

International Costumer

Volume XIX Issue 5

Sep – Oct 2020



From the President's Desk

August 2020

Costuming in Place... day 160 and counting

Greetings from your President *pro tem*; I hope you and yours are all still safe and healthy during these trying times.

It's August, I've made masks, I've been called back to work, and we've currently completely sealed up our house because there are wildfires on all four sides of the SF Bay Area. Must be 2020. But we are well and healthy, all of our friends living in the fire zones evacuated safely. We're waiting to see if they get to go back home.

The ongoing BoD online meeting has, after a few false starts, reconvened, and we are starting to deal with those important orders of business to take care of this year.

Voting is about to close on our first motion, which has given us a good test bed for taking advantage of our gSuite

to build a form for use as a ballot. It looks like a workable and likely solution for our all-members officers vote.

The other critical component of the members meeting is the President's Report. We could do this as a live Zoom webinar (a webinar gives us the tools to better control Q&A and run polls if necessary) or I could record it for you to view at your leisure. If you have a strong preference for either format, please let me know (icg-president@costume.org) or let your chapter rep know.

After working the kinks out of the new BoD Google Group, we're now ready to create replacements for the old ICG-D list, and any others you would like. This is a resource also available at the chapter level (Silicon Web is already taking advantage of the resources. I'll be sharing more details on what's available to ICG members here and through your chapter reps as we expand the offerings. (This includes the possibility of individual accounts, including cloud storage space via our gSuite Google Drive.)

One unfortunate note: our slack workspace is currently not actually under the control of the ICG; the ownership has not finished being transferred to us. Feel free to use it socially, but we can't post any real business there under the circumstances. We *can* create Google Chat channels for any members who would like to try that format; they are very similar to Slack channels but are part of our gSuite space. Let your chapter rep know if you're interested in trying one out!

Sorry this is short and dry, so here's my current costume project: besides trying not to breathe smoke, I'm working an addressable LED illuminated mask that can display animations or text, controlled by a mobile app. I hope to share pix of the completed project with you next time!

Here's a sneak peek from testing the ultra-skinny Neopixels I'm using in the project:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/CZPTHUwHAvhRVe7i9>



Kevin Roche
icg-president@costume.org

PS: More stupid running wardrobe!

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/b4wQOCUMJ5enHRCv9>

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/b4wQOCUMJ5enHRCv9>

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Aq83YtRx8XJTpPYD9>

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/X6hzZzuMxtCA82P68>



<https://photos.app.goo.gl/6w5AhVMNBmDHytCf7>

Keep costuming, be kind to each other,
 and keep making the world a weirder
 and more beautiful place!



From the editor: This month's cover photo: "Halloween Pumpkin Gourd"
 by [Nancy Sticke](#) from [Pixabay](#)

**From the editor:
We're looking for a new staff
member!**

By Melina Chestley

Andrew Assarattanakul has decided to step down from his position on the newsletter staff working on the website end of things and we are looking to immediately replace him. The duties involve the following:

-Take the final newsletter PDF and optimize the size and generate an image

-Update website related to the newsletter (post for front page, upload newsletter with password, remove password from previous newsletter, update newsletter page.)

-The site has Wordpress plugins that make the job fairly straightforward as long as you are comfortable with the basic Wordpress environment.

-Send newsletter (correct typos in emails, correct dates, update members list in mailchimp, update the newsletter template)

-A few days after sending the newsletter, report bounced list from sending the newsletter (mail chimp generates this).

I would like to thank Andrew for his work over these past years, it was appreciated. If anyone is interested in helping out and taking on this position, please contact me.

**Geometric Fabric Manipulation
or
The Art Of Quilting**

By Sue Edmunds (photos by author)

Trying to maintain one's creative sanity during this Stay Home Stay Safe isolation has been no picnic for those of us who thrive on creating costumes for now canceled conventions like WorldCon, NASFIC, DragonCon, and the Pennsic War. To make matters worse, many like myself (who was mustered out of my job after almost 45 years) finding stuff to do was like trying to scratch an itch you can't reach.

