **It's** sometimes difficult at small events, but the shift length for gate duty should be kept to 4 hours or less.
- 7) Keep a fire watch.

If tables are in short supply, be sure the gate gets one first. If possible, arrange for a canopy at the gate for protection from the weather.

**WAIVERS:** A waiver is a document signed in acceptance of personal responsibility for one's safety at an event. Anyone who will be participating as a marshal, field herald, water-bearer, or fighter must sign a fighting waiver. There are special rules and special waivers for minors. Any minor attending an event must present a properly signed minor's waiver at the gate.

*Waivers are available from the offices of the marshal, the seneschal, and/or the minister of the lists. They are also occasionally printed in the Crier.*

**THE AUTOCRAT** Running the lists, like feast-o-crating, is NOT a viable option for the autocrat. Other things the autocrat shouldn't try to do are gate duty, field heralding, and marshalling. Just making sure there's someone doing these things will keep you quite busy, so you needn't worry about having nothing to do! A FINAL WORD ABOUT COURTS: If royalty (or Baron and/or Baroness) are holding court, even if it was scheduled for a particular time, check with them to be sure they're prepared before having the heralds announce court. You should be checking in with your royal guests regularly anyway to be sure all is proceeding agreeably. If you know of anything weird that might be taking place at court, warn them so they can be prepared.

## CROWN EVENTS

Every year the kingdom holds two crown tourneys, one coronation, and a twelfth night feast (which includes a coronation). As a general rule, May Crown is held on the weekend closest to the Canadian holiday "Victoria Day," in May, July Coronation is held on the second weekend of July, September Crown is held on the weekend nationally recognized in the U.S. as Labor Day weekend, and Twelfth Night is held on the weekend closest to January twelfth.

The honor of holding Twelfth Night is rotated among the various baronies. All other crown events are booked by bidding. Each branch wishing to host a crown event makes a written bid by September Crown of the preceding year, and the Crown, Kingdom Seneschal, and Curia determine which bid will be accepted. If possible, consecutive events are held in different parts of the kingdom so travel times will be more fairly distributed. Sometimes the royalty will prefer that crown events be hosted by larger, more experienced groups, sometimes they may prefer to give a smaller group a chance. The smaller group could increase its chances by showing they've put on events before and are aware of what needs to be done to camp as many as 500 people.

The following should be included in your written bid:

- What event you're bidding for
- Name of autocrat, their rank, experience, and qualification as an autocrat - Seneschal (if he or she isn't the proposed autocrat) of sponsoring branch - Experience of branch in staging events -Name of site, location, map
- Site conditions (shade, drainage, even ground)
- Camping conditions (grills, showers, number of campsites, quiet area) - Projected weather
- Ability to control mundane access
- Parking arrangements (including parking for overnights such as vans, RV's) - Drinking water availability
- Potties (number and type)
- Special features (covered shelter, swimming)
- Potential hazards (cliffs, poison oak) and proposed solutions
- Local liquor laws/age
- Site regulations on fire, pets, alcohol
- Location and distance to hospital, food store, pharmacy, other stores, gas and service stations, including hours of operation
- Site costs including deposit
- Cost for port-a-potties if required (and pumping fee)
- Cost for garbage service (dumpster rental if required) -Special costs (drinking water, firewood) -Incidental costs (toilet paper, candles)



- Proposed site fee for adults, smalls, seniors, including the population estimate the figures are based on (the kingdom constable may be able to provide a head count from the most recent Crown events)
- Whether branch will need kingdom front money, how much, and when -Alternate site

The ideal crown site is a flat, well shaded area with good drainage and a large open area suitable for an eric, moderate weather, running drinkable water, sufficient flush privies and hot showers, covered area or areas that can be used for courts (in case of rain) and merchants, a fire pit for the bardic circle far enough from camp (and mundanes) to dampen noise, lots of tables and benches, cooking grills, plenty of parking space, unloading close to camp, screening from the mundane world, but close to stores and emergency medical facilities, with no poisonous plants, animals or insects. If you ever find such a place, we'd all like to know of it!

