

EOWA Eagle Cane Project

The Eastern Oklahoma Woodcarvers Association (EOWA) has become a club with a mission: creating canes for young veterans.

The “presentation canes” are especially for post-9/11 Oklahoma veterans with significant foot, leg or hip injury from combat-related trauma in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Inspired by a national news story on returning veterans suffering limb loss, EOWA member Jack Nitz, aided by fellow member Stan Townsend, spearheaded the project. A well-known carver of canes, Nitz presented a sample cane to the club at its April 2004 meeting.

The club unanimously approved a 30-cane project. Rough-out eagle heads and turned shafts were issued to members who wished to carve the canes. Instruction was given at the club’s weekly carve-ins for members not familiar with carving an eagle head.

••• *Detail of details* •••

The canes are made in two pieces, the head from 1-3/4 inch true stock (2-inch stock is better, if obtainable) and the shaft from 36 inch-long stock. The head is made from a rectangular block trued and squared to 1-3/4 x 3 x 4-1/2 inches. Using a simple shop jig a 3/4 x 2 inch hole is drilled into the bottom for securing the head to the shaft (see diagram). The hole must be perpendicular with the bottom of the blank to insure a true fit when the head is glued to the shaft.

The shafts are turned with a 3/4 x 2 inch dowel at the top for the eagle head mounting and a 3/4 x 1-1/8 inch dowel at the bottom for a crutch tip. The shaft tapers from 1-3/4 inches at the top to 1 inch at the bottom (see diagram).

Members provided patriotic themes (flags, bunting, ribbons, burned eagle feathers, etc.), but left room for inscription of the vet’s name, rank and unit on the shaft. Each is unique to the individual’s carving and finishing style – some are painted, some are stained and some wood-burned in addition to the carving.

••• *30 canes and no vets* •••

Finding eligible veterans proved more difficult than the carving of the canes. Because of privacy restrictions (HIPPA laws) the government is not allowed to release names of injured veterans. Local veterans’ groups and hospitals, even area congressmen were unable to help.

So the club took its story to the local media. A former reporter and wife of an EOWA club member wrote press releases and made news contacts. Subsequently, the story was picked up by local and area newspapers and a television station. The publicity helped generate several contacts for the club.

The first cane was presented at the September meeting to Sgt. Courtney Redeagle, a native American from nearby Pawhuska, whose family read about the project in the *Native American Times*. Redeagle and his family attended the meeting where he received his carved cedar cane. The cane had been blessed by minister and Cherokee native, Buddy Bolen, who also provided traditional beadwork for the shaft of the cane.

