

Much More Than Gold

Metals, Gems, and Creativity Shine at Goldsmith Silversmith

By Jackie Byers

If you want to add sparkle to your life, visit Goldsmith

Silversmith at 1019 Howard Street. Dwaine Ferguson and his staff have been designing and selling beautiful jewelry in the Old Market since 1974.

Dwaine was originally an architectural draftsman, which is what

he studied in college. For extra money, he made metal sculptures and sold them at art fairs. "My pieces were heavy, so hauling them to the fairs—or back home, if they didn't sell—was a pain," Dwaine recalls. "I had seen jewelry salesmen at art fairs in San Francisco. They had just a small case to carry. It made sense to me!"

Dwaine took a jewelry design class at UNO, and the instructor hired him as an assistant. "What I learned Monday through Thursday, I taught the students the next night," Dwaine says. "I lived in the Old Market in a warehouse—cheap rent. When this space became available, I contacted the family banker back home. I grew up in north central Nebraska. My family had been ranchers for generations, so our banker was happy to send me a check."

Dwaine has been in the jewelry business ever since, and he's proud to be a "destination jewelry store." His customers come from all over the United States and Europe. "We have customers who visit our store regularly, customers from the Old Market's foot traffic, and online customers who may not have been in the store for years." Some regular customers become friends. Some come in just to "ooh" and "ahh" over the pieces displayed in the lighted cases. Some of his customers are celebrities. Dwaine's favorite celebrity customer is Dusty Hill, a member of ZZ Top. They consider themselves "brothers of the hair." Dwaine has a photo of the two admiring each other's hairstyles.

Dwaine is a great conversationalist. As he chats with customers, he learns what they like in terms of jewelry design. "Some customers come in with heirlooms that they want to modernize so they can wear them. They may not be sure what kind of piece they want. But I am happy to design some pieces to give them a chance to see what their options are."

Dwaine recalls one customer who arrived with a round stone and no idea what she wanted to do with it. "I sketched a ring design for her, but she wasn't sure that was what she wanted. Forty-three designs later, she chose that very first design! Since I have more designs in my head than I will ever be able to create, I find this process quite satisfying."

Dwaine uses small, semi-transparent Mylar sheets for his designs. He starts with the basic design on one sheet, and then he overlays it with another sheet

that has additional embellishments on it. He tries different designs and gems until the customer chooses one. "If I'm designing a wedding ring to fit with an engagement ring, I sketch the engagement ring on one sheet, then the possible fitting ring on a second," Dwaine explains. "This way, I can create many design options without having to redraw the engagement ring each time."

Even if you think you'll never wear a certain piece again, Dwaine encourages you to bring it in and find out what's possible. One customer brought in the ring from her first marriage. Dwaine designed a spectacular rectangular pendant with the diamond off-center. "I wear that necklace all the time," she says. "Even my current husband thinks it is a great piece."

Dwaine also accepts jewelry in trade for his designs. "Customers might bring in several pieces and choose just one piece for me to re-create. They use the other pieces as trade to lower the cost." And at Goldsmith Silversmith, you can be sure you're getting something truly unique. "I have over 2,000 molds for the pieces I have made," Dwaine notes. "I always come up with fresh ideas for designs."

Goldsmith Silversmith employs several jewelry designers, including Dwaine's daughter, Danielle Morgan. Hele Spivak, Marisa Adamson, Heather Kita, Cassie Leaders, Linda Blumel, and Ray and Ila Kunc also have their creations on display in the shop and online.

You can see samples of each artisan's work online at www.goldsmithsilversmith.com. When you visit the shop at 1019 Howard Street, you'll meet Copper, the mascot. Copper is a handsome cat with eyes like topaz. He wandered in one day and decided to stay. With all the beautiful designs on display in the shop, you might just want to do the same! Let the designers at Goldsmith Silversmith help you find the jewelry design you may not even have known you wanted. If we can think it, they say, they can make it. Dwaine and the staff can be contacted at 402-342-1737. **WE**



Owner Dwaine Ferguson
and resident mascot,
Copper