Every site falls short in some ways, and the combination of shortfalls and pluses will be considered. Make your bid information as honest as possible, and be prepared to get accepted!

One of the reasons Twelfth Night is rotated among the baronies is because instead of a minimum lead-time of two months, it takes a minimum of about two years. For the baronial autocrat; although you needn't bid to host Twelfth Night, you should be prepared to provide the type of information listed below to the Curia. At the September Crown Tourney two years before the event (Sept. 1990 for the 1992 Twelfth Night), you should attend the Curia meeting and be able to provide information (at least) about the site you've chosen. It would be wise to attend every Curia meeting between that time and your event. Some of the things the Curia may want to know (in addition to the things listed for crown events above) are:

- How many rooms are available, and how many each room can seat
- How big the kitchen is, and what kind of facilities, appliances, and utensils are available
- Who will run the kitchen
- How many servers are available
- Where thrones and aisles will be placed
- What type of feast will be served, who will cook, how much it will cost -How you'll find crash space for a couple hundred people.

**IMPORTANT: Autocratting a crown event is really a team effort, so make sure ahead of time that the whole branch supports it!**

If you have the honor to host a crown event, there are a few things you need to know about crown events that makes them special. You don't need to hold any contests or competitions unless you'd like to; the guilds, Ithra, kingdom officers, and sometimes

royalty may have planned competitions, named judges, and purchased prizes themselves. You should check with the royalty as to their special needs. Copy for crown events should appear in the Crier about 4 months in advance.

There will have to be a schedule of events, and most of the actual scheduling may be out of your hands. The chivalry, peerage, curia, and offices will generally plan their own meeting times and places. The autocrat's job is to be the contact for all these groups. And to point out potential scheduling conflicts as they arise. The schedule of events should be posted for the populace, and changes noted there as they come up, as well as announced site-wide by field heralds.

Also, the kingdom officers will bear the responsibility for showing up and doing their jobs. If you notice something isn't getting done, your only responsibility is to report it to the kingdom seneschal.

**Autocratting a crown event isn't really that hard if you can handle input from a hundred directions at once, and have an experienced and cooperative team to back you up.**

## UNIVERSITY OF ITHRA

Ithra sessions are run only under the auspices of an Ithra Regent. Ithra provides instructors, classes taken there are worth credits toward an Ithra Master's Degree, and there are definite requirements for the cost of classes and how they are announced. In other words, you can all get together and have a belly-dancing workshop or a class on drum-making any time you want, but if you wish to hold a music and dance Ithra, you can only do so through your regent. This has many advantages, including the experience Ithra brings to bear. There's no cost to the branch (though the branch may provide donations and/or expense money if they can afford it), and the regent will do his or her best to help you put on the type of Ithra you'd prefer (Jewelry-making, calligraphy and illumination, newcomer topics, ethnic studies, fighting, costuming, almost anything you can imagine).

As part of holding an Ithra there's usually a potluck feast held on the Saturday evening. The feast is expected to close down fairly early since there will probably be classes in the morning. The regent and instructors from out of town may be excluded from making a pot-luck contribution if your branch can provide enough food. At the Ithra feast, the regent may require a few minutes to hand out certificates or medallions, or to conduct other Ithra business. Traditionally, Ithra provides a coffee pot and coffee, tea, hot cocoa wherever classes are being held (usually near the registration desk), so you'll want to provide room for this, and scout out the nearest source of drinking water. You'll be expected to search out places for classes and feast to be held, and to cooperate with the regent to make the whole thing work. Some of the things often required by Ithra instructors (besides tables and chairs) are blackboards/chalk/erasers, overhead projectors, slide projectors, or VCR/Television. Your regent will inform you of their needs.

Since you have a regent to help you in all stages of planning, this is one of the easiest types of events to put on. You will be provided with the forms and class descriptions and may be asked to provide a cover, all of which are rolled together into a course catalog you will help distribute to potential students. Your regent will help you determine a class schedule considering your needs and those of the instructors.

