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Kevin DuBose, right, helps the wind lift a dragon kite as Curtis Hitchcock lets out the line. The men, members of the medieval group Dragons of the Round, were at the Zilker Park Kite Festival on Sunday to promote Cavalier Dayes, an upcoming Renaissance fair in Smithville. Rebecca McEntee/American-Statesman Staff

# Kites paint the sky at Zilker festival

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The first kite that Richard Robertson ever made was out of brown paper and sticks, with an old strip of cloth for a tail.

"You'd keep the tail on all year long, and the line, and it would collect dust under your bed and your mother would get upset."

Robertson was 8 then. He's 69 now and has been making and flying kites all that time. Sunday, at the Zilker Park Kite Festival, which is the same age as Robertson, he flew a fancy model made of blue rip-stop nylon with yellow dove appliques and long twin tails that made it, in the wind, move like a graceful sea creature.

"It's a great feeling to create something and see it work," he said. "You're painting the sky with your kite."

This annual tradition is sponsored by the Austin Exchange Club. The money from concessions goes for child-abuse prevention.

The sky paintings over spring-greening Zilker Park took many forms. There were shark kites and whirligig kites, fish kites, kites that looked like birds and dragons and butterflies. Somebody flew a tent.

And then there was the titan of the skies. This was the kite which, when it got the wind beneath its wings, made you hear "Ride of the Valkyries" in your head. This red-white-and-blue kite covered 200 square feet of heaven and trailed twin streamers 135 feet long. This

was a big kite.

Dick and Gail Bell of Plano made that one. Kite-building, she said, started out as a hobby and "escalated to being our life. It's just a thrill to make them and see them fly."

Patrick McVeety-Mill, 7, clutched a modest version. He and his grandfather made it a couple of years ago. "My father had fond memories of kites, and he wanted to make one with his grandson," Patrick's mother said. "My father has since passed on, but we brought out today and I told Patrick, 'That's how I know you're a member Paw-Paw,' and he said, 'Me, too.'"

And the great thing was that Patrick's first kite, which he held in his small hand, was made of brown paper and sticks and an old strip of cloth for a tail.