I write fantasy novels set in a faraway world of my own creation. My latest magical adventure, *A Blighted Touch*, is scheduled for release next spring. It’s about a mysterious chime that rings out a curse across the land. In one city, everyone feels pain at the slightest touch. In another valley, everyone is blind. Only a cloistered young woman and a ne'er-do-well storyteller are immune, and they embark on a perilous journey to discover a cure.

As part of my book's promotion, I decided to create an original costume based on one of my characters. To be honest, my concern is personal. When envisioning your book going to the big or the small screen (one can dream!) is the appropriation of your vision by producers, directors, and costume designers. I plan to wear this outfit to future book signings and author appearances. Also, as a life-long costumer, wardrobe is a key element of creating my fantasy world. I want to describe realistically the sensation of living and moving in pseudo-historical garments.

*Who Should I Be?*

For this project, my first decision was to choose one of my characters. The heroine of my novel is a winsome twenty-something; several other characters are men. Although a book's description of its characters shouldn't limit your creative possibilities, I (realistically) selected a character who is the closest physical match to myself.

I chose Tesia, the sassy landlady of the roadside inn where my heroes on their journey take a room for the night. She is sensible, frugal, and self-sufficient. Like others in the valley, she is blind, yet she can smell if a guest has burned a candle too many and will charge him extra. The costume should be functional, like something an innkeeper would wear.

The setting of my fantasy world has medieval-style technology; therefore, my choice of fabric and colors was limited: no satins or polyester. Although there is plenty of magic in my world, the basic necessities of life are still mundane. My innkeeper lives in Heron Valley, so I wanted a blue and white color scheme. She is a merchant whose social status is above the vagabonds who patronize her establishment, so I determined that her gown would be one that a skilled seamstress of that period could construct. For accessories, Tesia carries a brass key ring, a coin purse, and wears a high quality leather belt. To complete the outfit is my RenFaire dagger, its place on my belt says that my character doesn’t depend on a husband to defend herself against rascals who don’t pay their bills.

*Continued, page 2*
Budgeting and Design

After deciding who I would portray, I established a budget for time and expenses. As I work full-time, construction would need to be done on weekends, evenings, or lunch hours at the office. My design skills are not advanced enough to make an original pattern from scratch without a waste of time in trial-and-error, therefore I chose a commercial pattern that I've used before, Simplicity#4940. It is the basic outline of your typical medieval bliaut gown. Because I'm not doing an historical reproduction, I jettisoned the long droopy sleeves and substituted a detachable sleeve at the elbow, using a tie technique that I learned in making RenFaire costumes. But my primary concern was the choice of fabric.

I realized that the outer fabric is crucial for any costume. I plan to wear this for many future events such as book signings, conventions, etc. I wanted a homespun look, not the machine-weave broadcloth you find at the usual chain fabric stores. Stone Mountain & Daughter is an invaluable resource for quality fabrics; but as I work full-time and live in the South Bay Area, I didn't have the time to drive up to Berkeley. Through email inquiries, Mary Jane Nee, Operations Manager at SM&D, suggested a linen-rayon blend with the uneven dye saturation and nibs in the weave, and kindly mail swatches to me. She was right and I loved the feel of its lightweight and pliability. From a phone call and a credit card number, a big box arrived on my doorstep a few days later.

What I like about this linen/rayon blend is that it handled like a dream. It's not slippery, irons to a crisp line, and it doesn't fray much. One drawback that I didn't expect was the “wiggle” on the bias. The technical term is diagonal stability, although the fabric isn't exactly stretchy. It handled very well once I got the feel of it.

Preventing Problems

I made a muslin to determine correct pattern size and to determine necessary alterations. It was worth spending the extra weekend to do this step. Even if you measure carefully, there really is no better way to see how a pattern’s design fits a human body and where adjustments are needed. I do not have a standard hourglass figure, so I can never rely on the guidelines of commercial patterns. How the shoulders are spaced, how the princess seams line up to my frame, and whether I would need a foundation garment—these are all decisions you can only make after checking yourself in the mirror with a muslin mock-up.
GBACG is officially 501-C

The Board of the Greater Bay Area Costumer's Guild is very proud to announce that it has received official tax-exempt status under IRS section 501(c) 3. Obtaining 501(c)3 status is a major milestone for GBACG. All donated contributions are now tax-deductible. Our commitment to programming supporting the educational growth of both Guild members and the local community continues with this significant achievement.

More information will be posted to the GBACG Yahoo Group, as well as at the Open House, January 17.

