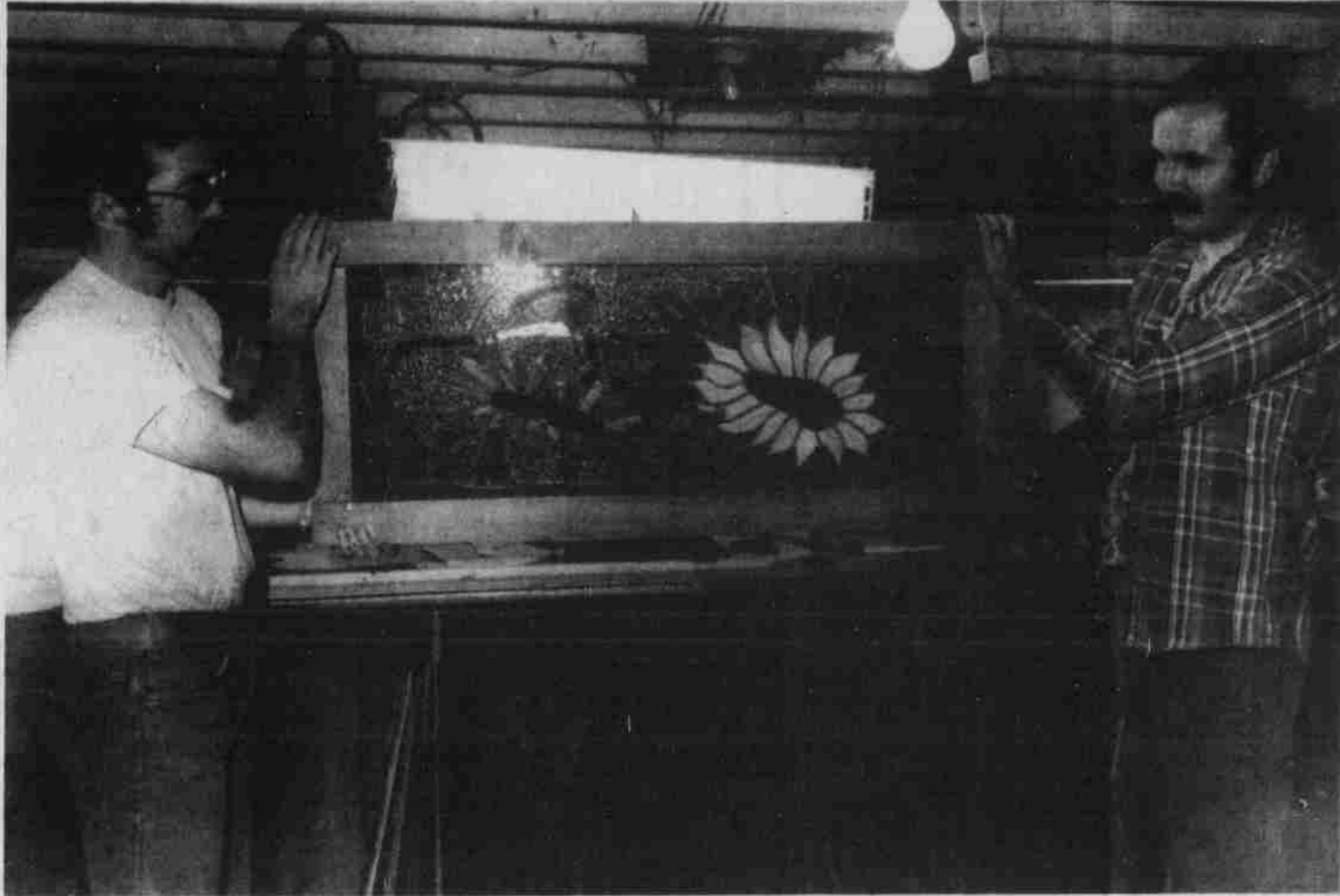


# 'The hobby that grew . . .'

## Demonstration planned during Artifactory on December 3



**A first student project** The Sweek brothers display an ambitious first project by a student. This stained glass window was designed and constructed by Judy Laughlin of Heppner in an eight month period. Mike Sweek (l) built the frame that encloses their student's handiwork.

Morrow County's award winning newspaper...

## THE GAZETTE-TIMES

Section Two

Page Nine

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Heppner, Oregon



**Tiffany for Christmas**

Greg Sweek cuts a small piece of glass to fit into the colorful and intricate Tiffany patterned lamp he is constructing. The stained glass masterpiece will be a Christmas gift "If I get it done in time," Greg commented.