But there was a bright side to all of this. I now had the time to go thru my sewing room and start to organize the storage tubs and shelving units crammed with fabric. Some of which I couldn't remember what it was for, as well as a treasure trove of vintage fabric from the 50's and 60's that my mom had purchased when my brother and I were kids. Also in the mix, buried at the back of the closet, was a half finished quilt I had started years ago. There were still 10 or so quilt blocks made from scraps from SCA garb that probably no longer exists or has been passed on to others. So once the room was reorganized and I now had space, I began the reconstruction of the quilt and the blocks.

I say reconstruction because time had not been kind to the cheap thread I had used at the time.

I next had to find a fabric to separate the blocks so it wouldn't just be a jumbled mess of prints and solids. The technical term is called sashing. I found a great dark brown that worked well with all the colors. Once that was put together came the really hard part.

To Baste Or Not to Baste was not an option. You Baste. If you don't, the quilt top, the batting and the underside fabric of the quilt will move when you get to the quilting part. It will move a LOT(!), especially if you are doing machine quilting, rather than by hand, on a frame. Basting is done with a needle and thread in long running stitches up and down the length and width of the quilt, as well as the sides if you are adding a border. Big safety pins can also be used on smaller quilts, but in the long run basting is better.

When it came to the actual quilting, I chose to outline the stars and diamond shapes as close to the seam as possible in a light color quilting thread to give it that homey look. The bobbin also had the same thread, so the underside of the quilt has the same diamond star pattern. Then finished off with some double wide quilt binding. TAA DAA! My first quilt. Done.

But ohhhh, has this become addictive! I had books and quilt block patterns that had belonged to my great grandmother, who was a prolific church lady quilter, back in Oregon.

Some of the patterns came from newspapers from the turn of the century or older. One was called "Mr. Roosevelt's Necktie" Teddy, not FDR.

I had started collecting fat quarters from sewing and quilting expos simply because of the wonderful selections of prints and colors that you can't find at Joann's or have to look for online. So now I have a use and a purpose for all of them. But, like I said, it's addicting. I have a hard time not checking out the fat quarters, jelly rolls and charm packs when I have to go to a fabric store for stuff unrelated. I just finished a project of a lap quilt and matching pillow and have started another made of blocks called "State of Hawaii". Using a bright red print, a light and dark blue Hawaiian palm print and a bright yellow fabric, it will be eye catching to say the least.



For anybody who has ever thought of trying their hand at it, go for it! It's not that hard or an exact science. It's all geometric shapes. Templates and rulers for all are plentiful in the quilting or sewing section of any fabric store. The only rule of thumb is make sure you always maintain a 1/4" seam allowance. If all those shapes scare you, try a strip quilt made from 2 1/2" wide jelly roll strips. You can find books on Amazon on just how to do one in a day.

Most of all, let your creativity run wild. Some of the most fantastic quilts I've seen at shows started out without rhyme or reason. Traditionally-made quilts have their own special aura and if you look close, you might see something in the fabric you may not expect. It's a one of a kind piece of art that can be passed down. I have a quilt that my great grandmother made for my dad when he was born. It's close to 100 years old and kept in a cedar chest.

This pandemic may be around for a while and the social distancing can be depressing when you don't know what to do with yourself.

FIND SOMETHING TO DO!

The internet is a great place to learn a new hobby that will allow you to put a special creative touch on something that's yours and yours alone.



Lap quilt and matching pillow



SCA garb scrap quilt

Eco-Costuming/Eco-Cosplay

By Melina Chestley

I love cosplay and costuming. I really enjoy the craft and the mental health happiness it gives me. But environmentally friendly it is not. Not usually. The environmentalist in me has already been taking steps in attempts to offset the environmental footprint of this hobby. I will admit right now that I have yet to jump down the rabbit hole that involves researching fabric creation practices. It will happen and, like any changes in your habits that you want to stick, taking things in steps is one of the better ways to accomplish that. In the meantime, I have limited fabric sources around and I still need to sew. Having an awareness of fabric content and keeping an eye out for sustainable online fabric vendors is where I'm currently at in this part of my sustainable costuming journey. However, there are still other things that can help make for a more environmentally friendly hobby. When it comes to cosplay, we often think "environmental" or "sustainable" practices and materials

present with difficult challenges to overcome: hard to find, difficult to implement, and just plain expensive.

