



# The ICG Newsletter

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The International Costumers' Guild, Inc. (ICG), is an affiliation of amateur, hobbyist, and professional costumers dedicated to the promotion and education of costuming as an art form in all its aspects.

## Farewell Message from the President

When I was a little kid I spent hours watching all the old movies I could. Each week I would watch the Lone Ranger and SGT Preston make things right. The westerns were the best then. The good guys wore white hats and the bad guys black ones. As I got older I found out it is not always so. What is good and bad are really in the eyes of the beholder. One thing that always stood out in those movies was that the hero always knew when to leave town.

Or as Sgt Preston always said "Well King (his dog), this case is closed."

Since 1983 I have been part of the costuming community, from working back stage to on stage to finding my first love the archives, and my second love video. I have been happy and sad. I made many friends and lost some along the way.

I had my finest hour when I got the Lifetime Achievement Award in 1999.

I have failed a couple of times - the Quarterly still hurts.

I have been both Vice President and President and following some of our past presidents has not been easy.

I have tried to do what needed to be done, not always as I wanted, but as they needed to be done.

I have turned the archives over to Pierre Pettinger and I will not seek reelection at CC-24.

I still have the important part of the President's message to complete:

First and most important I want to thank **Pierre and Sandy Pettinger** for their help. Pierre always had the advice I needed at any time of the day or night. Without his help and advice, I would have made many more mistakes than I did. Sandy you are a sweetheart. No matter when I called you never were cross or bothered. You are a very special lady.

**Darla**, I learned a lot as your VP. The only lesson you did not teach me was not to be President.

**Diane**, for a new kid on the block you were wonderful.

**Dora**, there is no way to say thanks for all the times you had to listen to my ranting about being President.

**Jeff**, where would I have been without you? You worked harder than I did, that's for sure. You always were right there with what I needed for the website.

To the **BOD**, you were great. You didn't always agree with me, but when the ICG needed your service, you never failed them. I am sorry I could not make the job easier.

Now back to work:

As has been the practice since Darla came up with the idea, the Presidential Award goes to **Denisen and Jay Hartlove**. Denisen you came in at the last minute and took over the newsletter and made it a treat to read. You have worked hard to make it better than I ever expected and you earned this award  
(Continued, next column)

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NOTE: NEXT DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS MAY 15!

## Editor's Message

**First**, thank you Carl for honoring Jay and I with the President's Award. It was a pleasure working with you, and I consider myself lucky to have gained you as a friend over the last couple of months. Enjoy your vacation while you can - and we'll look forward to hearing from you again, if not on a masquerade stage, then filming same!

**Meanwhile, vote early, vote often** was the old Tamminy Hall cry prior to elections, and while the "often" part may not hold, ICG elections are coming at Costume-Con 24, so get voting! My take is that no matter what your political stance on any given issue, you can't complain if you don't vote. (Better yet, if you run for office with grand solutions in mind!) Towards that end, earlier this month, I emailed all **Chapter representatives**, and asked **Carl Mami** to email the Board of Directors, for anyone running for Board office to get me their candidate statements for publication in this issue. If they've chosen to publish a statement of their candidacy, you'll see that statement in this issue of the newsletter.

Not planning to attend the ICG General Meeting at this year's Costume-Con? Inconceivable! But just in case, I've also included in this issue a copy of the **official proxy form**. Just fill out the form, get it to someone who is attending the General Meeting, and they'll vote for you.

In other news, I understand that my original chapter, the **GBACG** (Dreamers of Decadence) may be seceding from the ICG. I'm rather crushed, as Jay's and my names are on the original charter of that Guild, and I remember going to early meetings in Jwlhyfer de Winter's living room, where we ate chocolate chip cookies off her coffin coffee table and planned the first Fairie Tale Masquerade Ball. That group will be sorely missed. I believe that some chapter(s) of the ICG may be working with GBACG members to ensure they keep ICG voting rights, at least through the general election. And in the meantime, to them I wish good luck, be well, write often, and don't be strangers!

Got a minute? Check out the **Costume-Con archives** put up by **Kevin Roche** and his crew at [www.costume-con.org/gallery2](http://www.costume-con.org/gallery2). Fabulous and wonderful - thanks guys!!!!!!

Meanwhile . . . if you're like me, a competition-shy Master-level costumer, my own sweet husband, **Jay Hartlove**, has put together an article on tips and tricks from other, experienced competitors on entering (and potentially winning) masquerades. Thanks very much to him and everyone who contributed to his article!

As usual, enjoy this issue, and we'll see you again soon!

### (President's Message, Cont.)

hands down. Jay you are being honored because we all know how much you have to do with this, nothing runs without a good support team to smooth out the bumps and holding down the fort, not to mention all the folding and stuffing. You earned this honor, enjoy the limelight

At the General Meeting two important issues will be taken up, one is the guidelines. The other is the GBACG status. Your votes are needed. These are important issues and this is your chance to be heard. How you vote is yours to decide, but do vote.

