

Native Knapping

Peter A. Roybal's bows and arrows are right on target.

Peter A. Roybal does not create his art for the masses, quite the contrary.

Each piece he creates is "one of a kind" and authentically made in the original manner. He sometimes goes to extreme measures to fashion his silver, his leatherwork and beads, and his bows and arrows as close to the original method as possible. For example, Peter collects antique frying pans and old barrel hoops to make his metal arrowheads, just as his ancestors did. He also knaps (chips) arrowheads from obsidian and flint, a craft he learned from Jim Orr of Chino Valley, Arizona.

In creating his primitive Plains Indian flat bows, an art he learned from master bowmaker Rayme Hayes and author Reginald Laubin of Moose, Wyoming, he purchases blank hickory staves from the Carolinas. Only the best will do: well grained

Before Indians acquired metal, they knapped arrowheads from flint and obsidian. Indians also cut arrowheads from metal frying pans—which Peter did for these points—and barrel hoops. Peter attaches his arrowheads using natural animal sinew.



and free of knots. His Plains bows are nearly six feet in length and draw about 60 pounds at 26 inches. They are ready for display, target shooting or hunting. Most collectible Indian bows are created for display purposes not for shooting, but Peter's Native American customers often put his creations to work hunting deer and elk. Bows purchased by collectors usually find their way onto walls and into display cases. Peter deliberately shoots every one of his bows, which is his mark of authenticity.

Although Peter uses hickory, early Native Americans often used woods such as osage orange, ash, chokecherry, elm, maple, beech and cedar. If the woods weren't locally available, they'd be obtained from other tribes through trade. Wood from trees struck by lightning was highly prized because it was believed to be "energized," making it stronger than any other wood. According to Peter's research, bows were often made by elders and retired warriors. Many Indian villages had a limited number of skilled bowmakers. A horse was often traded for a bow; a great bow often cost two horses, since bows were necessary for hunting and protection.

French-Canadian trappers and traders were often the source of beads and steel blades and arrow points. Twelve metal arrow points could fetch a buffalo robe in trade.

Peter's beading is done with authentic old trade colors not found in your local hobby shop. Original "white heart" beads are almost impossible to find

today. Peter purchases traditional European beads like those from Italy and Czechoslovakia that were originally traded to the natives. Peter's arrows are crafted from Port Orford (Oregon) cedar, and he fletches them with wild turkey feathers from Indiana, which are attached with buffalo back sinew and hide glue. In earlier days, most of these supplies would have been found locally; if not, they'd have been acquired via trade.

Peter's leather pieces are created from elk and moose hide that he obtains from Colorado. The stiffer moose hide is used for his arrow quivers and knife sheaths. Elk hide, which is thinner, is used for medicine, flute, pipe and tobacco bags. For adornment, Peter creates twisted fringe and pieces of trade cloth banner. For authenticity, his leathers are occasionally painted with hand-mixed earth and vegetable pigments and hide-glass gesso.

It's a time consuming process, and Peter's discipline is evident in his lines, his textures and his forms. He works without assistance in his small home-studio in Phoenix. Occasionally, Peter will travel abroad to teach the fundamentals of his crafts to friends in Europe, though his extensive past worldwide travels have eliminated his desire to wander very far from home.

After a career traveling the U.S. in corporate life for the Ford Motor Company, Peter decided, at age 40, to follow a more traditional path. Although he possessed unique artistic talents, he carefully researched his areas of interest and sought out the best teachers and artisans, and carefully learned his silver, wood and



Since both ends of the bow must be equal in strength, Peter A. Roybal administers the final shaping with a draw knife or rasp.

— ALL PHOTOS BY BOB WILLIS —

leather crafts. When he found few traditional primitive Native American flatbow makers around, he decided to divert his attention to that craft. Today, he directs his time and talent to wood, leather and silver creations and workshops.

Peter, whose Pueblo (*Tewa*) name is Evergreen Shaking (*Cu-We-In-Me-E*) is a native of Northern New Mexico. His studies of that region earned him degrees from California State University. And he has lectured at the prestigious Parsons School of Art and Design in New York, and conducted jewelry workshops at the Visual Arts College in Manhattan. He has exhibited his silverwork for the past 15 years at the Heard Museum's annual Indian market in Phoenix. His silver pieces can also be seen at well-known galleries such as Packard's in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Garland's in Sedona, Arizona, and Leona King Gallery in Scottsdale.



Bob Willis, a member of Western Writers of America, has carried his cameras to more than 80 countries on every continent, has crossed the Atlantic more than 300 times and has recently settled down to learn everything there is to know about the West.

Peter's creations use materials similar to those available to 19th-century Native Americans. He incorporates trade beads and knife blades with cured animal skins, horns and antlers to make traditional looking products: (top) arrow fletched with turkey feathers and a possibles bag; (middle) bone-handled knives with scabbards and possibles bags; (bottom) bow with quiver, surrounded by knives, scabbards and possibles bags.

