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Center Story #1

John Fish Jewelers: Never a Dull Moment

John Fish Jr. and Steve Fish are brothers. They have worked together at the legendary John Fish Jewelers at Commercial Center all their lives.

Their father, John Fish Sr., originally opened the business 69 years ago, and it continues to succeed to this day. Prior to opening, John Fish Sr. taught at Rancho High School here in Las Vegas.

“Dad said a teacher’s salary wasn’t enough money for a growing family, and that’s why he took a chance on the jewelry business. He hired a watch repairman, but otherwise, he was self-taught,” John explained.

The brothers say they LOVE their work. They started at their father’s jewelry store as youngsters. Steve Fish even remembers as a 13-year-old in 1976 sleeping overnight at the Commercial Center store with his Dad when the concrete and steel vault for the business was being built and the store renovated.

John Fish Jr., the older brother, remembers being a 14-year-old working at the store. He was confident that his father had taught him “everything,” so he was not hesitant about greeting customers.

John recalls, “Some customers said no thank-you because they wanted to deal with Dad; others were very nice.” John never looked back. He continued working at the store after school and on weekends. He majored in Business Administration in college, knowing that he was ultimately going to work in the jewelry store.

Steve also majored in Business Administration, but he had some thoughts about working in Finance after graduation, even having various job interviews. However, before finally deciding upon his career, he, too, opted to join the family jewelry business.

To this day, John Fish Jewelers continues to be family run. In fact, Steve and his wife Janis have four children who have worked in the business. John and his wife Pilar have five children, and they, too, have worked in the business. Steve’s daughter Stephanie is also a full-time employee at the store.

Though originally the store was left in equal shares to all of John Fish Sr.'s five children, three years ago John and Steve bought out their siblings and they now co-own the store. It's open every day but Sunday, and one or both of the brothers are on hand every day.

Steve notes that the store still does a great deal of business in wedding and engagement rings. As an example, he recalls one family with eight children. One of the parents was a student of their dad's when he taught at Rancho High School. It turns out that seven of the eight children in this family bought their engagement and/or wedding rings at the store.

Although John Fish Jewelers has been in Commercial Center for almost five decades, the store had several other locations between its 1955 founding and the move to Commercial Center.

One of those locations was a shopping center in what is now the World's Largest Gift Shop location at Sahara Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard. Why? "Dad left the shopping center for the Commercial Center when an adult bookstore moved in next door."

John Fish Sr. died in 1996. His wife, Elaine Fish, came to the store daily after her husband died until she passed away in 2013.

In addition to the aforementioned engagement and wedding rings, an important part of the business is custom jewelry pieces and showcasing estate jewelry. The store also advertises itself for jewelry and watch repair, appraisals, custom design and manufacturing. Business is good, say the brothers.

Always with an eye to the future, today's up-and-coming jewelers can also learn the business at John Fish Jewelers. In fact, John is a GIA Gemologist and, for the last 20 years, he has run a school there that teaches students the ins and outs of the jewelry business. A three-and-a-half-month course costs \$10,000. A nine-month course costs \$22,000.

Among their thousands of customers over the years, have there been any notable ones? You bet. John remembers famous clients such as Elvis Presley (his dad's customer who even bought a ring from him), Whitney Houston, Fats Domino ("We made all his jewelry"), Dean Martin (John remembers as a teenager making a delivery to him at a local pool and seeing him surrounded by lots of beautiful

ladies), Marie Osmond, Evil Knievel, Jerry Lewis and others.

The most recent unusual customers? The FBI and DEA have both visited the store for appraisals of jewelry recovered during arrests.

For Commercial Center's John Fish Jewelers, never a dull moment.

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