Now that all of this has been done and said it is time to move on.

"THIS CASE IS CLOSED"

**C. D. Mami, (Past) President, Board of Directors, ICG**

## Ready for the Big Time

by Jay Hartlove

You've got a big idea for a costume, and you would like to show it off on stage. Maybe it's a really big idea, and you'd like a really big stage. Maybe a large science fiction convention is coming to town in a few months. Or maybe this big idea of yours would be worth traveling to the next Costume-Con or WorldCon. What should you be aware of, beyond the actual making of your costume, when you are planning on entering a large stage competition? What advice can seasoned competitors give you, the lessons they learned the hard way? I asked a number of costumers who have won world-class competitions what tips they would give someone thinking of entering a major costume contest.

Designing and building costumes for close-up display, such as for wearing to themed parties or in the halls of a convention, requires a smaller scale and more attention to wearability. Stage costumes generally are bigger or flashier, include movement, and focus on theatricality. There are big venues for displaying quality up-close craft, such as the historical competition at Costume-Con. But launching something theatrical, or with multiple costumes, or with special effects, requires additional planning and logistics beyond just doing a good job with the costume itself.

So why would anyone want to make this process easier for potential competitors? Although there are prizes given at shows, what fills the convention ballrooms with eager fans is creativity on display. The competition is there to get creative people motivated to do their best. Even your most ardent competitors want to see what you have done. In fact, your fellow competitors are often the only ones who really appreciate the effort you have made. No one wants to see your vision cut off from becoming reality because you fell into some trap the rest of us have fallen into before.

I assembled a panel of experts, folks who have been entering and winning big convention competitions for many years. My veterans:

**Ricky Dick** is a professional makeup artist and haunted house builder who has been competing his costumes at science fiction conventions, and winning, since 1980. He founded The Sick Pups of Greater Monmouth County (aka the NJ/NY ICG chapter).

**Karen Dick** is the co-founder of Costume-Con, the founder of the Fantasy Costumers Guild, which became the ICG, and the author of the Whole Costumers Catalog. She has been building winning costumes for science fiction conventions since 1973.

**Cheryl Serr** started small, making hall costumes for several years before getting up the nerve to compete in 1985. That was when she joined forces with her now-husband **Don**. Together they have gone on to win top prizes at the biggest shows.

**Kathy Sanders** entered her first costume competition at WorldCon in 1967. In all those years of active costuming, she has seen the complete arc that developed into what we now have as organized competition. She has not only won at dozens of shows, but has run several masquerades.



**Dana MacDermott** entered her first convention masquerade in 1983. She has been actively involved in organized costume fandom as well as judging shows and winning top prizes.

**Pierre and Sandy Pettinger** have been entering convention masquerades since 1983. Two of the most active members of our community, they have probably been involved in more contests, either behind the scenes or on stage, than anyone else.

I also asked **myself**, since I've been doing this since 1976. **What three things would you tell someone considering the Big Time?**

As diverse a group as this is, there was remarkable unanimity around a few key tips. Clearly these are worth remembering, as so many veterans came back with the same answers. There were eight basic categories of advice.

### Know and use the venue

When you begin to consider what you are going to create, think about the venue; think about the size and scale of your work so that it will fit the stage and will have details that can be appreciated at the distance from which your costume will be observed. (Dana)

Use the stage. Think through why your costume belongs on a big stage. What is the character doing? Is movement an important part of who the character is? Does the costume undergo some change in the presentation? Be sure to show off all sides of the costume, especially if there is something

interesting on the back. Is there something you want the audience to focus on? If there is an illusion or redirection, be sure your movement plays to this. What about lighting, sound and music? Even if your costume isn't a character, say you are doing an historical non-personality, then when are we seeing them? Are they taking a stroll through their favorite park, or are they meeting the Queen? How you act on stage makes

a huge impact on the believability of the costume itself. (Jay)

Read the rules. Don't assume it's the same as any other masquerade you've entered / seen. (Pierre & Sandy)

### Details count

Obsess about the details. Even if it can't be seen from the audience, the makings of a master costumer is in the details. (Cheryl)

Pay attention to the details. If your shoes don't go with the costume (for example), it can ruin the illusion. (Pierre & Sandy)

Try to pick characters you physically resemble. Nobody wants to see a 3 foot tall Darth Vader [unless it's for laughs - Jay]. (Kathy)

Love your costume. Make your competition costumes on the basis of what you enjoy doing and wearing, or some new skill you want to learn, not on the basis of what you think will win. Remember that judging can be highly subjective because this is an art form and there are no hard and fast rules. (Karen) (Cont. at "Tips" on Page 3)





**("Tips" Cont. from page 2)**

Know your materials. Nothing eats up time and builds frustration like having a material not function as you hoped. If your costume requires material or a technique you don't know well, then get advice from fellow costumers through the various guilds. This is a major reason for their existence. Get advice from the salespeople who sell you the materials. Find the time to take a lesson. Give yourself time to experiment. (Jay)

