



- Wood dowels for extending the feathers.
- Saddle hackles. 6-7 ounces per row of select hackle (thin). Choose colors that are complementary or contrasting. Buy an extra two ounces of your primary color for arm bustles.
- Crochet thread of different colors for tying on hackles. Thread should complement the hackles or if not contrasting, then the same colors as the hackles. (Visible ties should be a nice contrasting color.)
- Buckskin (heavy), thin latigo, or surgical tubing for base loops. You will need enough to make 90 loops 3" long and ¼" wide.
- Two pieces of plywood 5½" X 5½" X ¼" thick. (Light but sturdy!)
- Shoe laces. Four heavy white 40" athletic type laces for the bridle. Four 18" laces for the loop bridle.
- Metal coat hangers for uprights.
- Beaded medallions for centerpieces.
- Other miscellaneous items include: ½" masking tape, tacky glue, heavy cardboard for center pieces, sharp scissors, ironing board, iron, material for neck, chest and waist ties.

FEATHER AND HACKLE SELECTION

As the materials are gathered, naturally the quality of the turkey spikes and especially the hackles are of prime concern. Quality feathers are the beginning of quality bustles. If possible, it is always best to pick out these feathers in person. Turkey spikes will either be white, or dyed brown/black. Select spikes that are at least 16" long with the vein part of the feather in tact. Ask your trader if he has selects or if you may hand pick them.

Hackles are sometimes difficult to get in the exact color you want and in the exact size. Thin, 7" or greater are preferred. What you don't want are hackles that come in a range from 4"-6". If you cannot get all long hackles, it is better to settle for shorter 5" or 6" as long as they are all the same lengths per row (color). When your hackles arrive, check them for size and consistency of color. Do not hesitate to send them back if they are not prime condition and what you want!

STRAIGHTENING THE SPIKES

Each spike must be straightened to the same shape. Turkey spikes have two very stiff curves in them that must be taken out. The only method I have found that truly works for long term is to use an iron. Heat the entire quill with the iron set on medium high. After the quill is warm, begin rocking the iron on the quill starting at the base and working your way up. This will put creases in the feather and that is OK. The trick is to space out the creases evenly and note that at the base of the quill deeper creases are needed than further up the feather. Once creased, hold the feather with a little opposite curve until cool. Check the feather and repeat all or part of the process if it is not straight.

Fancy Dance Bustles

By Scott Sutton, Medicine Man 1973-74

There are certain qualities desired in a set of "feathers" worn by any fancy dancer. Not only must they have that round uniform look, but also they need to be sturdy enough not to fall apart when under contest conditions. They must swing with a rhythm that flows and accentuates the movements of the dancer. Another desired quality is the ability to quickly break them down and put them together.

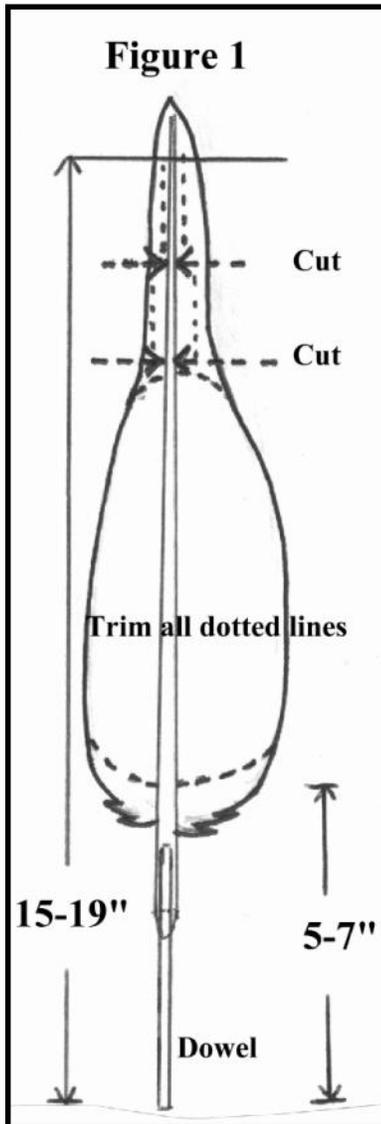
Though there are several ways of putting together a set of nice feathers, the method described in this article has been time tested. The feathers in the accompanying photos are 15 years old and have been danced hard in for many pow-wows.

