

Short Subjects

A Star Wars Secret About a Legendary Swordsman

With the passing of a Hollywood legend, a Star Wars secret is revealed.



Sept 2009 photo by Leon Hill

In early January 2012, legendary movie sword master Bob Anderson passed away at age 89. Anderson, who worked behind the scenes with actors from Errol Flynn to Antonio Banderas, also played a starring role on the screen.

Anderson not only coordinated the light saber duels, but also donned Darth Vader's black helmet and fought light saber battles in two of the three original "Star Wars" films, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*.

The intergalactic arch-villain was voiced by James Earl Jones and played by six foot six (1.98 meter) former weightlifter David Prowse, but Anderson stepped in during the key fight scenes.

"David Prowse wasn't very good with a sword and Bob couldn't get him to do the moves," said Anderson's former assistant, Leon Hill. "Fortunately Bob could just don the costume and do it himself." The scenes worked beautifully, although Anderson, then

nearing 60, was several inches shorter than Prowse.

Few knew of Anderson's role until Mark Hamill, who played Luke Skywalker, revealed that Bob Anderson was the man who actually did Vader's fighting. "It was always supposed to be a secret, but I finally told (director) George (Lucas) I didn't think it was fair any more," said Hamill. "Bob worked so bloody hard that he deserves some recognition. It's ridiculous to preserve the myth that it's all done by one man."

Titanic Apron Exhibited at English Maritime Museum

Perhaps the only surviving piece of clothing worn on the Titanic on exhibit in Liverpool.

An apron worn by Laura Mabel



Francatelli, personal maid and secretary to the famous couturier 'Lucille' (Lady Lucy Duff Gordon, wife of wealthy landowner Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon) is on display

at the National Museums of Liverpool, England. The dress is part of an exhibit entitled, "Titanic, Lusitania, and the Forgotten Empress."

Miss Francatelli and her employers were among the 12 survivors placed in

Emergency Lifeboat 1, dubbed the "millionaires boat" by the press. The evacuation is well documented within the reports of the Titanic disaster. Lady Duff Gordon's autobiography, *Discretions and Indiscretions*, refers to the "weird" assortment of clothes worn by Miss Francatelli in the lifeboat.

The exhibit on the *Titanic, Lusitania*, and *Empress of Ireland* runs from March 30th through the end of 2012 at the Merseyside Maritime Museum of Liverpool. Visit the museum's [exhibition web site](#).

Images of American First Ladies' Gowns

National Museum of American History hosts on-line images of dresses in their collection.

Over the past two centuries, the role of



Helen Taft inaugural gown, 1909 Courtesy of Library of Congress

"First Lady" in the United States has changed immensely. In the past several decades, the women to occupy this position have embraced causes such as literacy and healthy eating. This on-line exhibit from the National Museum of American History looks at the role

played by the country's first ladies and the beautiful objects they owned.

The site is divided into six sections, including "The First Ladies Collection" and "A First Lady's Contribution". The "First Ladies Collection" contains photos and descriptions of items like Martha Washington's silk taffeta gown and Dolley Madison's elaborate hand-embroidered robe. Moving on, "A First Lady's Contribution" contains images of the First Ladies on the campaign trail and other settings. One particularly interesting image here is that of Florence Harding pinning a flower on Al Jolson's lapel during a campaign stop. Finally, visitors can also view a timeline of all the First Ladies.

Visit museum's [web site](#) to tour this on-line exhibit.

Comic-Con Cofounder Dies

Pioneer of comic-book convention financed early years out of his own pocket.



Richard Alf, a co-founders of the San Diego Comic-Con, who was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer in December 2011, passed away in January 2012 at age 59.

Comic-Con now draws more than 125 000 people to San Diego every summer for a 3-day extravaganza, but un 1970, the first Comic-Con was relatively modest.

According to an article in the San Diego Union-Tribune, Alf joined up with a band of volunteers in 1970 to start the now-annual convention celebrating comic books. The article quotes friend and fellow Comic-Con co-founder Mike Towry as saying that Alf fronted a few thousand dollars to pay for the convention for the first three years and gave other co-founders rides in his car.

Alf also founded the Comic Kingdom shop in the North Park area of San Diego in the 1970s.

Edwardian Era Gowns on Display in Pennsylvania

Hobble skirts, petticoats and opulent evening gowns from 1910 on display.



An exhibit in Hanover Pennsylvania sponsored by the Shippensburg University Fashion Archives and Museum and the Hanover Area Historical Society features more than 30 fully dressed mannequins that show fashions for men, women, and children. The pieces are from the local fashion museum's permanent collection.

The exhibit, "Titanic Fashions: High Style in the 1910s," explores the popular

fashion trends during the era. Among the pieces with local ties is a pale green silk crepe dress dating to 1910 that belonged to Marjorie Elliott Boher Hosfeld (1889-1979), a 1910 Wilson College graduate and a native of Shippensburg.

The display is in the historical society's Warehime-Myers mansion at 305 Baltimore St., Hanover. The public opening for the display will be on March 11, 2012. The exhibit runs through April 29, 2012 from 1-5 p.m.. For more details, see their [web site](#).

Whatzis?

A puzzling photo of a costuming related object. Here's the solution to the challenge from the last issue.

The photo is of a wig powder dispenser from a barber shop, in the collection of Colonial Williamsburg. To learn more about it, view comments on this [Facebook page](#).



Photo courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg.

Do you have an unusual photo? Send it, together with a description of what it is, to vc@siwcostumers.org