



# Cactus Needles

Newsletter of the  
Southwest Costumers Guild

Vol 10 #10,  
October 2003

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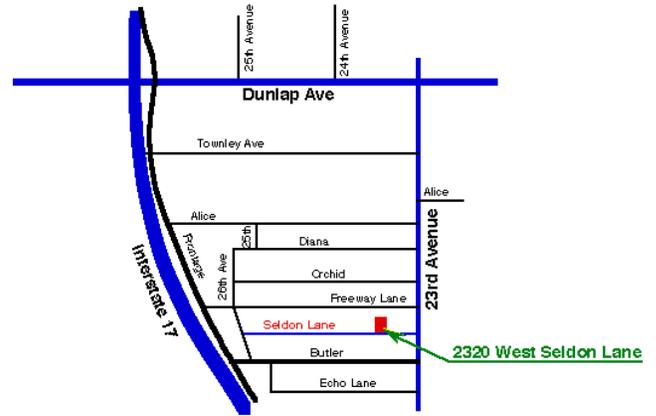
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## Calendar

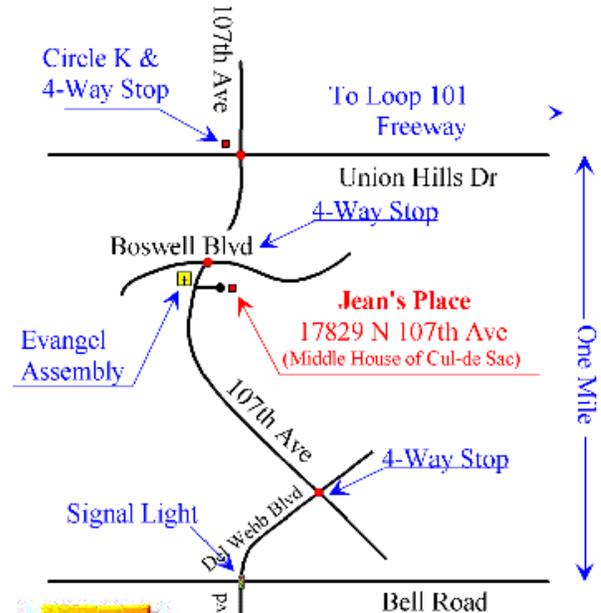
\*Indicates an event organized by SWCG. Unless otherwise noted, SWCG meetings begin at 1:00 PM.

October 26, 2003 – **Fabric Burning\*** SWCG workshop at Randall's place. Learn to use burn tests to distinguish different fabrics and fiber blends.



**Map to Randall's Home at 2320 West Seldon Lane in Phoenix.**

November 2, 2003 **10AM** – **Cloakmaking\*** SWCG workshop at Jean's Sun City Sweatshop. We'll build some capes and hats as our semiannual fundraiser.



**Map to Jean's Place  
in Sun City, AZ  
Southwest Costumers Guild Meeting**

November 14-16, 2003 – **TusCon 30** at the Innsuites Hotel Tucson, 475 North Granada Avenue in Tucson. Fan-Organized SF Con featuring GOH Yvonne Navarro, Artist GOH Leslie D'Allesandro Haws, Music GOHs Maya & Jeff Bohnhoff and Toastmaster Edward Bryant. TusCon also features both an evening masquerade and a midnight adults-only masquerade. <http://home.earthlink.net/~basfa/>

November 22 & 23, 2003 – **Devonshire Renaissance Faire** at Los Olivos Park, north of 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Indian School Road in Phoenix. A fine little one-weekend renfaire.

November 30, 2003 – **Duct and Cover\*** SWCG workshop at Jean’s place. Learn to make a dress form of your body using duct tape and stuffing.

December 14, 2003 – **Parasol Covering\*** SWCG workshop at Jean’s place. Learn to build a custom parasol over a standard frame. Annual officer elections.

January 25, 2004 – **Once More Into the Breeches\*** SWCG workshop at Stephanie’s place. Learn how to prepare custom-fitted stockings, slops and tights.

February 29, 2004 – **Leap Into Leap Year\*** SWCG meeting at Stephanie’s place. Annual calendar planning.

### **Welcome New Members!**

We officially picked up two new members in September.

We met Carlos Egan at Renaissance in the Pines this spring. He made it to Tasha’s for the September meeting.

According to her postcard, Diane runs B-Decked one - of a kind hats, unique jewelry and accessories. I hope she’ll tell us more about the business soon.