MATERIALS

- 80-90 Turkey spikes evenly divided between rights and lefts. 80 will be used in the bustle, 10 are spares.

EXTENDING AND CUTTING THE FEATHERS

Before the actual cutting, all the feathers must be made the same length. Start by laying all the feathers out. Sepa-



rate rights and lefts. Measure the length of the longest feathers you have. Make a decision on how long you want the feathers to be. They can range from 15" to 19". The look you want and your stature determine size. Shorter person, shorter feathers, taller person, longer feathers. Most turkey spikes are in the range of 14"-16". Cut the base tips of the feathers off. Remove the matrix inside the quill. If the feather is long enough, it will not need to be extended. Use wooden dowels and Tacky glue. Starting with the shortest feather put glue on the dowel and push it as far in the quill as it will go. Do not split the quill to do this.

Another decision needs to be made. How will the feather

be laid out? For example, two rows of hackles at top, large amount of feather with fluff at the bottom and large amount of quill showing or three rows of hackles at top, moderate amount of feather with hackle at bottom and moderate amount of quill showing. There is no right or wrong, it is totally up to the individual.

Taking that shortest feather, pull off the shabby veins at the base of the feather. Cut the extension off measuring from the base of the feather to the desired length of quill you want showing, say 7". Then from the base of the extension, measure the total length of the feather and cut the tip off. Extend and cut all other feathers to match this one. It is your template. Mark it with some colored tape to keep it identified.

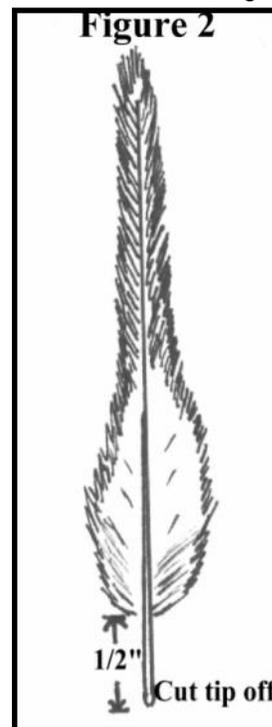
Portions of the veins are cut away at the tips to allow the hackles to be tied on. Do not strip the veins away, it will weaken the feather a great deal. Rather, cut them at the

desired spaces. Start with you template feather, measure down from the tip 1 1/2", cut across the veins to the quill. Do this on both sides of the quill. Then cut along side the quill to remove excess veins leaving only about 1/8" of vein on either side of quill. (On one side you may not have any vein, that's o.k.) Mark down another 1 1/2" to 2" and cut across the veins to the quill again. Repeat for the other side. This time trim off the veins leaving about 1/4" of vein. Repeat one more time if a third row of hackles is going to be used.

Trim the feather that is going to be exposed to the desired look. I like slightly rounded feathers. Others may like a more blocked or very angled cut. You decide, but make them precisely cut. This part of the feather shows!

PREPARING and TYING HACKLES

Hackles arrive sewn together at the base. Some bustle makers will use the strung hackles straight off the bunch by cutting them into 1/2" sections. I prefer a cleaner, lighter look that takes a longer time to do, but has a much nicer



result. Take the hackles off the strings. Clip the base tip off and pull off about 1/2" of the base plumage. Once a bunch of these are done, roll out some 1/2" masking tape (sticky side up) and group the hackles by 5's and stick them on the tape by the cleaned quill (make sure they are all facing the same way). After 8-10" are done, roll them up and set them aside. Continue until all the hackles are done. This takes some time!

