

International Costumer

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September-October 2017



Convention Season

Photo from Pixabay

President's Message

By Marianne Pease

I hope everyone has had a great summer, been enjoying the summer convention season, and had plenty of time for costuming amid all the other things that occupy our lives. This week I had the opportunity to stop in Madison on the way to a family reunion and visit with some of MACS. It was a great dinner with wonderful company, and a productive discussion.

I wish that I could travel around and visit every chapter. It's much easier to communicate about the needs of the guild and chapters in person during an earnest discussion than it is in an email list. Without effective communication through the entire guild it's easy for chapters to become isolated from the ICG as a whole. We are a community of costumers but sometimes I feel as though the community aspect has suffered in a time when online communities are so easy to set up and join. It takes more effort to reach out to the rest of the guild when the only option we have is a full-guild email blast. While improving communication within the guild is one of my priorities this year, changes can take time to implement in the ICG.

The best place for changes to start, however, is on the chapter level. Chapters have much



Marianne as Brienne of Tarth from Game of Thrones. Photo by Matthew Hermerding at www.mlh.design.

more flexibility to experiment and try new things.

Several chapters operate successfully on Facebook, others are trying Slack for internal communication and organization. NoVA is about to test out MeetUp to see if it's effective at bringing in new members and organizing events. In order for chapters to be successful however, no matter what

ideas or technology tried, someone stepping up into a leadership role is required.

Chapters do not actually require all that much work to keep functioning. At their most basic, they require a President to keep prodding things along and a Treasurer to keep things in order. Of the two positions, the Treasurer is the most essential. As a non-profit organization (if your chapter is a member of our GEL program or a non-profit in its own right), the treasurer is responsible for filing a very simple postcard with the IRS once a year as well as maintaining the chapter's membership rolls.

I am currently serving as NoVA's Treasurer and can attest that it only takes about five minutes a month to make sure the membership is up to date with the ICG, and perhaps half an hour once a year to take care of the tax and GEL requirements. The website has detailed instructions and guides to walk a novice Treasurer through the process. Additionally, Jeanine Swick does an amazing job as the ICG Treasurer and is an excellent resource if any chapters need help. Without an attentive Treasurer, however, chapters can suffer serious consequences up to and including losing the chapter's non-profit status- which is expensive to reinstate once lost.

If the Treasurer does the 'behind the scenes' work to keep the chapter running, the President is in charge of the visible

leadership and should be planning (or coordinating the planning) of guild activities each month. Meanwhile the Vice President and Secretary (or Secretaries, if the duties are split between corresponding and secretary) can be essential help in keeping things organized and active once a chapter really starts to grow. Other offices can be created as well. Some chapters might find a Tech or Social Media officer valuable additions to a chapter's leadership, for example, and all of these officers may participate in the ICG's various committees as appropriate.

No chapter officer is alone in their job. With a little effort to communicate, numerous other chapters and the ICG level officers are available to offer ideas, support, or insight. I'm also personally happy to talk to anyone and everyone. You can get in touch with me at icg-president@costume.org, on Facebook as Marianne Legume, and I'm happy to accept phone calls, skype, or google hangouts as well. Contact me for those personal details.

Good luck getting ready for Halloween this year!

Marianne Pease

From the Editor

By Vicky Assarattanakul

Happy autumn, costumers! I hope your summer was full of sun, fun, and happiness. The end of August is actually only the middle of my convention season, so I am still in the midst of sewing like crazy!

Please give a warm welcome to my new co-editor, Melina Chestley! Melina is a member of the Silicone Web chapter of the ICG. She regularly attends many Canadian conventions. Melina lives in Eastern Ontario. Her has an interest in historical costuming, and has started playing around with original designs and delved into the world of cosplay. It may be quite difficult to believe now, but she failed sewing in high school! And yet, nowadays, she is having far too much fun making things on her sewing machine!