## SECTION TWO

### EVERY EVENT CHECKLIST

Even though you've collected volunteers willing to help and/or scheduled to perform these tasks, it would be wise to remind them a few days before the event of exactly what you are expecting them to do. If someone should pullout now, try not to be angry. Try to work around them, replace them, or take the responsibility yourself.

#### GENERAL

1. Who will clean-up?
2. Who will collect site fees?
3. Will the seneschal be present?
4. Will needed officers be there, and be able to perform their functions?
5. Will the Gold Key be available? You may want to mention in copy.
6. Who will be the first on site?
7. Who will post signs?
8. Who will lock up?
9. Who will take down signs?
10. Is mundane publicity wanted? This should be up to your council.
11. Will you allow merchants?
12. Will there be activities for smalls?
13. Have you sent in and verified the date with Kingdom Calendar?
14. Have you submitted Crier copy on time? (branch /event name, city, state, EVERYTHING you know about the event, map, and note to the editor about what months you want it to run).
15. Have you called Kingdom Calendar and Crier Editor to verify that all forms are in?

#### SITE

1. Who will prepare site map to be handed out at gate? (Crown events MUST)
2. Where is running water (mark on map)?
3. Where is the nearest ice for coolers?
4. How many bathrooms (mark on map)?
5. Are toilet paper/hand towels provided?
6. Is a deposit required?
7. When and how will it be returned?
8. How much is the site fee?
9. When must site fee be paid?

**SITE {continued):**

10. When and where do you pick up key?
11. When and where do you return key?
12. Are there tables and chairs/benches?
13. If not, where will you get them? At what cost?
14. Is alcohol allowed?
15. How much parking is available?
16. Is overnight parking available? Where? (Shade would be nice)
17. When must the site be vacated? 18. Is selling allowed (merchants)?
19. Is there a merchants' area?
20. Is there a fee to the merchant?
21. Who will check and restock bathrooms (one male, one female)?
22. Are pets allowed? Are there leash laws (include in copy and post)?
23. Will (your) noise be a problem?
24. Is any covered shelter available?

**FIRES**

1. Are fires allowed? Candles?
2. Is there a fireplace/fire pit?
3. Is wood provided?
4. If not, who will provide it?
5. Who will chop wood?
6. Who will bring axe/wedge?
7. Will there be a designated smoking area?
8. What kind of fire extinguisher will be provided for the bardic fire?
9. Will the constabulary tend the fire/perform a fire watch through the night?

**CONTESTS**

1. Who will judge each?
2. What are the criteria for entries?
3. Who will provide the prize/s?
4. Where and when will each be judged?
5. Where and when will winner/s be announced?
6. Who will hand out prize for each?

**ENTERTAINMENT**

1. Who will provide entertainment?
2. At what time and place?



3. What are entertainers' requirements?
4. Is there any restriction on type or content of entertainments?

### **COURT**

1. Who will hold it?
2. When and where? (How many times?)
3. How long will it take?
4. Who will herald?
5. Who will provide period chairs, rug /s, pillow/s?
6. How much time do you need at court?

### **RAFFLE/ AUCTION**

1. How and when will it be announced?
2. Who will provide items?
3. What will tickets cost?
- 4 .Who will sell tickets?
- 5 .Who will be auctioneer/draw names?

### **CRASH SPACE**

1. How many out of town guests can you expect?
2. Who is willing to provide crash space?
3. Remember to bring crash space list to event with you.

### **AUTOCRAT'S NECESSITIES**

Where and when will you pick up autocrat's box? If your branch doesn't have an autocrat's box, you'll need most or all of the items listed in the "Amenities" section.

## **REVEL, FEAST, and BALL CHECKLIST**

Don't forget to consult the "Every Event Checklist," too.

### **GENERAL**

1. Who will set up tables and chairs?
2. Who will open up/set up/decorate hall?
3. Who will write up and post menu?
4. If menu feast, will you have the menu printed?
5. If so, who will prepare it for printing?
6. Who will pay for printing?
7. Who will pick it up?
8. Who will determine the type of feast (potluck, assigned)?
9. Where will dishwashing station (for guests to do own dishes) be located? (Not in kitchen, please!)

