

Cactus Needles

Monthly Newsletter
of the Southwest
Costumers Guild

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The internet edition of Cactus Needles is printed on 100 percent recycled electrons!

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Please e-mail or mail contact updates to the editor.

Calendar

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

January 9-11, 2004 – **DarkCon 2004** SF/Fantasy/Gaming convention at the Embassy Suites, southeast corner of Greenway and I-17 in Phoenix, Arizona. Medieval/Ren/Tolkein hall costumes are highly encouraged. Go to www.darkcon.org for details.

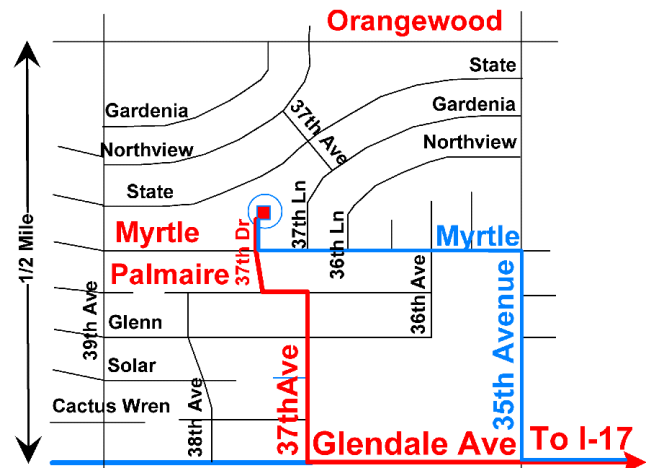
January 22-24, 2004, 10-5 – **Phoenix Craft & Sewing Festival** at the Arizona State Fairgrounds. Big trade show with demos & stuff to buy. Admission is \$8 for all 3 days.

Dollar-off coupon available at Hancock Fabrics.
www.craftandsewingfestival.com

January 25, 2004 – **Parasol Covering*** SWCG workshop at Stephanie's place. Learn to build a custom parasol over a standard frame. See materials list in the December 03 issue.

"De dues are due. De dah dah dah." – **Sting**
Please pay the treasurer at the January meeting.

Jan 28-Feb 1, 2004 – **Winter Range** at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility, NW corner of I-17 and Carefree Highway in Maricopa County, Arizona. The Single Action Shooting Society's National Championship Of Cowboy Action Shooting, Encampment And Frontier Exhibition, organized by the Arizona Territorial Company of Rough Riders. Shooting events with western-period firearms from horseback and foot. There's an impressive sutlers' row with lots of shooting and wild west costume supplies. Spectators welcome. \$3.00 parking donation.
www.winterrange.com/



Map to Stephanie & Craig's Place
7213 North 37th Drive, Phoenix
"Knock Until Dogs Bark"

February 11-16, 2004 – **Estrella War**. The Society for Creative Anachronism's annual camping and combat event at Estrella Mountain Park in Goodyear, Arizona. The event also features arts and sciences classes and competitions. Look for your beloved editor's "MoiRandall's" booth on Merchants' Row. Go to www.estrellawar.org for more information.

February 12 & 13, 2004 – **History on the Mall** at the Arizona State Capital Building. Tour of the capital, table displays & live demos by history societies & reenactors.

February 14, 2004 – **Tour of Historic Florence**. Antique & Collectible Sale, Quilt Show, Exhibits, Food, Shopping
Tour Tix: Adults \$10, call (800) 437-9433 for information.

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

March 18-21, 2004 – **National Festival of the West** at Westworld in Scottsdale, Arizona. Annual festival features western music jamboree, western trade show, western film festival, cowboy spirit award, cowboy poetry, celebrity appearances. Adults \$12, Seniors \$6, Kids \$4.
www.festivalofthewest.com/

April 3, 2004, 10-5 – **Arizona Book Festival** at the Carnegie Center, 1101 W Washington, Phx. Booth displays from local publishers, literary societies (including CASFS & LepreCon), and libraries. Lots of author guests.

May 7-9, 2004 – **LepreCon 30** SF/Art Con at the Sheraton Crescent Hotel, 2620 W. Dunlap, Phoenix, AZ. Guests of honor include author David Drake, artists Donato Giancola and Sylvana Anderson. Art Show & Auction, Gaming, LARPs, Computer LAN Party, Charity Auction, a Dealer's Room, Con Suite, Video, Anime and more. There will be a Masquerade directed by guildfriend Margaret Grady. Go to www.leprecon.org for details.

