

# Camp Crowley

by Bernie Hardesty Filemyr, LVT

**W**here do I begin? Even after it had been almost a week since I was at Camp Crowley, I still found my head coming up with remembered advice, tips, tricks, and general observational information, even in my dreams. What a week it was!

## Day One

First, I was greeted so very warmly by Deb and Mike. Then I just jumped right in. After going over some torch and safety items, Deb evaluates your skill levels through a discussion of techniques while demonstrating a basic bead, and then it's your turn to torch some beads. From there depending on where your skill levels lie, Deb starts you making bigger and better things. In my case, we did some foil encasing and then fuming of a beautiful bead. (Did I mention you get to keep everything you make and draw for demo items?) We also covered enamels and design pickups in enamels.

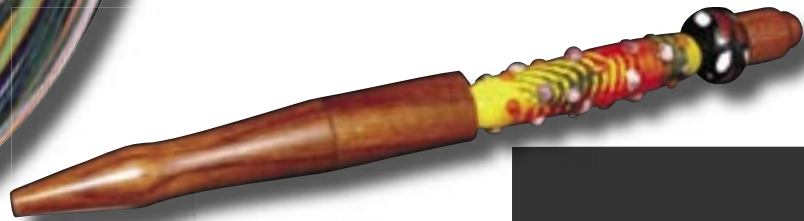
Next up, we made torchwork items to be used in the next day's class on paperweights with Mike. If you happen to be at a loss for ideas, they have an awesome library to help. Can't quite get something right on your idea, just ask. They will help you figure it out. None of this taking over from you—unless you asked because you reached that point—but good clear instructions to assist you. *You* are the torch master! Participants are allowed to go at their own pace and are not made to feel rushed. This may not sound like a lot for the first day, but it is enough time to fill it, and the day flies by! (Did I mention lunch in there someplace? They feed you as well for lunches.)



## Day Two

The second day starts in the hot shop with Mike greeting you with the glory hole fired up. He then goes over some basic protocols for working in the hot shop, safety concerns, and reminders to keep hydrated as well. Drink lots of water before, during, and after working in the hot shop.

Your torch items are put on a hot plate or in a kiln depending on how they are to be used. Maybe some frit for pickups are chosen to be spread on the marver. Glasses on, punty in hand, and then you are dipping your first gather. Mike helps you with the angle to go in, turning and waiting so there are no tails dragging, then over to the marver. With going back and forth between glory hole and marver, pickups, forming at the bench, and more gathers you are dancing the glassblower's waltz. Where does the time go? (I'm pretty sure somewhere in there was another lunch.) Then at some point, Deb gets you to pick out some background glass for your fused plates that you will make later in the week. That is so it can be capped with clear glass and fused prior to your lampworked pieces being fused in later.



## Day Three

This day begins with picking out the glass to make a dichroic bracelet and also for some cabochons to wire wrap later in the week. This does take a little time, as you need to choose, cut, clean, and stack it carefully for the kiln.

Where are those brilliant paperweights? Probably out of the annealer by now and waiting for inspection!

Next it's back to the torch to make more components for your plates if you don't have enough. Then all the pieces need to be scrubbed in soap and water and cleaned with alcohol before gluing them in place so that when you move them to the kiln shelves things don't go awry.





## Day Four

Today it's back to the hot shop. Doing the glassblower's waltz, you will make at least a glass float and a tumbler, and if there is time, a small bowl. This is just an incredibly fun day.

Don't forget your drinking water, and bring your lungs, too! Seriously, blowing is fun, hard, and very funny to hear! You can see why when it's your turn. As Mike guides you through building your float and tumbler, sometimes you'll think everything is about to get out of control on your glass, but Mike keeps everything on track and you end up with some fun pieces. If there is time and you get to the bowl, that is the cat's meow. Using a spinning motion to help form the lip of the bowl is a gas! Don't take my word for it; just go! Obviously if you have more experience, your time will be spent a little differently. These are very flexible folks, tailoring what they can to your own levels.

At night you may have some homework. Yes, I said homework! Depending on how your day went, you will need to prepare your glass tile for sandblasting by applying the mask, drawing your pattern on it, then cutting out the pattern in preparation for a two-stage blast. Probably somewhere in there you will also look at those plates you fired and get them in the kiln for slumping. (I believe there was lunch sometime with the fun part!)