Story and photos by  
Elane Blanchet

Greg and Mike Sweek of Heppner are stained glass craftsmen—creating items of great beauty out of glass, copper and lead. They are sure to be a crowd pleaser at the Artifactory on Saturday, Dec. 3, where they plan to demonstrate their craft throughout the day.

The brothers work on their sparetime activity in a small shop in the basement of Mike's house on Court Street, surrounded by colored glass of every hue, shape and texture, rolls of copper and lead, soldering iron, pattern and lamp forms. On Monday, Wednesday and Thursday nights a total of 15 students invade the basement, eager to learn the stain-glass craft.

"If you can't stand failure, this isn't the class for you," Mike Sweek commented. "Glass is an unpredictable quality." He added that fear of glass was the biggest obstacle for the beginner to overcome.

The Sweeks estimate that they have about \$4,000 worth of inventory tied up in stained glass supplies, mostly in glass itself. They call their craft "the hobby that grew."

Greg became interested in the craftsmanship aspect of stained glass while in college at Oregon State University, and, after returning to Heppner taught himself how to create stained glass items out of a book about 4½ years ago. Within six months, brother Mike caught stained-glass fever, and a joint venture was born.

While the Sweeks sell some of their items, they admit that so far their best products have been gifts. A lamp patterned after a Tiffany design took Greg 400 hours to complete and is now hanging in their parents' house in Heppner. A window they considered their best is installed in the bathroom of the same house.

The Sweek brothers are actually a poor bet to be stained glass craftsmen since Mike is partially color-blind and Greg admits he has a very poor color sense. They both rely on their mother Lillian as color consultant.

"Most of the cost of stained glass is in the labor," commented Mike. Only about \$50 or \$60 worth of glass may go into a lamp worth \$450. The most either brother has sold either a window or a lamp for is \$250, underscoring the fact that their most time-consuming products are either given away or kept.

The Sweeks have never advertised either their stained glass products or classes. Word-of-mouth has brought in about 40 students in the past three years

and all window or lamp customers have heard about the craftsmen in the same way.

Most beginners have a certain project in mind when they take the 45-hour class, though their two instructors may start them on a simpler item, such as a small stained glass butterfly, to give them confidence and teach the basic skills involved. The hardest part in stained glass work, the brothers say, is cutting the glass and learning to cope with failure when the brittle substance breaks in the wrong place several times in a row.

The Sweeks and their students use two techniques in assembling stained glass products. Lamps and indoor windows are put together by wrapping the edges of the glass pieces with copper foil and then soldering them. This method creates the strongest bond and is the one that was used for Tiffany lamps. A window that will be exposed to weather extremes must have a more flexible bond to allow for contraction and expansion of the glass. Lead pieces with grooves are then used to fit the glass together.

Patterns for lamps are often derived from Tiffany and are modified when desired. Neither brother likes to do the same thing twice, so if an order comes in for an item one of them had already done, the other brother takes over.

Both Sweeks were born and raised in Heppner, the sons of Ned and Lillian Sweek. Mike graduated from Heppner High School in 1965 and Greg in 1970. Both are also graduates of Oregon State University. Mike in Biology and Greg in Range Management. Mike is married and his wife Judy also works with stained glass.

Greg is employed as a county appraiser and Mike as a fork lift operator at Kinzua. In addition to their stained glass hobby, both brothers also keep bees. Mike makes rugs and works with wood, constructing frames for many student projects.

"We have arrived at the present state of our stained glass enterprise entirely by accident. We had no premeditated path," commented Mike.

Accident or not, words don't do justice to the intricacy, and beauty that result from the Sweeks' spare time activity.

Seeing is believing, so everyone is invited to watch the brother craftsmen at work during their all-day demonstration at the Artifactory on Saturday, Dec. 3, in the Catholic Parish Hall.

**"Band-aids by the gross"**

Monica Jones of Heppner concentrates as she brushes flux on her stained glass butterfly in preparation for soldering on its antennae. A beginner, Monica said the insect is her eighth small project and she intends to start a lamp in January. Note her left index finger. The Sweek brothers joked that they bought band-aids "by the gross."



**Creating with stained glass**

Mike Sweek snips a bit of copper foil to wrap around the pieces of colored glass which make up the hanging lamp he is creating. Portions of the unassembled lamp can be seen in the foreground.

