

It might be difficult for some people to understand how a person could become emotionally attached to a tree. This story is about a very special tree. Over a hundred years ago, a delicate maple key happened to land with the right side down in the fertile soil along the shoreline of Georgian Bay. The key developed roots that anchored the small sapling in the unspoiled soil of the forest wilderness. Many years passed until one day two young adventurers walked for almost one mile along the beach (no roads) to arrive at their new cottage property. The tree, considered to be young in 'tree years', had grown into a strong and healthy sugar maple. Those adventurers were my parents and the year was 1948. Dad built a log cabin from older and bigger trees on the property and later added a covered porch. The tree was located just outside the kitchen door, a perfect location to witness my family's wilderness experiences on Clearwater Beach. Its boughs shaded our picnic table from the hot summer sun and protected us from the rain when we darted along the path to the outhouse. Years later, the road came through and the log cabin was replaced by a new frame cottage. The tree stood like an *arboreal sentinel* outside my bedroom window while I grew from childhood through the terrible teens to mature adult. For more than 120 years the tree had adapted and survived the intense winds and frigid temperatures of the Georgian Bay winters and the extreme heat and high humidity of the glorious summer seasons. Unknowingly, this wonderful tree became subjected to a high degree of stress when we re-located our septic system in 2004. The roots were amputated by the excavator and the tree was unable to recover. In time, we began to realize that the tree had to be cut down before it fell down. Its long life had come to an end.

Now, you might not understand why I could not be present when the tree was cut down, for me it was a tragic day. I felt very sad to lose a tree that had become so intricately entwined with our family history at the cottage. After the tree was taken down, we decided to keep as much as possible, as a poignant reminder of our experience with the property. The stump was saved and placed in the garden as what I like to call a *landscape element*, complete with dirt and pebbles still entangled in the vast root system. The trunk was cut in two pieces and left sitting in our driveway. For two years we searched for someone to mill the tree into lumber to build something useful and meaningful. We contacted several professionals with portable sawmills. One fellow said he would not touch a residential job because there might be metal in the tree that could damage the sawblade. Another fellow told us the job was too small, another said the job was not really worth his time. We had grown so attached to this particular tree and there it was lying in the driveway waiting for us to find someone who could help. One day I happened to be reading our local community paper, and read the story about the Maple Leaf Forever Tree and this fellow named Sawmill Sid. We contacted Sid and asked if he might consider working on our tree. The response was very positive and we are now looking forward to working with Sid to fulfil our dream of retaining our family memories.