To tie the hackles on the feather for the first row (tip of feather), use crochet thread of the same color. Note that the hackles curve in one direction. Always tie hackles on so that they fan out away from the

quill. **NO GLUE!** This will add weight and make the quill brittle. Tie the hackles as follows:

- Have 4 – 6 bunches (depending on desired thickness) of hackles ready.
- Hold the quill of the feather and lay one bunch of hackles against the front of the feather (fanning out) at the first tie junction.
- Wrap that bunch just one or two turns with the crochet thread. Just enough to hold them temporarily.
- Put the second bunch on the back of the quill (fanning out) and wrap them a couple of times.
- Repeat this until all the desired hackles are loosely on the quill.
- Once all hackles are on the quill continue to wrap

(tightly) until you have a nice even (not too bulky) wrap. Tie off the thread.

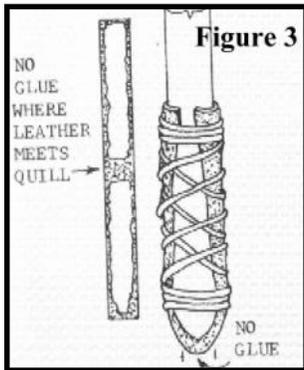
- Repeat until all feathers are done.

Complete the second row in the same manner. If a third row is to be used, do it as above. Whichever row is the one next the top of the trimmed feather, it is nice to use a contrasting color of crochet thread. The row on the bottom, against the large part of the feather that shows, will be done in the same manner if using hackles. Again use a contrasting color of crochet thread. If using fluff a slightly different technique is needed.

- Cut the fluff to the desired length. This is done in two steps. First gather the fluff up toward the tip and snip it off. This gives a uniform appearance and a cleaner look. Second, measure from the tip to the length desired and cut quill. Peel off ½" of fluff.
- Flatten the quill of the fluff.
- Tie on two fluffs on the front with a nice contrasting color of crochet thread. Wrap twice. Put two fluffs on the back and continue to wrap until you have a nice, even tie. This will be seen so all ties need to match in width.

BOTTOM LOOPS

Cut pieces of heavy buckskin into ¼" X 3" pieces for the base loops. Glue the strip (except for the center)



the quill and wrap it tightly with crochet thread (neutral color). Hold the feather and begin spiral wrapping the thread down. When you reach the tip of the quill, wrap a few times around and then spiral back up. Wrap a few more times around, then tie off.

ADDED TOUCHES

To add extra beauty to your bustles you may want to add some extras. Coloring the quills with bands of color is one thing you can do. Use either colored electrical tape or for real beauty, thread wrap the quills with the crochet thread. Another thing you may elect to do is to add streamers to the end of the feathers. Horsehair, mylar tape, or flag tape may be used. Caution should be used not to make the feather too heavy at the tip or it will be prone to breaking.

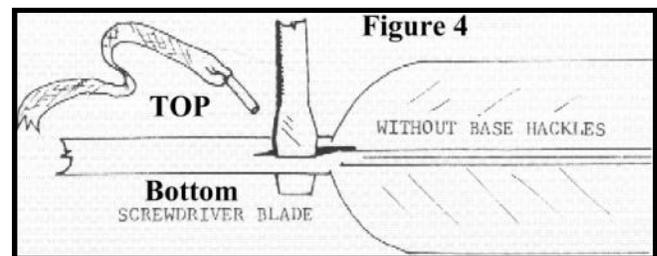
PUTTING THE BUSTLES TOGETHER

Now that you have done all the hard work, it is time to see a thing of beauty take shape. The feathers will be put together in four sections. Through the bottom loops, using one of the 18" shoelaces, string together the number of feathers you want in half the bustles (18-20 makes a pretty full bustle). Do this until all four sections are com-

plete. You now have two rights and two lefts. This is the loop bridle.

The base bridle is the next step. Bridling the feathers just below the base hackle or fluff takes some care. First of all, DON'T USE BEAD SPACERS! This adds tremendous weight to the finished bustle. If you use the 40" heavy athletic shoelace and the following technique, spacers will not be necessary.

