

From the Editor's Desk:

Born to be Wild



Richard H. Gross, MTS

My duties for the Stained Glass Association of America include (but are not limited to) creating editorial calendars; editing, writing, photography, and layout for *The Stained Glass Quarterly*; those same tasks for the *Sourcebook*; managing and developing the SGAA's five main websites, which are: *stainedglass.org*, *stainedglassquarterly.com*, *stainedglass-school.org*, the Discussion Forum, and of course, the *Sourcebook* website at *www.SGAAOnline.com*. They also include managing all computer systems daily and audio/visual at trade shows and conferences; promoting the Association through various other means, including social networking sites like Facebook; and even sometimes tasks like designing and building light tables for this year's Conference or the framework we use to display the panel exhibition at the Annual Summer Conference.

In other words, I wear a lot of hats around here. I'm sure studio owners all across the country can relate. Today, though, I would like to talk about one of the jobs that doesn't get quite as much attention as the others. Maybe that's because it doesn't seem quite as noble or dignified. I suppose there's just not that much glory in it. Maybe it's because it's one of the "have-to-do," not "want-to-do," tasks.

You just sort of do it without thinking much about ways to do it better or more creatively because it's not so much about creativity as it is just getting it done.

I'm talking, of course, about mowing the lawn.

Why, you might (reasonably) ask, doesn't the SGAA just have a lawn-mowing service come in once a week and keep the grass in shape? Well, we looked at that, but with the size of the land that the SGAA Stained Glass School is buying to build

the new school, the bids were coming it at upwards of \$200 a week. With the way the grass grows in Kansas City, that works out to in the neighborhood of \$6,000 per year just to cut the grass. That's a lot of money that the School could be using to pay for the property and to put toward getting classes started. Besides, every dollar that we can save is another dollar we don't have to ask our members for in donations and another dollar we are closer to the goal: *a state-of-the-art teaching facility for stained, decorative, and architectural art glass*.

Besides, to be perfectly honest, cutting the grass is enjoyable. On Friday afternoon, I just shut down the computer; fire up the little lawn tractor; break out the mp3 player and listen to loud, obnoxious music that I haven't otherwise had time for since high school, and enjoy a little sunshine while getting the grass cut as well. By the time I'm done, it's time to shut down the office and go home to have a shower and a beer. Really, it's not such a bad way to start the weekend.

At least that was the case until this year. This year, we got hit with two weeks of steady rain in mid May. The grass grew

like crazy, and, by the time the rain stopped and the ground dried enough to mow again, it was higher than it ever has been before. The poor little lawn tractor — already quite elderly (for a lawn tractor) and not in the best of shape — gave up the ghost. With a *bang!* and a cloud of smoke, the engine seized up, never to turn again.

That left me mowing this yard for two weeks with a push mower. It took two hours a day, every day, to keep up with it. Suddenly, mowing went from an enjoyable Friday afternoon activity to daily torture that was seriously compromising my ability to keep up with my main duties.

Things worked out well in the end, though. The sad little lawn tractor was replaced with a slightly used commercial cutter with a 48" deck and a platform (called a slider) that you stand on to ride behind it while you whiz along at about 15 miles per hour. Suddenly, cutting the lawn has become not just an enjoyable way to end the work week but downright fun as well.

If you should happen to come visit the Stained Glass Association of America Headquarters on a Friday afternoon, you'll most likely see me outside on the mower, zipping back and forth across the lawn. I'm out there doing it not just because it's a blast but also because it's saving the School a lot of money, and every dollar puts us one step closer to the goal.

If you do happen to visit, be sure to wave. Shouting probably won't do any good. I'll have my headphones on, and the music will be up really loud.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard H. Gross".

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