



## Diamonds still best holiday bell-ringers

AP — Bells, bells, bells . . . the tinnabulation of the bells.

Tinkle or tinnabulation, "Jingle Bells" or "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" bells traditionally sound the holiday season.

"Bells wafting through the air are a symbol of Christmas," said Terry Mayer, a "bellologist" and president of the Metropolitan Chapter of the American Bell Association, an organization of bell collectors.

The group was organized in 1940 and has about 2,000 members. It is described as a "hobby" organization, "a group of friendly people who enjoy the romance of sleigh bells, horse bells, camel bells, and elephant bells, the shimmering beauty of glass and porcelain bells, the mystique of Oriental bells, the challenge of antiques, and the knowledge of contemporary bells."

Under the name of Terry Mayer, Mayer also designs bell jewelry in silver and gold. Holiday celebrators can literally go to the party with bells on. She's made bells for Tiffany's, the 21 Club, and actresses Liv Ullmann and Elizabeth Taylor, among others.

"VICTOR HUGO DEFINED bells as the 'opera of the steeples,'" said Mayer, "especially true during the holiday season when the melodious carillons are played with spirit."

"Jingle Bells," which gives us a feeling of merriment, was written in the early 1850s by James Pierpont of Massachusetts, where sleigh bells were traffic horns. The owners of sleighs were fined by the police if they didn't have their bells on."

Her re-sounding research has turned up some other clappers:

- The bells of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem ring at Christmas and are broadcast all over the world to symbolize the birth of Christ;
- Martin Luther is generally believed to have been the first to put bells and lights on Christmas trees;
- In Norway, it is said, feeding

cattle salt in a cowbell on Christmas Day is a way to assure that they will come home from the pasture of their own accord on summer evenings.

Does any of that ring a bell?

**OTHERS MAY PREFER** more traditional jewelry — diamonds.

In a recent survey of retail jewelers and suppliers, the American Gem Society predicted diamond rings will be their top-selling jewelry item this season.

More than 31 percent of the respondents forecast non-engagement diamond rings, while 17 percent said it would be colored stone rings that will sell best.

The American Gem Society is a non-profit educational association of jewelers, with about 3,200 members.

The best-selling men's jewelry item, according to the AGS survey, will be watches, picked by about 65 percent of the respondents.

A recent Diamond Information Center survey reported that 71 percent of today's men think it's socially acceptable to wear jewelry other than a watch or ring.

"Although an executive who shows up in a boardroom with an earring will raise more than a few eyebrows, men find jewelry more acceptable today than ever before," said Woodrow Fleming, vice president of the Jewelry Group, of Best Products.

He said sales of men's diamond jewelry at Best Products has more than doubled in the past three years and now accounts for 16 percent of the company's diamond sales.

The yearend holiday season is traditional the busiest season for the diamond industry, according to Lloyd Jaffe, chairman of the American Diamond Industry Association.

"Last year," he said, "Americans bought 18.3 million pieces of diamond jewelry valued at \$9.8 billion. Forty percent was acquired in December."

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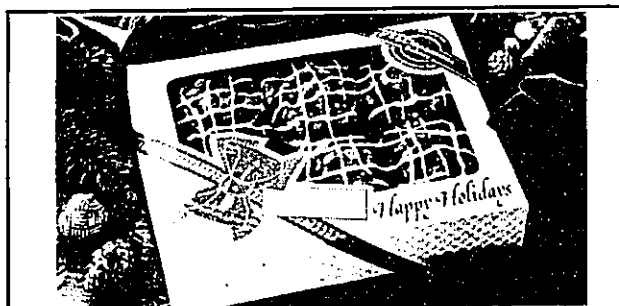
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