

# Gigi Hoyt

The first time I ever worked glass behind the torch I was 5 years old.

Homer Hoyt, artist, author, founder of Glasscraft and my dad stood behind me and held my hands while I made a glass snoopy.

I was born and raised in Boulder, CO and growing up I had a tendency to view glass as a job or a way of living life rather than a form of artistic expression. It was how dad made his money. I had no desire to pursue lampworking because I was a rebel teenager and there was no way I was going to be anything like my father.

After high school my father started to show me how torch work was actually a medium of art and art began to interest me very much.

My father planted the seed in my mind and I was soon asking him to teach me things behind the torch. I started making jewelry and small ornaments that were painted with glass stain; at that time there was no colored borosilicate glass. I enjoyed this immensely and the prospect of becoming an artist crept into my head.

But instead, in 1984 I put any glass interests into the part time section of my life and moved to Breckenridge, Co starting what would be a 4 year attempt at professional snowboarding.

At the time they didn't make snowboarding boots and I would duct tape a combination of cut up sorrel boots and ski boot liners together. My favorite sponsor: The Duct Tape Company (available in nine breathtaking colors).

I had some success as a pro boarder, gaining numerous board, gear and apparel sponsors. I was still blowing glass as a hobby, but it was not a priority in my life.

After the fall of my snowboard career, I moved away from the mountains and started working full time for my father at Glasscraft as a production glassblower.

I made hummingbirds, approximately 80-100 a day.

To this day I'm not quite sure if this was a good or a bad thing. On the positive side I learned the discipline that it takes to work as an artist to build and reach goals. I saw the results of patience and practice. I learned that using the same techniques over and over can help you reach that perfect technique.

On the negative side I felt that sitting down at the torch was work, something that had to be done and something that was guaranteed to sell. I did not allow myself the flexibility of creating at all. Torch time was work time.

In the end though, it all worked out for the best. I had started a career at Glasscraft. When I began getting extreme production burn-out I started to become more involved in other aspects of the Glasscraft business.

Glasscraft was a small company then. I was exposed to and worked on every position on the pay roll. I mopped the floors, took orders, shipped out materials and unloaded trucks. Ordering the glass, advertising the business and keeping the books as well as daily torch work.

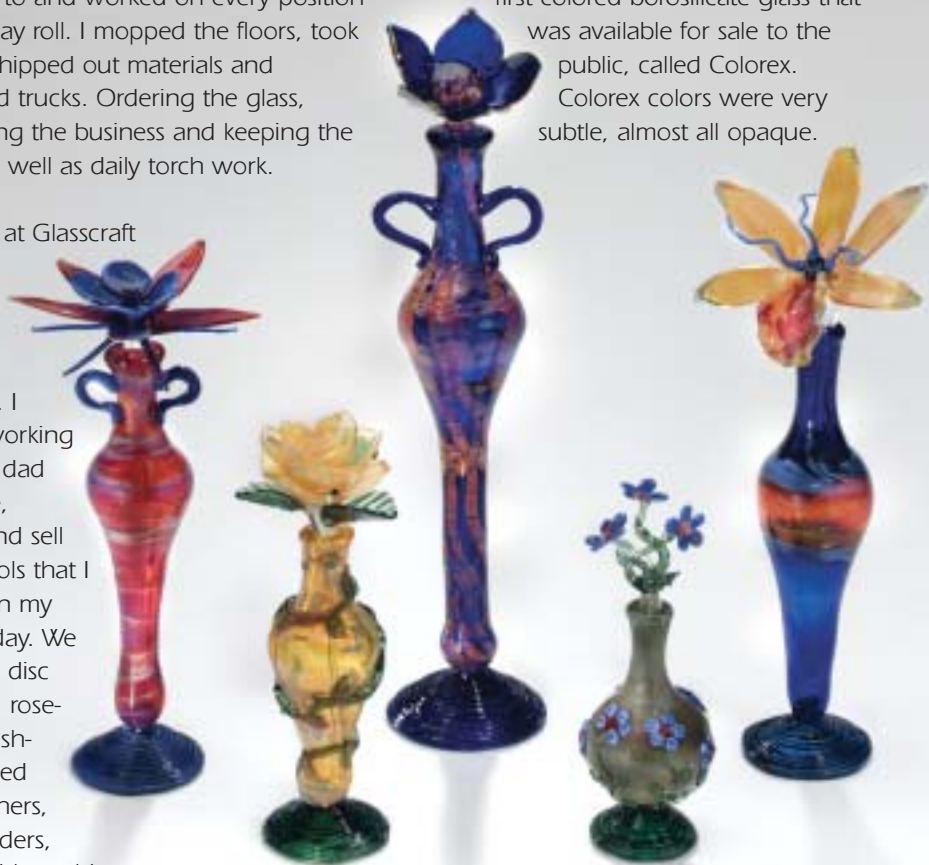
Working at Glasscraft with my father brought us closer together. I began working with my dad to create, invent and sell many tools that I still use in my work today. We invented disc mashers, rose-petal mashers, angled leaf mashers, claw holders, and marble molds.

