

Montana Jewelry Store With 100+ Year History Closing; Big Sale Announced

Kalispell, Montana – Nov. 15, 2018 - When she was just starting out in the jewelry business more than 40 years ago, a rancher entered Lisa Anderson's jewelry shop where she was working the sales floor.

He was wearing mud-covered rubber duck boots and had a somewhat disheveled look. Anderson didn't want to treat him any differently because of his modest appearance and she gave him her full, undivided attention.

It paid off: She wound up selling him a \$775 sapphire ring! It was her biggest sale to date and a lot for 1975!

It was also a powerful lesson that she has always shared with her staff at Wheeler Jewelry. And, it's a big reason why the store has remained successful since she became owner in 1979.

"Never judge a book by its cover," said Anderson, who is closing Wheeler Jewelry in Kalispell for reasons including wanting to spend much more time with her husband and grandchildren. "Every person is the same that walks through that front door. I think we've done a really good job of creating an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome."

Huge Going Out of Business Sale

Shoppers looking for great deals on one-of-a-kind jewelry should circle Thursday, Nov. 15 on their calendars! That's when Wheeler Jewelry's going out of business sale begins.

The store sells a huge cross-section of items with prices ranging from \$28 to \$30,000 and includes a nice selection of estate pieces. Wheeler Jewelry has a wide assortment of diamonds and also carries rare sapphires discovered during the gold rush days that are only found in Montana.

One of those sapphires – the Yogo - is extremely rare, more so than diamonds. The natural, unheated, precious gemstones, prized for its color, clarity and beauty are found only in Yogo Gulch, Montana.

“We’re very fortunate to have these beautiful gemstones,” Anderson said.

The store also carries brand name designers including Peter James, Wolf, Parle, Galatea, Imperial, Bering, Venetti, Bellari and Mark Schneider.

Favorite Customer Memory

Anderson recalled a young man who had put a small engagement ring on layaway. He saved and finally had the money to buy it, planning to propose to his gal on Christmas Eve.

“We were all so excited,” Anderson said.

The staff gave him a bottle of champagne and two glasses to celebrate. He took his soon-to-be bride to nearby Glacier National Park, which was covered in four feet of snow. They headed to a small bridge overlooking a frosty river.

He poured the champagne and placed the ring inside her glass. Not accustomed to the taste of bubbly, she took one sip and tossed out the rest. The ring, along with the champagne, wound up buried in the snow!

Unable to find it, they summoned help from their families, and still no luck. The families attended midnight mass and prayed for a miracle. The next day, armed with shovels, they dumped snow into the backs of two pickups and slowly sifted through it. A happy ending and a story to tell the ages as they found the ring in one of the pickup beds!

“That’s a memory that really stood out,” Lisa said.

Store History

Wheeler Jewelry is located inside Kalispell’s first brick building, which served as a bank after opening in 1891. A jewelry store eventually moved into the building in

1908 and it has remained that type of business ever since. No other type of business in Kalispell has been at their same location longer.

Inside are beautiful and unique showcases that traveled by steamboat from Sheboygan, Wis., to Fort Benton, Montana. The ornate and heavy cases came over the mountain pass to their final destination in Kalispell.

The store derived its name from the third owner. Anderson decided to keep the name when she took ownership of the store because of its excellent reputation.

Lisa has marveled at the countless changes over the years.

“I went from hand-writing receipts and ledger entries to using a contemporary computer system,” she said. “The ability to analyze inventory, along with seemingly endless options has allowed me to run the business more efficiently.”

Fascinated by the Jewelry Business

Anderson has always been intrigued by jewelry, ever since she was a child. “The whole business to me is fascinating and goes far beyond Kalispell,” she said. “You have ties to diamonds in Africa. Opals in Australia. It’s a business where I can always keep learning. I wasn’t stuck in an office adding up numbers. I was in a multi-faceted, real-world environment.”

Part of that sense of adventure has been making regular trips to Antwerp in Belgium to buy diamonds.

“I’ve done things that have really pushed me as a person,” Lisa said. “I’ve had wonderful opportunities to learn incredible things.”

Remembering Her Customers

Anderson has forged close bonds with customers over the years, making her decision to close bittersweet.

“I’ve made lifelong friends through my business,” she said. “I mean close friends.”

Anderson said the store has been there over the years for customers planning for weddings, anniversaries, baptisms and numerous other special occasions.

“I know there’s going to be some disappointment that the store is closing because Wheeler’s has been the go-to place where you got honest answers, wonderful service and the real deal,” she said. “it has been a privilege to be there for people.”

Customers have also expressed overwhelming appreciation for Wheeler Jewelry on social media.

“I am so glad that I chose Wheeler Jewelry to make my ring for me,” one customer wrote in a review posted on the store’s Facebook page. “Not only is my ring exactly what I wanted, it’s beautifully crafted, the price was in my budget and I have never been treated so well by a company.”

Wrote another: “Lisa did a phenomenal job helping my fiancé find the most perfect ring.”

Giving Back

Wheeler Jewelry has always been committed to helping local causes. A passion close to Lisa’s heart is the Tamarack Grief Resource Center, where she’s done volunteer work. The center helps children who have lost a parent or loved one.

“Loss often forces kids to grow up quickly and lose pieces of their childhoods. When the kid’s go to camp, they get to be kids,” she said.

Lisa is also supportive of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, which has their local office in the upstairs office of the building. For the past 40 years, she has donated a portion of the rent.

Store Legacy

Anderson likes to think of herself as an example of how women have made tremendous strides in business. Lisa hopes she inspires other women to reach for their goals and achieve their success as well.

“It is not always easy but it is absolutely possible,” said Anderson, who has a daughter who is an attorney. “I really want women to know they can do anything they set their sights on and enjoy their life.”

WANT TO GO?

What: Wheeler Jewelry Going out of Business Sale

Where: 139 Main St, Kalispell, Mont. 59901

When: Sale starts **Thursday Nov.15, 2018**

Store hours: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday

More information: Visit wheelerjewelrymt.com, call 406-752-6809 or send an email to: info@wheelerjewelrymt.com