As your convention season winds down, please consider writing an article for *International Costumer*! We love to hear about conventions you've attended, masquerades you've competed in, costuming books you've read, and events that your chapter has attended. The deadline for article submissions for the November – December 2017 issue will be October 15th. Please send your submissions to icg-newsletter@costume.org. I look forward to hearing from you!

Worldcon 75 Masquerade

By Philip Gust

The masquerade at Worldcon 75 in Helsinki Finland took place on August 12. A list of award recipients was published in the August 13th issue of "Painopiste," the official newsletter of Worldcon 75, available at http://www.worldcon.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/conzine_masquerade_final.pdf. A gallery of contestant photos by photographer Lincoln Peters is also available online at: <http://www.worldcon.fi/whats-on/masquerade/>.

Silicon Web Costumers' Guild President Kevin Roche was one of the presentation judges for the event. In his President's column for the August issue of *The Virtual Costumer* magazine, Kevin reports that the masquerade was full of wonderful things, and that the judges did not have an easy time of it.

According to Kevin, one of the most remarkable entries was by 12-year old Olivia Flockhart who decided she didn't want to be the only Young Fan entry in the show and entered as a novice instead. Kevin found her "When Halley Came to Jackson in 1910" presentation both innovative and truly beautiful, as she drifted across the stage as Halley's Comet while her father watched with a bundled babe-in-arms. Olivia's entry won Best in Show, Presentation.

Confluence 2017, Pittsburgh, August 4-6

By Lisa Ashton

Edited by Melina Chestley

I recently returned from a weekend in Pittsburgh at the Confluence SF Convention. After many years of NO costume programming, this year some brave souls decided to resurrect the Costuming/Cosplay program with related panels, a workshop, and a Masquerade. Karen Schnaubelt and I were invited guests, along with Brigitte Byrne and Tom Higgs of the local area.

Karen and I made a point of wearing hall costumes as much as we could (as did the other two invited judges) and of giving out various hall costume award ribbons. Anything we can do to encourage hall costumes and costume awareness!

There were panels, presented with a view toward an audience that is newer to costume topics. Karen and I were both on panels titled "Costuming 101: How to Get Started", "Masquerade 101--What to Expect and How to Prepare", "Costumes That Fit: How to Use Basic Shapes as a Foundation". Karen and I also coordinated a beading workshop at 9:00 Saturday morning for Beginning Beading: Beading and Cabochon & Beaded Embroidery", which we thrilled



Judges for the Costume Contest: L to R, DarkGeekLord (Tom Higgs), Karen Schnaubelt, Lisa Ashton, Brigitte Byrne

to see, was full. Everyone enjoyed learning the project, and most were able to complete a beaded cabochon. One attendee even went back to her room with an extra glass blob I gave her, and completed a second one right away! I hope we can establish a tradition of workshops as they are very popular and people like to learn by doing.

Thanks to Barb Carlson of the Confluence Committee for wearing so many hats. She almost single-handedly brought the masquerade into being. It was very simply managed with a teeny stage, no lights, but we did have two MC's and a microphone. Contestants went through optional

workmanship judging (if they made all or most of their costumes), then were brought in to walk across the stage and give a short spiel if they liked.

Judging was immediately after; we honestly were able to decide on awards and titles of awards, but the Con offered such fantastic prizes, we had trouble deciding on those! There were memberships to BOTH CC36 and CC37, and two large gift baskets including, snacks, gift cards to JoAnne Fabrics, and gas cards. So all in all, it was a terrific experience and so wonderful to see a con bringing back Costuming after a long interim.

Cultural Appropriation and Appreciation in Costuming

By Vicky Assarattanakul

Madison Area Costuming Society routinely helps out at the local science fiction convention, Geek.Kon. This year, I spearheaded a panel on a hot topic, cultural sensitivity in costuming. I was joined by Shelly Kumar and Danielle McKinney, who are both knowledgeable in the appropriate way to wear specific ethnic clothing.

