

Changing Styles Forces Longtime Mt. Kisco Jeweler to Shut Store

By Anna Young

A change in shopping habits continues to reshape the small business landscape in downtown throughout the United States. It will also soon mean the end of the line for a longtime Mount Kisco jewelry store.

Rose Garden Jewelers, located at 12 S. Moger Ave., will be going out of business on Friday, Mar. 31 after 23 years of operation, its owner Shirley Wang confirmed last week.

Wang said that in the last five to 10 years, the local business scene in Mount Kisco has changed and foot traffic for the once busy storefront has slowed significantly.

"Time is just not the same," Wang said. "I've done this my whole life; it's a hard decision but I feel this is the right time."

Wang started her career in the jewelry business in Hopewell Junction in Dutchess County, wanting to be a part of a downtown business district.

She spent five years there; however, she was robbed in her store at gunpoint, an experience that forced Wang to move her family to Westchester and eventually opening a store in Bedford Hills.

Aside from the life-threatening incident, Wang also realized that she needed to have a better education about the jewelry industry.

"There's so much knowledge you need to have if you want to run a jewelry



ANNA YOUNG PHOTO

Shirley Wang, left, the owner of Rose Garden Jewelers in Mount Kisco, with her daughter Shawei. The store will be closing in March.

business," Wang said. "If you see two blue gemstones you need to know what's genuine and what's synthetic."

Wang enrolled at the Gemological Institute of America where she received a comprehensive education on diamonds and colored stones along with technical expertise and practical skills to evaluate

gemstones. Upon completing the course, she received her degree from the graduate gemologist program, the most prestigious credential in the industry.

Wang then shadowed professional jewelers and attended courses at Jewelers of America, an association that helps advance professionalism and ethics within the jewelry industry.

Despite finding success in Bedford after moving to Westchester, Wang relocated to Mount Kisco because there was more foot traffic in its downtown at the time. Once in the village, Wang opened an old-fashioned, full-service store specializing in antique, Victorian art nouveau and high quality custom-made jewelry.

"Sometimes when I came back from antique shows customers would be waiting in line to get the first pick," Wang said.

Despite a loyal clientele over the years, a new generation has been replacing many of Wang's most valued clients. She said younger customers have gravitated away from antique jewelry styles. Wearing a brooch or a pin isn't in vogue these days, so they're interested in different types of jewelry establishments for their most important purchases, she said.

"I have spent a lot of time making this decision," Wang said. "Many of my customers have retired and moved away and it's tough trying to keep up with this

generation's style."

Wang will begin her retirement vacationing in Switzerland with her daughter Shawei next spring. After her return, she plans to consult on a part-time basis with some of her customers on purchases if they need help as well as do appraisals and repairs.

In the meantime, Wang is marking down her inventory hoping to sell it all during her remaining three months in business.

"This truly is the end of an era," Shawei said. "I'm just sad my daughters won't be able to grow up with this store like I did."