



Georgia Gems

A Publication of the Georgia Jewelers Association

Georgia Jewelers Association 5815 Fairwood Walk, Acworth GA, 30101
Phone: 770-424-7567 Fax: 770-424-9438

Hello to all,

I don't know how your weather is, but it is hot in Elberton, GA. I can thankfully and humbly say that sales have been hotter, but it can certainly get worse. Everything you read or hear in the newspaper, radio or TV, has a comment on these challenging times.



We are all looking at our expenses closer, ways to add on sales and of course keeping our faithful and loyal customers happy and coming back.

Many of you are already doing this, but after listening to some fellow jewelers when we were in Antwerp, we decided to start buying gold, silver and diamonds off the street. This has been a very successful way to get customers in, both new and old and a way to help people generate cash for themselves. Some take the money and are very happy, while others are finding a way to take old unused gold, etc. and trade it in for a new piece of jewelry. Check on any local regulations to do this and then place an ad in the newspaper, radio or most effectively a nice sign in your window. Kitco.com is a great way to check metal prices each day. This helps to stay on top of the market and also to have a good source to sell to.

We are gearing up for another fun and family filled weekend at Brasstown Valley for our state convention Sept. 9-21. A Friday night barbecue venue is planned for those than can come early and is a great time to share stories and renew friendships.

Our executive director, Judy Lince has also been very busy working with Kathy Beall, executive director of Alabama Jewelers to coordinate a joint convention in

2009. The Board of Directors had a conference call and it was unanimous to proceed with this. Any input would be greatly appreciated.

Judy will be getting all of this information on our new web site this month. This will be a great means of communication for all of us.

Find time to praise your staff, encourage good sales techniques and follow through. But most of all, find time for yourself - whether vacation time, or a day or two a week to spend time with family.

Best to you and let's make a difference in these times!
Sandra



GJA Annual Convention and Design Contest

Sept 19-21
Brasstown Valley Resort

★ Design Contest form enclosed ★



Calender of Events

July 26-29 RJO (Minneapolis)

July 27-30 JA (New York) Show

August 2-6 IJO (Philadelphia)

August 9-11 SJTA (Atlanta)

**Sept. 19-21 GJA Convention
Brasstown Valley Resort**

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 A New Website is Coming Soon <http://www.georgiajewelers.org>

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Publication Month	Deadline for Receipt of Advertising Copy
Winter.....	November 15
Spring.....	March 15
Summer.....	July 15
Fall.....	October 15

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Spring.....	March	15
Summer.....	July	15
Fall.....	October	15

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Request to reprint articles with credit should be addressed to the executive director.

Change of address should be sent to the GJA headquarters location above. Georgia Gems, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to run add material on hand if material not received by copy deadline date.

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SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

STERLING REPUTATION

BY KRISTA REESE

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER STALCUP

IT'S A SMALL SPACE, only 2,600 square feet, but like its owner, the Beverly Bremer Silver Shop strikes a high profile. This modest-looking storefront in an easily overlooked Buckhead strip mall is a nationally known source for new and “estate” sterling and hollowware place settings, decorative pieces and collectibles.

Inside, more than 1,500 popular and obscure patterns, meticulously organized in labeled boxes, line the shop's dark green walls, all the way back into its labyrinthine recesses. Glittering glass cases display an assortment that encompasses moderately priced everyday goods such as frames and baby gifts as well as museum-quality antique punchbowls, chafing dishes, trays and goblets, in sterling and rare American coin silver. (One baroque “gentleman's ice bucket” incorporates glaciers and polar bears to commemorate the Alaska treaty.) Prices range from \$10 to \$80,000.