### **SITE**

1. Is there a refrigerator?
2. Is there a stove? Oven?
3. Is decorating allowed (banners)?
4. Is overnight parking allowed?
5. Is crash-space available?
6. How many will the site legally seat?

### **FOOD**

1. What kind of food? (pot-luck?)
2. Who will be in charge of kitchen (NOT YOU)?
3. Who will be in charge of servers (NOT YOU)?
4. How many at the head table?
5. How much cooking will be done on site?
6. How and how long will food be stored?
7. Who will act as servers?

### **DANCING**

1. Who will provide music?
2. If taped, who will provide tape player?
3. Who will announce and lead dances (and teach them if necessary)?
4. Is there electrical power available?
5. Is there enough lighting for night dancing?

## **AUTOCRAT'S NECESSITIES**

For menu feast, post copy of menu and schedule in kitchen for servers and cooks! If entertainments, contests, or courts will be going on during the feast, coordinate with the feast-o-crat so he or she can allow for serving breaks accordingly.

## **TOURNEY/WAR CHECKLIST**

Don't forget to consult the "Every Event Checklist," too.

### **GENERAL**

- 1 .Who will bring field marshals' poles?
2. Who will bring field heralds' baldrics?
3. Who will act as field marshals (you can usually count on volunteers)?
- 4 .Who will act as field heralds (ditto)?
5. Who will act as head water-bearer (need jugs, straws)?
6. Who will bring elimination forms/waivers?
7. Does the person acting as minister of the lists need assistants?
8. Who will bring and set up eric?
9. If you wish to have war archery, is there a large enough space?
10. If war archery, who will provide face/head protection for marshals?

### **CAMPING SITE**

1. Is there a suitable eric site?
- 2 .Is camping available? For how many?
- 3 .Is drinkable water available?
- 4 .Is there a curfew for noise?
5. Showers would be nice
6. Hot water would be nice

### **ARCHERY**

1. Allowed on site?
2. If target archery, who will keep score?
3. Who will provide targets? Bales?

### **AUTOCRAT'S NECESSITIES**

Always mention war archery in the event copy, so "lights" will bring their equipment, and bring extra screen and duct tape. For any type of war, provide team designations (ribbon, tape, arm-bands, etc.) and bring duct tape and marking pen in case they need some other kind of designator.

## AFTER THE EVENT

When the event is over, there are a few more things the autocrat must do. Some of these are:

- Clean up the site after the event (don't be afraid to ask for help). Clean up is very important, because the SCA jealously guards its reputation for leaving every site cleaner than we found it. Sometimes it seems like too much work at the end of what's been a very long weekend, but you have to dredge up one more ounce of courage -you can't let this go!
- Lock up the site after the event (if appropriate).
- Haul out garbage (if required).
- Turn in any keys and/or equipment borrowed. If there was a deposit on the site, arrange for it to be returned to whoever paid it.
- If your branch has an autocrat's box, and you used it, you'll have to replace anything, which was taken out of it, and return it to whence it came, or keep it until the next event, as appropriate.
- Hand over anything turned in to you as lost and found to the local constabulary (except for at Crown events, when it should be handed over to the kingdom constable).
- Find out from the gate constable how much money was taken in from site fees. Sometimes the constabulary retains responsibility for the money and turns it in to the reeve, sometimes the autocrat does so; the best way to judge which to do is to find out how your branch usually handles this. No matter how it's done, you should know how much was taken in. If you're overwhelmed with costs for the event, the constabulary can usually give you an advance for expenses out of the cash box, and report this to the reeve at the next council meeting (and may ask you to sign a receipt).
- Attend the next council meeting to report the results of the event (and listen to the council's critique -this is a good time to mention anything the council could have done better, too; that's how we learn).
- Turn in the autocrat's expense form. Submit your expenses (and receipts) to the branch reeve, and verify that gate monies have been turned in. If there are any event expenses still to be paid, arrange with the reeve to pay them.

