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**President's Message**

Aurora Celeste

Spring is here! Here in Kansas spring is heralded by weeks of 30 degree temperatures alternating with weeks of 70 degree temperatures. Turning off the heat is always a sign that I need to clean out the costuming closet. This year it's going to be doubly hard because the costumes have started migrating to the clothing closet. Take some time out this spring to clean out your stash and old costumes and put them up on ebay or take them to a secondhand store. Even those bags of sewing scraps can be useful. I donate mine to a local nursing home who gives them out to residents who make gorgeous quilts and to the local penitentiary where they use them to teach inmates mending and washing skills. You'd be amazed at what you can recycle if you try!

Convention season is in full swing again! Spring and summer are always full of great opportunities to share your costumes. Renaissance Festivals, SCA events, Civil War reenactment, and many other great costuming events are also starting up. If you're like me then there are always five events for every one you have the time and money for, so careful planning and flexibility are key to attending as much as you can fit in. Remember to take tons of pictures when you go! The Kennedy Archives always appreciates a donation of great costume photos.

And, speaking of Convention season, another great Costume Con is just around the corner! Costume Con is a great opportunity to meet people that love costuming as much as you do in a relaxed and helpful atmosphere. Of course, it may not seem relaxed if you're competing in all the events, but even then the great con planners always manage to make the process as painless as possible (although none of them seem inclined to delay the convention so I have another week to work on costumes ;p ).

Costume Con also has the annual meeting of the ICG Board of Directors and election of officers. This year we've got a new slate of officers up for election, and

your vote is important! If you can't attend the convention you can always send along your proxy form with someone who can. If you don't know anyone attending there are plenty of people on the mailing list who have offered to carry proxies. Just speak up, someone will volunteer. There is a Proxy form at the end of this issue.

Spring also brings forth many other changes. Personally this spring is a very bittersweet time. As I write this I am days away from completing two honors theses (thesis? thesai?) (*ed: theses*) in completion of my undergrad degree. I hope some of you will be able to see part of my theatre project in the FSF Masquerade at Costume Con. After I complete these projects I'll graduate and go out into the world to attempt to get a job. I'm still not sure yet where that will be, I'm looking at numerous locations on both sides of the country. It's hard to leave the Kansas City Chapter of the ICG that I helped to form, but it's great to know that no matter where I go my SiW family will follow. That's the biggest joy of having an internet chapter: we can support each other no matter the time zone or location. So be sure and post your latest pictures, videos from con, or even construction horrors on the yahoo group. This group is only as strong as you make it, and your participation makes it great.

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## **Script Analysis for Costume Design: an Overview**

Gail Wolfenden-Steib

The first time you read the script, read for enjoyment—find a quiet place and just try and enjoy what you are reading. Leave the highlighter, pencils and post it notes alone. Hopefully you like what you read. If not, you'll need to find something you do like with in the context. It'll make the process a lot easier.

The second time you read the script highlight anything remotely related to costume required by the script. Make note of any changes/fast changes or specific character requirements. Are specific items mentioned? Look for hankies, glasses, uniforms, etc. Make copious notes—this is why we photocopy scripts.

Set up a basic grid for a costume plot—make it as large as necessary. This is your handwritten version—convert it to excel later. Read the script again and fill in the blanks on the chart with all the scribbles and notes you made in the script. Read carefully and look for anything you may have missed the first two times. This will give you a better idea of who is involved with what when. If you have one actor playing multiple roles or acting as 'scenery' (so common with Shakespeare shows) this is where you see conflicts and problems first. Break down large scenes into page numbers if you have people in and out changing clothes. Be detailed!

Hopefully you have met with the director by now and have heard the concept for the show. Now it's the time for you to start developing your ideas within the concept while looking at the 'big wall chart of costume' you just created. Reread the script again. Try to enjoy it while referring back to the plot occasionally.

Research-research-research! See what inspires you. Don't limit yourself to costume books or magazines. A photo of a leaf can inspire a costume just as well as picture of a period garment. This is your chance to bring your touch into the show.

