A Waterjet Cutting Glass is "Almost Like Cheating"

By Chris Cardinal

Retired Air Force engineer Dan Brubaker and his wife Cathy were looking to earn extra money and keep themselves busy after they left the workforce. Dan went into metal fabrication with a part-time job shop, and his wife went into glass art with Custom Creations, LLC.

Like many other glass artists, Cathy was frustrated by the difficulty of hand cutting complex shapes, and the amount of tedious hand finishing that was required. Their method of production was "hand cut as close as you can and then finish on the grinder", according to Dan. This limited their designs, caused glass breakage, and was extremely inefficient.

With the addition of a WAZER, their traditional glass business has been modernized, with the small waterjet creating possibilities that simply didn't exist before. Dan explained that complex shapes such as stars and multicolor inlays were "the kind of things you couldn't cut by hand", but with the WAZER, "it's nothing to draw it up and then cut it out."

The WAZER has opened up creative avenues that were not available before. Cathy now sells fused glass panels with intricate designs to replace the clear glass that is typically found in decorative lanterns. The designs are very detailed and the pieces fit tightly without hand finishing, so they can only be cut on the WAZER. Plus, it allows her to scale a design up or down in size, and cut 10 sets at a time to be sold on Etsy.

"My wife saves 75% of her time using the WAZER"
This kind of transformation has the couple enjoying more business than they can handle, with the WAZER running several days per week. Dan noted that Cathy is doing "things she wouldn't have attempted before because it was just too difficult", plus "she saves 75% of her time using the WAZER." For example, multi-piece glass Cardinals that would have required 4 hours of hand work to produce 8 sets, can now be cut on the WAZER in 5 minutes.

Dan said that with the WAZER, "It almost feels like cheating."