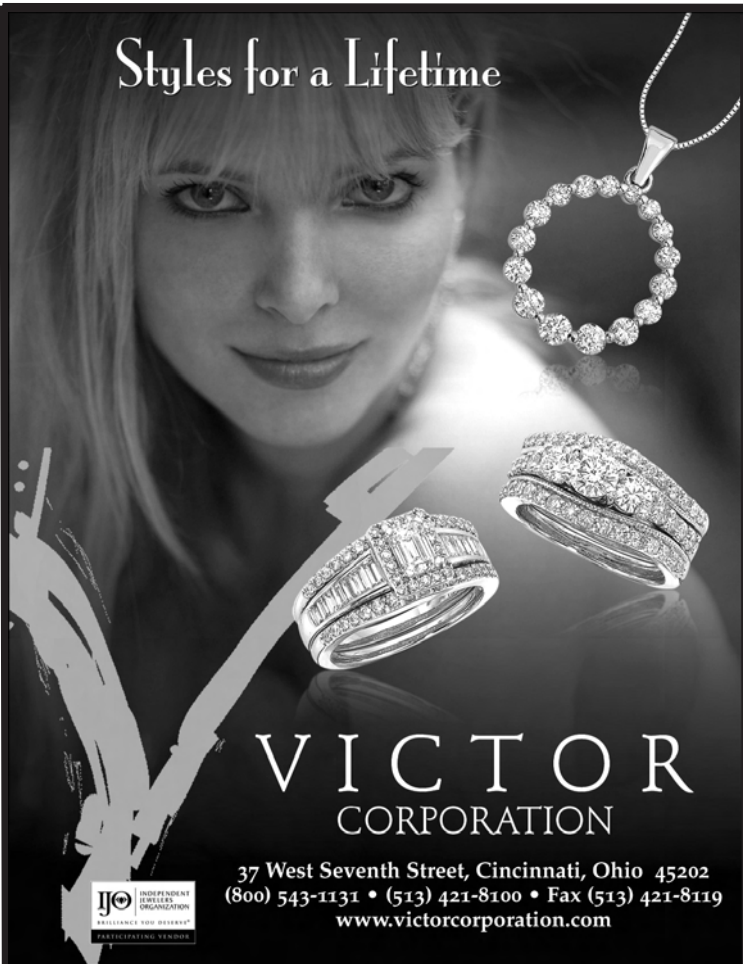
“I just love all this Tiffany junk,” Beverly Bremer says, standing in front of one locked case. Although she knows the exact worth of the pieces inside, she's not exactly clear on their provenance. “I'm a merchant, not an historian,” she shrugs.

Despite Bremer's notable business successes, her shop's true worth isn't its inventory – it is its place in Atlanta's culture. For nearly 30 years, it has been the spot where generations connect and mark seismic shifts. It's where matriarchs joyously buy a first grandchild's silver baby cup, dreamy new brides outfit a sparkling holiday table and divorcees unload painful memories for much-needed cash.

At first glance, the shop's 76-year-old founder and redoubtable resident expert seems to fit the profile of what you might imagine as her stereotypical shopper: the well-dressed, fashionably coiffed and comfortably situated Buckhead matron who has never experienced real need. But Bremer quickly dispels that image. Sitting at a small antique table in the back of her shop with her daughter and business partner Mimi Bremer Woodruff, Bremer leans over on her elbows and describes the start of her career with a characteristically frank declaration: “I was penniless!”

In many ways, mother and daughter are alike – both are tall (Bremer is 6 feet; Woodruff is 5'10”), slim and attractive, with hawk-like intelligence and easy social

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graces – not to mention smart business suits and impressive jewelry. In other ways, they're opposites. Woodruff's business degree and international work experience help explain her circumspection, despite her comparative youth. Bremer's matter-of-fact telling of the twists and turns of her amazing career belies her home economics degree and ladylike demeanor.

Bremer is a student – of silver. She can trace its roots to royalty. ("It was the only metal that was hygienic. It probably saved several dynasties.") And well knows its mythic place in Southern lore – usually buried in the backyard, to hide from the Yankees. ("If half the people who had stories like that actually saved their silver, I'd be a lot better off today," she tsk-tsks.)

But she is more intimately familiar with its traditional role as a woman's savings account. Before they were allowed to own property, women accrued their net worth in jewelry – and silver. Like Queen Isabella, who funded Christopher Columbus' explorations with her jewelry box, women made deals with precious metals, often those hammered into sterling tea sets or place settings.

In 1975, Bremer joined a long line of women who reversed their fortunes by carefully trading her silver. She was at an inconvenient crossroads: divorced and looking for work in a time and social environment in which neither was acceptable. She had three young children.

Despite her family's accomplishments (her grandfather, John Collier Hart, was a state attorney general), she describes her background as "poor, but cultured." Still, there were three servants, and constant reminders to "Remember who you are," she says.

"Everybody was poor in 1931," she points out – especially in the South. She grew up the daughter of a soil conservation agent, moving from Dallas, Texas, to attend high school in Gray (between Macon and Milledgeville), graduating in 1948. In her senior year at the University of Georgia, an uncle gave her enough money to join the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority.