Things to keep in mind while generating a basic plot (and doing research or beginning to develop a design in your head):

1. Place and Locale
2. Period and Time (time of day, season, is a holiday involved, year or years, span of time covered)
3. Mood
4. Social status of characters
5. Movement required of the actors in costume (freedom in dance heavy shows versus constrained in period shows)
6. Are there fast changes involved and are they actor driven or will there be help—are changes done a vista or backstage

7. Budgets—this is the real world—keep your materials and labor budgets in mind (as well as your fee)
8. Size of the space—intimate spaces require more detail than large houses

You can always embellish and pull back on a design but it's easier to adjust for budget, time and labor (skill level) constraints if you haven't designed the ultimate 'Broadway Show' when you know it will never have a chance to be realized. Rude surprises are never fun. Know the skill levels of yourself and those that will be building the show. In school I was taught to just design with no care for how the designs would be realized. They were to be looked at as art. As a working designer, if you can't realize what you put to paper and have had them approved by the director you probably won't be on the top of the list the next time the theatre is hiring. This is not to say don't stretch yourself and just keep doing the same old thing, it's saying look realistically at the big picture and create a quality production based on the resources available.

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## **Costuming by the Book**

Philip Gust

Creating costumes based on characters in a book presents some unique challenges. While reproducing costumes based on paintings, photos, movies, or TV shows challenges a costumer's construction skills, creating costumes based on book characters also challenges their conceptualization and design skills.

The author of a book is focused on telling a story through narrative and dialog. If clothing is described, the description must be in service of the story. In some stories, like Lois McMaster Boujold's *Vorkosigan* novels, clothing is important and the author provides many details that can guide the costumer. In others, such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, clothing is incidental, and the costumer is forced to fall back on similar real-world cultures for source material.

Cover art can provide some guidance, but the author is often at the mercy of an illustrator who may or may not have even read the book. Examples abound of cover art that bear no resemblance to the characters in the book. Even when the cover art does correspond to the book, it is just a single illustration, showing one person's interpretation of how certain characters look and what they wear.

Of all those who face the challenge of portraying costumes from books, movie costume designers have the most daunting job. They must come up with a world of concepts that are consistent, yet faithful to whatever descriptions the author provides. They must design costumes that are functional clothing within the societies the author has created, and the limits of available materials and hard use the costumes will receive. Finally, they must work with the knowledge that those concepts and designs will influence how generations of fans and readers see the characters.

Most fans and many hobbyist costumers do not realize the difficulties that movie costume designers face in going from the book to the movie, or understand the process they follow. While some designers discuss aspects of their work after the fact, they provide little insight into how to begin the process and how to follow it. Perhaps this explains, in part, why hobbyist costumers so seldom attempt to create costumes based solely on books.

While discussing this topic with a group of costumers at BayCon 2007, I wondered about the feasibility of a new kind of costuming event. Unlike a masquerade, which focuses on constructing and presenting finished costumes, this event would focus on the kind of conceptualization and design process required to translate a book into a movie. Participants would create, present, and discuss their concepts and designs for a group of characters in a book or series, and bring that world and its people to life, through their costumes.

A few months ago, my wife Kathe, reminded me about the idea, and asked when I planned to do something about it. Since BayCon 2009 was still several months away, I decided to see if there was enough interest to pilot it there.

Crossing my fingers, I sent out this call for participation to a small group of wildly creative friends in the costuming community, who were all award-winning costumers:

*BayCon 2009 Programming Proposal:  
"Costuming by the Book"*

*Imagine what it was like for Ngila Dixon when Peter Jackson selected her to design the costumes for "Lord of the Rings" based on the books and her own imagination. Now imagine you have the same opportunity.*

*The producer of a soon to be announced movie, "John Carter of Mars", based on Edgar Rice Burroughs' books, have invited several teams of noted costume designers to pitch their concepts. Only one will be chosen, and the winning designs will be what generations of fans remember.*



*Kathe and I are proposing an event at BayCon 2009 based on this scenario, using the first three books as source material: "A Princess of Mars", "The Gods of Mars", and "The Warlord of Mars".*

