



# CACTUS NEEDLES

Newsletter of the  
Southwest Costumers Guild

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## Contacts

Southwest Costumers Guild PO Box 39504 Phoenix AZ 85069-9504		<a href="http://www.SouthWestCostumersGuild.org">www.SouthWestCostumersGuild.org</a> <a href="http://www.costume.org">www.costume.org</a>
President Diane Harris	602.841.1608	<a href="mailto:calliebelle@earthlink.net">calliebelle@earthlink.net</a>
Vice President Frances Burns	928.284.9860	<a href="mailto:francesb@sedona.net">francesb@sedona.net</a>
Treasurer Lyn Jeppesen	602.275.3321	<a href="mailto:rieppesen7@hotmail.com">rieppesen7@hotmail.com</a>
Newsletter Editor Randall Whitlock	602.995.7514 602.697.0492	<a href="mailto:randwhit@moirandalls.com">randwhit@moirandalls.com</a>
Secretary Kathleen Fulton	602.787.8768	<a href="mailto:kfulton@fclaw.com">kfulton@fclaw.com</a>
Archivist Jean Palmer	623.876.1848	<a href="mailto:bjeanpalmer@msn.com">bjeanpalmer@msn.com</a>
John Autore	480.733.2745	<a href="mailto:creativelympls@yahoo.com">creativelympls@yahoo.com</a>
Courtney Black		<a href="mailto:darkladyofavalon@aol.com">darkladyofavalon@aol.com</a>
Chuck & Tasha Cady	623.582.0540	<a href="mailto:tasha.cady@honeywell.com">tasha.cady@honeywell.com</a>
Anna Caggiano		<a href="mailto:annamc@ix.netcom.com">annamc@ix.netcom.com</a>
Mike Cassidy		<a href="mailto:blunc@att.net">blunc@att.net</a>
Sue and Angie Clayton	480.759.0199	<a href="mailto:sueclatyon@cox.net">sueclatyon@cox.net</a>
Cat Devereaux		<a href="http://www.alleycatscratch.com">www.alleycatscratch.com</a>
Duane & Kathryn Elms		<a href="mailto:dkelms@cybermesa.com">dkelms@cybermesa.com</a>
Margaret Grady	602.796.1229	<a href="mailto:mgrady@eigi.com">mgrady@eigi.com</a>
Mark Greenawalt	480.496.0266	<a href="mailto:mark@futureclassx.com">mark@futureclassx.com</a>
Michael Griffith		<a href="mailto:somniac754@hotmail.com">somniac754@hotmail.com</a>
David Jeppesen	602.275.3321	<a href="mailto:rieppesen7@hotmail.com">rieppesen7@hotmail.com</a>
Paula Lary	480.784.5901	<a href="mailto:paulaslary@yahoo.com">paulaslary@yahoo.com</a>
Bonnie Love-Svirskas	602.840.2470	<a href="mailto:bonnieaz@cox.net">bonnieaz@cox.net</a>
Pete Manly	623.842.6079	<a href="mailto:petemanly@msn.com">petemanly@msn.com</a>
Edouard B. Mesert	602.678.4751	<a href="mailto:ebmassociates@cox.net">ebmassociates@cox.net</a>
Barbara Ratti	602.723.0464	<a href="mailto:b.ratti@att.net">b.ratti@att.net</a>
Jessica Swatij		<a href="mailto:evilynnyheart@yahoo.com">evilynnyheart@yahoo.com</a>
Laurie Taylor	480.560.7016	<a href="mailto:laurie@mazarineblue.com">laurie@mazarineblue.com</a>
Nola Yergen-Jennings	623.435.9700	<a href="mailto:ladycamilla@cox.net">ladycamilla@cox.net</a>