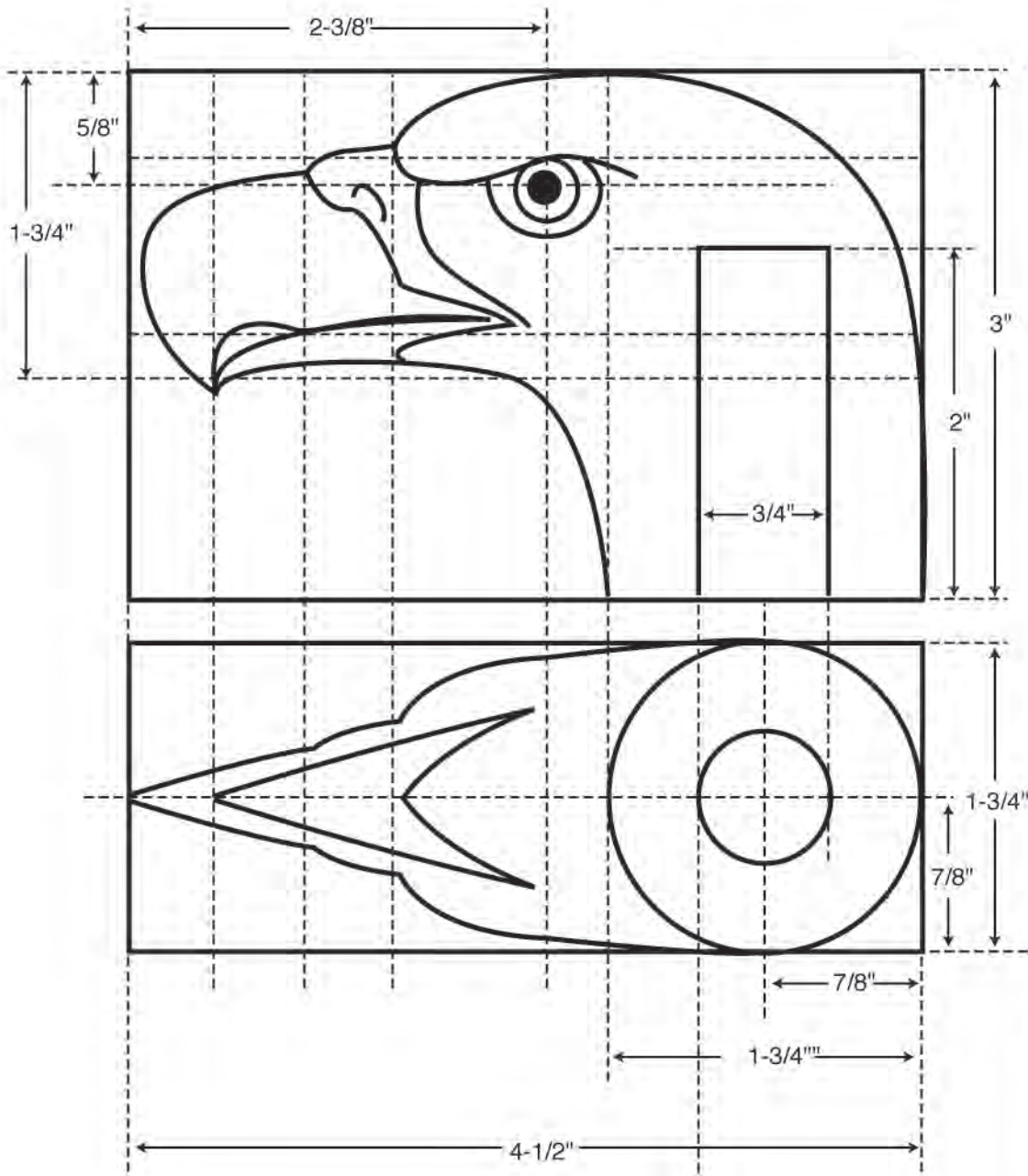
To date, November 2005, 13 canes have been presented and 19 EOWA members have participated in the project. Green Country Woodworkers provided 30 stands and Northeast Oklahoma Woodturner Bob Hawks turned nine shafts by himself. The club is still pursuing the names of eligible veterans for presentation.

Clubs or individuals interested in more details about the project may contact EOWA members Jack Nitz by phone (918) 299-2251 or e-mail at ujnitz@yahoo.com or Stan Townsend at staninvent@cox.net. Information is also available at the club Web site: www.eowca.com.

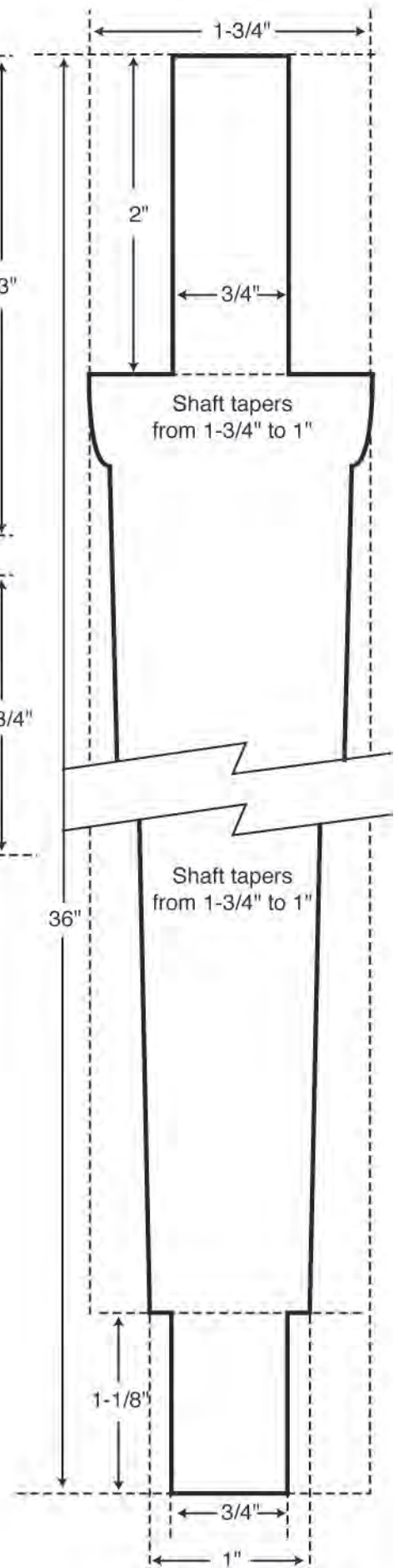
Whether you agree with the reasons for war or not..., supporting the troops is what matters the most.