Together we created and experimented with many things that never even came into fruition. We toyed around with the idea of using a foot pedal to conserve oxygen, a foot operated masher. My father and I made a kiln together and considered producing them for sale.

I spent many hours with him every day talking about the needs of our industry and how we could help it. We would talk about things like dichroic glass, how it was made, if it could be made better. We talked about how glass beads could be made using soda-lime glass and where to obtain it.

We would talk about scientific applications and how they could be utilized in art glass, things like metal to glass seals, using chemical reactions to sharpen our tungsten picks, the polariscope, and much, much more.

We marveled at the new colored borosilicate glass sticks, talking about how it was made and where we could find it. I remember the first colored borosilicate glass that was available for sale to the public, called Colorex. Colorex colors were very subtle, almost all opaque.



Even though each and every piece was clear-coated it still bubbled and the colors would boil out of it if you weren't really careful.

I remember the discussions with a lot of our clients back then. It was a time when public references to the "glass curtain" were common place. We would joke and make comparisons between the forbidding walls of communism and the art glass industry. No one would teach or share any ideas with other potential glassblowers for fear of their ideas being ripped off by this perceived competition.

There was a business using the name "Lost Art Glassblowing" because that was what it had become, a lost art.

It wasn't until people like James Thingwold started up the Glassline publication with others like Kemp Curtis, the Rasmussens', Jerry Liotta, the Hoopers, Ricky Dodson, Lewis Wilson, Robert Mickelsen, Don Niblack, Harold Hacker, Paul Labrie, Sue Ellen Fowler, Kevin O'Grady and a handful of other courageous artists decided it was time to break down this glass curtain.

The community started sharing its ideas, even publishing them! We were teaching one another and newcomers about the art of torch work.

This was an exciting time for everyone in the industry. It brought everyone closer together; the community at large and my father and I.

I have always had a love for beads; blame it on the Boulder hippie in me if you want. I took a workshop from Brian Kirkvliet during the California Glass Exchange of 1992. From there I couldn't stop, this was where real fascination began. We figured out some pretty creative ways to make beads.

I wanted to learn more from other artists. I couldn't afford to go all over the country seeking out and paying for workshops, travel expenses and all. So with some time, I convinced my father that we needed to invite other glassblowers to Glasscraft to teach us and local blowers that were interested in learning.

We began the workshop program at Glasscraft on a trial basis. Kevin O'Grady was our first real workshop. I assisted Kevin and the instructors that came after him. I would get them supplies when they needed them or help our customers when they wanted to buy supplies. In exchange I got to take the classes for free.

During that period I attended classes from Kevin O'Grady, Robert Mickelsen, Loren Stump, Pati Walton, Sue Ellen Fowler, Roger Parramore, Lewis Wilson, and many more. I started to figure out what type of work inspired me, I started to get ideas about what it was that I really wanted to make out of glass, I started creating.

My heart was always in the glass and with my father, always that little girl watching my dad make silly little glass creatures. I was always fascinated by it and by him, I was just a little slow coming out with my true feelings.

Later on, my father let my husband and I move into an apartment in the back room at Glasscraft, allowing us to save money for a house of our own. My first child was born there.

Shortly after she was born, we bought a house. I brought my baby girl to work with me often, leaving her in the care of her grandfather Homer while I waited on customers or took telephone orders. Sometimes Homer, it seemed, was the only one who could console

my little girl. I was happy and so was my father.

Not long after this period my father was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's. He had a couple of severe accidents related to his condition and it was difficult to watch him deteriorate.

Then my house burned down and I lost everything I owned. The fire was not a result of my glassblowing studio but rather a cordless telephone base unit. My second pregnancy became high risk due to blood pressure.

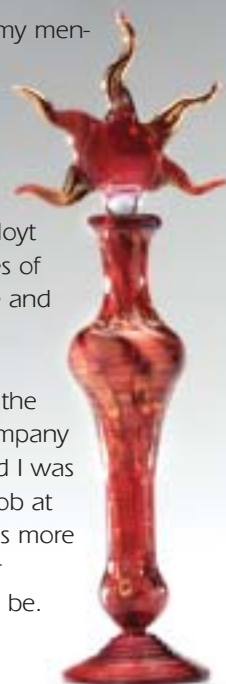
With the stress of a new baby, my father's deterioration and the loss of my home I was diagnosed with severe depression and my doctor made me take a leave of absence from my job.

