

ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

HAND CRAFTED CUSTOM WOODWORKING

A Cause for Walking Sticks

Walking goes hand and hand with walking sticks. Regardless of whether your traversing terrain that is flat or mountainous or mud or pavement the natural process is enhanced with the aid of a properly sized and implemented staff carried in one hand to provide balance and support. The concept is based on the formation of a three point stance.

It makes obvious sense that three points of contact with the ground provides greater stability than two points, what may be less intuitive is realizing that three points is actually more stable than a base of four. Think about it, a table with four legs can wobble if either two are positioned higher than the other two. With three points of contact, it's impossible to wobble; stress is equally distributed across all three points.

When you allow all three points to position independently and allow the variable distribution of weight to increase balance you have a very stable platform capable of maintaining that stability over significant changes in terrain. How is this relevant? Well, one walking human (two points) carrying a staff (third point) can act in this manner to improve their ability to walk.

Rory Fanning (shown below) has taken on walking as a personal quest to honor Pat Tillman, and raise funds for the Pat Tillman Foundation. His method: [walking across the country](#). It's not our place to sum up Rory's reasons so we'll leave that to his words.

"Reading the headlines the past couple of months has driven home the realization that our country does not have enough leaders like Pat. How many captains of industry or political representatives running the show these days would have made the sacrifice Pat made? What distinguishes Pat is he had the ultimate distractions in his back pocket. Money and fame. I am not taking anything away from anyone who has volunteered to pursue greater truths in this world, by pointing out Pat. All paths have absolutely unique challenges. However, Pat is an example current leadership can take the greatest lesson from. To have unlimited comfort and security, only give it up for the pain and toil of greater cause is epic."

- Rory Fanning



We're behind [Rory's quest](#), and we believe in the objectives of the [Pat Tillman Foundation \(PTF\)](#). Our nation is going to need leadership that understands the three point stance. If we're going to weather the economic quakes, clean up our environment, feed an ever growing population, ensure everyone receives healthcare, and resolve countless other issues alive in the world today it's going to take an amazing array of minds focused on a common goal.

Some of those minds will come from today's generations, but many will come from the minds of the next generation to take the reigns. Leadership Through Action is a theme that echoes through the Tillman foundation and three of their core initiatives are The National Veterans Scholarship Fund, The Tillman Scholars Program at Arizona State University, and the Collegiate Fund for Social Action. These are focused efforts to ensure the next generation to take power will have the tools to achieve our nation's critical objectives.

Artisans of the Valley is offering our skills as craftsman to support Rory's quest to demonstrate what leadership and individual sacrifice for a cause means. Master Craftsman Stanley D. Saperstein, now retired from daily shop operations, is concentrating on producing hand made folk art style walking sticks, hiking staffs, and canes. Mention your support of Rory's Walk and for Pat Tillman's belief's and we will contribute 40% of your walking stick commission and we'll match that amount personally.

Examples of Stanley's Walking Sticks, Canes, Hiking Staffs, and Restoration Services are included in this feature portfolio and on our spin-off website www.customwalkingsticks.com

Visit www.walkforpat.com or www.patillmanfoundation.org for more information on these organizations.

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Master Craftsman Stan Saperstein, founder of Artisans of the Valley, is now enjoying a well earned retirement and has returned to his roots as a folk art whittler.

Stanley spent his childhood summers in Hudson, NY on his grandmother's farm learning the country art of whittling. Stan absorbed all the tricks and techniques he could draw from the old timers that hung out at his grandfather's gas station, a small building positioned on the hill above the farm house that also served as a general store. Using sticks and scraps of wood his carvings included small figures, walking sticks, once even a complete length of wooden chain.

Stan spent a lifetime mastering the fine arts of furniture making, carving, sculpture, finishing, restoration, and design. Stan's pursuits made him an accomplished historian, reenactor, and author. He maintains memberships with the Sons of Union Civil War Veterans, is a previous officer and continuing member of the Camp Olden Round Table & Museum, and has served on the board of directors of the Swan Foundation, a group dedicated to preserving the history of the American Revolution through education.

