

## Don Cline Pursues Varied Interests, Each Rich in History

By Aaron Hodge  
Colby Sawyer '14 and Beacon intern

Don Cline of Andover is not partial to idleness; a consequence of eager interest. One glance at the property he and his wife, Lorraine, own reveals a panoply of pursuits – a sugarhouse to the right, a healthy garden to the left, a 33-acre conserved wood lot – and, neatly tucked away at the border of the backyard, is an unassuming shed. The zest, however, is on the inside.

As you walk inside, you're immediately confronted by a large table that fills



Don Cline at work in his stained glass window restoration studio.

the majority of the room; on top, some of the most enduring and significant art of human history. Okay, a stretch, but I've got your attention.

The centerpiece of Don's studio is, while not quite as overblown as promised, certainly the trademark of a fittingly lofty idol – Christianity itself. Dogma aside, Christian churches have maintained a sense of awe and serenity over the centuries through sheer design alone; an undeniable staple of this sublime aura being the illumination of God's light. No, not Jesus – I'm talking stained glass.

However, enduring centuries can take a lot out of a window, and somebody's got to keep them maintained. We return to Don's studio.

"The glass is the glass, and it has been the same since ancient times," he tells me intermittently while gliding through the process of stain glass restoration. Restorers keep most of the old glass from jobs, since matching with new glass can be very difficult. "Having a supply of old glass on hand can make replacing broken glass much easier."

The making of glass and lead have changed since Cathedral times, becoming more science than art. While glass manufacture is more efficient and the variety of colors and textures has improved, the lead is the weak link.

During the Industrial Revolution, valuable trace elements such as tin, copper, and silver were removed from the lead-making process, making the lead much more pure. A hundred or so years on, the lead strips used in stained glass windows, called comes, are deteriorating prematurely. Medieval lead has fared much better over the centuries, because those trace elements eliminated during the Industrial Revolution were actually protective alloys.

Most windows of the mid- to late-nineteenth century suffer from the weakening of the lead comes that hold the stained glass together. This deterioration is exacerbated by air pollution and vibration caused by traffic. In some cases, the glass has partially fallen out of a window. The danger of losing these windows is very real. Temporary fixes are just that. The real solution once the lead had deteriorated is re-leading with modern, post-Industrial Revolution, alloyed lead comes.

Originally from Garrettsville, Ohio, Don attended Hiram College with a concentration in Studio Art, something he has been fortunate, and savvy enough, to continue as both a living and a pleasure. It was at Hiram in 1973 that he was first introduced to the art of stained glass by a college friend. He took to it instantly, and, with the help of his roommate who had connections with antique dealers, eventually took on his first project with a Cleveland antique store.

After a few years, he moved to New England with his brother and a friend, looking for work in the film and video business. For many years, he and his friend produced programming for the Concord cable system. While his buddy is still in the business and now owns studios in Claremont, Don joined Lorraine's graphic design and publishing company, Cline Design, in 1989.

Since then, they have serviced clients across the US and Canada operating a newsletter and marketing service for the construction industry. However, the stained glass discipline crept its way back to Don in an unexpected place: the New England Historical Genealogy Society.

Knowing his grandmother's family was from Connecticut, he decided to do some independent research on his roots, a pursuit that led him to a magazine article titled *Mystery in Stained Glass*. As the story goes, there was a shattered stained glass window in Essex, England as a result of Oliver Cromwell's agenda towards Catholics in the 17th century, which had been pieced back together by the townspeople. The window depicted two generations of a family, that of the surname

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