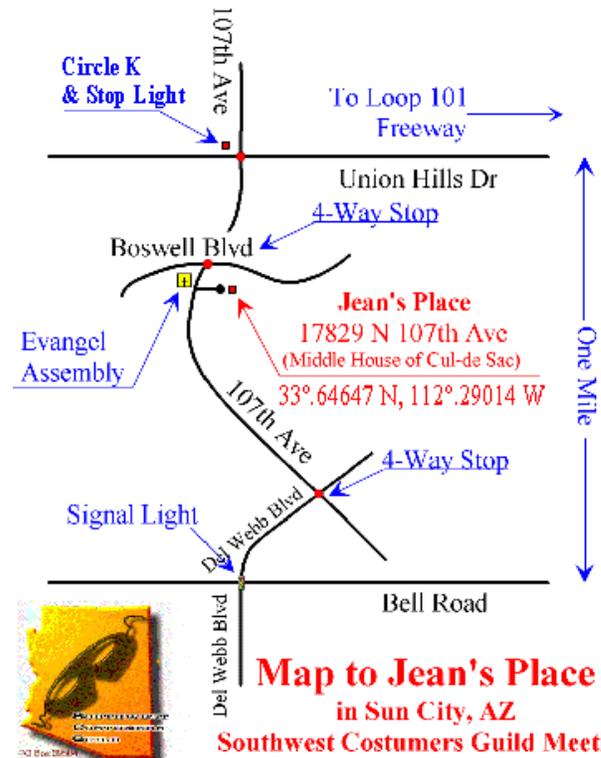
## Calendar

Know of an upcoming costumed event in Arizona? Please tell your editor. **\*Indicates an event organized by SWCG.** Unless otherwise noted, SWCG meetings begin at 1 PM.

August 4-6, 2006 – **Costume College** at the Airtel Plaza Hotel, 7277 Valjean Avenue in Van Nuys, California. Costume Guild West's annual costuming arts conference. Tickets are sold out as of this writing.  
[www.costumecollege.org/](http://www.costumecollege.org/)

August 14, 2006, 5:30 PM to 9ish – **S&B\*** SWCG personal projects workshop at Tasha's Place.

August 20, 2006 – **Exploring Turkish Costume\*** SWCG meeting/workshop at Jean's place. Seek inspiration and choose projects for the "Turkish Court" renfaire concept.



September 1-4 (Labor Day weekend), 2006 – **CopperCon 26** at the Tempe Mission Palms hotel, 60 E 5<sup>th</sup> St, Tempe AZ. This fan-run local con features author guests, Mark Zicree, Diane Duane and Peter Morwood, as well as artist Sarah Clemens and filker Seanan McGuire. The masquerade will be directed by your beloved editor. Go to [www.coppercon.org](http://www.coppercon.org) and see the writeup later in this issue for details.

September 11, 2006, 5:30 PM to 9ish – **S&B\*** SWCG personal projects workshop at Tasha's Place.

September 17, 2006 – **To Be Announced\*** SWCG monthly meeting/workshop. What would you like to do?

September 23-24, 2006 – **Phoenix Cactus Comicon** at the Mesa Convention Center, Mesa, Arizona. Lots of comic book writer and artist guests. A masquerade is planned.  
[www.phoenixcomicon.com](http://www.phoenixcomicon.com)

October 9, 2006, 5:30 PM to 9ish – **S&B\*** SWCG personal projects workshop at Tasha's Place.

October 22, 2006 – **Turkish Turbans and Wraps\*** SWCG meeting/workshop at Jean's place.

November 10-12, 2006 – **TusCon 33** at the InnSuites in Tucson, Arizona. Fan-run SF convention. Guests to be announced. <http://home.earthlink.net/~basfa/>

November 13, 2006, 5:30 PM to 9ish – **S&B\*** SWCG personal projects workshop at Tasha’s Place.

December 11, 2006, 5:30 PM to 9ish – **S&B\*** SWCG personal projects workshop at Tasha’s Place.

January 4-7, 2007 – **DarkCon 07** at the Embassy Suites (I-17 & Greenway, Phoenix) anime, cosplay, art demos & displays, parties, computer gaming, costumes, bazaar, LARPs, Star Wars cantina & poker tourney. All chaired by our own Nola Yergen-Jennings. **Special Guest: Jewel Staite** – “Kaylee” from *Firefly* and *Serenity*. [www.darkcon.org](http://www.darkcon.org) .