Bremer's height bestowed a self-consciousness that still plagues her. "It's hard when you don't fit in," she says. But her stature proved to be a boon on her first job, as a sales clerk at Rich's department store, when merchandise manager Frank Neely sought her help in open-



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ing a tall girls' shop. "Those buyers were wonderful," she says of the first career women she encountered. "That was my first experience with target marketing." She took note of the way shoppers' preferences were recorded.

After her divorce, she went back to work at Rich's, and later the Swan House, where she says she felt the acute disapproval of her former peers – and was fired for "assuming too much responsibility," she recalls, laughing. She did the unthinkable for her time and social class: She reached out for help, going to counseling, and later,

flying her entire brood to Big Sur, Calif., to attend seminars at the "alternative education" center, Esalen. "It was a grand way to examine your value system," she says.

Bremer was determined to make her mark – even if she didn't yet know how. On New Year's Day 1975, she accompanied a friend to a new flea market on Piedmont (on land now occupied by the Lindbergh MARTA station). There, scores of vendors had set up 8x12 booths separated by curtains. To her amazement, Bremer found that her Burgundy and Francis First silverware was bring-

ing \$60 per place setting – as a young bride, she'd bought her first at \$15.

Before long, with her three children often accompanying her, Bremer had again done the unthinkable: The well-bred lady set up a table in the flea market, and started selling her silverware on weekends. Despite the unorthodox surroundings, the Bremers loved the colorful characters they met there.

"It was my first exposure to immigrants," she says. "We had Chinese food, a Jewish deli. It was glorious." One of their first friends was a gay man with a law degree who also sold jewelry. "He pierced my ears and drew up my will," Bremer says. The lawyer/jeweler's partner, a coin dealer, taught Bremer to weigh silver on the troy ounce system, to determine its value as a commodity. Pawn brokers became sources and trusted advisors.

"One day I'll write my memoirs – *Tales of a Junior League Pawn Broker*," she says. Old friends came by



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with pity in their eyes, and she just smiled – she was making more money than she could have ever dreamed: \$50,000 that first year, “mostly out of my house,” she says.

Her timing was impeccable – in 1973, the Hunt brothers had decided to corner the silver market, and the value began climbing steeply. Bremer, her children and motley crew of advisors held on for dear life. “I carried around a calculator – the value was rising that fast,” she says.

Incredibly, by her fourth and fifth years Bremer was taking in \$1 million annually from her flea market silver sales. As she had learned at Rich’s, she kept notes on every buyer, and manually inventoried every salt spoon and asparagus server. In 1980, the silver bubble burst, dropping precipitously from a high of \$54 per troy ounce to about \$10, but by then she had learned the business well enough to survive.

That same year, she bought space on Peachtree Road, next to Tomfoolery, a small bar featuring a comic magician who worked the lights, played the music and amused the crowd with his series of cigarette tricks. “Here,” says Bremer, motioning behind her, toward her desk, “is where he and his two dogs slept. That was his shower, over there.”

After the magician vanished for a long-term gig in Vegas, Bremer expanded from her original small-



WELL POLISHED: Bremer's 2,600-square-foot shop is home to many wonders

er space next door, and dug in for the long haul. "I don't ever move," she says.

At a windowed room at the back of the shop, two men polish silver full time, so that estate pieces bought at the shop are sent home gleaming. The careful notes Bremer kept on customers eventually became an extensive database she still maintains – with 89,000 names, in the U.S. and abroad. She regularly informs clients what pieces in their pattern have become available. Premier auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's are among her rivals for rare old silver.


Woodruff, her daughter, earned degrees in French and business, and was set to work for Tiffany's in London, before a last-minute denial of a work permit kept her at home. She has helped bring the analog-driven Bremer (who does use a computer – but only DOS) into the digital age, heading up the effort to create a website on which thousands of individual pieces are for sale.

"The challenge," Woodruff says, "was to make it like visiting the shop," where many among the staff possess decades of institutional knowledge and expertise. (One part-timer is Joseph Brady, also seen evaluating silver on PBS' *Antiques Roadshow*.) Along with prices and patterns, the site (www.beverlybremer.com) carries a wealth

of information on the history, care and use of silver. Up and running only since September, the site brought in \$230,000 in its first four months.

It's clear that Bremer's business is approaching another crossroads. Although she seems little affected by it, Bremer says myasthenia gravis is taking a toll on her energy level. Woodruff, with children of her own at home, cannot yet afford to be at the shop full-time. More ominously, despite the fact that silver's value continues to increase annually, climbing steeply in recent years, sales have stagnated for the first time in her career, never recovering from the 9/11 crisis. "It's cultural," she says. She mourns the decline of elegance.