### **Create A Custom-Fitted Dance Belt Pattern**

by Paula Lary

*Following is the text of the handout given with Paula’s dance belt workshop at Coppercon 23.*

--Newspaper makes a good draft material.

--The process is best done with a friend who you trust – for reasons that will become obvious. It’s also a good idea to wear lightweight pants—harems would be good—on which to have something pin the paper to keep it from slipping out of place.

Decide how wide you want the finished belt. (2” is a good start)

**For a full cabaret style belt:** decide where you’ll wear the belt on your body—how low, etc. Measure the front across, adding 5-6 inches on each piece. Do the same for the back, starting at the exact point you ended the front on each side. The extra 5-6 inches on each piece allows paper for adjustments on the sides. Also, be sure the back is measured at the same level as the front to keep the belt on the same level around the body.

**For the partial belt (like a Tribal belt) with ties:** Decide how far around you’ll want the belt, then add 5-6 inches.

Cut strips of paper to the above dimensions. For the full cabaret belt, cut 2 strips—one each for front and back.

Fold the strips in half and mark a vertical centerline.

Fit the pieces on you exactly at the level you’ll be wearing the finished belt, matching the centerline to your center. For the cabaret belt, again, be sure the front and back meet at the same level.

Have your friend locate all the gaps in the paper and pin darts at those gaps, making sure they are evenly/symmetrically spaced around you.

Mark the places where the front and back meet on the cabaret belt or where the partial belt starts on each side of your body—your choice as to where you want these to be.

When all darts are pinned in and all points marked, place the strips on fresh paper and “smash” the darts flat. Trace these pieces onto the new paper—the new drawing will be curved. Be sure to transfer all markings from the original to the new pattern. Also, be sure to draw in a straight of grain line horizontally across the center of each pattern piece.

After tracing the actual pieces, add 5/8” seam allowance to the top and bottom of each piece, and add equal amounts of extra inches to each **end** of the pieces—3-4 inches is good.

Cut out the exact shape of each piece; remember they will be curved. Retry these pieces on your body for fit, being sure to place it exactly where you originally measured it; add more darts if necessary and redraw.

When the fit is good:

**For partial belt:** Trim the paper on each side to allow just 5/8” on each side beyond the ends for seam allowances.

**For cabaret belt:** (a 2 piece belt is recommended instead of permanently sewing one side together; makes it easier to alter the finished belt later if you gain or lose weight or want to sell the belt). Allow 1 ½ -2” on each end for overlap to hide fasteners. Be sure to mark each piece at the exact points you’ll fasten the belt. Pin pieces together on you and mark where the fasteners will go, then determine by sight how much overlap you’ll really want beyond the fasteners—1 ½ inches is usually good.

Make a mock up out of inexpensive fabric; this finished belt would be good to use for dance practice.

**Basic construction:** You’ll probably be using 3 types of fabric: the fashion fabric that everyone sees—even if it will be covered with beads, sequins, etc., it should be of a nice matching fabric because it can peak through the decorations, a heavier fabric such as canvas or denim, and an absorbent fabric such as a cotton for the lining.

Fasteners for the cabaret belt should be the good sturdy skirt fasteners.

For each belt section, flatline the heavier fabric to the wrong side of the fashion fabric, creating one piece of fabric (for each section of belt) to work with. The lining can then be attached in the usual way; it can be machine stitched, but hand stitching with a whipstitch is recommended so the lining can easily be removed for cleaning or replacement.

**For the partial belt:** Ties should be sewn onto the right side of the ends before the lining is attached, leaving the ties “inside” when the belt is turned. Be sure to leave an area unstitched to allow for turning. Hand stitch this opening closed once the belt is turned right side out. Ties should now be hanging loose outside the ends of the belt. Ties can be grosgrain ribbon—which ties well and doesn’t slip, but use the  $\frac{3}{4}$  or wider ribbon. Ties can also be of self-fabric minus the heavier fabric and made in a narrower width tapering to as sharp a point as you want and as long as you want, just be surer will be long enough to tie with some hanging free. You can also sew tassels to the points before turning them.

Once you have a basic pattern that fits you, draw this pattern onto good sturdy paper or heavy Pellon. You now have a pattern that you can use over and over. To do different styles, trace your basic pattern onto paper, then use it as a base to draw points, dips, scallops, etc. to the top and bottom seam lines. Just remember; if you make the belt wider, you will have to add in new darts; the wider the belt, the more darts. You should fit this new pattern to you before cutting into fabric.