### From the Mailbox

Greater Bay Area Costumer’s Guild **Finery** August 2006  
Yes, You Can Fit Yourself part 2, introducing new spotlight column on randomly selected members, upcoming romantic poetry gathering, upcoming “Let Them Drink Wine” social event

### Coppercon 26 Masquerade Information

by Randall Whitlock

(This should appear in your CopperCon Program Book)



Have you a favorite SF or Fantasy character or creature? Have you carefully recreated a historical garment? Do you have a novel idea for future or alternative clothing? Have you a visual joke to tell? Why not share your concept with us?

### **Enter the Coppercon 26 Masquerade!**

The physical setup is like a fashion show. We will provide a stage, Masters of Ceremonies to announce you, a sound system to play the music or narration you provide, and a stage crew to bring it all together. An appreciative audience will provide itself: Your 15 minutes of fame on a silver platter!

### **Where/When**

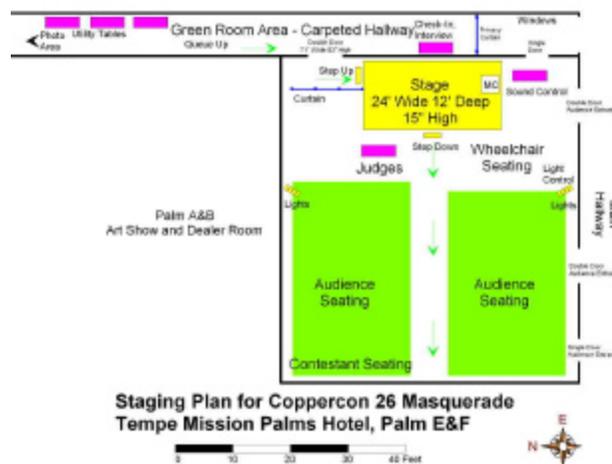
The Coppercon 26 Masquerade will be held at 7:30 PM on Saturday, September 2, 2006 in the Palm E&F Rooms of the Tempe Mission Palms Hotel in Tempe, Arizona.

There will be a Contestant Meeting at 2PM on Saturday. Check your Coppercon Pocket Program for the exact place. This is the time to prepare your entry forms and bring your music, notes for the MC, documentation, and to work out any presentation questions with the director and crew.

### **How do I Sign Up?**

There will be signup forms set out near the registration table. Before the con, you can download the forms from the masquerade page of [www.coppercon.org](http://www.coppercon.org) . Bring your signup form to the contestant meeting.

If you absolutely cannot attend the contestant meeting, please give your completed signup form with signatures to the Masquerade Director. He’s wearing the shoulder bag with the yellow sash.



### **Staging Details**

The masquerade will be presented in the Palm E and F rooms.

The **stage** will be built of portable risers arranged into a rectangular main stage. The stage will be 24 feet wide, 12 feet deep and 16 inches high. You will step up from stage right to enter and step down from downstage center to exit. The contestant preparation area or "Green Room" is the carpeted hallway behind the ballroom. We’ll close it off with a curtain.

We will have water, mirrors, tables and volunteer "den mothers" for your assistance. The [Southwest Costumers Guild](#) will provide some emergency repair supplies. You should expect, however, to bring whatever tools and materials you will need for basic setup and maintenance of your costume. Sharing of resources among contestants is appreciated.

## Lights and Sound

Lights will be arranged for general illumination of the stage. Don't expect special effects or anything too elaborate. We hope to be able to play audio cassette tape, CDs, and digital music formats submitted on CD.

The Masters of Ceremonies will have a microphone, but onstage microphones will not be available for contestants. If your presentation uses dialog, please record it on your sound track or TALK LOUD.

