

# Carve in the Park

By Forrest Grierson

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SO FAR THINGS are good. Parking is free, the weather is fair and I see Bill Myette's license plate on one of the cars in the parking lot. All we have to do is find him. Ah there he is, sitting on the edge of a wooden picnic table reading the *Ontario Woodcarver*.



**Bill Myette at Carve in the Park**

Normally, we find a table adjacent to a walking path overlooking Lake Ontario. Today, we are meeting at Bluffers Park at the south end of Brimley

Road in Scarborough. Our spot is an easy walk to the washroom. We often rotate locations to accommodate members of our small group.

We have tried Woodbine Park in the Toronto Beaches, Heydenshore Park in Whitby (near the site of the annual Brooklyn Woodcarvers show) and Lakeview Park in Oshawa. Occasionally we get adventurous and try other places.

Each venue is different: the scenery, the type of park visitors and the hum vary. What is common to all locations is that our visitors love woodcarving. This provides a nice boost to our egos.



**O'Malley and Murphy passing the time**

Bluffers Park has sailboats, motorized cruisers, smaller fishing boats and Seadoos—all moving

slowly in and out of the harbor. And walkers. We love the walkers; the majority seem to be worldly tourists visiting local friends and relatives.

There is often a lively interest in purchasing our carvings and it is hard to resist; so we dicker and succumb. We never say no when we are asked to pose for pictures. Who knows, those photos could find their way into albums in China, Australia or Los Angeles.



**Rod Fraser at the Brooklyn Woodcarving Show**

Our Whitby location is a distance removed from the harbour, and many families visit this park. The beach and play-grounds are only steps away. The kids are a lot of fun and interested in learning how to *'whittle'*. They really like Rod's little guys and Bill's cartoon-character spoons. We carefully restrict

access to the razor sharp tools. This is not the place to display delicate works.

IT IS OFTEN difficult to find a table adjacent to the bike path and boardwalk at Woodbine Park. Benches are more often the norm.

But once we are settled, we see a number of fitness activities going on—jogging, power walking and cycling—stuff we three carvers used to do ... in the distant past. Our table is a little heavy to move closer to the boardwalk, but no matter—visitors still seem to find us. These are mainly young people, as well as older, retired individuals with lots of stories to tell—all out for exercise, fitness or people watching.

Bill has found a good spot for us. After he shifts his rear out of the way, we adjust the table location to ensure it is in the shade and spread out our tablecloth.

We find that three carvers per table works well, but a fourth can easily squeeze in and add to the conversation. When more carvers join us we find another table to add to the first. The breeze is refreshing and makes the heat of the day comfortable. Today the carvers are Rod Fraser of the Port Perry Club, Forrest Grierson of the Pickering and the Scarborough Whittle Kids clubs, and Bill Myette of the Pickering Club.

OUR CARVING PROJECTS are pulled out of knapsacks and placed onto woodcarving mats ready for the day's work. Tools are selected and arranged. Small caricatures and spoons are put on display for our visitors to notice.

The conversation starts. We are very good at solving the world's problems (if only the politicians would listen) and we keep ourselves up to date on various topics of interest.



**Lunch at Carve in the Park**

At some point our stomachs start to growl. We put down our tools and enjoy a carvers' homemade lunch as only non-chefs could prepare.

Today's visitors include folks from England, China and Australia. Rod turns down several offers to sell a number of his little guys as he is building up his inventory for an up-and-coming show. Advice is often requested and provided to those would-be carvers who express interest in learning our craft.

Holy cow, it's after four—much later than our usual quitting time. We pack our tools and carvings, brush the wood chips to the ground (try doing that at home), shake out and fold the tablecloth and say our goodbyes.

We have been doing *Carve in the Park* for several years. It starts up after most other carving venues shut down in the spring. We have found Thursdays generally work for us. We arrange to meet between 11 and 11:30 am. The first one there grabs a table. Forrest keeps an eye on the weather and gets in touch with each of us to discuss weather risks, confirmation of location and attendance.

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