*You are invited to be a member of a two or three person team to create costume designs for three or more characters that will establish the look of the movie costumes. You should provide costume design illustrations, color themes, and descriptions of the materials for the costumes, and a one-page write-up describing your overall design concept and how it relates to the book.*

*You are encouraged to include swatches that show the colors and materials. You may also include things like inspirational photos, scaled mockups, or whole costume pieces, maquettes, sample props, or jewelry, if they help to present the concept more clearly.*

*The entries and write-ups will be exhibited as part of the art show so that BayCon members can examine them at their leisure. On Sunday, there will be a panel where the teams present their concepts and answer questions from the audience. Visitors to the exhibit and audience members will have the opportunity to provide feedback and "hire" their favorite entry. The results will be announced either at the end of the panel or in the final newsletter.*

I was delighted to receive positive responses from three teams, each of whom happened to be married to each other: Bruce and Dana McDermott, Chris and Christy Bertani, and Bryan Little and Mette Hedin. Since we originally hoped to have four teams, Kathe and I decided to jump in as the fourth team, and recruit someone else to serve as panel moderator. Having teams who have been costuming together for a number of years should add an interesting dimension.

The framing story of a soon to be made movie and teams of competing costume designers is primarily to add interest to the event for both the audience and the teams. Although each of the teams enjoys competing, this is a cooperative undertaking to test the concept, develop a workable set of guidelines, and have fun together in the process. In fact, we have set up a Yahoo group for the event, where we can all coordinate activities, discuss ideas and concepts, and eventually share finished designs.

The John Carter series is what sparked the original idea several years ago. I've always been fascinated by the books, and thought they would be an interesting choice for this kind of event. At the time, no studio had

firm plans to make what would no doubt be a wonderful movie. The fact that Pixar recently announced such plans makes the choice especially timely. The first movie in a trilogy will not come to theaters until 2012.

Each team will create designs for three principal characters: John Carter; his red Martian princess, the “incomparable” Dejah Thorus; and the green Martian warrior, Tars Tarkus. They are also encouraged to create designs for several other characters to help flesh out their concept of the world of Barsoom (Mars).

The John Carter series presents some challenging problems for the costume designer. First, clothing was not especially important to Burroughs’ stories, and he provides little in the way of detailed descriptions of costumes or materials beyond a kind of silk-like fabric, a few white furs, and the ever-present leather harnesses.

Second, there is surprisingly little differentiation in the descriptions of costumes worn among the different cultures and races of Barsoom. The primary differences seem to be how much or how little ornamentation and jewelry people of different ranks or social strata wear.

Finally, there is the issue of nakedness. Burroughs conceived most of Barsoom as a warm, arid climate, and its cultures not having much use for conventional clothing. In fact they are puzzled and amused by the types and amount of clothing Earth people wear. The easy way out would be to go for the Frank Frazetta treatment. In fact, many renditions of John Carter and Dejah Thorus found on the Web head in that direction.

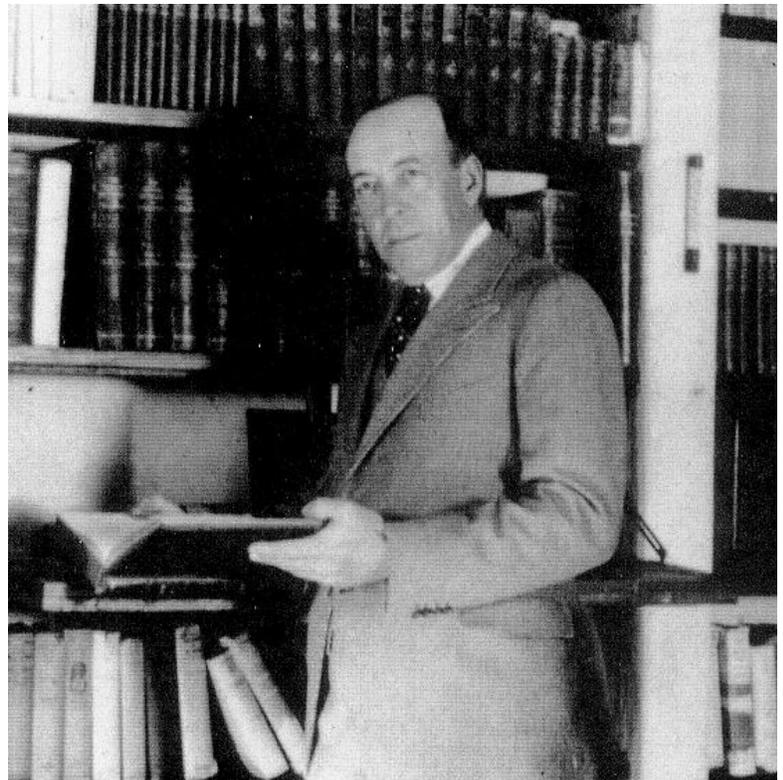
For the purposes of this pilot, I recommended we assume that the picture is aiming for a PG rating, but that the studio has a reputation for giving its talent latitude to “push the envelope in order to appeal to both men *and* women, without totally grossing out the kids. I noted that Bill Theiss had to grapple with that very issue on Star Trek TOS. Besides, “no costume” is still no costume.

