

Unique musical heritage helps Duluth's Security Jewelers stay in tune with community (/featured-articles/3239-unique-musical-heritage-helps-duluth-s-security-jewelers-stay-in-tune-with-community)



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Family-owned jewelry stores often reflect the life around them, evolving over time to suit the unique needs and desires of their clientele. Security Jewelers in Duluth, Minn., has a particular history of striking the right chord with its community.

Three brothers banded together to open Security Jewelers back in 1924, during the days when jewelry stores offered much more than jewelry. On the weekends, Jack, Jerome and Bernard Seiler would lock up shop and hop into the only vehicle they owned, driving 60 miles north into the mining and logging areas of the Iron Range in northeastern Minnesota.

There, they unpacked mandolins, banjos and accordions - instruments the ethnic workers had played in the old country - and demonstrated each instrument by playing the only tune they knew, "Show Me the Way to Go Home."

Jay Seiler, grandson of Jack and current co-owner of Security Jewelers, says it was a real working class area, with a lot of sailors and workers from other countries, mostly Scandinavia. "This was sort of a regional hub, and we had merchandise for everyone."

The brothers would sell as many musical instruments as they could, then drive to Minneapolis to pay off the wholesalers who sold them the instruments. Then they'd get new merchandise, and the mandolins, banjos and accordions would hang in the store above displays of luggage and valises.

Bernard left Security Jewelers in the 1940s and started his own store. Jack's sons are Stuart - Jay's father - and Michael. Both were in the business; Michael died young, and Stuart is semi-retired but still working at Security. Until the mid-1980s, Stuart ran the store with Jerome's son Jack, who now co-owns the store with Jay.

Shift Away from Music

Security Jewelers started out in Duluth's Bowery area, filled with nightclubs and bars. In the mid-1940s, the store moved two blocks east to a little more refined part of town. During those years, Security had an optical shop with an optician in the store. "I





remember traveling and going to Zales stores when they were starting to build the chain, and they carried that type of stuff too," Jay says. "A lot of big stores had those humble beginnings.

"By the '50s and '60s, we'd gotten out of the musical instrument business. In addition to jewelry, we sold

lots of small appliances - coffee makers, toasters, electric fry pans, that type of stuff that you now get at Best Buy. We had televisions, radios, stereos, eight-track tape players. We were very well known for that; it was an important part of our business, in addition to the fine jewelry in the front part of the store. We also sold cameras, which was very typical back in those days."

Security Jewelers' reputation for honesty was such that the store didn't advertise much until the late 1960s. Then the family had fun with it. One billboard featured Jack, at 5-foot-3, standing next to 6-foot-4 Stuart, with the words "Long on service, short on prices."

Jay, who'd grown up working with his father Stuart - like his cousin Jack had learned from his father Jerome - joined the business in 1986. Jay had worked as a representative for a large New York jewelry manufacturer and brought a new perspective to the family business as the store started offering prestigious designers. He also moved swiftly to establish www.securityjewelers.com in 1996.

Security Jewelers today is a fine jewelry store with many brand names and gifts. The evolution continues as lifestyles have taken a turn for the casual, and the cousins don't carry as much silver and china these days. "People used to register for those kinds of gifts, but you don't see much of that at all anymore. With bridal registries, couples go to Target, Bed, Bath & Beyond, places like that. They buy more casual dinnerware now.

"Brides might have two generations before them who want to hand down their silver and fine crystal, but a lot of them don't even want it. They don't want to care for it - they can't put it in the dishwasher!"

Giving Back to Community

Security Jewelers is a regional force. "We're known pretty much around our state as the bridal store," with a huge diamond inventory and many bridal designers including Forevermark, Lazare Kaplan, A Jaffe, Gabriel & Co. and Verragio, just to name a few. "Customers will drive three hours to do business with us."

The store is also the country's only independent jeweler carrying Swedish designer Efva Attling's licensed collection of jewelry based on Beatles' songs, including a "Good Day Sunshine" pendant, "Let It Be" pin and "Lucy in the Sky" cuff.

Along with doing good business - the founding brothers taught their children to provide "the highest quality, the finest service and the lowest prices" - Security Jewelers is very much involved in the community. The store produces a limited edition crystal Christmas

ornament annually to benefit the nonprofit Bentleyville holiday light display in Duluth's Bayfront Festival Park on the shore of Lake Superior. One hundred percent of the profits from the ornament sales go back to Bentleyville, which supports the Salvation Army and draws 100,000 people every winter to downtown Duluth.

"When you're on the main street and you've been around for 91 years, you've got to give back," Jay says. "The community has been very good to us, so we like to give. Bentleyville is one of the many things we're involved with in helping to raise funds."

For more information about Security Jewelers, you can call 800-251-2222, visit www.securityjewelers.com (<http://www.securityjewelers.com>) or send an e-mail to info@securityjewelers.com (<mailto:info@securityjewelers.com>) .