**This is a visual entertainment**

You are there to entertain the audience. To quote George Paczolt, "Hit them once, hit them twice and then get off." Longer than that and you bore the audience. (Kathy)

Run your idea past other people not just your closest friends. An inside joke is just that, an inside joke. Not everyone will get it. And if the judges don't get it... (Don)

Think about the nature of your audience and select something they will appreciate with a minimum of explanation. If you do not honestly think that the audience will understand what you have done without more than three sentences of narration, you may be making a mistake in your choice of subject. Your mode is visual; everything else should be secondary and exist in the support of your concept. (Dana)

Shorter is sweeter. You don't need five minutes (or even 2 1/2) for your presentation. Honest. (Cheryl)

This is a visual medium, so limit the verbal explanations. Besides, if you have to have the announcer explain it, then your presentation has failed. (Kathy)

Rehearse!! (Cheryl & Don)

**Enjoy the creative process**

[Costuming] scratches your deep creative itches. Enjoy the experience. Try to have your costume(s) ready in advance of the convention, so you can enjoy the con, talk to your friends and make new ones. Nothing wrecks an experience more thoroughly than spending the entire time in a panic finishing your costume. Be ready enough backstage so that you can look around and see the wonders that are appearing. (Dana)

Remember that your costume is more than the extremely short time you spend on stage. Try to enjoy the creative process of making the costume and designing the presentation for competition. Try to imagine what fun you'll have wearing the costume in the halls the next day or the next convention. (Karen)

No matter how well you plan, turning a design into reality will always have setbacks and steps that take longer than expected. So plan on having the costume well before the convention. If you actually get it done ahead of time, then you are better than me. Even with lots of planned elbow room, seasoned costumers often find themselves finishing the costume in their hotel room the afternoon before the competition. (Jay)

**Be self-sufficient**

No matter what the people running the Masquerade tell you they can provide, try to be as self sufficient as possible. No committee can be 100% for 100% of the costumers. You don't want to chance being the 1% who has a problem. (Ricky)

Repair kit. Don't leave home without it. When you're behind stage and something breaks, comes undone, rips, etc. having a needle and thread, duct tape, hot glue, or even a hammer and chisel could save your whole presentation. (Don)

**Take care of yourself**

Take care of yourself physically, mentally and emotionally before and after you've arrived in the green room. Make sure you've eaten, and are hydrated and as comfortable as possible. This is the best way, regardless of any success from awards, that you can have a fun positive experience and have the will to try it again. (Ricky)

Mix awe inspiring look and comfort/convenience in equal portions. (Cheryl)

Make sure you have dinner (even if it means room service or pizza while you are doing the first preparations in your hotel room). (Dana)

Calories and hydration and relaxation. Eat and drink, your body needs fuel. Rest, shower and relax. (Don)

Eat something before showtime. Drink water (just not too much). Sleep the night before. (Pierre & Sandy)

**Keep perspective**

Once you step on stage, you no longer 'own' your costume.

It is now art for the ages. Whether people-audience-judges like it, hate it, love it, remember it, or not, is now not up to you. Since you don't have any control over this, you must find peace with what you have built and be satisfied with it in your own head. (Ricky)

The best "awards" don't always come from the judges. Sometimes, they're from the guy from the third row who finds you after the masquerade and says that he and everybody sitting around him thought you should have won.

Sometimes, they're from the person who remembers your costume months or even years after you wore it in competition. (Karen)

Do not allow winning awards to be the validation of your costuming. Awards are nice, but if they are your major motivation, you will be unhappy often, angry frequently, and less satisfied with your own work. (Dana)

If you don't win big or win at all in a competition, KEEP TRYING. Ask for constructive criticism from judges or costumers whose opinion you respect. Keep trying to improve your construction and presentation skills. Try to fine-tune an existing costume, or try something new. This is an ongoing evolutionary/learning/growth process for everyone, even the people who have been in the hobby for 10, 20, or 30+ years. (Karen)

**Have fun**

Don't sweat it - it's supposed to be FUN!! (Pierre & Sandy)  
It's a costume contest, you're supposed to have fun. It's a requirement. (Don)

Remember, costuming is supposed to be fun. (Kathy)

You are supposed to be costuming because it is fun. (Dana)

These quotes show how important it is to be kind to yourself during this very stressful process. From giving yourself enough lead time, all the way through to keeping wins and losses in perspective, the lesson from the veterans is to give yourself a chance to enjoy your art. We all love to see creativity on display. None of us want to see a fellow costumer consumed in frustration.

So stick these tips up on your workroom wall, and get costuming!

*Photos used with permission.*

*Jay Hartlove has been costuming since 1976, and has won numerous awards, up to and including being an integral part of the Best in Show-winning team at ConJose. His name is on the charter of the Greater Bay Area Costumers Guild, and he now holds membership in Silicon Web.*