The purpose of the panel was to provide education on what is and is not appropriate when it comes to costuming, specifically in the realm of fan costuming. Our goal was to address a common misconception among some sci-fi fans, that one should not cosplay across race, or wear clothing from an ethnicity that they are not a part of.

We created a PowerPoint presentation showcasing some of the more offensive costumes, most of which were of the Halloween store variety, and explained why they were not appropriate. In most cases, it is a matter of realizing that the costumes are based on racist stereotypes that are no longer tolerated by the general public. Despite the fact that costuming can be an escape from reality, we can't pretend like we live in a perfect world. Unfortunately,



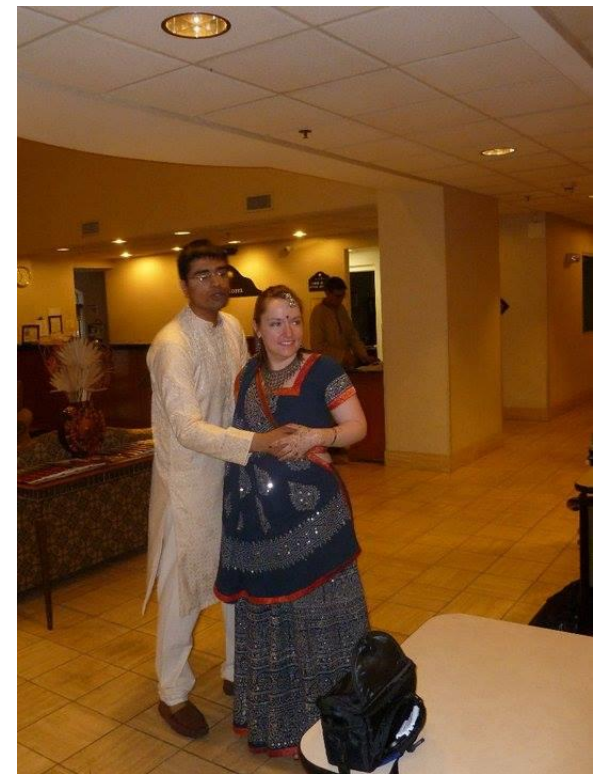
Shelly Kumar, Danielle McKinney, and Vicky Assarattanakul after a Geek.Kon panel on cultural sensitivity. Photo by Jamie Butler

our hobby can't be completely divorced from politics, and it's important to understand that there can be a fine line between appreciation and doing something that may cause offense.

After we explained this fact, we delved into two prevalent opinions – one, that one should simply do whatever they want because they will offend someone, and two, that one should never costume across race or culture. It was our opinion that both of these ideas are incorrect, and that the best answer was found in between. One can certainly costume across race and culture, but it is prudent to be mindful.

The idea that one should not costume across race or culture partially evolved out of a desire to protect culture and keep it "pure."

However, in practice, this idea turns out to be more harmful than protective. In fact, it actively harms ethnic clothing industries. Many countries are already struggling to keep their traditional clothing relevant, and consumers are purchasing less and less from them. My husband's cousin made a statement indicative of this when we went to Thailand earlier this year. She stated, "I'm surprised you are interested in Thai clothing. I'm Thai and I don't own Thai clothing!" Similar sentiments are expressed by people in Japan about kimono.



An example of appropriately costuming across race and culture. Photo courtesy of Shelly Kumar.

Therefore, when the idea that “outsiders” cannot wear this clothing is pushed, it only adds to the problems that these struggling industries are facing.

We then went on to explain how to costume across race and culture in a way that displays appreciation. The first piece is to research. Research the appropriate way to wear clothing, what colors are appropriate for what occasions, and so on. One of the fabulous aspects of having the Internet is that we have a wealth of accessible information at our fingertips at all times. There is a great deal of information out there on how to wear kimono, sari, kebaya, and so on.