If doing points, make sure the fabric is stiff enough to for them to keep their shape. They can be reinforced with hat wire or: you can do a basic belt and create points by decorating the belt with appliques that have their own points—let them overlap above and below the actual belt top and bottom. However, be sure to reinforce these—and line them. The backs of these appliques—especially the sequined ones—are very rough and could scratch you or snag your skirt or harem pants.

After construction, decoration can be done with appliques, sequins, coins, bitty bells, beading, amulets, shells, tassels; whatever you want; just be sure you know what you’ll be decorating with before choosing the flatlining and fashion fabrics. Coins and beads add lots of weight; the fabric needs to be able to support them. They also snag sheer, knit and satin fabrics.

When sewing on beads, etc, use a heavy beading thread and wax it several times. If using coins, be sure to allow enough thread to let the coins “swing” to hit each other for the sound.



**Show & Tell:** Paula recently rediscovered some of Vilma’s extensive collection of ladies’ hats from the 1940s and 1950s and brought them to the September meeting.

### Synthropol

Paula writes of a product called “Synthropol” to which she was introduced in a hand dyeing class at Costume College. This product is a mild detergent particularly well suited for washing hand-dyed projects. It is available locally at The Quilted Apple on 24<sup>th</sup> Street in Phoenix.

### Incoming E-Mail

I just received the following e-mail at webmaster@southwestcostumersguild.org.

*“Need help with costumes – bigger breast, more shapely hips, a tuck here and there???” [www.breastandmore.com](http://www.breastandmore.com).”*

With that URL, how could I resist? Turns out the company sells “silicone bras” made with the same technology used for mastectomy prosthetics.

Anyone planning a Seven of Nine costume? --Randall



**Heads Up:** The plaster face casts built during our July meeting were unveiled in September. These can be used as the basis for custom-fitted masks and makeup applications.

### From the Mailbox

*The Scarlet Letter*, September 2003 – Features include a review of the Spirit Halloween Store\*, bad pirate jokes, Torcon winners list, Pre-Archon news, SLUTS quotes, Geek Masquerades, Meeting Minutes.

Grab the newsletter from Randall at the next meeting

Special thanks to editor Jack Below for sending us a fresh copy after the first was shredded in the mail.

\*The local Spirit Halloween Store can be found at Metro Parkway West and Cheryl Drive in Phoenix, next to Metrocenter.



**Product Review:**  
**White Sew Cute**  
by Randall Whitlock

This is a very small, portable straight-stitch sewing machine.

Yes, it IS cute. It's only eight inches tall and can be run from four AA batteries inside or an included 6-volt plug-in

power supply. Since the DC input is a fairly standard jack, it should be fairly easy to connect the machine to a higher capacity battery.

Consider the possibilities for emergency repairs and alterations at a con or a camping event! What's more, it's cheap. I paid \$25 for mine at Hancock.

The machine can be activated from a side switch or an included pedal. Both the upper and lower threads are fed from standard-size bobbins. Fittings are included to wind bobbins.

The Sew Cute is not without its flaws. The tensioning is not very sophisticated, so it may be finicky about fabrics and threads. You can't control stitch length or speed. It's pretty much all plastic and the gears have a less-than-smooth sound. The Sew Cute will never replace your full-size sewing machine, but can be a helpful auxiliary.

For a test project, I used my Sew Cute to build . . . . .

**Randwulf's Jester Cap: A Work in Progress**  
by Randall Whitlock.

On the next page is the 1.0 version of *Randwulf's Jester Cap*. This makes a festive three-horned rennie cap that might be worth building at our next fundraiser sewing session.

The pattern is a size 7 3/8 and fits my head very closely. Other sizes will come later as I develop the final publication version. The pattern works very well with craft felt and begs to be parti-colored. I also have a 4-panel, 2-horn version of the jester cap pattern.

**Directions**

Cut out the pattern. Digital subscribers to Cactus Needles can simply print out an extra copy of the page.

Lay the pattern down on your fabric and trace around with chalk or pen. Trace three of them onto two layers of felt. Use two colors of felt for parti-coloring. Do not cut out the pieces just yet.

Sew along the pattern line from the left side, around the horn, and stop at the point of the crown.

Cut out the pieces, running your cut just outside the seam you have just sewn. Cut out the bottom and right side along the lines. You should now have three pairs of panels.

Sew each panel pair to the next one along the side seam shown on the right side of the pattern.

Turn the hat right side out. A blunt pencil or chopstick may prove useful in turning the horns.