-Even though you may be tired (or even re-tired) from the autocratting business, it's worth the effort to call or write a quick note to those who helped the most. You may need them again sometime!

## IDEAS

For the completely new autocrat, there are some ideas for contests and prizes that are easy, cheap or free listed below. For help in deciding what kind of event and activities to plan, "Medieval Holidays and Festivals (A Calendar of Celebrations)" by Madeleine Pelner Cosman, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981, is an excellent source, is inexpensive, and most bookstores will order it for you if your library doesn't have it.

**TREASURE HUNT** -A good activity, especially for smalls, and handy because you can do it almost at the last minute if you run out of entertainment. Hide a treasure, and leave a string of clues, each leading to the next. For team play, the treasure has to be something that can be divided. Cookies and pennies divide very well. You might ask for an item to be donated to the treasure chest as admission to the hunt, or ask everyone to bring a white elephant to donate to it. Ask the hunters to place each clue back exactly where it was found once it is read.

**SCAVENGER HUNT** -Make copies of a list (can be done on site by hand if you're desperate) of things the scavengers have to find, and the first team finished gets the prize. You can make your list very medieval by including items which would have been hard to find then (but aren't now) like oranges, needles, salt. Avoid items that people would be reluctant to part with (award medallions, knights' spurs, circlet) or which might be unwise to lug around (like weapons). In this, like most competitions, it wouldn't be fair to pit smalls against adults and children of one age should be discouraged from banding together.

**TWILSEY-WOP** -Played by two people standing on a log, each with a pillow. They try to knock each other off (it can get rough). The log shouldn't be too high, and contestants with a size or other advantage usually put one hand in their belt. Eyeglasses shouldn't be worn for this.

**DEFLOWER A MAIDEN** -Every lady at the event is given a flower (usually silk), and the gentlemen try to charm the ladies into giving their flowers away (stealing doesn't count). The lord with the most flowers in the end wins. The reverse game is called **CHARM THE LORDS**.

**OBSTACLE COURSE, THREE-LEGGED RACE, OTHER TRADITIONAL PIC-NIC GAMES** -are generally in period. Give contestants a bucket of water to balance on their heads and an obstacle course to run (don't make it too hard). On a hot day, they won't mind getting wet. There's potential for injury in these games, so warn the participants.

**NEWSLETTER COVER CONTEST** -Bring the newsletter covers for the last year and have guests vote for the one they like best. Perhaps the prize might be a free year's subscription (and everyone will do more covers next year!).

ARTS (POETRY; STORY; SONG) -These provide entertainment for everyone, but there should be a time limit or a really long entry may bore the audience to sleep. A fun contest is a poem on a theme, to be composed on site (provide pencils, erasers, paper). Winning entries can be printed in the branch newsletter.

ARTS (CALLIGRAPHY; ILLUMINATION) -Designate whether or not it's to be done on site (if so, provide the paper, pens, pencils, rulers, crayons and/or felt pens), whether there are age or skill divisions, and what the theme and judging criteria are. A good smalls' contest is "Draw a Beastie." Winning entries can be printed in the branch newsletter.

COOKING (TARTS, SUBTLETIES, BREADS, etc.) -Winning recipe can be published in the branch newsletter (or cookbook, if you're planning one), and be served to the head table at the feast.

TOURNEYS: Tournaments may be single or double elimination, round robin, multi-weapon, or whatever you like. You may be able to persuade a local artisan or craftsperson to make something special (either in advance, or custom-made to winner's specs/measurements) for the winner and his or her inspiration. Period camping gear is a popular prize, and can be anything from a stool to an arming chest or medieval-looking folding table. A collection of fighters' necessities (duct tape, rivets, pliers, closed-cell foam, etc.) is inexpensive. For cheap or free, the winner can be the branch's champion (though the branch must approve this in advance, and the champion may be provided with a baldric and/or shield bearing the branch's arms). Using some florists' tape, florists' wire, some bits of ribbon, and silk leaves and flowers (unless your site has and will allow you to pick fresh ones), you can make wreaths for the winner and his or her inspiration, and may wish to have extras to award to the most chivalrous fighter and his or her inspiration. For tournament runners-up or side competitions (best semblance of death on the field, for example), a leather lanyard is cheap, easy to make, and nice to have.