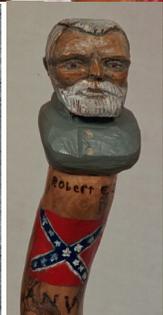
He may have left the farm behind a long time ago, but the farm never left him. The circle of his life has returned him to the freedom of his childhood resulting in these purely artistic works.

Stanley's style is unique even among the vast array of folk art carvers. He perfected his own variety of traditional Civil War era hand made walking staffs, creating a twist on a nearly lost art form. Each stick is a signed one-of-a-kind, offering an individual the opportunity to choose their own personal statement by embellishing the staff they carry with artifacts from their life.

Many of Stanley's sticks include a bust to create and invoke the primary concept or theme behind the staff. The likeness of Lincoln, Lee, or Grant; busts of Native Americans, soldiers, or founding fathers are all within the range of possibilities.

Details of flags, insignias, names, and other symbolism develop the theme of each staff. Beyond carving, further intricate markings are burned and painted. These are highly personalized works of art, requiring an extensive interview process between the artist and the individual commissioning the staff.

[Check out our Civil War Staffs](#)



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Through creativity and dedication, Stan can morph a simple natural stick or a thin length of milled lumber into a fraternal art form. He offers his skills to members of fraternal organizations to create unique and personal staffs to fit and depict their lives; their legacies.

Custom insignias can be carved, whittled, sculpted, painted, or burned into the finished stick. Embellishment includes family trees, favorite designs, fraternity letters, and business logos. Stanley specializes in producing a walking stick that contains as many personal distinctions as possible. Staffs are commonly topped with a whittled sculpture.

Stan is the last of the breed of formally trained Master Craftsman, approaching 40 years of professional experience there aren't many requests he can not fulfill.

[Check out our Fraternal Staffs](#)



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A gentleman's cane or lady's walking stick can make a personal statement, initiate an engaging conversation, or invoke a sense of confidence. Whether you require a cane to assist your daily walks, a hiking staff to support your weight and provide balance during a long hike, show your support for a team, or just want something cool to carry, a walking stick is a great accent to any outfit.

Stanley can apply fantasy characters, medical symbolism, mythical creatures, musical figures or instruments, wildlife, or even mask a functional sword within the shaft of a cane. Floral work, equestrian busts, and school spirit are further options.

Each of these custom commissions reflects the personality of the individual that proudly carries their signed original staff. No two staffs are ever exactly the same!

[Check out more sticks from our gallery!](#)



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One of our favorite walking stick materials is known as "diamond willow." This unique abnormality of nature forms on several species of willow, a bi-product from what is commonly believed to be a fungal infection known as *Valsa Sordida*. The tree reacts to the fungus much like an oyster reacts to sand, it causes an irritation that results in the tree growing around the root of the fungus. The natural growth pattern consistently forms an elongated "diamond like" shape with a topography that is deepest in the center.

Diamond willow formations are most common in colder northern climates ranging from Alaska into Canada and certain areas of Minnesota and Michigan. Harvest requires trekking into swamps, bogs, and riverbeds; our scouts have told us these remote places are only accessible for a short period each year.



The shapes and placement of the anomalies vary; some are widely spaced, while others are more closely clumped. The more diamonds on the shaft, the more valuable that piece is considered. However, for the purposes of walking stick carving, too many diamonds can crowd the shaft space and prevent introduction of other details. The perfect diamond density is a matter of opinion.

When the bark is removed and the staff is carefully sanded and prepped, making sure not to remove the reddish layers under the bark; this is especially important around the diamond areas, the true beauty of the piece appears. It is a personal preference whether to undercut around the diamonds creating further contrast and depth or to leave the natural flow of the wood intact. Finishing with tung oil or shellac provides for the most outstanding natural grain patterns.

Combined, the work of nature's fungus and an artistic carver's skills amount to a unique piece of wood - depending on the size and shape diamond willow is useful for lamps, table bases, coat racks, chair frames, and railings, and a host of other creative projects. Stanley Saperstein carves these "freaks of nature" to produce one-of-a-kind walking sticks and canes.