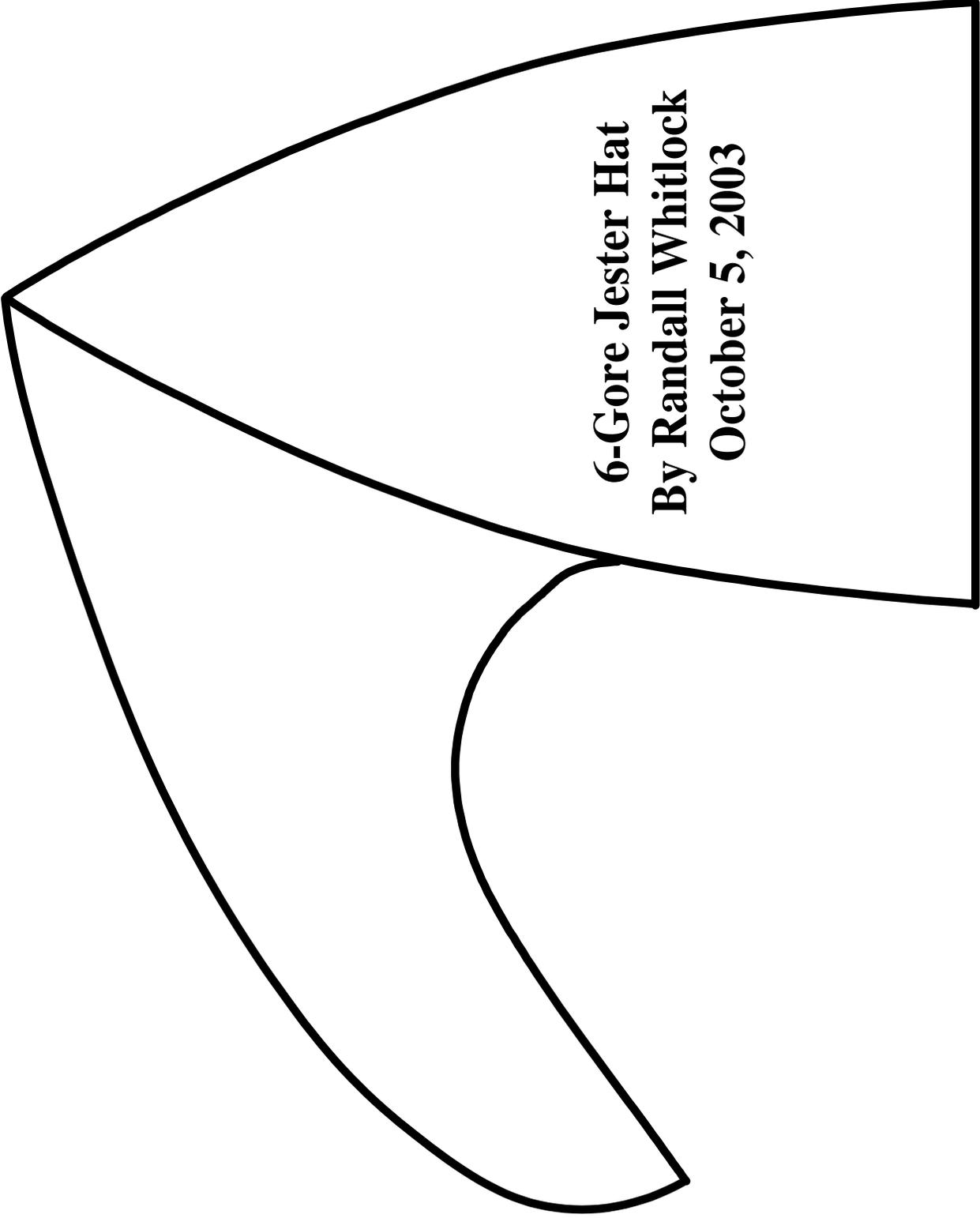
Cut a two-inch wide headband, fold it over, and sew it to the base of the hat. Run a drawstring through the band for tension and size adjustment.

You can attach bells, pompoms, tassels, or other decorations to the ends of the horns.

If you want fuller horns for stuffing, sew a diamond-shaped gusset into the concave-curved seam of each horn.

If you leave off the horns and just cut out six of the bent triangle gores, this pattern becomes a skullcap that can be the basis for a baseball cap, Sherlock Holmes deerstalker, propeller beanie, etc.





**6-Gore Jester Hat**  
**By Randall Whitlock**  
**October 5, 2003**