

News of the arts

A sculptor in the ranks

Many members of the Armed Forces in the Quebec City area have, for several years, been familiar with the name Corporal Jean-Guy Cyr since they have had the opportunity to admire in their own messes, the fine wood sculptures done by this member of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment. Increasing numbers of civilians from the area and military personnel from nearby bases have also heard of his talents.

Yet, surprisingly, this gifted artist has been sculpting for only five years. "Before 1973," he says, "I would not even have dared to make a birdcage. Then, at the age of 33, I got an urge to do wood carving. It began all of a sudden, and I don't really understand why."

Incredulous first critic

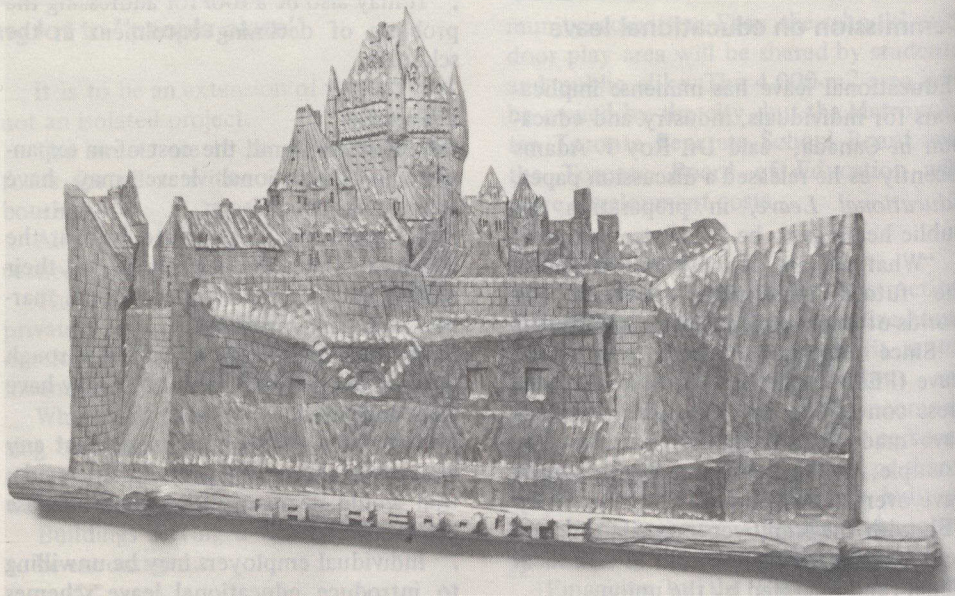
Without any knowledge of the techniques of wood sculpture, and using very simple tools, Corporal Cyr managed to make a coffee table on which he carved a relief of the façades of a block of old Quebec houses. Seeking the opinion of an expert, he took his first work to a local artifacts salesman, who was openly sceptical. He found it hard to believe that this man, who claimed he had never before held a chisel, could produce a piece of sculpture of this quality. He congratulated Cyr, however, and suggested that he show his masterpiece to Jean-Julien Bourgeault, one of the leading wood sculptors in Canada.

Bourgeault's reaction, too, was one of enthusiastic but guarded admiration. He merely congratulated Corporal Cyr and asked him to show him his next work. "It is possible for someone to create a genuine masterpiece at his first attempt," Bourgeault explained, "and then be incapable of producing anything good again."

So Jean-Guy Cyr returned home to create another coffee table, this time in the shape of a sleigh on which he carved a typical Quebec landscape. He went back to Bourgeault's home in Saint-Jean-Port-Joli. The cautiousness the master had shown initially turned, this time, into admiration. "What I like about your work," he told him, "is that you don't try to copy us. You have a style of your own."

In business

Since then, Jean-Guy Cyr has devoted his leisure time to pine sculpture, pro-



Above is the Citadel, Quebec City, with the Château Frontenac in the background.

ducing almost 150 subjects. Most of his works were sold almost as soon as they were finished. Judge Arthur Dubé of Quebec City bought Jean-Guy's first masterpiece, the coffee table, for \$800, and a number of wall plaques have been sold to military and civilian admirers and various organizations.

One of the buyers was persuaded to purchase a wall plaque almost unwittingly. Some two-and-a-half years ago, Cyr photographed a fine residence on the outskirts of Quebec City. Wanting to earn a little money to cover the expenses of the coming Christmas season, he made a relief sculpture of the house on a pine plaque about one metre long and 50 centimetres high and showed it to the owner in the hope of selling his new creation. The surprised but interested home-owner bought it, paying the rather unusual travelling salesman the price he was asking.

Heritage sculpture

Very attached to the cultural heritage of Quebec, Corporal Cyr takes special pleasure in sculpting old Quebec dwellings. The Château Frontenac, the Saint-Jean Gate and several other historic sites in Quebec City have often been produced in relief on his wall plaques.

Although he admits to being more interested in architectural than human subjects, Cyr sometimes carves human figures. He even made a statue of the Mascot Major with the Royal 22nd Regiment's famous goat "Batisse", which was later presented to Queen Elizabeth during

her visit to the twenty-first Olympic Games in 1976.

The Queen was not the only one to receive as a gift sculpture made by Corporal Cyr. General Jacques Dextraze, Lieutenant-General Jacques Chouinard, Major-General Roland Reid and Colonel Jacques Painchaud, all former members of the Royal 22nd Regiment, are among the military personalities who have been presented with his works at various official ceremonies. The Corporal is also waiting for a suitable occasion to give Admiral Robert Falls, Chief of the Defence Staff,



Jean-Guy Cyr in his workshop.

Sgt. A. Leduc

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