

Ricotta Jewelry

45th Anniversary

1968 – 2013

Forty-five years ago, Ricotta Jewelry was opened in Philipsburg by Joseph Ricotta at its present day location of 105 North Front Street, under the name of O'Brien's Jewelry. The name was changed to Ricotta Jewelry in the early 1970's. Joe's son, James, worked with his father from the beginning, only leaving the business after high school to obtain a degree in watchmaking and jewelry repair from Bowman's Technical School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. After returning, Jim, twenty years old, met his future wife, Joan, seventeen, and they were married the following year. Joe Ricotta passed away in November, 1989, at the young age of fifty-seven. Jim's wife, Joan, then came into the store to run the retail end. All three of their children, Crystal, Tiffany, and Jared spent a lot of time in the jewelry store growing up, first, helping with things like making bows, cleaning and working at sidewalk sales. They would play "watchmaker" with old broken watches and tools, which is the same thing their grandson, Tanner, six, now does. Through the years, Jim and Joan would take all three of their children with them to the jewelry and gift shows in Las Vegas, Ohio, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Their son, Jared, is now a physician's assistant at Clear-Med in Philipsburg and also does clock repair (a trade he has learned from his dad) on most Saturdays in the jewelry store. A lot of their customers have watched their children grow up. They had named their daughters with jewelry related names, but at the time, Jared was not a jewelry related name. Jared was a Biblical name that they both just liked. However, now, when a number of Jared's friends recently got engaged, the fiancés said, "He went to Jared's!"

Jim and Joan have attended many seminars on all aspects of operating a jewelry store including diamond grading from Gem School America. They attended the JCK Jewelry Show in Las Vegas again last year to keep up on the latest trends and changes in the jewelry industry. Being in business for forty-five years, they have access to a lot of different suppliers and will help you find exactly what you are looking for, no matter how small or large the sale may be. They can customize or create that "one of a kind" piece of jewelry, when larger chain stores are not willing and/or are overpriced in making those changes for you. They offer financing through Springleaf Financial Services and still have lay-a-way.

Jim's time is spent mostly at the workbench, specializing in antique pocket watch repair for people all over the world, and doing watch and jewelry repairs for other jewelry stores in Pennsylvania and other states, along with the repairs that come through the front door daily. It is exceptionally rare to find a jewelry store where the owner is both a watchmaker and a jeweler. Recently, there was a customer who came into Ricotta Jewelry looking for a new watch. Through conversation she mentioned that another jewelry store had told her that her watch could not be fixed. As a knowledgeable employee of Ricotta Jewelry, Shirley Ruggiero,

asked to see the broken watch and said, “ My boss can fix that. He specializes in watchmaking and he can fix that.” All the watch needed was a stem and crown to wind it! Jim fixed the watch, and we had a very happy customer. Joan keeps adding to a large box of thank you notes and letters from customers who have been extremely happy and grateful when Jim has restored a family heirloom watch, some of which the customer had previously been told, by others, that the watch could not be fixed. Customers find out about Jim’s expertise watch repair mostly by word of mouth from other satisfied customers. Jim and Joan have friends who own jewelry stores in other nearby towns, and they refer their watch repair customers directly to Ricotta Jewelry.

Another interesting aspect about Ricotta Jewelry, is the building itself. The Philipsburg Historical Society has records showing that the front portion of the store dates back to the 1830’s (possibly the oldest building left on Front Street). However, the building was originally located on Pine Street, down from the Schoonover corner; and at the time, it was owned by Samuel Way and used as a shoemaker shop and Squire’s Office. A map dated 1861 shows that the building had been moved to the corner of Laurel and Front Street and used for a store by Daniel Barret. A map dated 1897 shows the building at its present location where it was re-modeled and owned by William Miller, a merchant tailor. Two extensions have been added to the front of the building over the years.