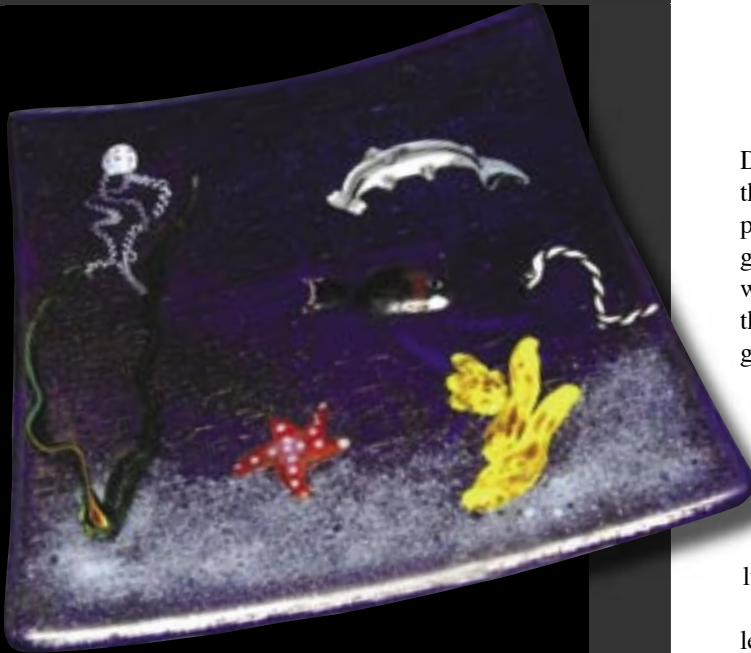
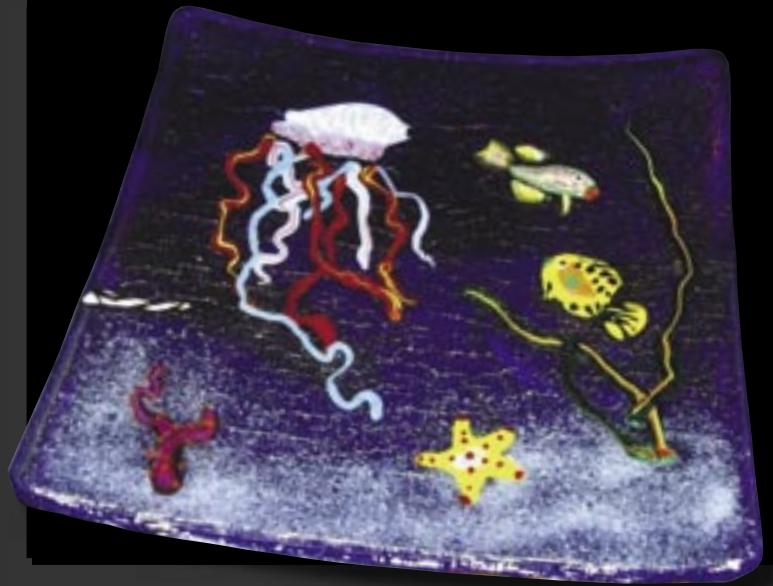
## Day Five

Day Five already?!?! Wow! Where are those cabs? Okay. Next we did some cold work and fire-polishing before we moved to wrapping the cabochons with much hilarity on my part, as I am *all* thumbs with this sort of work. Finally with Deb's great instructions and demos I managed to get a couple of things acceptably wrapped. They even looked decent, if I do say so. We attached some cabs to a sterling link bracelet as well and *bling!*

Have you seen your slumped plates? Awesome! How about those annealed glass floats and glasses and for the lucky ones who had the time, the bowls? Pretty far out!

Did you finish your homework on your piece to be sandblasted? First you'll need to take off the areas that will have a first-stage blast. Clean all the sticky off with alcohol if there is any because it acts as a resist and will change your design if you leave it on. Now goggles and mask and you are off, sandcarving your glass tile. Mike keeps an eye on things so you don't get carried away and slice right though the tile. This goes much quicker than you might realize. When stage one is done, then go take off the next level of masking. Successive levels go even quicker than the first, so take less than you think you need to and go back to do a little more if you have to. Peel off your last layers and clean it. You will be so amazed! Chemically bond some feet to the bottom and you are golden. (Did I mention lunch was served?)



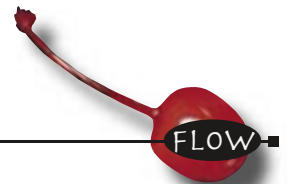


## Day Six

Can you believe it? Time to professionally finish your pieces. Deb explains and guides you each step of the way. First how to use the equipment safely and what the successive grits do, the proper pressure to use, and amounts of water you need. Now to the lap grinder to get those paperweights footed and cut windows if you want some that way. Use the speed bit to take off large amounts of the glass quickly and then work through approximately five other grits to get a mirror finish on your work.

Mike will also show you how to finish your blown pieces where the punty marks are. Then you can sign, sandblasting to etch or carve your blown and fused pieces. This takes more time than I have words for, but it will take up the day very quickly. There is also a discussion about cold working, why and how, as well as pricing your work. (Very informative and lunch was yummy!)

I don't know if I conveyed how much fun is involved in this learning process with Mike and Deb but there is, and the information is just there for you to soak up as much as you want. Bouncing ideas around with this creative couple and the others who may be attending Camp Crowley with you is *priceless!* I can't wait till I do another Camp Crowley. I may already have two others coming with me!



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