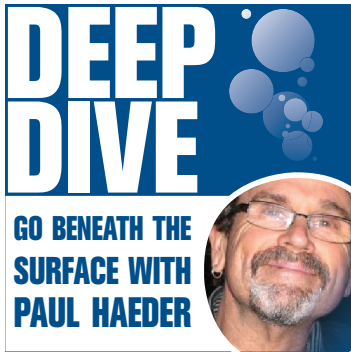


Give me light

Glass man itching to craft again in Waldport



One never knows where a story about a “character” and a “celebrated” artisan will take both writer and subject.

Chuck Franklin and his American bull terrier, Rocky, greet me at their house near Eckman Lake. Rocky and Chuck have been living here with his wife Carol since 2015.

Retirement for the 72-year-old self-described ex-hippie (“actually, I am still a hippie”) has not been such an easy thing for a man who once had more than 20 artists and craftspeople working for him in his glass studio in Portland.

Well-known-in-glass circles, Chuck Franklin Glass Studio, a 2008 book written about his stained-glass work — “Windows of Character and Style” (Wardell Publications) — covers a lot of territory.

Chuck hands over the book as a gift — a bridge to understand the depth and breadth of his stained-glass operation.

He prepared for the interview — photocopies of articles, photos of stained-glass and mosaics; the DVD with an 2002 OPB Oregon Art Beat featurette of his work; an accompanying slide show of his creations.

His traditional, classic, art deco, freestyle and psychedelic glass work is all over the country inside churches, casinos, dozens of restaurants, private homes and public spaces.

Inside their house, the couple has ceiling-to-floor artwork, as well as plenty of glass from Chuck’s repertoire — large complex stained-glass abstracts and landscapes catching light and sun, abutting windows; wall art, to include his mosaics; and some fused glass pieces.

Everywhere I look, that spectrum of colors imbues the living space. Shadow, reflections, refraction, cascading colors.



Chuck Franklin and his wife, Carol, at their Waldport home.

Ancient discovery brings Heavenly light

“It is more likely that Egyptian or Mesopotamian potters accidentally discovered glass when firing their vessels. The earliest known manmade glass is in the form of Egyptian beads from between 2750 and 2625 BC. Artisans made these beads by winding a thin string of molten glass around a removable clay core. This glass is opaque and very precious.” — Stained Glass Association of America

If we could go back in time with Chuck, the reader would have a heck of a journey and some juxtapositions of a young fellow who was destined to be a fighter pilot to a jet-setting artisan flying out to jobs in towns like Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Austin, LA, New York.

His narrative cantilevers back to Benson Polytechnic High School in Portland (founded, 1917) — a school which really prepped him to learn the value of craftsmanship.

Using drafting skills, exploring mechanical and engineering problems, designing art whether through woodworking or metal craft, Chuck learned more than academic tricks.

“I feel bad for today’s youth. There should be shop classes, and more crafts and trades. Not everyone thrives in an academic setting.”

When Chuck was 18, he headed to OSU with a Navy scholarship, but found out his eyesight wasn’t good enough for pilot school. He glommed on to aerospace engineering because of his talent for math. “I would sign up for math courses for the easy grades. But as a child, I always was

doing art. I loved drawing.”

He tells me that the Vietnam War, the protests, the prospect of military endeavors overseas and other issues threw a boomerang into his youthful plans.

His last hurrah in the aerospace field was a short stint in California with 29 other students to work on the preliminary design of the Mariner Mars lander.

Once back in Portland, he knew that sort of work was not his forte or drive.

Down but not out in Stumptown

We talk about how life can take these curves to completely remake and refocus someone.

He was in Portland kicking around working odd jobs. He tells me this was both a low point and a very necessary new step in his life — “I was out of work, living in a friend’s garage, and I was a hippie.”

He started making candles selling them out of his VW microbus.

Then a trip to the hospital put Chuck in front of a wood sculpture displayed in the lobby. He told himself he could do that and commenced to carving.

That was in 1974. A tsunami of good fortune, being in the right place at the right time, and his engineering and artistic fortitude with a “no fear” attitude quickly coalesced into the budding glassman he is today.

Big-time glass works

His 34 years at that point in the fast-paced commercial stained-glass field garnered him a lifetime achievement award from the Art Glass Association in 2008. His glass studio. Another seven years working largely on McCormick and Schmick’s restaurants garnered his studio



One of Chuck’s self portraits from almost 40 years ago.

success. One year, the total gross for his business was upwards of \$2 million.

He’s been at the art of glass since the age of 28, 41 years with his Portland studio.

The steam of business picked up at the right time. He met Carol more than two decades ago while she was cashing in at Hippo Hardware. When they married, Carol took over the books, the bookings, the travel, payroll and all the back of the house stuff not related to arts and crafts.

Chuck holds Carol’s hand telling me how instrumental she was in helping the business stay afloat and grow.

Deep down, Chuck realizes how layered his life turned out gaining all these skill sets and all these compadres in the business of designing, crafting and making great interiors of these high-end restaurants.

“I know when I die, I will be taking my craft and many techniques with me to the grave.”

However, even at 72, he has an eye to keep going, on a small personal scale. His smaller pieces are at Earthworks and Touchstone in Yachats. He is taking on commissions.

“I know I’ve had a really good run at this,” he tells me while finishing up a window for a homeowner in Toledo.

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Read on, as *Deep Dive* continues at www.oregoncoasttoday.com.

Paul Haeder is a writer living and working in Lincoln County. He has two books coming out, one a short story collection, “Wide Open Eyes: Surfacing from Vietnam,” and a non-fiction book, “No More Messing Around: The Good, Bad and Ugly of America’s Education System.”