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1A&L | Thursday May 14, 2015 | MILTON CANADIAN CHAMPION | www.insidehalton.com

Tree carvings new addition to Evergreen Cemetery

By Julie Slack
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Several trees at Evergreen Cemetery are taking on new lives — raccoons, bears, squirrels, hawks and beavers to be specific.

Milton Evergreen Cemetery Board member Marsha Waldie said the board wanted to create something beautiful for people who visit the cemetery — whether they're regulars or just once-in-a-while visitors.

"We at Evergreen Cemetery are a volunteer board and are always looking at adding various elements to the final resting place of our citizens," she said. "Last year we started on a project to incorporate tree art, and had two tree sculptures completed in the fall."

Last week, five new ones were completed on the grounds by Orangeville artist Jim Menken.

"We have many people who just come to Evergreen to enjoy walking and now they can enjoy these lovely tree carvings — a unique way of saving trees," said Waldie.

Most of the carving was done with a chainsaw, followed by hand-carving details. Men-



Jim Menken works on a tree carving at Evergreen Cemetery. *Graham Paine / Metroland West Media Group (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)*

en said the chainsaw work makes the project completion a lot faster.

The carvings at the cemetery include a hawk, bear, multi-critters such as chipmunks and squirrels, old man winter and miss spring and a raccoon and her baby.

Each tree carving takes about a day.

Menken, who was a teacher prior to becoming a full-time carver in 2003, said he enjoys the peace of carving and working outdoors.

"I've had a lot of people commenting about how much they like them," he added.

Each of the carved areas is hand-painted by Menken and then sealed so it will withstand the test of time.

Milton residents Alma Hopkin and John Swan say they regularly walk through the cemetery and think the tree carvings are "terrific."

"They're perfect," said Hopkin. "We walk here as often as possible and we just love them."

Menken's carvings can be found across the GTA — some on private properties, others in public parks such as Mississauga's Riverwood Conservancy.

Bald eagles, beavers, totem poles, people and bears are among the work for which he has been commissioned.

Julie Slack can be reached at jslack@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @milton-musing.

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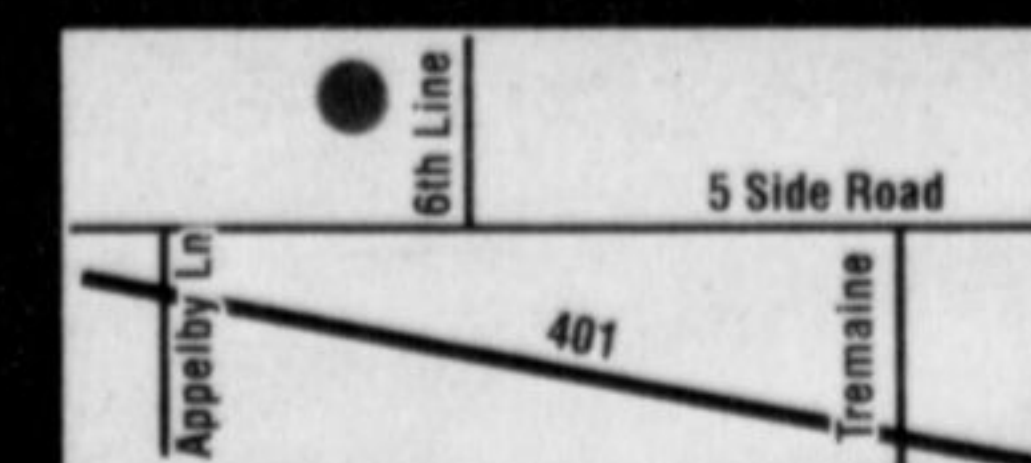
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