

Jewelry
by Harry Zirkelbach 03-28-2011

When a jeweler see a man enter his store, he's usually heard saying.

"What's for the little lady today?"

Men wear little jewelry.

This accelerated when fashion change removed suit coats from daily wear.

Heredity may be involved. For jewelry, dad wore a silver belt buckle with his initial "H".
He had won it in a card game contest, was happy to repeat that game when asked.
And sometimes, without being asked.

A dedicated life-long smoker, he never used a cigarette lighter.
As he seemed to possess no hint of another jewelry gene in his genome.
He bought none for his wife or children, ever.

The first piece of jewelry I remember buying was a ring, identifying me as a graduate
from the University of Detroit, Class 1944. Inside the ring,
mention of the Aeronautical Engineering Degree bestowed.

As part of the Occupation force in Japan in 1946, our group operated from Kyoto,
Japan's ancient capital, the only Japanese city of size not fire bombed into oblivion.

Japanese tradesmen, set up shop in the Hotel halls regularly, selling antiques and
jewelry. The Army furnished shelter, food, entertainment. We needed little else.

The older men agreed, everything seen was a bargain.
I had to agree, bought wood block prints, oil paintings, and from Mikimoto, personally
a strand of pearls. That fisherman extolled their luster, size graduation, demonstrating
that beauty against the darkest black velvet. They glittered, and I was sold, made him
tell me more, so I appeared less a rube.

I did wonder how this possession might stand out on the neck of a white woman. But
that was of no concern to any military personnel sequestered in Kyoto that year.

The pearls were taken home, and not considered again until I married.
Then given to my wife Barbara . There they really did impress me when she wore them.
Even better, she thought so too.

With little money in the early years and the admonition to never buy clothing for my wife,
I did buy jewelry for her. In time I came to realize a truth most men knew intuitively,
a woman is never annoyed when given jewelry.
And she can't have too much to select from.

Late in my work life, I frequented Indian Reservation stores in western Colorado. The owner of one, the Hogan, west of Mancos on US-150, adopted me as a customer.

She began collecting things she felt I would like, and she was often right. Through her I obtained bolos, belt buckles, wrist watch bands, in both silver and gold.

I bought them because of their beauty to me.

She constantly reminded me,
the metal of each pieces was often of equal value to the jewelry,
so in effect the jewelry was free. She and the jeweler were making money somewhere;
she left it up to me to guess how, and I never did.

I still wear little jewelry. Pieces bought over a lifetime belong to others now.



Neighbors are Jewels, another precious commodity.