Fictional Costume, continued from page 2

Then came cutting the fashion fabric. Like anyone who sews I’m always nervous about slicing into the “real thing.” Once a pattern is cut, there's no going back. You can’t rely on buying additional yardage after-the-fact to replace mistakes as dye lots change and fabrics are sold with no replacements or reorder.

As for construction tips I use safety pins for marking the “right” and “wrong” side of the fabric, especially helpful when using a fabric that’s similar in color on either side. My gown has several vertical panels joined by princess seams, so reversing any of the pieces could have meant delay or disaster.

Finally, substituting grommets for the zipper required a facing flap. I used a stiff cotton from scraps in my collection. I was concerned about fabric pucker if the edge seam did not have a 1/4-inch steel bone slipped into it, but I didn't want a stiff back seam in a loose flowing gown. A little bit of ripple is acceptable and realistic. I stabilized the edge seam with a running stitch of heavy buttonhole thread that gives a hand-sewn look.

GBACG is officially 501-C

Upcoming Events

GBACG Workshop: Quilted Ribbon Trims
Nov. 15, 2014
Learn to make 15 different trims that are ideal for garment edging, hat bands, accessories, etc. Email: workshops@gbacg.org

GBACG Goes to Dickens Fair
Dec. 6, 2014
Visit with friends and make merry in Dickens’ London with our annual GBACG meet-up. Over the course of the day, we’ll gather at two different locations to admire each others costumes, meet old friends, and absorb the general splendor.

New York Society Tea
Dec. 27, 2014
Come celebrate the holidays, Gilded Age style! We’ll enjoy a sumptuous tea, holiday cheer, and the very best possible company in the incomparable Garden Court, Palace Hotel, SF. Costume: daywear, 1870-1889.

Costume Salon: Fantasy
Jan. 11, 2015
Join us for potluck tea, snacks, socializing, and sharing resources. Theme appropriate books, patterns, garments, or projects also welcome. Our salons are free and no dress-up is required. If you’d like to attend, email costumesalons@gbacg.org

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Elect your next GBACG Board of Directors

It's time to elect the President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Terms of office are two years and commence at the beginning of the fiscal year, January 2015 through January 2017. These individuals will guide the guild for the next two years. GBACG’s by-laws stipulate that these offices are elected by the membership. Although these positions are uncontested, we encourage you to participate in this collaborative process. All members, including student and household, are eligible to vote. A link to the ballot for download is http://www.gbacg.org/newsletter-links/finery-issues/bod_ballot_2014.pdf*. Candidate statements follow.

Catherine Scholar
President

My obsession with historic clothing began at age 5 when I read *Little House on the Prairie*. During high school, I participated in the Renaissance Faire and realized that there was a whole community of people combining their loves for dance, theater, costuming, and history. GBACG has given me that same community of like-minded seamstresses, artists, historians, and those who love period fashion. I have been proud and happy to give back to the group as a GBACG board member since 2009, first as *Finery* editor and, more recently, as Events Coordinator. In my everyday life, I’m a freelance writer and editor, and a full-time mom to my two sons. I’m ready to assume a bigger role to make our fabulous group become the best it can be for all of our members.

George McQuary
Treasurer

In addition to serving as Treasurer for GBACG since 2009, I am the Recording Secretary for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees #2019 and I chair Jane Austen era balls for baers.org. I’m also active in the Alameda Elks (always happy to sponsor people interested in becoming new members), BACDS.org, PEERS.org, and I’m often seen at East Bay Waltz, Vintage Invasion, and Gaskells. I’ve studied with Judi Lozada, Monica Norcia, and San Francisco icon Ina Chalis, performing in operas with her Ina Chalis Ensemble at the SF Community Music Center. I am a tenor at St. Philip Neri church and the Oakland Cathedral Choir.

Judith Grivich
Secretary

Judith Grivich attended her first GBACG event in 2005 and has been costuming since near-birth. She also has a near-worthless Master’s Degree in Shakespearean Criticism. While she enjoys all forms of costume, special loves exist for millinery, fantastical wigs, and resin casting.

