



Photos by Robert Erickson



CRAIG CARMICHAEL

Carving out a Reputation

By Lisa Crandall

Standing in front of a nearly life size carved bear, the prospect that one wrong move, one slip of the hand could reduce this magnificent piece of work into so much kindling is heartbreaking. It's a reality that chain saw carver Craig Carmichael deals with each and every time he pulls the starter on his saw.

Craig has been practicing his craft daily for more than two years now. The result is a growing reputation as an artisan of note. His yard is filled with carved creations in varying degrees of completion. Each one is unique and many hint at his puckish sense of humour. There is a bear clutching a tree limb by the hot tub, ready to catch towels. Several shorter bears totting trays that are perfect for a patio. Other critters include oversized raccoons that can be attached to a tree in the yard or a pillar at the front of the house, an eagle poised to land in the yard, several dogs sitting at attention, and a whole

range of less finished rabbits and pigs. He has a turkey, Winnie the Pooh and Donald Duck, and more short bears. The bear I was admiring most is a custom order, destined to become an eye-catching piece in somebody's living room. It will be quite the conversation piece when it is finished.

Each one of Carmichael's creations starts as a carefully selected very large piece of local wood. He sources his wood from friends and family when they are removing larger trees from their yards and woodlots. Over weeks and months, he works with the wood, shaping it with a variety of different size saws and then electric hand tools. Between each step he lets the piece sit, continuing to dry. Even after a piece is finished and delivered, the wood continues to dry, but care in the early stages helps control the inevitable cracking and warping of the wood as time passes. The finishing touches are done with a propane torch and multiple layers of

outdoor Varathane®. These creations are intended for outdoor placement and with a minimal amount of aftercare a Carmichael creation can be expected to last for years.

Carmichael Woodworks is located along a quiet country road near Spencerville, Ontario. Most of the work is done out of doors, even during the warmer days of winter. The deck that wraps around his home functions as a staging area. Craig's wife Joanne acts as his marketing manager and books his vending events at local craft shows. His bears have proven so popular that he's only been able to do a handful of shows this year and he has a backlog of orders in various stages of completion. LH

To see more pictures of his work, or to discuss your own custom creation, check out his Facebook page under Carmichael Woodworks or his webpage at <http://carmichaelwoodworks.wixsite.com/carmichaelwoodworks>.

You can also find his wood animal creations at Athens Hardware 18 Main St., Athens where you can also order one of Carmichael's Woodworks creations.