



photos by JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Robin (left) and Ronnie Pearlman have put some added sparkle into the local jewelry scene with their Two Sisters firm.

Gem dandy

2 Sisters fashion's latest pearl

By Charlene Mitchell
special writer

Designers come and go as the crazy world of fashion and trends dictate what women will wear from one season to the next. But for now, at least, Two Sisters Jewelry is where it's at.

Those two sisters are West Bloomfield designers Robin and Ronna Pearlman. A sellout at a recent trunk showing of their handwork reaffirms what the two have known for awhile. Their ritzy-glitzy stuff has become the rage.

The latest trunk showing was at Quintessence in LaMirage in Southfield. It was the sisters' third such showing. But it had all the trappings of the other two.

THIS TIME THE SCENARIO went something like this: the doors are ready to open. In front, the Quintessence staff is frantically arranging trays of earrings and pins. In back, the Pearlman's calmly munch away on freshly baked cookies and sip coffee. Outside, some friendly jostling is taking place as customers vie for spots close to the front door.

The first customer through the door is — believe it or not — a male, clad in a tweed sports coat and blue Reeboks, who had purchased several items at the last trunk showing. He didn't waste any time making his selections.

"I know what I'm looking for," he said, not bothering to stop as he shopped. "I want some unusual things I can have around for gifts later on."

In less than 10 minutes, he had purchased three pins and other pieces he said he planned to give his teenage daughters, a special woman friend and his secretary.

"See ya next time," he said with a wave of his hand as he fought his way through the crowd to the front door.

AMIDST THE PANDEMONIUM, the two sisters were their usual bubbly selves, talking to customers about the various pieces of jewelry. The attractive pair were dressed in colors that have become their trademark: black and white — complemented with their own jewelry.

Ronna reached inside a glass showcase to pull out a 4½-foot pastel beaded necklace.

"Look at this," she said, "have you ever seen anything like it?"

"No," interrupts sister Robin, "because it's one of a kind. We searched everywhere for the perfect pink crystal to go with these pale jade beads. This is a piece of art."

If indeed the designers feel their work is art, so do the people who buy it. That day, for instance, something like 300 people jammed Quintessence to see what Two Sisters had to offer.

The necklace was bought by a woman who said she needed something special to wear to her niece's wedding. Quickly, Ronna worked Two Sisters' special magic. As she looped and twisted the long strand, the necklace suddenly took on a



With glitzy jewelry such as this dangling earring, Two Sisters has captured the public's imagination.

new look, emerging as a multi-colored choker with bits of crystal shining through and reflecting the other colors. Price tag: just under \$300.

Two Sisters Jewelry is far from commercial. Working together in the basement of their parents' home, the pair spend hours sorting, sifting and selecting just the right combination from piles of antique buttons, beads and fine pieces from antique chandeliers.

"The bulk of our time is spent gathering materials and deciding what can be used and what can't," said Robin.

Friends keep their eye open for gems, too. But sometimes their efforts backfire.

ONCE A WELL-MEANING friend brought them a very old rosary she'd picked up at an estate sale.

"Although the crystal was wonderful, we knew it would not be appropriate to break the beads apart. So we gave the rosary back," Robin said.

Rummage sales and flea markets are the best source of materials. Their scavenger hunts have

netted them hand-carved ceramic beads from the '40s, along with antique shoe clips, all in mint condition and ready to start a second life.

The reincarnation of old junk is providing the Pearlman sisters with a good and steady income. Requests for their merchandise come in faster than they can produce it. Current clients come first, a decision that pleases Silberman.

"I'm so glad we took them on in the beginning," she said of the artistic gamble.

"Our customers love their work, and we find it's just as fast as we get it in," added Silberman.

Store manager Ken Devey echoes her comments.

"Some of our best customers (the ones who stop in twice a week whether they buy or not), are now asking for Two Sisters merchandise just as they ask for Carlos Falchi or Judith Lieber. The name is definitely becoming hot in the northern suburbs."

Just before the store closed, a woman rushed in with both hands in the air — her fingernails still wet from a manicure from a nearby salon.

"I've got to see what's left," she said, breathlessly. Motivated to see a pair of dangly pearl and crystal earrings, she told the clerk to make out the bill and gift wrap them, she'd be right back to pick them up. It was a sizzling finale.

But don't get the idea that Two Sisters' success happened overnight. Far from it. For more than a year before they began selling, the two studied various fashion publications and experimented with various techniques in the arrangement of their gems and beads. The main idea was to avoid copycat versions of other designers.

When the day came to enter the marketplace, Two Sisters Jewelry got off to a tremendous start when Birmingham's prestigious fashion leaders Roz and Sherrn became its first big account.

AT FIRST, THE PEARLMAN'S loved having their things in a high-fashion shop like Roz and Sherrn because of the rare opportunity to have a steady stream of well-beeled and well-dressed women see their work.

But as time went on, the Pearlman's decided they could do better by spreading the goods around rather than dealing exclusively with one shop. The decision was to get into smaller specialty shops.

The decision paid off — even though it means the pair works seven days a week, up to 16 hours some days in order to keep up with the demand.

Now their goal is to do customized pieces for celebrities.

"We'd love to make something dazzling for Aretha Franklin, for instance," said Ronna, somewhat wistfully.

It may call for another change in marketing strategy. But that shouldn't be too difficult to handle. After all, being innovative is what got them into business in the first place.

Mutual funds let you branch out

So you've decided to invest in the stock market. Following some research, however, you probably will discover that this decision is only the first in a long line of difficult ones facing today's investor.