What's not yet clear is whether Bremer's shop is facing the end of an era, or the passing of a torch. Woodruff seems imminently qualified and poised to take the business into its next phase – although Bremer seems by no means ready to retire, still putting in long hours, six days a week. (She does, however, take a break at lunch for tai chi.) But what neither of them can yet envision is what kind of business it will be, and for what kind of customer.

One thing is certain – the shop's founder is like her own best merchandise: unique and malleable, an enduring symbol of both a forebear's gift and a future bequest, its value and beauty only increasing with time. 

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Welcome!

Georgia Jewelers would like to welcome six new associate members:

Mary Lou Dangler, Dangler Studios, Sarasota, FL
Girish Keniya, International Diamond Distributors, NY, NY
Allen Lipscher, Global Diamonds, INC, Chicago, IL
Jeff Yother, The Victor Corp, Gadsden, AL
Larry Pulliam, Walters Jewelry Co, Inc., Loganville, GA
Tommy Miller, Henry Jewelry, Inc and I Gansky Company.

If you see these folks please thank them for joining our state association and invite them to our Sept. 19-21 convention!



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Crime reports regularly carry news of jewelry heists by criminals who consider theft a quick way to raise cash. The news is a constant reminder that working in the jewelry industry exposes you to the risk of being victim of crime, sometimes crime that involves violence.

As the only insurer that specializes in insuring jewelry and jewelry businesses in the United States and Canada, Jewelers Mutual Insurance Company understands the jewelry industry and how to minimize crimes against it. That's why they launched a new online training course: Selling with Security. Easy to access at www.jmuniversity.com, the course teaches three key concepts that help retail jewelers sell with security and reduce theft.

The stats

Here is what the 2006 statistics from Jewelers Security Alliance (JSA) reveal:

- Most losses occur during open hours of business.
- On-premises crimes increased 15.8% over the last year.
- Grab and run losses increased by 146% between 2005 and 2006.

In 2006, JSA listed 1,422 criminal events in the U.S. that targeted jewelry firms. These resulted in seven deaths (owners and employees), as well as 15 shootings that carried the potential of death. In addition, inventory and business losses reached \$73.3 million.

Protect your employees, yourself, your family

There are numerous tips that jewelry owners can adopt to reduce losses. Jewelers Mutual has this information at your fingertips with the new Selling with Security course at JM University. The course introduces easy tips, real-life examples, research, and practice exercises to make sure you understand how to secure your business.

The Selling with Security course is free to Jewelers Mutual policyholders. Simply contact the Sales & Marketing Department at 800-558-6411 to register with JM University. Not only will you have access to two great security courses, you will be able to register other staff members, monitor their progress with each course, and extend or deactivate access as needed.

While the Selling with Security course offers tons of valuable information, it focuses on three key habits in the workplace:

1) Meet and Greet

- Greet each customer.
- Make immediate eye contact.
- Keep watching your customers and don't turn your back at any time.

2) One on One

- One salesperson should assist only one customer at a time.
- Show only one item at a time to one customer.

3) Turn the Key

- Keep showcases locked when unattended.
- Exercise proper key control.
- Use wrist key holders.

While nothing will prevent loss completely, teaching employees easy, key principles, and reinforcing them daily, puts you in greater control of diminishing your chances for loss. The online course is a great training tool for new employees, and an excellent refresher for anyone in the jewelry industry.

Visit www.jmuniversity.com to register and take the course. To learn more about the course and how to register, contact Jewelers Mutual's Sales & Marketing Department at 800-558-6411.

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Georgia Jewelers Association Jewelry Design Contest

Eligibility

Anyone who is a member, or is employed by a GJA member, or a GJA member sponsored student currently enrolled at a college or university, who is interested in designing and creating one-of-a-kind piece of jewelry that says something of current styles and fashion.

Rules of Entry

- Pieces **MUST** be original designs created by the person entering the contest.
- All entries must be completed pieces made within the last two years.
- Pieces cannot have been mass produced or previously sold (unless Jeweler has written signed permission from client to use the pieces for the times required).
- Pieces should not be marked or hall-marked until after the judging. Previously sold pieces must have this information masked. We will mark marking or hallmarking to our discretion if you do not.
- Special displays are not allowed. All pieces entered must be on standard display material.
- **GJA reserves the right to disqualify any piece which does not meet all criteria.**

Details of Entry

Entrant may enter one piece in any or all four categories. Each piece submitted requires \$35 entry fee. Entry fees are non-refundable.

