

Leisure

Ancient art reborn by Stouffville man

By BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

William Menzies is a purist, an artisan with an uncompromising approach to a craft which has become lost in the past.

Equipped with a collection of authentic period wood carving

tools made by himself or retrieved from basements throughout Canada and the United Kingdom, Menzies makes pioneer woodenware. The 52-year-old Stouffville area father of five grown children creates spoons, ladles, and bowls, along with miniature

dories and dinghies that take him back to his days growing up by the sea in Scotland.

An English-trained professional gardener by trade, Menzies' passion for wood carving began almost a decade ago when he set out to find someone who was still practising the historic craft. "I couldn't find anyone who was doing it, so I took it up out of interest," said Menzies from his small workshop located next to his residence at the Pride of Arabia horse farm on Warden Lane.

Menzies is in charge of gardening and estate maintenance on the exquisitely manicured 25 acre equestrian operation.

He suggested his interest in pioneer woodenware ties in with years spent creating custom landscape effects from stone.

"I've always appreciated fine tools and fine wood working."

"I guess it's a continuation of the gardening work, cutting stones for walkways and walls. I suppose I've adapted the woodworking to the stone work."

Menzies, who was born in Canada, raised in Scotland, then returned to this country in 1971, made his first woodenware pieces out of off-cuts of bass wood he had lying around the house.

"People saw them and asked me if I could make pieces for them."

"I was then asked to put on a craft demonstration at a bicentennial on an island on the Rideau River. I took my equipment, and mine was the most popular display there."

Using draw knives, gouges, spoke shaves and other early wood carving tools, Menzies begins with blocks of raw bass wood, as well as walnut and poplar. He painstakingly



William Menzies turns out a tool in his woodworking shop at Pride of Arabia farm on Warden Lane. Menzies looks after gardening and estate maintenance on the farm, but carves wooden tools as a hobby.

Photo: SUERD WITTEVEEN

carves and sands the forms into polished creations, then applies a coat of oil for a finish.

He has seen demand for his work increase over the past few years as people are drawn by his authentic, hands-on approach. He appears at town fairs, and recently put on a demonstration at Black Creek Pioneer Village.

Menzies said his demonstrations never fail to attract attention from people of all ages.

"It amazes a lot of people that it can still be done."

Children have a fascinating interest in it, and they ask interesting questions."

Noting the lack of people practicing the rare trade, Menzies said the day is fast approaching when he may have to give consideration to doing wood carving full time.

MPP Julia Munro hosts barbecue

Durham-York MPP Julia Munro is hosting an appreciation barbecue on Sept. 24 from 2 to 5 p.m.

The event, featuring special guest Minister of Community and Social Services Markham MPP David Tsubouchi, will be held at 19 Milne Court, Uxbridge.

Admission is \$5 for an adult or \$12 for a family. Everyone is invited.

STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS

Guidelines and good advice on making a success of it from the start.



Legion Week

September 17th - 23rd

The public is invited to a

STEAK SOCIAL

at Stouffville Legion

SAT., SEPT. 23RD

Steak and ? = 7-9 p.m.

Dance - from 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Dinner & Dance Dinner Only Dance Only

\$12.00

\$7.00

\$5.00

D.J. - Dave Payne



DARTS MIXED FUN LEAGUE

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Registration - Sept. 28th - 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Starts - Oct. 12, 1995