WARS: The easiest type of war to judge is one where points are given for each victory throughout the day, in several different kinds of battles (and sometimes even points for arts or sciences competitions as well). Traditionally there is a bridge and/or boat battle (bridge or boat outlined on ground with chalk, rope, or tape), a get-the-other-guys'-banner battle, storm the castle (or hill, if no castle is handy).

OTHER PRIZES / ITEMS FOR AUCTION OR RAFFLE -Books on medieval topics and Society publications like the Elf Hill Times (especially the song book issue), make excellent contest prizes that don't cost too much. If your branch needs memberships, but has money, you might consider giving SCA memberships as prizes. Search local thrift stores for feast gear, pieces of fur, jewelry. At fabric stores you may find trims, belt buckles, cloak clasps, etc. Some fabric stores will special order trim if you buy a sufficient amount. For any contest aimed at newcomers, or with a newbie division, cloth



napkins, baskets, candles/candleholders and other bits of feast gear, costuming books, or pouches make good prizes. Prizes needn't be expensive to draw participants, in fact, too magnificent a prize can be discouraging to those who don't think they're "good" enough to compete on what may be perceived as too high a level. Good items for auction or raffle are: weapons, cookies, pieces of armor, services (cooking, hauling, gophering, lessons in an art/craft), period items bought or made, period lunch in period container, book on medieval subject, kits for an art/craft such as leatherworking, embroidering, calligraphy, illumination, etc.

**BARDIC CIRCLE:** If you have a relatively small or new branch, you can give your bardic circle a boost by holding a contest (for the best song on a subject, for instance). Otherwise, just provide a fire reasonably far from those who are sleeping, ask someone to start by leading a song everyone knows (if they haven't done so before you can ask!), and sit back to enjoy!

**SITES:** If you have no idea where to find a site for your event, try consulting state, county, and city parks departments and community centers, MA camping guides, and other local clubs which might use the same type of site (archery and gun clubs, for instance). City parks and schools usually don't allow alcohol, but state parks and some churches usually do. Some wineries will consider sharing their grounds for the weekend. Other branches in your area may be able to help you, if they've been looking for sites, too.

**TYPES OF EVENTS:** Summer solstice, Equinox, Yule (perhaps with an evergreen tree hung upside down, the traditional "kissing bush"), Samhain (pronounced "Sow-een"; a sort of medieval Halloween), All Fools Day (when everything is backwards), Beltane, Champion's tourney, peasants revel, masked ball...etc.

## PARTING WORDS

Do your best, which is all you can do anyway, and don't sweat the stuff that's beyond your control. If you've read through the Friend once, and used the checklists to be sure everything's covered, you shouldn't do too badly. And remember; nothing in the Friend is law -it's just friendly advice (with the exception of the requirements for insurance and waivers at SCA events, which are required by the Corpora). One last list, and then you're on your own. These are the things that'll be most important to your success:

- Try to get a pretty nice site without too many inconveniences or dangers, not too far away, with weather not too extreme.
- Get your Date Request Form and Crier copy in neatly and on time
- Discuss everything you plan with the council (they'll help you by thinking of all the ways it could go wrong...) and be willing to modify your plans enough to accommodate as many suggestions as possible.
- Don't charge too high a site fee.
- Draw a good map, and post lots of obvious signs.
- Hold some contests that don't require any pre-planning on the part of the guests.
- Don't try to fill every moment of the weekend -everything takes longer than you think, and people will make time to visit whether you allow for it or not!
- Provide plenty of potties and potty paper. -Consider pets and smalls.
- Don't catch the woods on fire. -Smile through it all.

**Good luck, and may your event be free from incident!**