



# Hats that last forever

*"It really doesn't matter who the hat goes to or who the person is, yes it helps get the word out but as with my show producing days what motivates me is being able to see-hear someones reaction when they get there own custom piece."*

ARTHUR MROCZEK

AS TOLD TO DAN PETERS

Arthur Mroczek's story is rather unique. He's a first generation Pole living in the United States. His family immigrated in 1972. When they were children living in rural farming country the only TV available showed a US Cowboy program called Bonanza. This is what they thought the US was like...

"As a child I too watched this show and became a fan of western culture. Our elderly neighbor was a very traditional American, WW2 fighter pilot who served, train car collector and model builder. He was born in Montana and came from a line of ranchers / cowboys. I remember visiting his basement which had this massive train model set up with plane models hanging from the ceiling and hundreds of western hats / memorabilia. We became friends and I would remember listening to his incredible stories of the west and air fights during WW2. He gave me a few hats and showed me how to "restore" them so I could proudly wear around Chicago as a child." he said.

Chicago was home to Al Capone so the gangster stories also interested him, plus hats. This is where his blending of western and fedora styles started to happen. He has shaped and restored hats all throughout gradeschool, high school and university being known as the guy who wore cool hats.

After university Arthur Mroczek entered the entertainment field producing live shows, touring with artists all over the world like Andrea Bocelli, Ozzy Osbourne, World Wrestling Entertainment and Cirque du Soleil. On these journeys he always visited antique stores, rummage sales and flea markets in search of early hats, materials and hat making equipment. After a while he had a massive collection. Artists he toured with would ask where did he get his hat which he replied he

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made it or restored it. That's how it started, people would bring him hats to fix or make from scratch. It was always a side hustle until Covid came and completely shut down his touring world. This time gave him a chance to reflect and focus on what he really enjoyed doing in life... which was making hats. He befriended a master hat maker in Colorado and studied with him to refine his skill set. This master never had any children and wanted to pass along the craft to someone who appreciated it and would continue the original methods, using original materials all made by hand. Since then with friends in music and acting they would connect him with other various industry people. He started making hats for costume designers to put in programs on actors musicians and every day people who appreciated unique style and old world craftsmanship.

He set up a small studio in Los Angeles and has been focused on making heirloom bespoke hats with the highest level of materials and craftsmanship. The only "machine" he uses is a 1930's singer sewing machine to sew ribbon on brims. Everything else is by hand - iron, steam, shaping, sanding, etc.... using the tools collected over the years.

His fiancé is half Mexican and half Native American and when visiting her family in Texas and New Mexico he learned about their history and how important hats were. His "Socorro" model is named after the town her family comes from and the shape inspired by the hats her native American/cowboy family wore.

He stated that "Many hats today are made by automated machine using stiffening product and cheap materials. I only use what hat makers used 100+ years ago.... 100% beaver felts from the original and only maker in the US, all ribbon is vintage sourced from the relationships formed over the years and picking at estate sales. Even my thread and is old stock. My leather sweatbands come from the last US maker who originally manufactured them for Stetson. Its imperative the materials I use are of the highest quality and as authentic as possible. My hats take about 4-5 days to build since its all by hand and

the numerous steps / drying / curing times involved. I became close friends with actor and real cowboy C Thomas Howell ( Red Dawn, ET, The Outsiders, The Amazing Spideyman) when he reached out about a hat. We collaborated to make a custom signature model for him called "Tommys Socorro". Also recently built a hat for actress Jessica Macallan who stars in Legends of Tomorrow." He continued,

"It really doesn't matter who the hat goes to or who the person is, yes it helps get the word out but as with my show producing days what motivates me is being able to see - hear some-

ones reaction when they get their own custom piece. Its being able to evoke emotion, provide a memory and give something they can wear daily and pass down. People who appreciate hats and know how it becomes a piece of their identity.... I like to say a hat is like a piece of canvas that captures your life experiences and journeys."

### What kind of Corporation is your business?

I am a Los Angeles based hatter who specializes in restoring and reinventing handcrafted heirloom "Classic Americana" to clients all over the world. In my past life I produced and promoted touring artists globally, one being UK's very own Ozzy Osbourne along with Andrea Boceli, Cirque du Soleil and the WWE. Have traveled often to your country and have a deep appreciation for its people, culture and history.

As an immigrant we never grew up with money so restoring and reusing items was a necessity. I always loved working with my hands extending the life of any item. We live in a very disposable society, cheap product, cheap fashion... nothing is built to last. Americans alone generate 16 million tons of textile waste a year and we are only 4.25% of the total global population.

### What is unique about your business?

The unique thing about my business, is definitely the clientele. One day it's an accountant and next a

movie star. It doesn't matter if you're a musician,



*"A hat is like a piece of canvas that captures ones life experiences and journeys." - Mroczek*

professional athlete, supermodel or schoolteacher. I can quickly tell if you're genuine or a wanker. Luckily most are humble and always treated the same. Rarely if ever do we speak of profession just a love of hats.

### How and why did you get started in this line of work?

My family immigrated to Chicago in 1972. When they were children living in rural Poland they only TV available showed a US Cowboy program called Bonanza.

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came a fan of western culture. Our elderly neighbor was a very traditional American, WW2 fighter pilot who served, train car collector and model builder. He was born in Montana and came from a line of ranchers / cowboys. I remember visiting his basement which had this massive train set along with plane models hanging from the ceiling and hundreds of western hats / memorabilia. We became friends and remember listening to countless stories about the west and military missions during WW2. He gave me a few hats and showed me how to "restore" and wear as a child.

Chicago was home to Al Capone so the gangster stories also interested me + there hats. This is where my blending of western and fedora styles began. I would shape and restore hats all throughout gradeschool, high school and university being known as the kid who wore cool hats.

After university I entered the entertainment and lived on the road touring. During these journeys I would always visit antique stores, rummage sales and flea markets in search of early hats, materials and hat making equipment. After a while I had a substantial collection. Artists I toured would always ask where did I get my hat which I replied I made it or restored it. That's how it started, people would bring me hats to fix or make from scratch. I befriended a master hat maker in Colorado and studied with him to refine my skill set. This master never had any children and wanted to pass along the craft to someone who appreciated and would continue the original methods by hand.

### How do you deal with the stress of Covid-19?

Covid was actually a blessing. Creating hats was primarily a side hustle until Covid completely shut down my touring world. This "off" time allowed me to reflect and focus on what I really enjoyed doing in life.

### What is most important to you in a company?

Never to follow whats trendy. Quality and timeless design will always be fashionable. My creations are a mixture of both form and function that weave in joy and resurrects memories. When a grandfathers hat is restored and allowed to be worn again or a unique new style is created and becomes a piece of the owners identity then be passed down for generations is a magical thing.

### To what do you attribute your success?

We often go thru life searching for something. Sometimes when you stop... that something finds you. A luck, a little perseverance, some creativity and the ability to set aside fears of how someone might judge your creations.