

Cactus Needles

The Monthly Newsletter of the Southwest Costumers Guild
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Please send corrections by e-mail or mail to the editor.

Calendar

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

June 26-27, 2004 – **Renaissance in the Pines**. A fine renfaire at Fort Tuthill, off of I-17, just south of Flagstaff, Arizona. From the web page at www.renaissanceinthepinesinc.com, "Step back in time to the Shire of Stone Ridge to the year 1560 as we put on a festival in honor of Queen Elizabeth's visit. See fully armored knights joust, historical recreations from lace-making to blacksmithing, games of skill and chance, a marketplace full of rare and unique treasures, stage shows of swordplay and comedy acts, children theatre, music, dancing and much more."

June 27, 2004 – **Velvet Embossing*** SWCG meeting/workshop at Carlos' place. Final Planning for WesterCon.



Here are Directions to Carlos' House:

Go south from Loop 101 or Bell Road on 67th Ave. Turn left at the second residential street south of Bell Road on the left (West Kings Ave). My house is on the left about 100 yards down the street. It is off-white with green awnings and has a red pick-up in front.

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.

July 25, 2004 – **Splashdown*** SWCG social at Chuck & Tasha's place. Our annual costume party in the pool. Make a costume you can swim in. This year's theme is "Aliens."

July 30-August 1, 2004 – **Costume College** at the Airtel Plaza Hotel in Van Nuys, California. A whole weekend of costuming workshops and classes presented by Costumers Guild West. Go to www.costumecollege.org for details.

August 29, 2004 – **Chemises and Shirts*** SWCG workshop at Randall's place. Learn to build a basic underdress or shirt. Bring muslin or other suitable fabric.

September 26, 2004 – [Buckram Hats II*](#) SWCG workshop at Carlos' place. Put finishing touches on the hats we started in March.

October 24, 2004, 10 AM – [The Cloaking*](#) SWCG workshop at Jean's place. We'll build some capes and other items to sell at Devonshire as our annual fundraiser. Bring your sewing tools and try to find some of the "Dreaded Black Fuzzy" fabric.

November 28, 2004 – [Bustles*](#) SWCG workshop and potluck at Frances' place in Sedona. Bring food to share. Bustle material list to be posted later.

Saturday, December 18, 2004, 5 PM – [Dickens Walk*](#) SWCG social at Edouard's place. Assemble in Victorian or other winter costume, then walk the Christmas at First festival together.

January 30, 2005 – [Duct Tape Mannequins*](#) SWCG workshop at Jean's place. Build a custom dresser dummy around your body using the handyman's secret weapon.

February 27, 2004 – [Calendar Girls & Guys*](#) SWCG meeting at Stephanie's place. Annual calendar planning.



Photo Courtesy of Jeff George

Kim & Rick Tie The Knot

Guildsters Kim and Rick Andrews were wed on Friday evening, June 4 at the Embassy Suites in Phoenix, site of many local SF conventions. The ceremony was performed by minister, author, and former CASFS president Adam Niswander before an intimate assembly of overlapping sets of family, fen, and SWCG members. The knot-tying was quite literal since the wedding rings feature a celtic

knotwork design. The ceremony was followed by a dance reception and fine feed. Best wishes to the happy couple!

Anna Preps for Worldcon

Seems like it was just January when Anna attended her first con. Now she's ready for the big one! - RW

Hallo,

I've managed to put together a trip to WorldCon this September, and am very, *very* excited. Among many other events (not the least of which will be seeing TERRY PRATCHETT!), I hear they have a Regency dance. I'm currently finishing up a god-awfully complex gown due mid-July (which is why I've been AWOL from all the meetings, I'm spending all my time sewing like a maniac), after which I'll be slamming together two Pratchett-themed costumes for WorldCon, so I'm not going to have a chance in heck to sew a Regency dress. Does anyone own one they might be willing to rent/sell/lend to me? I'm a 36" bust and a 27" waist. I'm not picky about a perfect fit -- so long as it doesn't fall off or split when I sit, it'll do. I'll wear any color except pink or yellow (I look like an undead easter bunny in those colors).

