



Creative Sewing Center

My black velvet Christmas outfit by Terry Soll.

Thinking back it was not a happy thing that I made this but a necessity that I now feel was very creative. It was long ago- maybe “your” lifetime long; 20 years. Historians always say it was the “best of times” and the “worst of times”. Well, best means we had a bridal department in our store and that year every young lady who was getting married at the holidays decided she wanted black velvet for bridesmaids dresses. We sold and ordered more than 7 of the big hangers of black velvet. In those days, velvet came on tall hanging stands with metal hooks around the top and bottom edges holding the velvet straight top and bottom so that the fabric would not crush or twist. It was beautiful, costly, weight intensive, and perfect in most cases. Interesting though, not a single bride took all the fabric on the bolt so at the end of the season, I was left with 1/2yd and 3/4 yard pieces hanging on these huge hangers. As I said it was the best of times, we sold second sergers to women who sewed for the public- those black velvet dresses because you just don’t sew velvet with any machine. In fact another story comes to mind at this time; the woman who was found by her husband crying in her sewing room. He asked why she was crying and she said “I had to turn down a bridesmaid’s dress job that would have made “big” money because she did not have a serger for her black thread. He said “you have a serger”. She said “but that has white thread on it”. She was in my store within the hour, for a new serger.

Then all the happy times were done and it was January, 20 years ago and I am looking at the seven ends of bolts of black velvet. If you know what “die lot” is then you know that almost none of the seven pieces were the same color or the same intensity of color. Whoa is me and what do I do?

I guess I thought that the colors would run together so in one brazen act of “fix it” or “throw it away” I threw all of it in the washing machine and the dryer. It all came out wrinkled, soft, luxurious and supple enough for a broomstick skirt.

I started by cutting a shirt out of the velvet. Luckily the sleeves could come out of one piece, the back and front out of another. You see that there had to even be a yoke out of purple because in order to make the skirt all the other fabric was necessary. With a yard of beaded fringe that someone left on the bolt, I was able to make the yoke blend with the other shirt pieces and a shirt was born.

The skirt is a bit more complicated. The fabric was different shades so the top layer was two pieces about 60” long and 13” wide. The bottom section was serger gathered onto the top. It was all the longer sections left from everything else that made the length of the skirt. There was not enough fabric for a hem on anything so I rolled the hem edges with metallic thread. This really ended up a beautiful flat 3 thread hem. One inch elastic was threaded through a casing to make the waistband.

Click on my Layered Skirt pattern and see the details of how to sew this wonderful broomstick skirt.

I wear this outfit every year on the Saturday before Christmas. Some years when I feel small and thin I tuck the shirt into the skirt. Some years when I do not feel so thin I leave the shirrtail out. I hope that you enjoy this little story from 20 years to now. Remember it is always the “best of times” and the “worst of times”, it is all in the way you handle it. We found out this past year that “back then” the economy was in a horrible recession. Oh well.

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