

# MJSA JOURNAL

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FROM THE EDITOR

## Buy American

**W**hen I get a compliment on my wedding rings, I can't stop at thank you. I have to tell people that they were custom-made for me by American jewelry designer Paul Klecka. And that they're platinum. And that he designed them in CAD and had them cast. And that the satin finish with high polished edges is one of my favorites on this particular white metal because it looks gorgeous and wears well. And...see, I could go on and on. In fact, I can't imagine *not* having a story to tell about who designed my wedding rings, and how and where they were made.

But I have been part of this industry for 14 years. I live and breathe this stuff every day. What about the average consumer? Does she even care?

That's what I wondered when I was working on this month's issue, which turns the spotlight on jewelry manufacturing in the USA. To get a better idea, I decided to reach out to some of my friends on the retail side of the industry. Surprisingly, all noted that consumers rarely ask where a piece of jewelry is made—but when they are told that a product is "homegrown," it means something.

"Consumers are very impressed when I tell them pieces are manufactured in the U.S.," says Daniel Gordon of Samuel Gordon Jewelers in Oklahoma City. "Brands like Tacori and Jeff Cooper train our sales staff to make the point that their merchandise is made here." His staff explains how the jewelry is made, and that while an overseas piece may seem more affordable, the real issue is quality—shortcuts may have been taken to ensure that import's low price point. "When I bring it to the consumer's attention, it helps them make a decision if they are strongly considering a purchase," Gordon adds.

Susan Eisen of Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry and Watches in El



*Don't skimp on quality.*

Paso, Texas, takes a similar approach with making the distinction for her clients. "Most people do not ask us where our jewelry is made, but we make a point of telling them that it's made here—especially the things we create ourselves in the shop," she says. "We definitely use it as a sales tool to distinguish between the quality of the gemstones, the thickness of the mountings, and the manufacturing techniques. Although things from overseas may cost less, we prefer to deal as much as we can with good ol' American-made goods."

Even multi-store retailers that carry a higher percentage of overseas product feel the need to tout the origins of

their American-made brands. "It definitely is a plus to be able to say 'Made in America,'" says John Green of Lux Bond & Green, which has locations in Connecticut and Massachusetts. "Where possible, we say it and it helps close sales."

As an American, I find some comfort in knowing that, given the choice between a foreign-made wedding ring and one manufactured here in the States, at least the purveyors of these three retailers would be encouraged to buy American. That's not to say that all jewelry made offshore is low quality, but much of it doesn't hold a candle to respected American brands.

If I were a member of the American jewelry manufacturing community, I would take away an important lesson from this: Quality is one of the key differentiating factors between your goods and low-cost offshore competition. It's what retailers hinge on to sell your product, so don't skimp on it. Give the consumer a piece of jewelry that stands the test of time—one that she will be proud to wear, and even prouder to tell others that it was made, by you, in the USA. ♦

*Miguel Korthiel Snyder*