Each day I use or look at the cane I realize that it is not a symbol of limitations but instead a gesture of thanks and a symbol of respect and honor. The cane sits in my living room next to my bedroom door so that anyone who enters my home shall see it.

– SPC David Rheuark, EOWA eagle head cane recipient



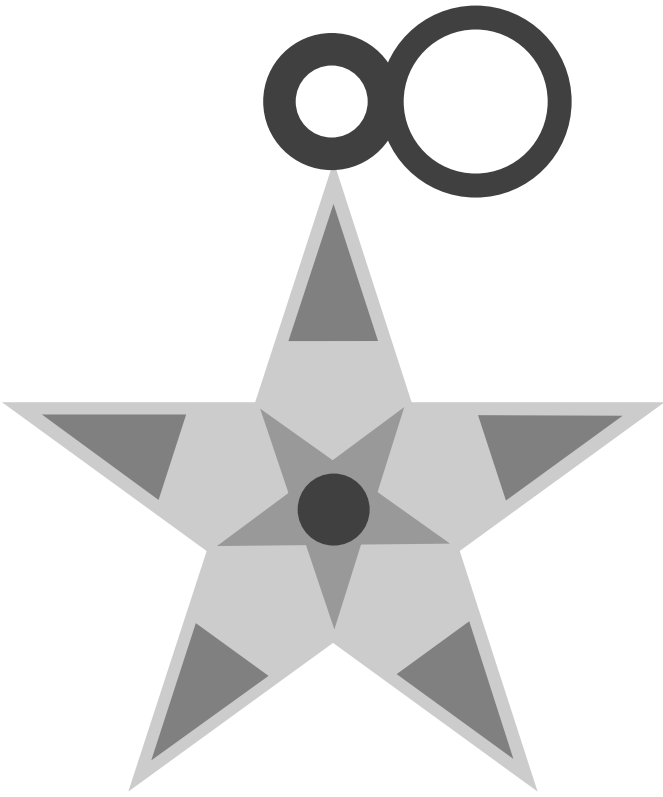
Eagle Head Dimensions



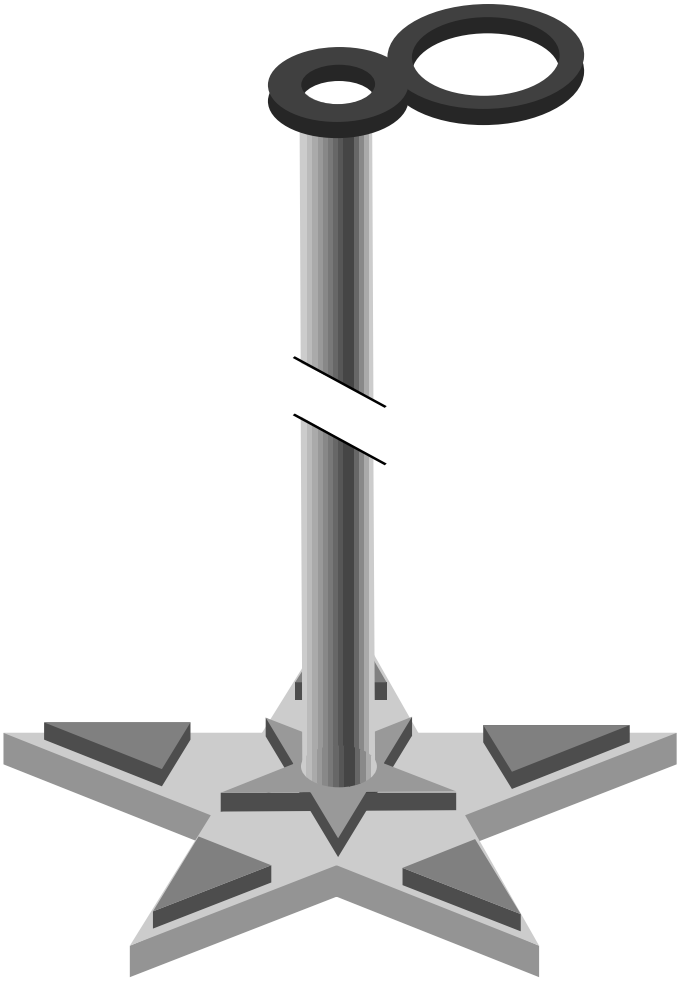
Cane Shaft Dimensions



Cane carved by Buyrl Franks



Presentation Cane Stand
(approximately 1/2 scale)



Carved by Jack Nitz



Carved by Rusty Johnson



Carved by Bill Payne