July 2-5, 2004 – **ConKopelli (WesterCon 57)** Regional SF Convention at the Wigwam Resort in Litchfield Park, Arizona. Guests of honor include authors CJ Cherryh and Diana Gabaldon, artist David Cherry, fan John Hertz, and music guest Heather Alexander. Go to www.conkopelli.org for details. *SWCG will host a costumers' suite on Friday and Saturday. Guildster Carlos Egan will direct the masquerade.*

SF Hyper-Museum Seeks Costume Exhibit

Dear Costumers:

You may have heard about *Experience Science Fiction*, the first SF hyper-museum, opening in Seattle next summer. I'm serving on the advisory board, and am looking for costume-related material to display in the "Homeworld -- The Science Fiction Community" exhibit. The display case will show all aspects of fan activity, and of course costuming is a major part of that-- and so exciting visually!

Here's a link to their website:
<http://www.experiencesciencefiction.com/> to give you a better idea of the scope of the project.

We're looking for photos, sketches (esp. documenting the design and construction process), small props or hand-held items, and one perfect costume. Unfortunately, there's not room to display

complete examples of the breadth of the work being done in costuming for the opening, but there is interest in doing a larger exhibit in the temporary gallery at a future date.

To give you some ideas of what will best fit the needs of the exhibit designers, here are some requirements:

*It must be a science fiction costume, not fantasy. * It must be from an original idea, or based on a book or story, not a media reproduction (there will be plenty of media-related stuff on display).

*It must be available for donation or long-term loan -- at least two years.

*It must look good close up. It doesn't have to have won a workmanship award, but it shouldn't be a slapdash effort that looks best from 20 feet.

*It must be able to arrive in Seattle by mid-January.

*It must be in good condition.

If you have something tucked away in your closet that might fill the bill, let me know as soon as possible. The best thing would be to take some digital pictures and email them to me, but a Polaroid or other photo will do.

DO NOT send me anything directly! I'll be working with the exhibit designer and the curator to select the costume material. And if you personally don't have anything, please pass this letter on to someone who might, or send me their contact information.

Anything put on display at Experience Science Fiction will be treated with the utmost respect. The staff adheres to all curatorial standards of conservation and display -- it will likely come back in better shape than when it left your hands.

I'm very excited to help this museum tell the whole story of science fiction -- with your help we can showcase our particular area of endeavor.

Yours for rip-free seams,
Astrid Anderson Bear

Sad News

Helen "April" Rice passed away on December 19, 2003. Plagued by a congenital heart condition throughout her life, every day she lived set a new medical record and gave new inspiration for her friends. April was not a costumer herself, but a vocal supporter and appreciator of masquerades. April served as handicapped services liaison at many local cons.

April had an influence on my life I don't think she ever knew about. In a UFP video room at a fan gathering in Phoenix in 1989, she dropped the straight lines for several of my puns that first attracted Moira's attention.

--Randall

Brass Etching Made Simple

by Randall Whitlock

"Etching" describes a family of techniques that create decorative designs on metal by dissolving away part of its surface. The designs can be *negative* – formed by incisions in the metal, *positive* – with raised areas forming the art, or a combination of the two.

A few years back, I hit upon a simple, low-tech method for making etched designs on brass, bronze, or any other metal that contains copper. Just use circuit board etching solution. This is a mildly acid solution of ferric chloride used by electronics designers and hobbyists. The stuff costs about four bucks a pint at Radio Shack.

The copper from the metal replaces the iron in the chloride solution, dissolving the metal surface as copper chloride and reprecipitating the iron as clouds of fine iron oxide crystals suspended in the waste solution.

To use this technique, select and clean your metal object thoroughly. Oxide or anything else covering the metal will stop it from dissolving and leave a bump on the finished piece. This is the key concept of the technique, as well as a caution.

Coat any areas you do not want to be dissolved with a resistant medium, such as indelible ink, wax or lacquer. Don't forget the back and sides of the piece! You can lay out incised designs by masking the areas you want dissolved, coating the surface, then removing the mask.