Kathe suggested thinking about the meaning of “nakedness” from three perspectives: a man of John Carter’s age in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Burroughs’ age of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a modern audience in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. She also suggested considering certain functional problems of “nakedness” on Barsoom, such as riding the large, semi-tame Thoats, used by some cultures as transportation, and fighting ground and air battles with guns, bladed weapons, and grappling hooks.

It will be interesting to see how the four teams deal with these and other issues. As I finish this article, the exhibit goes up in the art show about five weeks from now, on Friday May 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the panel takes place two days later, on Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. Each of the teams has way too many other things to get done, and is struggling to find time to complete their designs. Will they finish in the nick of time? What will they finally have to show? How will BayCon members react?

In the best tradition of an Edgar Rice Burroughs cliffhanger, stay tuned...

Edgar Rice Burroughs→



## Age of Antiquity Historical Garment Services

Laura Mason Lockard

Looking back over my life, it is obvious that costumes and historical dress has been my longest running interest and passion. I remember up looking up “clothing” in the encyclopedia to see the examples of historical dress and then combing the local Goodwill for possibilities as an elementary student. My mother taught me to sew. She learned from her mother, who had been trained as a professional dressmaker in the late 1890’s. Until January of 2009, I did all of the machine sewing on my grandmother’s 1952 Necchi sewing machine that she won as the grand prize in a creative sewing contest. Her entry was red flannel drawers for a chicken. No, I am not kidding! But alas, that is a story for another day. (*ed note: see next issue.*)

### My sewing machine, Grandma, and the chicken.→

After I graduated from college and was faced with the problem of what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, I started to get involved with the local historical groups. One day I decided I was going to make myself a Civil War outfit and join a re-enacting group, and things pretty much snowballed from there. Within a couple years I was making historical clothing for other people and had a handful of loyal clients. That was 1994, when I first registered my hobby business

as Age of Antiquity and started paying state sales tax. However I still had a family and a mortgage, so giving up the day job was not an option for me.

From 1994 until recently, my main focus was custom design and sewing. In addition to paid work for clients, I had this crazy idea that I wanted to research and create an outfit for every major style change since the middle ages. I have not lived long enough to pull that off, but I have the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pretty much covered! But what to do with all of this stuff that now oozed out of the attic and closets in my house? I spent several years carting it to various events putting on period fashion shows. In addition to the historical fashion show, I had a show on undergarments (corsets, chemises, drawers, petticoats, hoops – some of which are original) and millinery. Women’s groups liked millinery particularly well as they could try on the bonnets and hats. Nobody ever asked me if they could try on a corset.

← An 1850’s Outfit from the Early Years

## Chicken ‘Britches’ Honored



TRYING FOR SIZE—Mrs. Eva Anderson, 64-year-old grandmother, from Harwick, Pa., is shown above with a set of chicken pants she designed and sewed to protect her prize birds from a cold spell last year. Her efforts won top prize for unusual sewing, giving by Necchi sewing centers. The loot: an all-expense-trip to New York, where this picture was taken.