Too hard to find is getting easier to deal with these days, but sustainable fabric or supply sources are not always accessible and it does require a bit of research on our own to confirm that the company is practicing or supporting the methods it's claiming. Developing sustainable practices can be difficult, as it usually means habit changes, along with careful thought and planning. Expense is always a consideration in our hobby, but there are a number of ways to mitigate that factor.

I was pleased to see someone like Kamui Cosplay using their platform to address this issue. They choose ten points to review and though not all of them are applicable to everyone, there are some excellent ideas in the video that can be adapted to your own practices. I'm going to discuss the ones most applicable to me but if you would like to see all their ideas, you can watch their video which can be found here: <https://youtu.be/zYUIT5Qgpwc>

Shop Smart

One of the first concepts that comes up is around shopping and a good phrase to remember is Fast Cosplay = Fast Fashion. Basically, you get what you pay for. Purchasing a piece of cheap fast fashion makes it easier on your bank account initially but in reality, that garment needs to be replaced more often (adding to trash problems) than if one had purchased a single, better quality garment. There is a growing awareness of just how poor fast fashion is in both textile waste and financially so applying that phrase to the costuming/cosplay world is not a bad idea. There are ways to shop smart that will not only help towards a more sustainable habit but can also help to be more fiscally responsible. There are more options available than just buying new. Upcycle old unused pieces that are just taking up space, use up the supplies you already have, visit a thrift store, talk to other costumers and see what they're willing to part with, watch for costuming/cosplay garage sales or trade days.

If you decide to buy new, pay attention to your shopping habits and try to make more conscientious decisions. I have been attempting to do this in many aspects of my life not just the costuming areas. Purchasing only what is needed for a specific project not only cuts down on waste but is more fiscally responsible. I have been saying the following a lot over the last number of years; "it's not that the dollar doesn't go far anymore, it's that it goes almost nowhere at all," so paying attention to how we spend our money is a very good habit to develop.

Having a large stash of fabrics or supplies can be useful but the visual clutter that comes from that doesn't work for me. A larger portion of my stash (larger than I may wish to admit to) has come about not so much because I keep a ready supply of my most used fabrics but because I bought things for projects that never got used as they were not needed/not quite right or because the project is still sitting there waiting to happen for no other reason than I just haven't gotten around to it yet. To deal with that stash and the habits that brought it about,

I'm trying to be more aware of what I'm purchasing, how I'm going to use it and where it's going to fit in the space that I have. Retail space in our homes is usually at a premium and we should be working with that, not against it.

Kamui also suggested that for basic or constantly used supplies to purchase in large orders to decrease the shipping/travel footprints. This may or may not work for everyone. Each person would need to decide for themselves if this is an option that works for their space and style. For me that's linen. One thing I will buy on spec is linen, especially white/natural linen. I use it constantly for my historical costumes. If I see it on sale and I know I'm getting low, then it will be coming home with me. It will be used, and it always has a space to go on my shelves.

Another way to shop smart is to choose supplies or items that have re-usability or minimal waste. This may require some research or learning some new skills, but it can help to decrease your environmental footprint.

Shop Locally

I have a personal preference to shop locally in many parts of my life but for costuming/cosplay supplies this is not always an option unless you're in a big centre that has a number of available stores. I am not. I live in rural Eastern Ontario. I have access to a Fabricland and a Michael's. Both pricey but technically local (though still a big corporation behind it). If I need to order online and then have stuff shipped, I try to shop smart and minimize my shipments to decrease the environmental cost of transport. Keep a list of upcoming project needs so when ordering from an online distributor, you can try to order supplies for more than just the one project. Financially, this may not always be an option, but I do feel that having an awareness of upcoming needs is a good thing.

When I do decide to travel to Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal for some fabric shopping, I go with a list of my current projects (usually a notebook that also has fabric swatches of what I already own to match up with) and what I

need (to save on extra trips later). I try to get together with some friends who also need to shop (less cars, less individual trips and I get to visit with my friends).