The ink in a Sanford Sharpie permanent marking pen will not wash away in the etching solution. Lines drawn with the Sharpie will remain as raised areas on the metal after etching. This is a particularly easy way to make lettering and other raised designs. Sanford makes calligraphy pens with the same ink. If the pen tip smells like petroleum distillate, it will probably work.

Another good way to make raised lettering is to buy rub-on transfer letters and apply them to the metal surface. The motto plate on my sword scabbard was made this way. Make sure the hollow spaces of the transfer letters really are hollow, not just transparent.



Etched Motto Plate on Walnut Sword Scabbard

Once your metal is prepared, with all of the areas to be kept covered and all of the areas to be dissolved left bare, immerse the metal in a shallow bath of etching solution. A shallow plastic pan works well. The pan should be just larger than your object to minimize the volume of solution needed. On really big pieces, you could contain the solution by forming a modeling clay dam around the area to be etched

Gently agitate the solution by tipping the pan back and forth for about 20 minutes. Drain your solution back into its bottle – The stuff is good for a couple more uses.

Rinse your metal thoroughly with water. Run lots of extra water down the drain to dilute the washed-off solution. Clean your metal surface with a suitable solvent. Sharpie ink and transfer letters dissolve well in acetone or mineral spirits. Some lacquers prefer turpentine. Polish your metal with Brasso or an equivalent product. You may wish to coat the finished object with lacquer to preserve its shine. I prefer a matte, aged-brass finish myself.

I've had good success with brass and copper sheet stock from hobby stores. I've made motto plates as inlay set into wood, pet tags, and other cool stuff. I've had particular fun decorating the brass military-style belt buckles worn with cloth belts. You need a 100 percent brass buckle for this. Most buckles are actually steel, plated with brass. Test with a magnet before etching.



Once upon a time, I would dispose of used solution by pouring it over a limestone driveway. The calcium carbonate would neutralize the solution and deposit the metals as oxides. Now that I live in a more urban, environmentally-conscious area, I save the spent solution for the next city household hazardous waste collection day.

Websites Forwarded by Stephanie

Meeting Highlights

The December meeting was sparsely attended (most of us had holiday plans). We deferred the 2004 officer election to January and limited ourselves to nominations. Incumbent President Frances Burns, Veep Jean Palmer, Secretary Paula Lary, and Newsleditor Randall Whitlock were renominated. Stephanie Bannon was nominated for Treasurer.

Dickens Nights Revisited



Randall, Jean and Pete at Christmas at First.

SWCG members visited the Christmas at First celebration in two shifts, with Edouard and Randall hitting the event on Saturday, December 13 and the second expedition of Jean, Pete, and Randall arriving on Sunday, September 21. we handed out a bunch of SWCG business cards. I enjoyed the kind-hearted irony of evangelizing our cause to church goers. – Randall



Victorian costumed choir at Christmas at First.

www.alleycatscratch.com/lotr/

A site with detailed information about the costumes, jewelry, and accessories from the Lord of the Rings films. It includes photos from various exhibits, discussions about fabric, etc. Extremely cool! (Editor's Note: this site is webmastered by our friend and ICG member Cat Devereaux.)

www.cafeshops.com

Also known as CafePress.com, this is a graphics company organized as an online mall. Apparently you can submit artwork in your own shop and CafePress will print it on demand for your customers as T-shirts, hats, coffee mugs, etc. Lots of designs from the SCA, vikings, pirates, medieval art, etc.

SWCG Online Discussion Forum?

Anna recently e-mailed your editor to ask if SWCG has an online discussion forum.

Right now, each of us keeps their own e-mail address book, but a listserv might be handy for discussing technical questions or sending announcements to all members.

Show of electronic hands – would the members be interested in setting something up through Yahoogroups or an equivalent provider? – Randall

From the Mailbox

Greater Bay Area Costume Guild *Finery* Vol 2 No 1

The first issue of the year announces GBACG upcoming events, including an Ice-Skating event inspired by Currier & Ives lithographs. Costume hints for practical Victorian daywear. Discussion of potential costume Oscar nominees, Workshop on converting thrift store jackets to Victorian.

Parting Thought

I read recently that before coming to America, revolutionary war pamphleteer Thomas Paine was a corset maker. Does this mean that there were “Common Sense” corsets 200 years before there were “No Nonsense” panty hose?