Go to http://www.gbacg.org/newsletter-links/finery-issues/bod_ballot_2014.pdf to obtain a PDF copy of the ballot. Please mail your completed ballot* to:

GBACG Election
P. O. Box 6392
Alameda, CA 94501

[* Sorry, our by-laws require a signed paper ballot.]
**Fictional Costume, continued from page 3**

**What Went Wrong and How I Fixed It**

Attaching the sleeve extensions with a blanket stitch didn't work as I had hoped. I planned to make detachable lower sleeves instead of the long angel sleeves of the original pattern so I used cotton floss to make a blanket-stitch on the upper sleeve cuff and the connecting edge of the extension. My plan was to put another line of floss through the blanket stitches to weave them together. When I tried it, I didn't like the results: it looked more like an attachment to Frankenstein's monster, a revelation that doesn't appear until you assemble your creation. I hand-sewed the sleeve extensions into the underarm seam. In the future, when not under a time crunch, I may cut all new sleeves from my remnants.

Also, I could not tell from the swatch samples how greatly this fabric wiggled across the bias, which I discovered while pinning the facing piece around the neck. Despite stay-stitching along the neckline, there was a lot of diagonal ease. After a lot of fussing and pulling of threads the facing lay correctly. I hand-basted this to assure correct alignment before machine stitching the neckline. Word of advice: Never disregard pattern directions to stay stitch!

I plan to model the outfit at the January Open House and look forward to seeing you there!

**Five Things to Keep in Mind**

1. **Time.** If you are planning to wear the costume at a particular event you’ll need to determine the complexity of the design. Honestly rate your skill level to avoid stressful last minute sewing marathons. If you’re under a time crunch, don’t try to learn new skills on the fly such as embroidery, crochet, pleated ruffles, invisible zipper placement, etc.

2. **Budget.** The biggest expense will be the fabric. A lot of historical and fantasy gowns involve large amounts of yardage. Look for sales, coupons, online bargains, thrift store racks, as well as scraps from your staff for facing or lining.

3. **Comfort.** When designing the outfit, remember you are not a mannequin. How easy will it be to get dressed? Will you need help, or can you get into it by yourself? Think of the layers, if you’ll be over-heating in summer weather or in a crowded convention center. Can you move about easily, sit in a chair, drive a car, or go to the restroom? Will you have a train that will be stepped upon by others?

4. **Materials.** Think of your character’s social status and personality to inform your choices of color, texture and style. Consider the garment’s design and the physical properties of your material. If you’re not trying to be 100% historically accurate, give yourself permission to mix patterns and techniques.

5. **Accessories.** Personal items make it more than just a costume. A belt, a drawstring purse, a knife, a key ring—these things tell about your character. Also, think of practicality—where are you going to put your “real” wallet and hotel/car keys?

Find Denise’s social media links on her website [www.drobarge.co](http://www.drobarge.co) (that really is dot CO, not dot COM)
President’s Column
BY DEBORAH BORLASE

It is with great sadness that I am announcing my departure from GBACG’s board. I’m thrilled to have been a part of such a dynamic and amazing group of people, and I will miss the board terribly. I have seen this group accomplish so much in these last six years. We moved our newsletter from paper to electronic format; increased our online presence; improved our Pattern Review page; added a lecture program to our schedule of events and have started a scholarship program for Costume College, Costume Academy or workshop registration fees; increased the number of events offered each year, of which half of these are member-hosted ideas; restarted the Costumers Bazaar; and last but not least, we managed to complete our nonprofit, 501(c)3 status. This has been the most rewarding time of my life, but other duties call. Please do not fear! You are in excellent hands with much of the Board remaining behind, and Catherine Scholar will be a most excellent steward of this lovely ship. I wish you all well, and hope to see you at the next event, workshop, lecture, or salon!

Events, continued from page 3

GBACG Open House
Jan. 17, 2015
Join us for our annual meeting where we highlight upcoming events, raffle costume items, present a fashion show, and other fun stuff. Meet your board members, see old friends, and so much more.

Sister Organization Events

Discount ticket information: http://www.gbacg.org/about-gbacg/member-benefits.html

PEERS: Victorian Twelfth Night Ball
Jan. 3, 2015
http://www.peers.dance.org/12th2015.html

BAERS: Second Friday Dance Parties
Jan. 10, 2015
http://www.baers.org/fridays.html

Interested in joining the GBACG or renewing your membership? Want to purchase tickets to events or workshops? You can do all of this on the GBACG website:

- Join/renew your membership: http://www.gbacg.org/about-gbacg/join-gbacg.html
- Purchase event tickets: http://www.gbacg.org/gbacg-calendar.html - see individual event webpages to order online (via PayPal), or to print out a form that you can mail in with a check.
- Purchase workshop tickets: http://www.gbacg.org/gbacg.org/gbacg-calendar.html. See individual workshop webpages to order online (via PayPal), or to print out a form that you can mail with a check.
- Post or view pictures on Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/groups/gbacg/
- Follow GBACG on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/gbacg