Today, more than ever, the variety of investment alternatives is mind boggling, as are the time, energy and expertise required to manage a successful portfolio of stocks or bonds. "Portfolio" is the key word here. Most wise investors choose to invest in several (at least 10 to 20) securities at the same time to lessen the risk of loss due to a single stock's failure.

What's more, if you've looked through the financial publications, you may be aware that with large institutions doing most of today's securities trading, the small individual has difficulty keeping up with clients unless they have an investment background and are prepared to devote hours to studying the market.

ONE ALTERNATIVE which many small investors are turning to is the mutual fund, and it makes investing in the market something even the newest investor often feels comfortable with. It's not surprising, therefore, that these are among the most popular investments around today.

A mutual fund is a collection of stocks, bonds or other securities that are selected and then managed on an ongoing basis by a professional management organization. There are a multitude of mutual funds available designed to meet the varied financial objectives of most investors.

Managing the fund by a professional portfolio manager involves buying suitable securities when they are undervalued and selling attractive investment opportunities and disposing of securities deemed to have reached over-valued levels. This is obviously an extremely difficult, time-consuming task for the average investor acting on his or her own behalf.

Mutual funds also offer the small investor the opportunity to invest in more companies than he or she could probably afford to go on their own. After all, these funds pool the money of hundreds of small investors, placing the funds in a highly diversified range of securities.

Different mutual funds have different objectives and are professionally managed accordingly. For example, some funds are designed to



lose change
Marty Redilla

provide investors with current income, while others focus on long-term growth of an investor's money. Depending on its objectives (and yours), your fund will invest in the stocks of newly formed companies, corporate bonds, precious metals stocks, blue chip stocks, government securities, tax-free municipal bonds, or other groups of securities.

ALL MUTUAL FUNDS, however, share this advantage: they help the small investor purchase a diversified portfolio without requiring a large initial sum. And the portfolio is selected by financial professionals. In short, convenience is a hallmark of the mutual fund. And, because of their built-in diversification, the funds also limit an investor's risk. All this is available for a minimum initial investment of as low as \$250.

To add to their list of benefits, mutual funds are also very liquid — easily convertible into cash. And often times, investors can choose to place their money in one of a "family" of mutual funds, shifting from one fund to another with a different objective managed by the same company as their financial goals change.

On the negative side, investors should be aware that all these benefits don't come without a price tag. Depending on the fund selected, mutual funds charge management fees, up-front sales fees, distribution fees, declining and liquidation penalties, and others. Investors should be aware that all these benefits don't come without a price tag. Depending on the fund selected, mutual funds charge management fees, up-front sales fees, distribution fees, declining and liquidation penalties, and others. Investors should look carefully at the objectives, investment style, performance, and costs of a particular fund before plunging in.

Marty Redilla is assistant vice president and account executive with E.F. Hutton & Co. in Plymouth. For more information on mutual funds, write Redilla, E.F. Hutton & Co., 459 Main, Plymouth 48170.

Photo adds snap to job application

Dear Joan:

I will soon be sending applications to a number of schools. I wonder if I should enclose a photograph? In the area of teaching the applicants are chosen by credentials and experience. I don't have a personal interview before being hired. I'm interested in elementary grades, and I feel a pleasant face is important when dealing with children. Do you think I'm out of line sending a photo with my application?

You are certainly not out of line by enclosing a photo with your application. You're not selling your looks, but providing more information with your application. A cheerful disposition and pleasant face are indeed requirements for an elementary school teacher.

Jobs are scarce, and the competition for them is stiff so you must do everything possible to make your application stand out from the rest. By all means enclose a photo.

Dear Joan:

I recently applied for a position as a receptionist/secretary at a law firm. I had the feeling I was over-dressed and too high fashion after arriving for my interview. How do you know what to wear for various jobs and interviews? This law firm is a top-rated team with very plush offices, and I felt they would be looking for someone with a sense of fashion. However, I didn't get the job.

Rule No. 1 when applying for a job of any kind: Dress conservatively. The only exceptions to this rule are rock bands.

Even though this law firm was in the high-rent district it was not looking for a fashion expert. Employers want stability and security projected by employees, first and foremost.

The suit is always appropriate for male and female interviewees. Women also are correct in a well-cut shirt dress, with or without a jacket. Always choose quiet colors for that initial meeting: for instance, gray, navy and beige. Remember: When in doubt, dress down, not up.

Dear Joan:

I work for a large discount store.



business etiquette
Joan K. Dietch

The director of the particular store I am with is stealing from the company. I don't mean paper clips and pencils. He takes big-ticket items and funds of money the employees contribute to the store for activities. In fact, he's terminating employees who do the same thing he's doing, only theirs is on a much smaller scale. What is my obligation to the company in a situation like this?

If you have proof someone in your company is stealing company funds or merchandise or committing any kind of illegal behavior against the company or the employees (and this includes sexual harassment), you are duty bound not to ignore it.

1) Talk to the person privately. Tell him or her you are aware of these illegal activities. Let it be known this is a warning, and you will not report it if the activity stops.

2) If the behavior continues, discuss it with three or four of the employees on your level and make a group decision on what action to take. You may want to confront the offender as a group and give one more warning.

3) If the behavior does not change, then report him to the senior management. A group of employees doing the reporting is the best way to go. There is strength in numbers.

4) If the culprit is in a position of authority over you and your group then quickly report the illegal behavior to the outside senior director.

Ethics seem to have declined in the business world, and one of the reasons for this is not facing up to male and female interviewees attitudes are hurting all employees and the job futures of everyone.

Joan K. Dietch of Rochester Hills is sales and marketing consultant who lectures on business etiquette and has written a business dress book.