Category 1A) Materials may not exceed \$300 in cost value. Pieces must be made of silver, gold, or platinum and may contain stones.

Category 1B) Materials from \$301 to \$1000 in cost value. Pieces must be made of silver, gold, or platinum and may contain stones.

Category 2) Materials from \$1001 to \$3000 in cost value. Pieces must be made of gold or platinum and may contain stones.

Category 3) Materials over \$3001 in cost value. Pieces must be made of 14K gold or higher karat gold or platinum and may contain stones.

Timetable

Sept. 10, 2008: Application and entry fee with description of each piece attached must arrive at GJA office

Sept. 17, 2008: Pieces may be sent to design contest chair c/o Eddie Knox (see address below). **DO NOT** send pieces to GJA office.

Sept 19/20, 2008: Pieces may be brought to convention and delivered to design contest chair, Eddie Knox.

Sept 21, 2008: Design Contest

Judging

The entries will be judged by qualified people in the jewelry industry and art communities. When the pieces are being judged, they will be identified only by number.

The Judges will select winning pieces on the basis of: Creative use of materials, Contemporary design, Wearability, Originality, and Fashion merit.

Prizes

Prizes will be awarded to the winning piece in each category and to the "Best of Show". Only retail members may win this award. Display of entries will be at the Convention September 20 - 21st. Presentation of awards will be at the Sunday luncheon. Gift certificates and plaques will be awarded to all winners. The "Best of Show" award winner will be entered in the Jewelers of America National Design Contest in New York City in March, 2009.

Send Entry Forms and Fees to:

GJA Office: 5815 Fairwood Walk, Acworth GA 30101
(770) 424-7567 (Fax) (770) 424-9438 judyince@comcast.net

Georgia Jewelers Association Jewelry Design Contest

Jewelry Entry Form

Thank you for your entry in the Annual GJA Jewelry Design Competition. We appreciate your interest and support of the organization.

Please fill out and submit this form along with your entry fee(s) to the GJA office by September 10th, 2008. Finished pieces must be brought to the convention by September 20th, 2008 or received by Chair by September 17th, 2008. By sending in this application you agree to all of the rules and entry details. You may fax or mail this form.

Retail Member Sponsored Student

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Store _____

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Category 1B _____

Category 2 _____

Category 3 _____

Total _____

X \$35.00

Total Fee Sent _____

Attach description of pieces entered including material value (cost).



Mail Finished Pieces to:

GJA Design Contest Chair

c/o Eddie Knox

180 Allen Road, Suite 107

Atlanta, GA 30328

(404) 252-2256 (Fax) (404) 8434-1198

All finished entries must be brought to the convention or sent to GJA by REGISTERED MAIL, insured with a return receipt. Entries remain the property of the person entering them. All non-winning entries will be picked up at convention or will be sent back registered mail as soon as possible. GJA assumes no liability for loss or damages to any piece entered. Insurance for each piece entered will be the sole responsibility of the entrant.



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Georgia Gems

A Publication of the Georgia Jewelers Association

Georgia Jeweler's Annual Convention in the North
Georgia Mountains at

Brasstown Valley Resort

Young Harris, Georgia

September 19-21, 2008

We had so much fun last year we're going back!

Seminars and Training 2008 Design Contest
College Football Party and Hospitality Cottage
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Golf Tournament NEW on site Spa
Friday night cookout Saturday evening dinner
Tennis, pool and workout room
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Make sure to mark your calendar and plan to attend this super weekend of fun, fellowship and education. It is a great time to bring your children or even your grand children. Meeting other jewelers and sharing ideas, concerns and success stories is a main goal of the weekend.

All salesmen and associates are invited and welcome. Retailers from nearby states are welcome too. At Brasstown, we say "the more, the merrier!"

Saturday evening you can join the rest of the *Dawgs* and watch the Georgia Bulldogs take on Arizona State from Tempe, Arizona. We will rock the house.

Call the hotel direct to reserve your rooms (800-201-3205, Mon-Sat; 8am to 5:30pm. eastern time). Be sure to mention you are with the Georgia Jewelers convention to receive our GJA room rate of \$169 plus a \$25 resort credit for each reservation! *Reserve by August 19 to receive special rate & resort credit.*

Registration form for the convention coming soon.

Georgia Jewelers Association

5815 Fairwood Walk
Acworth, GA 30101