Donate old materials

I found this concept a little tricky as I am not really involved in the local cosplay community (there just doesn't seem to be much of one where I live) so having exchange parties or being part of a cosplay club to share things isn't a viable option. Which means that it is time for a bit of research to see if there are any local art clubs/craft clubs that will use donated materials. I wish there was a place in my area like Arts Junktion (<https://www.artsjunktion.mb.ca/> in Winnipeg, Manitoba) that takes in all sorts of items that are free (or donation if you can) for others to use. A bit of quick google searching shows me that there is a similar one in Toronto but that is still a few hours away by car. For now, the best that I do is go through my items, put some pics up on Facebook and see if any of my friends have interest. This has been a fairly successful practice for me so far but

can be time-consuming. If no one I know is interested in my items, then off to a charity shop they go.

Finish old costumes before starting new ones

Hahahaha! Yeah. This needs to happen more often. I struggle with this, but it does fit in with the "use up the supplies you already have" idea before buying even more stuff. I feel that it is also prudent to review your project list and make sure you really want to do a project before embarking on it.

Wear costumes more often

I am a big fan of this idea. I am quite happy to wear a costume more than once. There is often a fair amount of work in the projects we create and limiting it to showing it off once for a few hours seems almost criminal to me. It deserves a chance to be shown off!

When I moved into cosplay one of my personal objectives was to make things well, make them properly, be happy with what I created and to not get

caught up in the ‘need a new thing every con.’ That last part was a very unsatisfying trap that I found myself in with my SCA based costuming. I felt a self-imposed expectation that I needed something new and spectacular for each event and it led me to being unable to create at all. Part of the reason to have it as an objective with cosplay was to get myself out of that trap and it has been working in many parts of my life.

Accuracy is not everything

Given that movies & shows sometimes use products or parts that are no longer available, accuracy may not be everything but sometimes it is the point. I agree that buying fabric and supplies again and again just to try to get it correct is neither environmentally nor fiscally responsible. It also takes up a lot of space. Sometimes good enough is actually good enough. However, if accuracy is what you want (and I have a couple of projects on my list where accuracy is part of the challenge) then we need to figure out a way to make it happen without wastage. My way of

dealing with this is to make sure the research is done and available to me whenever I’m out shopping so when I find the correct supplies, I can grab them. More importantly, if what you find is not correct, or only good enough, and that’s not the plan for the cosplay, then don’t buy it. It may take longer to finish the project, but it will end up with the accuracy that you want, and you won’t end up with bins full of unused supplies. Then you’ll have a bit more money to put to other projects.

Try to reduce waste

Waste is going to happen but attempting to be efficient is the idea. I keep a tote under my cutting table for scraps. When it starts getting full, I try to find time to go through them and figure out what is useful and what is not. Perhaps hosting a scrap swap party with other sewing friends? I have been seeing more tutorials on using up scraps that I need to check out. Youtube has been great for scrap using ideas.

If you are planning to host a workshop that requires some materials, please put a shout-out to your friends and see what supplies they’d be willing to donate. I recently donated a bunch of scrap linen to a person planning basic embroidery workshops. I donated another bag full of scraps to a person who was looking to make small items to give away. It worked out well; they got what they needed without having to spend money on small bits of fabric and I was able to give some of my fabric cabbage a new use.

In the end, we all know that small steps can lead to long-term, consistent changes. Some steps may be easier than others but I feel that they’re pretty important steps to take. Hopefully some of the ideas here will resonate with you and you can add or adapt them to your own costuming journey.

About the ICG

Membership Benefits

ICG membership benefits include participation in local Chapters and in Special Interest Groups, voting rights, eligibility for grants, online forums, learning and volunteer opportunities, and the International Costumer.

ICG Online

Visit the ICG website for current information and resources:

<http://www.costume.org/>

Join us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/internationalcostumers>

Coming soon: the new ICG google groups

[Amazon Smile link:](#)

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1656188>

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The Marty Gear Costuming Arts and Sciences Fund

The Marty Gear Costuming Arts and Sciences Fund provides grants for projects and activities that promote the art and science of costuming. For information on how to apply for a grant, please visit

<http://www.costume.org/grants/grants.html>

The International Costumer

The *International Costumer* newsletter is published bi-monthly by the ICG. The current issue is for members only. Back issues are freely available to the costuming community on the ICG website.

Online Submissions

We welcome short costuming articles, book reviews, event reports, and news items. Submit your copy as rtf, doc, docx or txt files to the International Costumer editor:

icg-newsletter@costume.org. All graphics formats are accepted.

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