

Barbara Spring /

MR. & MRS. CARVER PLUMTREE

You're not the first person to see me as a Grant Wood for the 70's, but there's no real connection, nor did I come to *Mr. & Mrs. Carver Plumtree* through folk art. I came to the people in wood from making food. Let me explain.

I was terribly involved for a while in making food out of wood and then, after I'd exhausted that subject I began to make chests of drawers and soon I wanted to make people to fit in with the things I had made, and the brick walls for the rather dismal houses I saw them living in.

With the people I always start with the shoes or the soles of the shoes, but the shoes are the very beginning of the character. Then I do the legs one by one and join them together. Then I start on the body which can be hollow or solid or both. I work from real clothes sometimes. I stuff them with sawdust to get shape, then I fibreglass them, tip out the sawdust and get a hollow form. I hung an old dress over Mrs. Plumtree that I'd dipped in resin, and then I laid fibreglass over the top of the dress to get the folds right. And then I collected chips from everyone here: chain-sawed red cedar chips, white cedar from the lathe from which to make the patterns that I veneered over the dress underneath. Then I made the head and put it on; the hands and the book came last. And of course there's all the filling and sanding and finishing, and the difficult business of getting the wood which has resin in it to take to fibreglass.

Mr. Carver Plumtree was made in about the same way and very quickly too, because everyone was egging me on and the assistants were so good — they cut every one of those peg ribs on his sweater. *That's devoted!* And Fumio just had to make his glasses and fit them on. I mean, I had no drawing, so I couldn't say to the assistants, "Look, here you go, follow this." And so we did it together and had a

lot of fun as it came out. I worked faster here than I ever have before.

I knew that I was making an interior piece and I knew that the lady would carry a book called *Cast-Iron Cooking*. When I was certain that the figures would be in a library, I added his books: *The Pure & the Impure*, *The Confessions of Molly Bloom*.

People always have a lot of fun around my works, but I don't always intend them as funny. Mrs. Plumtree, for example, is an everyday housewife. She isn't the best looking person in the world; she doesn't have the greatest shoes. But she's got quite nice legs.

— BARBARA SPRING