Narration to be read by the MCs should be submitted on 4 by 6-inch note cards or on the form we provide. Write or type carefully! Besides your introduction, please include the designer, maker and wearer of the costumes; and any sources of inspiration for the presentation. Character names and other unusual words should be spelled out phonetically (fone-et-ick-al-lee).

## The Team

Your Master of Ceremonies will be [Jack Mangan](#), author of [Spherical Tomi](#) and host of the [Deadpan Podcast](#).

[Nancy Freeman](#), filksinger and creator of "Stardust County," will be your halftime entertainer.

Gary Swaty of the [Phoenix Filk Circle](#) will be your sound director.

[Randall Whitlock](#) will be your Masquerade Director. Look for his fuzzy countenance and the yellow "Masquerade Director" sash when you have masquerade questions.

**We need more help!** We need Stage Hands to set up the curtains and lights, "Den Mothers" to assist the contestants backstage, House Managers and Catchers to handle the seating.

## Contestant Divisions

Masquerade entrants will be registered in one of these divisions:

**Young Fen** is for children. This is a noncompetitive division that gets lots of good "oohs" and "aaws" from the audience. Young Fen will each receive a special prize of chocolate Pirate Gold for participation.

Young Fen are expected to be under the supervision of a parent or sitter. We don't pretend to be qualified as child care professionals. Older kids, particularly those who have built their own costumes, may choose to enter the Novice Division.

**Novice** is the division for contestants who have not previously won three or more awards in SF convention masquerades and have not previously won a Best in Show.

This masquerade is newbie-friendly--Try your wings!

**Experienced** is the division for contestants who have won three or more awards or a Best in Show at previous SF masquerades, or who have extensive experience in theatre, historical societies, or other costuming fields. The contestant is on his/her honor in choosing the division. We won't be checking resumes or anything.

(Hint: There are usually far fewer entries in the Experienced Division. Moving up in divisions can actually gain you a competitive edge.)

**Performance Only** This division allows you to show a costume that was rented, purchased off the rack or custom-made by a professional. In other words, costumes you paid for. Performance Only costumes are not eligible for Best in Show, but may win performance-related mentions like most humorous or best cosplay sketch. If your costume was made by a close friend or relative (for love not money), you are not limited to this division. Simply include the maker's name as part of the contestant team.

**For Display Only** is for persons who wish to display a costume, but not to be part of the competition. If your costume has already competed at a large SF venue like Westercon or Worldcon; or if you have some conflict of interests, your costume should be entered For Display Only.

These divisions are meant to be flexible in their definition, since we can't know in advance how many contestants will appear and what kinds of costumes they will show.

## Prizes

We are planning special awards for Best in Show, for the Novice and Experienced divisions, and several Judges' Choice/Special Mention awards. These will most likely be in the forms of ribbons and certificates.

[AniZona](#), Arizona's own annual Anime' convention, will present a special award for best anime' or manga-inspired costume.

Our roving congratulators will present **Hall Costume Ribbons** during the convention. No forms to fill out, just randomly presented thank-you's for spicing up the convention with your costumed character.

**Prize Donations** If you are a fandom or costume-related artisan, author or business person and would like to donate a prize for the Coppercon 26 Masquerade, please talk to the [Masquerade Director](#). You will receive our gratitude and the chance to promote your work or products before a

highly motivated fannish audience. You can also designate what kind of costume presentation will receive your prize (best historical, best special effect, most humorous, best use of duct tape--it's your choice).

### Rules and Suggestions

1. Strong Suggestion: Please limit your presentation to 60 seconds or less.

*It's longer than you think. Brevity is the soul of wit.*

2. Rule: No fire or flame allowed on-stage.

*The masquerade is indoors. It's a fire code thing.*

3. Rule: Wholly purchased or rented costumes may not be entered for full competition, but are welcome as Performance Only or Display Only.