- First find an old ¼" x 6" flat blade screw driver. Sharpen the tip so that it is almost like a knife. (This is the secret)
- With the feathers lying with front sides down on a table, pierce the quill at the base of the tied hackles or fluffs going against the grain of the feather from the top of feather to bottom of feather.
- Once pierced, turn the screwdriver 90°. The quill may split a little and that is OK. While in this position, thread the shoelace through, DO NOT RELEASE SCREWDRIVER YET!
- Position the shoelace exactly where you want it, then release the screwdriver. Try to avoid moving the shoelace once the screwdriver is removed. This assures a snug fit with little if any movement of the feather



along the bridle.

- Repeat until all feathers of the section you are working on are bridled.
- Care must be taken to evenly space all feathers so that all sections will match! While doing this, look at the tips of the feathers not necessarily at the middle.

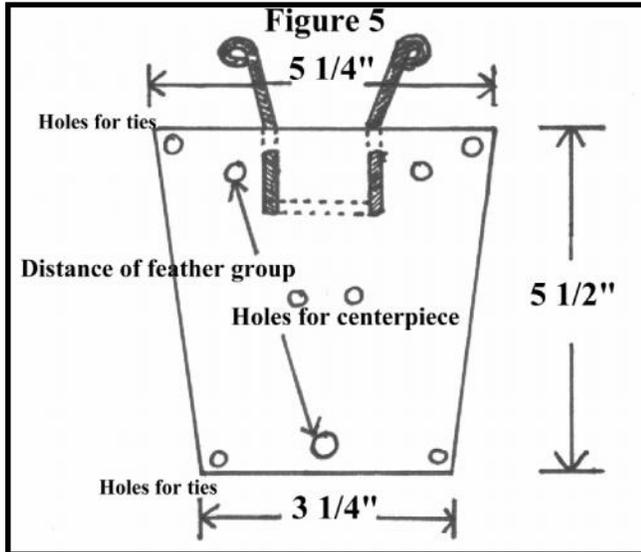
When put together, two sections will be tied to each other to form one bustle. This allows the bustles to be easily dismantled for storage.



Three bands of colored tape wrapping decorate the base of the quills.

BACKBOARDS

There are many materials that the backboards may be made of. Strength and lightness are the qualities you are looking for. I like $\frac{1}{4}$ " plywood. Cut to dimensions below. The edges should be smoothed. If you like, the boards may be painted, but it is not necessary. Ties for the bustles can be made out of heavy shoelaces, bandanas, or woven sashes. When putting the uprights on the board, it is important to make them as tall as the bridle is to complete a circle if the bridle ties passed through them. These



should be made of a material that is strong enough to bear the weight without bending. I've used heavy coat hangers, spring steel and thin long bolts for this purpose in the past. Use what you like, but make sure they are securely attached to the backboard.

All that is left to do is to attach the feather bridles to the backboards. Lay out two of the halves. Put the loop bridles at the center through the same bottom center hole of the backboard. Put the other loop bridles through the holes on top of the backboard. Tie each side to itself on the back of the board in a tight bow. Tie the base bridle shoelaces at the centers together bringing the feathers close to complete the rounded look. Tie the other end of the base bridle to uprights using half hitches. When both sides are tied, the bustle should be rounded and bowed. And, by now is looking beautiful!

THE FINAL TOUCH

To complete the bustle, a nice centerpiece is needed. Four-inch beaded medallions are the best for this. They need a backing. I use a piece of masonite cut in about a six-inch circle. Glue hackles all around the edge, and then trim them off for a nice clean look. Drill holes to correspond with the holes in the backboard. Put ties from medallions through centerpiece, then through backboard and tie tightly. This will hold the feathers out and give them a beautiful appearance.

That's it. You now have a great looking set of feathers. These are not built overnight and require care after completion. If you want the bustles to last for years, it is important not to leave them strung together. Doing so causes stress to the bridles, makes the hackles sag and eventually the colors will fade. Packing them down will keep them in great shape for years to come. Remember that the bustles in these photos are 15 years old! Take care of them and they will last a long time.