Then one day I lucked into another dealer who was unloading a huge stash of vintage wedding goods, so for a while I also had a vintage wedding display. I had to give this up when my son got old enough to protest being used as a 19<sup>th</sup> century children's clothing model and my mother became too elderly to assist me. My mother could get a model into an ill fitting outfit, looking decent, with nothing more than a box of safety pins. And my son? Well, every kid needs something to tell his psychiatrist when he grows up.

One of my long time clients and dear friend (Dr. Marijean Ferguson) was the head of the Sociology department at a nearby university. Every so many semesters she would do her Victorian America class, and one of the class projects was for the students to put on a Victorian Fashion Show using my outfits. They each had to choose a period and research a historical character to represent in the fashion show. Sadly, Marijean passed away in 2004. An antique textile expert was brought in to deal with the items in her estate (she had a sizable collection of original items in addition to the stuff I made for her). I offered to come and identify the items that I had made, but they refused this offer. Later I heard through the grapevine that about half of my items were classified as original and subsequently donated to a clothing museum. While I regret that my products were misconstrued, it is a nice compliment as to the level of authenticity I had achieved. For a couple years after that, I didn't sew much. I went through a series of major life changes (divorce, remarriage, moving, etc) that made it pretty much impossible to sew for clients during that time.

I came out on the other end of those transitions with a husband who is willing to play dress up. We are both musicians (yes, another skill and passion for which it is very difficult to get paid) and interested in historical music. We began developing historical music programs to perform on period instruments in period costume. We have been doing this now for about 4 years.

**Bill (my husband) and I in our 18<sup>th</sup> Century finery for a concert.→**

Fast forward to 2008, when after 13 years of employment I lucked into an 18 month severance package when my job was eliminated due to a corporate merger. Finally – a real opportunity to try and make it with my sewing business full time, along with enough money to invest in a project I have had in mind for at least a decade: using a machine embroidery to duplicate antique hand embroidered period clothing. In January of 2008 I purchase a Husquvarna Viking Topaz 30 embroidery machine and 4D Professional digitizing software. Boy, does it look strange sitting next to that 1952 Necci! My my mother assures me that Grandma would be impressed beyond words with what this machine can do.



The old and the new side by side in my sewing room, with Grandma's wedding photo from 1907.→



I will be making major updates to my website during the next 6 months as new products, many of which can be manufactured ahead of time (unlike custom work) are developed.

In the planning stages are: red or white flannel 19<sup>th</sup> century under-petticoats and drawers with black embroidery around the hem (not recommended for chickens); machine crewel work pockets; lightweight batiste chemises; embroidered men's 18<sup>th</sup> century waistcoats; machine "French Handsewing"; Civil War undersleeves; and reticules (purses) featuring machine stitches that replicate hand embroidery. I also plan to photograph the inventory of reproduction millinery, underpinnings, clothing, and outerwear from years past, and will most likely sell many of these items. Middle aged spread has set in, and I no longer fit into them. (Darn! I will just have to make new ones!)

The vintage bridal wear will soon be offered for sale online as well. Please keep an eye on my website, [www.ageofantiquity.com](http://www.ageofantiquity.com), for new developments.

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### Proxy Form

On the next page, you will find a Proxy Form taken from the ICG web site. In order for ICG members to cast votes at the annual meeting if they are not in attendance, their proxy form must be brought to the meeting by an ICG member who can cast the votes for them. As of this moment we know that both the budget and the slate of candidates for office will be up for votes. There may be other issues.

You can give instructions to the ICG member who will be casting your vote. Print out the Proxy form, fill it out and give it or FAX it to someone to carry it to the ICG meeting.

*This Proxy Statement is for ICG members who will not be attending the Annual Meeting at Costume-Con. If you want to vote, complete the form and give it to someone who will be attending.*

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International Costumers' Guild 20\_\_ Annual Meeting Proxy Assignment Form

On this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_, I, \_\_\_\_\_, assign my vote to

and authorize the below named member of the International Costumers' Guild, belonging

to \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter, to represent me in all business coming before

the 20\_\_ Annual Meeting of the International Costumers' Guild.

Assignee Name\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Assigner Name\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Who you are authorizing to vote on your behalf.

**\*\*Your name.**