A second piece, which was quite relevant to our audience of media-recreation



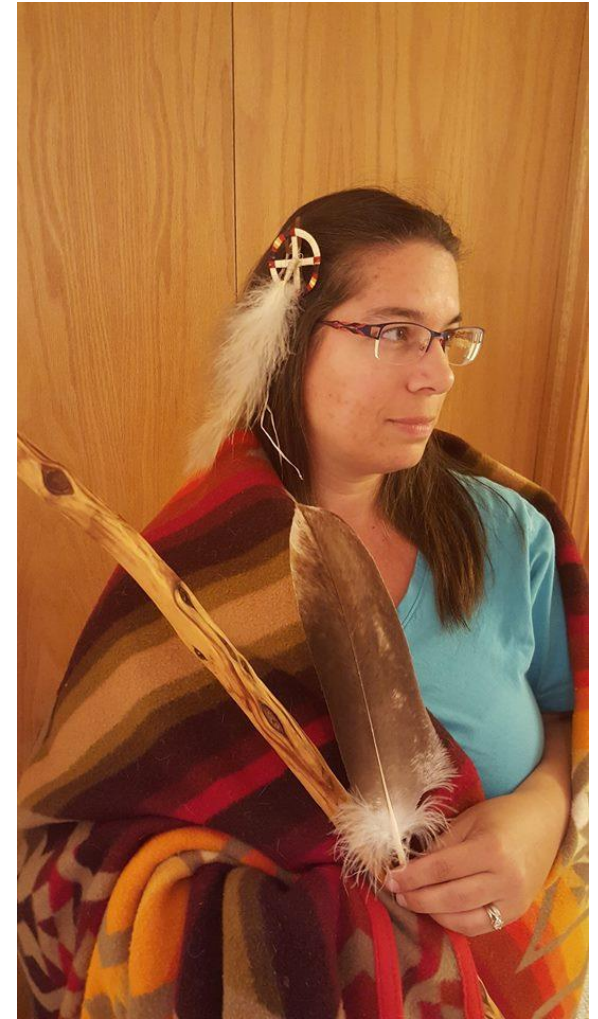
Vicky at a previous panel, showing an example of costuming across culture with inspiration. Photo by Gail Middleton.

costumers, is not to change one’s skin color unless one is portraying a race that does not exist in the real world, such as Togruta or Na’vi. While there may have been times in the past where this was more acceptable, it is not in today’s world, and our audience needed to be mindful of this.

I had reservations about putting on this panel, because I did not want it to turn into the angry mob that typically surfaces when this discussion takes place online. However, our audience was respectful and engaged, and they had many good points to share.

We ended the panel with a discussion on whether it was acceptable to cosplay characters based on racist stereotypes such as Sunflower from *Fantasia* or Mr. Popo from *Dragon Ball*. It was an excellent and educational discussion.

I know that panels on this topic at other conventions have run the gambit from “well done” to “awful.” Personally, I would run it again, especially for the younger audience that we attracted. Taking the educational approach seemed to work out very well, and helped create an atmosphere for discussion, rather than creating an environment where people felt they couldn’t share their opinions.



Danielle in her Brothertown attire. Photo by Scott McKinney.

I hope that this conversation continues in a positive and educational manner, both online, in panels, and in all costuming communities.

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>

Join the ICG-D Yahoo! group for lively discussions on costuming-related topics:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/icg-d>

Send comments and suggestions to the ICG board and standing committees:

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The Kennedy Memorial Archives and Gallery

The ICG's Pat & Peggy Kennedy Memorial Archives is the world's largest archive of photographs, video and paper ephemera of costuming. Exhibits include an online photo gallery (<http://www.costume.org/gallery2/>) and the ICGArchives YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/ICGArchives>).

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.

Contacting the Editor

Please contact the editor to report problems, or to offer comments and suggestions: icg-newsletter@costume.org.

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