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[Artisans of the Valley](#) offers museum quality period reproductions, original designs by commission, and antique restoration/conservation services, hand carving, modern furniture refinishing, onsite furniture repair, hand made walking sticks, and educational programs. Our website is now over 225 pages, including galleries, feature articles, and educational sections, company background, and our new adventure album section. We extend an open invitation to explore our site, and contact us directly with any inquiries or questions you may have.

Eric M. Saperstein is Master of Artisans, Owner, Webmaster, Editor, Bookkeeper, Buyer, Office Manager, Legal Pit-bull, and he's in charge of vacuuming the shop: eric@artisansofthevalley.com

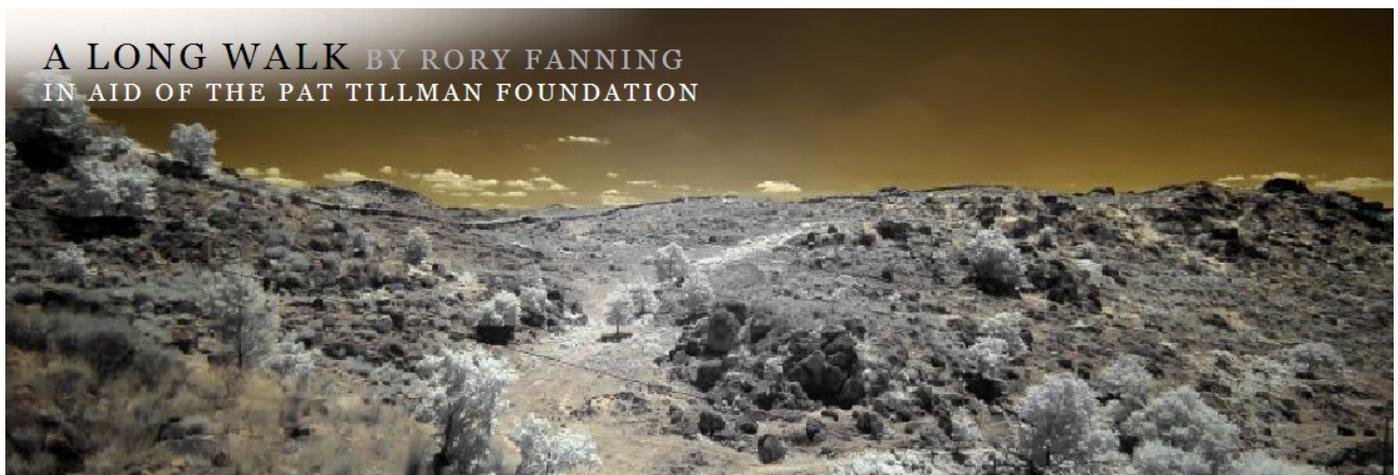


Stanley D. Saperstein, Master Craftsmen, Author, & Historian founded Artisans of the Valley in 1973. Stanley offers historic presentations, impressions, and various lecture series ranging from Civil and Revolutionary War, American Folk Art, and Interactive Role Play of Characters ... sometimes trying to reenact American Chopper episodes in the shop: woodcarver@artisansofthevalley.com

Collectors who boast to have one of Stanley's staffs in their possession include the famous author and walking stick collector George H. Meyer, author of "American Folk Art Canes." The popularity of cane collecting is a growing hobby; Forbes Magazine has recently reported a great art investment, American Folk Art Canes. These pieces of 1800 - 1930 Americana have soared in value in the past few years. This leap sparked a new interest in handmade canes, both antique and new. The investment is very reasonable, and you will own a conversation piece that never goes out of style.

Stanley's custom canes, walking sticks, and hiking staffs are available by commission through Artisans of the Valley. Artisans also offers cane repair and [restoration services](#). Please contact us with your ideas for a custom commission or for evaluation of your piece for restoration.

Please take a moment to check out [Rory Fanning's website](#) for details about his efforts to aid the Pat Tillman Foundation. Artisans of the Valley is proud to support such a worthy cause, and we hope that you will consider making a donation through a custom commission, by supporting Rory's journey by submitting a donation through his website, or by contributing directly to the [Pat Tillman Foundation](#)



A LONG WALK BY RORY FANNING
IN AID OF THE PAT TILLMAN FOUNDATION

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