

Santa Barbara DAILY SOUND

Local Jeweler has Personal Touch

By Ray Estrada
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From being a house cleaner to a jeweler, Calla Gold's life has been one of enthusiasm and passion for what she does.

"I have a passion for designing a little piece of art for someone to wear," said Gold, who boasts some 2,000 clients along the South Coast. "I like to tell people how hoop earrings make their smile look better...or how a certain color can make you look more exciting."

Gold has lived on the South Coast most of her life, attended area schools and worked at local businesses. She still was a teenager when she became a businesswoman - the first female Fuller Brush saleswoman in the tri-counties.

"I was ringing doorbells and greeting customers with a friendly "Hi! I'm your Fuller Brush man," she said. "That always got a laugh, and broke the ice."

About a year later, Gold combined her experience with housecleaning, knowledge of cleaning chemicals and ability to communicate to launch her first business - Cinderella Services House Cleaning Extraordinaire - when she was 19 years old.

Gold hired several employees for Cinderella while continuing to sell Fuller Brush products. She married, but the hours were long and left little time for herself or new husband. "My business was a success, but I couldn't imagine running Cinderella Services forever," she said.

After three years, she had enough, rethought her goals and sold the business.

A friend recommended that she list what she liked about the last two businesses. "I liked going to the nice homes, dressing well and meeting all the interesting people that I ordinarily wouldn't have met," she said.

For two weeks, she followed her friend - a "jeweler without walls" - around on her appointments and felt the confidence to strike out on her own. About 27 years ago, she started Calla Gold Jewelry and became another jeweler without walls.

"My jewelry went everywhere I did," Gold said. "Soon my banker, optometrist, hair stylist and grocer were my customers." In a short time, many of her old Fuller Brush and housecleaning customers knew of her new enterprise.

"The master plan had been to start the business, run and expand it for two years and then sell it," she said.

Three years went by quickly - then four, five and six years. "I was hooked and loving it," she said. Around the third year, she canceled her subscription to Entrepreneur Magazine and began reading National Jeweler. "I'm not going to sell my business," she said.



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Designing jewelry really prompted her career as a jeweler. “I felt calm and happy while working on a design,” she said. “It reminded me of my much younger self, who could spend hours with a pencil and paper happily drawing horses.”

“I’ve been visiting my clients in their homes and where they work ever since,” she said. “I don’t mind saying that I’m an expert at helping people like you select the right pieces of jewelry.”

The piece a client chooses should compliment that person’s physical appearance, unique personality and lifestyle, she said.

She takes genuine pleasure in helping someone choose the jewelry that they’ve always desired, whether it’s a unique ring featuring diamonds and other gems, Italian designer chains and bracelets, or wedding rings, which are her specialty.

“I design more wedding rings than anything else,” she said, while displaying some of her creations called “stackable rings,” which are a little easier on the knuckles.

“While my passion is designing custom and unique pieces of jewelry, I get special satisfaction in solving problems with those neglected and troublesome pieces of jewelry that you may have relegated to the darkest depths of your jewelry box,” Gold said.

“On more than one occasion, I’ve been called the problem-solving jeweler,” she said. Calla Gold Jewelry sizes rings, solders broken chains, restrings pearl necklaces and restores family heirlooms.

She said she encourages customers to wear their heirloom jewelry because it will have more meaning to the people it is passed onto if children see their parent or grandparent wearing it.

Gold is a member of the Santa Barbara chapter of the National Association of Business Women Owners, or NAWBO. “I enjoy meeting with successful, intelligent businesswomen,” she said. “I just love them.”

She also speaks at jewelry conventions as a sales trainer, and at South Coast organizations on “Revitalizing Your Jewelry Wardrobe,” and “Discovering Your Best Look,” based on her magazine series.

She is working on a book about her work, which may be published next year.

