

Diary of a Beadmaker— The Switch

by Patricia Trout

Photography by Patricia Trout
and Lauren Gadzinski

4/07/08 Brought home my new torch. Got a Mini CC, the green and the red hose thingies, the backflash devices, oxygen concentrator, and a regulator. The guy said this is everything I need to get set up. Bob (my husband) is so supportive, he bought everything for me!! He's going to help me set up tomorrow. Can't wait! He said I could use the propane tank from the barbecue. I should be making beads on my new setup in less than a day! I can finally set the ol' Hot Head aside!

4/08/08 Found out my propane tank is empty. Going to get it filled. Hooray!

Later: Propane tank was full. I thought it felt kind of heavy. Bob said he barbecued, like, twelve times since the last time he filled it, so he assumed it was empty. We still don't know how it could have been full. Weird.

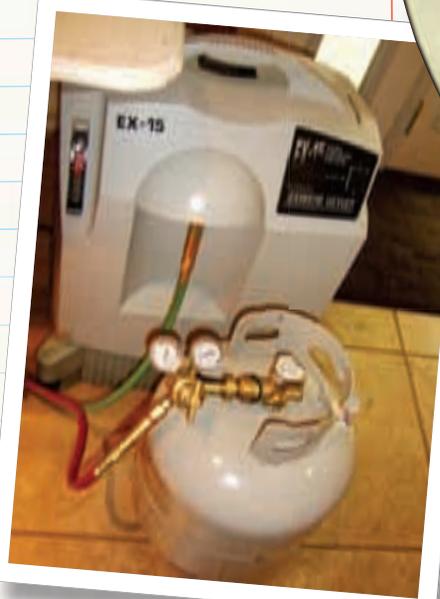
Later: This regulator will not fit on my propane tank! I've tried. I must have tried a hundred different ways! I banged my arm on the tank, and it hurts. This made me raise my voice to Bob a tiny bit. He got mad . . . so sensitive!

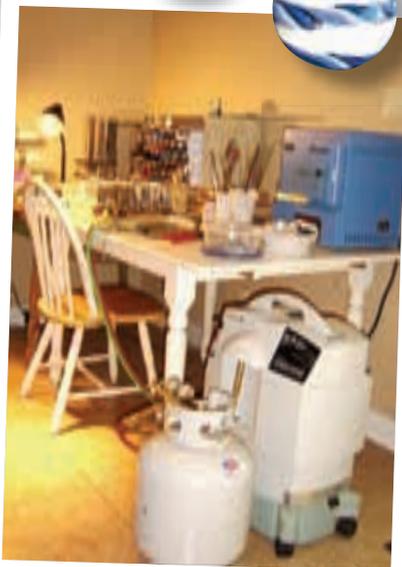
Later: Spent the rest of the day wondering why I don't have two regulators, one for propane and one for oxygen. Found out a few hours later that you don't need an oxygen regulator when you have a concentrator. Duh!

4/11/08 This regulator still does not fit on my propane tank. The fittings are all off. Female-to-female parts, crazy fittings that seem to go nowhere. What is the problem? Bob seems frustrated. His face can get the most interesting shade of red sometimes.

4/12/08 Okay, what is the problem? Who can I strangle??? I'm going to post a question on a beadmaking website asking about the regulator.

Later: Got a response from the beadmaking website. They tell me the green hose is for oxygen, the red hose is for propane. I already know that!!! Okay, they were just trying to help.





4/13/08 Everything is all set up. The hoses are attached to the torch, the green hose is attached to the concentrator. This regulator thing, do I really need it? Okay. Yeah, I do.

Later: Bob tried attaching the regulator to some of the oxygen fittings. He said he remembered that the oxygen fittings tighten to the left and the propane fittings tighten to the right. He found out I have an oxygen regulator, which I do not need. Reality is setting in that Bob might be smarter than me. Whatever!

Later: Went to three different stores. Finally brought home the perfect little propane regulator! It fits!!! (Will return the oxygen regulator from the place where I bought it.)

Later: Guess what? I made a bead! Started with a round one. Dang, that stuff gets hot! The first melting of the rod dripped onto my work surface. Bob freaked out just because I screamed.

P.S. It's so quiet, too. I can kind of watch TV while I'm working (if I'm careful)!

4/15/08 Made a few focals today. In half the time!!! Also played with raku a bit. I just superheated my bead and then blew on it to cool it quickly. I saw some pretty colors before I popped it in the kiln! A little wonky shape, though.

4/16/08 Took a few days to get used to heat control. After a while, it can actually seem slow, especially when you're making a large bead.



4/18/08 Tried to reduce. Had to do a little research on how to reduce with this setup. Oh, lower the oxygen, bushy flame; I see. Wow! Look at that reaction! Some silver glass just needs a kiss of the reduction flame, some needs more. I bought a sample pack of different types of silver glass to see which ones I like. Glad I did this, because there are two I really like a lot!

4/19/08 My large beads are cracking when I work on one end. I must remember to keep the end that I am not working on warm.

4/20/08 Learned that some silver glass must be struck, while other silver glass must be reduced. I never knew this! I thought you reduced them all! No wonder I found myself saying, "Luna doesn't work." It does work. It does! It does!!



5/15/08 I haven't had to refill my propane tank yet! I love this setup! Love, love, love it!

I couldn't have done it without the love, patience, and support of my husband. He is the sweetest, smartest man in the world! I love you, Bob!



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