*You can use some purchased parts in a competition entry, but the overall costume is to be fan-made. An original arrangement of variously obtained parts (thrift store costuming) counts as a fan-made costume. If your costume was made by a friend or relative (for love not money), just be sure the maker's name is included on your signup forms. Any awards belong as much to the maker as the wearer. For example, a Darth Vader with a store-bought helmet would be okay if you built your own cloak and chest plate. You'd certainly impress the judges more if you did build the helmet.*

*If you have a store-bought costume that you'd like to show, or a cosplay sketch to perform using professionally made costumes, you are very welcome here. Just be sure to enter the "Performance Only" or "Display Only" division.*

4. Clarification: The "Contestant" can be one person or a team consisting of designers, makers, and models. Everyone who worked on the costume presentation should be given credit on the signup forms.

5. Rule: Thou shalt not slime thy neighbor! No messy substances (wet, dusty, oily, sharp, etc.) that might damage the stage or interfere with other contestants will be allowed.

6. Rule: The masquerade is rated TV-14.

*There will be children present and it's not our job to teach them the facts of life. Please, no more skin than beach-legal at a fairly liberal beach, no deliberately offensive language or disturbingly violent action.*

*If you have an idea that sounds good, but might be over the top, please talk to the Masquerade Director first. I have a fairly open idea of what constitutes TV-14 and how an idea might be made to work.*

8. Audience Rule: No flash photography during the stage presentations.

*Flashes are very distracting to the contestants and audience. A sudden, dazzling light can cause a contestant to trip and fall. Non-flash pictures are okay. Posed pictures can be arranged off-stage with permission of the individual contestants. If there is enough support for it among the contestants, we might do a second run-through for photos.*

## Please Turn Off Cell Phones and Camera Flashes



9. Law of Nature: S---Stuff Happens.

*Yes, some of your plans may go wrong here in the real world. Murphy was a prophet. Please stay loose and handle it with grace. Don't let self-imposed stress or a hot temper ruin the experience for you and those around you.*

10. Firm Rule: Keep the action on the stage. Weapons, stunts, and special effects must be approved in advance by the Masquerade Director.

*If the weapon and its presentation have not been cleared, you will be disqualified from competition. This is a safety thing. I like weapons as much as the Next to Last Action Hero, but I want to see for myself what you are carrying and what you intend to do with it. This safety approval rule also applies to acrobatic stunts, special effects, energetic dances, or anything else that might inadvertently extend beyond the stage.*

11. Safety Principle: Surprise the audience, not the crew.

*See Rule 10. I once scared the heck out of a masquerade director because I forgot to tell her that a pratfall was part of my presentation!*

*If you are going to do something surprising, please clue in the Director, MC, and Catchers in advance.*

*If you want to interact with the MC, you must rehearse with him at the contestant meeting.*

12. Rule: The Masquerade Director has full authority to eliminate anyone from the competition on the basis of unrepentant bad taste, danger to the contestants or audience, violation of the above rules, or any other reason deemed sufficient.

*This rule is intended to protect you and the convention from the real loons. The rule will not be invoked for frivolous or unfair reasons.*

### **Belly Dance Shoppe**

14848 North Cave Creek Road, Phoenix

[www.gobellydance.com](http://www.gobellydance.com)

Reviewed by Paula Lary

I recently took a field trip to this shop with my bellydance class. Naj is normally closed on Sundays, but she opened for us.

This shop is wonderful for everything from dancewear for classes (the leotard type body suits with mesh midriff sections, choli type of suit materials) to veils, hip scarves, bangle bracelets, necklaces, jewelry to harems, tops and skirts. Prices and styles range from fairly inexpensive cabaret to the Goddess Glitziana-type beaded and sequined bra, belt and skirt sets costing hundreds of dollars.

The shop is owned by Pat Ford, AKA "Naj," a dancer herself. I took in a beaded, coin mirrored velvet bra to try to get matching coins to replace a few that had fallen off. She didn't have loose coins for sale, but I did find a velvet coined and beaded hip scarf to match and came away with something even better. Naj saw me wearing the bra to see how it matched the belt and she came over and worked with me. To make the bra fit better, I still need to finish what she suggested, but it will end up not only looking better, but will be much more comfortable to wear.