Failing that, can anyone recommend an amazingly easy and fast dress pattern? I doubt I'll have time, but I can try. I don't really give a whoop about historical accuracy right now, I just want something vaguely Regency-ish so I can get into the atmosphere of the whole thing. Maybe daydream that Colin Firth's Darcy is lurking around the corner. ;)

Thanks,
Anna M.C.
annamc@ix.netcom.com

The Costume Closet: Pirate Soft Wear **by Randall Whitlock**

When I was a kid (in the days before VCRs) I'd stay up late on Saturday night whenever a local TV station ran any pirate movie, whether it starred Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, or was one of the zillion remakes of "Treasure Island." I'm delighted with the popularity of last year's "Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl" with lots of pirates and "Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World" with its gritty realistic pirate hunters. I look forward to a whole new wave of cinematic adventures on the high seas.

Pirate hall costumes have been with us all along at SF conventions, but what do we mean by "Dressed like a pirate?" The first pirate ship probably set sail about ten minutes after the first merchant vessel, so any historical period is fair game. Pirates of any period would have

dressed the same as other able seamen, especially the ones they robbed.

Most of us, influenced by pirate movies, think of the Buccaneers of the Spanish Main in the 17th and 18th centuries. Costume features such as knee britches, puffy shirts, long coats with turned-back cuffs and lots of braid, buckled shoes with tall stockings or cavalier boots with turned-down cuffs; scarves tied around the head and/or hats with turned-up sides. Fortunately, these things are fairly easy to make or buy.

Baggy knee britches can be made using any basic four-panel drawstring trouser pattern. You can simply turn a pair of sweat pants inside out and trace the pieces. Add ties, buttons, or buckles at the knee and you're there. Tall, striped stockings can be found on the merchants' row at medieval, renaissance, and wild west events.

There are many patterns available for puffy sleeve shirts, though simply wearing an oversized, worn-out dress shirt will do for a start. Ties at the elbows and cuffs can help the look.

While the long coats of the period were tailored at the shoulders and waist, this isn't essential for starters. A waistless A-line coat built down to knee length will do. Just make sure it has lots of nonfunctional buttons, full skirts, braid, and turned-back cuffs and you'll look like the guy on the rum bottle.

Cocked hats go well with the look. Start off with any broad-brim hat, such as a garage sale cowboy hat or one of the heavy felt hat blanks sold at medieval and renaissance events. You can fold (cock) one side up on your sword-arm side and add a plume for the earlier part of the period. You can cock front and back to form a "bicorn" hat, like those worn by Napoleon or Captain Aubrey. Later these were worn with the sides folded up, as seen on Captain Aubrey's lieutenants. Cock three sides to form a "tricorn" like those worn by Captain Jack Sparrow or Paul Revere. Common accessories for cocked hats include plumes, feathers or trim around the edges, and "cockades," which were patches of ribbon folded into a square or rosette.

Nautical accessories might include an astrolabe, drinking jack, eyepatch, etc. Check with your local convention for how they feel about cutlasses and replica flintlocks.

Jewelry and temporary tatoos with skull and crossbones themes are easily found, but I have a problem with the logic. The last thing a real pirate would do on shore is advertise the fact. The jolly roger is fine for a pirate flag, but displaying it in port would be the same as wearing a "hang me" sign in front of royal navy officers. On the other hand, there is little risk of a drumhead court breaking out at a con.

Good sources of historical patterns for pirate garb include Alteryears (www.alteryears.com), Patterns of Time (www.patternsofetime.com), and Smoke and Fire Company (www.smoke-fire.com). Smoke and Fire Company is heavily into the Revolutionary War period, so they have patterns for long coats, knee britches and folding cocked hats. They also sell buckled leather shoes and other accessories. Please remind me to bring their new catalog to the next meeting.



← *Left: Anna M.C.'s meticulous re-creation of Captain Jack Sparrow from "Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl," presented at DarkCon in January, 2004.*

Of course, we are into Science Fiction and Fantasy, so we have many possibilities not covered in the historical sources. We can dress as pirates who sail oceans that never were, or the bounding main of outer space. A space pirate costume might be modeled after your favorite literary hero/villain or something that sailed straight out of your own imagination. You might take some of the movie pirate costume ideas above and use alternate materials, such as metallic fabrics and flashing LEDs. Add a cybernetic eye patch, a robot parrot, a bubble helmet, or anything else you like. Now and again I do a "software pirate" costume with accessories made from disks, cables, and network cards. Arrrrrr!

Incoming Mail

Read these newsletters from other ICG chapters at our next meeting or grab them from your loyal editor.