During that time I worked for some great friends part-time, Diablo Glass in Boulder. Matt Romano, Miko Scott, and Steve Sizelove were all co-owners at that time and I love them dearly for their support and friendship. Robert "Raj" Seymour, from Prometheus Glass and Color The World, who continues to be my most valued friend to this day.

I had settled myself into a rental while my house was being re-built and I had gotten myself on a stable regime of anti-depressants, I again, returned to work. Then my father died.

He was my boss, my mentor, my teacher, my colleague, my friend, at times he was my only ally.

My brother, Rich Hoyt inherited the duties of running the estate and the business. Unfortunately, my brother and I saw the running of the company very differently and I was asked to quit my job at Glasscraft. This was more difficult than I ever imagined it would be.



I had spent my whole life around this business, I watched my father raise it as if it were one of his children. I played in the building as a kid, I worked summers there while in high school, and I had invested everything including my identity into Glasscraft and now I was being told to simply walk away.

Under the rules of the estate I had no choice but to leave. It was one of the hardest things I have ever done. I was devastated.

I decided, if I could not live out my father's legacy in his company than I would do it through torch work.

I started my own business making beads, perfume bottles and pipes.

During this major life transition, I knew the only thing that would heal my wounds was time. I put my head down and charged into the world of torch-work. I created a line of perfume bottles and jewelry and started out selling mostly at retail craft shows.

I got into some of the more prestigious shows and the more I worked the better it got. The inheritance that I got from my father was a god-send, because without it I don't know how I could have done it all. I was a single parent with a new business and a household to support.

I invested my money into my glass business and daycare. Things were going well. I put my head down and charged into my work once again.

I entered in the "Glass at the Gardens" show held at the Denver botanic gardens. Much to my surprise I was awarded "Best of Show" of more than 200 glass artists from the area and several "First Place" awards in various

categories. I guess the hard work was finally paying off.

I did my first wholesale show in 2003, the ACC Baltimore winter show and then the Rosen groups' Philadelphia Buyers Market in February of 2004. These shows were instrumental in driving me to continue in the wholesale glass market.

I am blessed to have the support of the people in this trade, artists and the gallery owners alike. When I feel overwhelmed, my friends are constantly reminding me that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Through all the major hurdles and obstacles I have always felt that extreme fascination with glass and that is what kept me going.

There is something that happens when it's just me and my torch and the glass. Ideas come barreling into my mind with the flow and movement of the molten glass and the possibilities of what can be made with it.

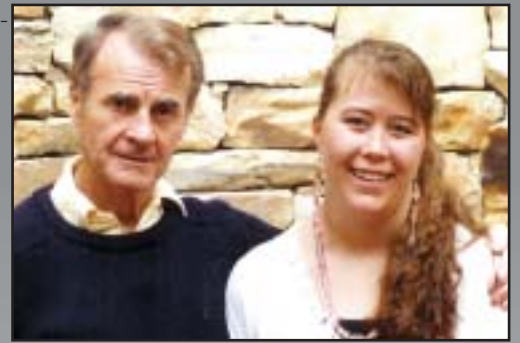
I feel like my dad is right there with me, gently giving me encouragement and praise, proud of me because I stuck with it.

I was raised around glass and it has successfully melted my whole being and molded me into who I am today.

I know that the world of glass has blessed me with the best friends anyone can have and whether or not I "make it" financially is not a concern for me. Life is the challenge. The challenge of raising children, starting a new career and business, and the losses I've had to endure along the way were simply my own challenges.

I give praise to the other women in the industry who also have had to face their own challenges. I have always been pleased to meet the women of glass.

For my father, Homer Hoyt. I love you.



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*My work is available in over 75 galleries nationwide. I have listed a few below:*

Carlyn Gallerie, Dallas, TX  
Boulder Arts & Crafts Co-Op,  
Boulder, CO  
Don Muller Gallery,  
Northampton, MA  
Selo/Shevel Gallery, Ann Arbor, MI  
Kuivato Gallery, Sedona, AZ  
CBL, West Orange, NV  
Kane Marie Gallery,  
Virginia Beach, VA  
Art Effects Gallery, Merion, PA  
Pandoras Box, Sanibel, FL  
Boat Basin Plaza, Charleston, OR