Her hours are Tues-Fri 1-6PM, Sat 10AM-3PM, closed Sundays.

### **Facing Jeopardy!**

by Randall Whitlock

This spring, America's second-favorite game show (they're sensitive about that "Wheel of Fortune" thing) opened up their contestant selection process by offering an online qualification test. The bar must have been set pretty low, because I received an invitation to interview at the Jeopardy! contestant search on July 19, 2006.

I caught a plane the evening before (my birthday, as fate would have it). Fate also caused a power failure that crashed the navigational computers at LAX, so we sat on the runway at Sky Harbor for an extra three hours. At that level of boredom, the mind drifts. I found myself wondering if the lady on the tail of the Hawaiian airliners had ever been properly introduced to the fellow on the tail of the Alaska Airlines planes. Her flower indicates she's single, after all.



*Not as famous as Hollywood, Culver City is nonetheless an entertainment industry capital.*

The contestant search was held in Culver City. I suppose this was a kind of homecoming for a sci-fi geek like myself since the earliest episodes of Star Trek were filmed there. Everything in Culver City is named after Howard Hughes: the freeway, the mall, etc. Heck, my return flight took me over the dome in Long Beach where they used to keep the Spruce Goose. When I had lunch at the Howard Hughes Center, I was afraid my waiter would have a long beard and fingernails. Fortunately they didn't take the theme that far.

There were three sessions that day, each with about twenty people. We filled out a contact information form and took a 50-question written test together. Three of us at a time played a practice game with thumb buzzers and all. After each game, we did mock interviews like Alex Trebek does right after the first commercial.

I think I looked fairly good in the game, but so did all twenty in my group. The group looked very much like what you see on the show—lawyers, engineers, preachers, teachers and stay-at-home moms. Look out for that last category. They read a lot.

Glen, who has been contestant coordinator for twenty years, made the session enjoyable and low stress. He's a Wheel of Fortune veteran himself from the Chuck Woolery years, before Pat & Vanna. He says his claim to fame was winning a genuine scented toilet paper dispenser.

It seems we've been playing an old-school version of Jeopardy! with UFP at local cons. As in the Art Fleming years, you can buzz in before the host finishes reading the question, but you have to answer based on what you've already heard. Sometimes this has disastrous results for the too-quick.

In today's version, Alex always gets to finish the question. This is because the buzzers are inactive until armed by an offstage referee. A yellow light appears around the game board when the buzzers are armed. You never see this on television because the camera always zooms in on a single question screen. Glen suggested we practice buzzer skills by clicking a ballpoint pen as we watch the show. We received souvenir pens suitable for this purpose.



They tell me I'm in the official contestant pool and will remain there until the anniversary of my online test next spring. Most of the shows are taped in August and September. If I don't hear anything in the next two months, that's probably all she wrote. There are about 400 contestants in a typical season. With the expanded contestant pool, I make my odds about one in forty of getting on the show.

I figure I've already won. I had a fine time on my trip to outermost tinseltown. I have stories to tell, had a day off from work, saw land and ocean I'd never seen from the air, and my audition even got me out of federal jury duty. (The jury coordinator was almost as excited as I was.)

### **New Online Resources**

Our recruiting flyers have been uploaded to the web site at [www.southwestcostumersguild.org](http://www.southwestcostumersguild.org). Next time you attend an event with potential for evangelizing on behalf of our guild, please print out a few to take with you. The Victorian Ball foldover flyer, the SF Convention foldover flyer, and the quarter-page flyer are posted as Adobe Acrobat .pdf

files (the same format as this newsletter). Most computers already have the acrobat reader software installed.

*By popular demand (one demand anyway), here are some more pictures from the Devonshire Senior Center Luncheon in April. Photos by David Jeppesen, or at least taken with his camera.*



*Next Month: Cabela's Conquers Glendale, CopperCon 26 Masquerade Review, Costume College Remembered.*