ICG Newsletter Spring, 2004. President's address, From the Editor, ICG Annual Meeting minutes, calendar, Restoring Bloom to Granny's Bloomers, Karen Dick's favorite places to shop, ICG Chapters & stats, new officers.

GBACG *Finery* May/June 2004. Farewell from outgoing president Tony Lunn, Sew for the Cure Day (making comfort caps for chemotherapy patients), Costumecon 22 review, 2 Hats of the Renaissance workshop.

St Louis Costumer's Guild *Scarlet Letter* 1st, 2nd quarter 2004. The SLUTS will host CC25 details at <http://cc25.topcities.com/index.htm>. So you want to be a Superhero, Archon 27 Masquerade Report with photos, CC 22 reviews.

Quick Reviews
by Randall Whitlock

May in the Meadows Renaissance Faire was held for the first time on May 1 & 2, 2004 in the city park surrounding the Prescott Valley Civic Center. This one-weekend fair was organized by the same team that brings us the Devonshire Renaissance Faire this year. Your editor participated as a merchant. The physical environment was wonderful, with cool, clear weather and real grass. The fair was well attended and lively. Lots of new participants, so the faire had plenty of energy, but not yet the polish of Devonshire (many undecorated easy-up tents). I'm looking forward to next year!

LepreCon 30 Masquerade. The number of entries was about average for Lep with excellent quality of costumes, including the outstanding Freddy vs Jason. Some technical glitches connected with the one-time use stage setting. (We need to do some upgrade work on the pipe & drape before Coppercon). Congrats Margie!

419 Scams Hit the Costuming Community
by Randall Whitlock

In mid-April I received an e-mail from someone who introduced herself as a gift shop owner in Lagos, Nigeria, inquiring about wholesale purchase of my "Randwulf's" sewing patterns. So far, this is perfectly normal. Most of my pattern sales are to other dealers, though all of the previous inquiries have come from the US and Canada. I answered with my terms and was about to close the deal when *two more, nearly identical, inquiries arrived from other individuals in Lagos.*

My spider sense tingled. I sent out my own e-mail inquiries to other pattern dealers and the ICG-D discussion list. In unison, sounding like Brave Sir Robin, my friends advised, "Run Away!"

It seems that EVERY small pattern dealer has received the same kind of message. All of them led to trouble. It was a new variation on the "419 Scam."

If you have e-mail, you've received a 419 scam message, probably hundreds of them. The sender usually pretends to be a deposed government official or his widow (most often picking on Nigeria) who wants to use your checking account to get money out of the country. If the proposal were genuine, it would be a form of money laundering and highly illegal. In reality, the scammer would suck your account dry. The legitimate government of Nigeria takes great offense at this insult to its people. Hence these are called "419 Scams" in recognition of the code number of the Nigerian law that makes them as illegal in Lagos as the rest of the world.

These new variations are more subtle and directed at internet merchants. The scammer places a large order for wholesale items, usually paying by credit card. From there, the scam can go several directions:

1. The credit card charge is reversed after you ship, but before you can collect your money. This happens so often that credit card companies will no longer guarantee purchases from certain countries.
2. The scammer overpays and asks you to send the change to a third party. The credit card charge may be reversed at this point or a check turns to rubber. At best, you've laundered some money into US currency for them. At worst, you've been robbed of money AND merchandise.
3. After establishing a business relationship, the scammer tries to convince you to send them a cell phone, laptop computer, or other high tech. Since export of these technologies is highly regulated, you are now part of a smuggling scheme.

I begged out of the deal, pointing out that I don't have any kind of export license and recommended that the gift shop owner hire an import/export agent. Such regs may or may not really apply to my business, but it made a good excuse to bail without directly insulting anyone. Good thing. Two of my colleagues recognized the scammer's name/alias as someone who does the cell phone smuggling thing.

A sincere thank you, once again, to all the friends who provided valuable advice.

Prepare for a Moving Experience

Your editor has just received word that Paula has already found a buyer for her house in Florence, getting a better price than expected. She needs to move before escrow closes on July 10.

Paula would appreciate some help in packing, moving, and temporary storage of her stuff. Several friends have already committed to a move session on Saturday, June 19, but other times are good too.

You can reach her at (520) 868-5702 or jedastarone@yahoo.com. E-mail pickup may be a bit irregular with her new job hours.

Next Ish:

- How to get medieval on your easy-up
- Review of Renaissance in the Pines
- Exciting articles from fellow guildsters, as soon as you write them.