

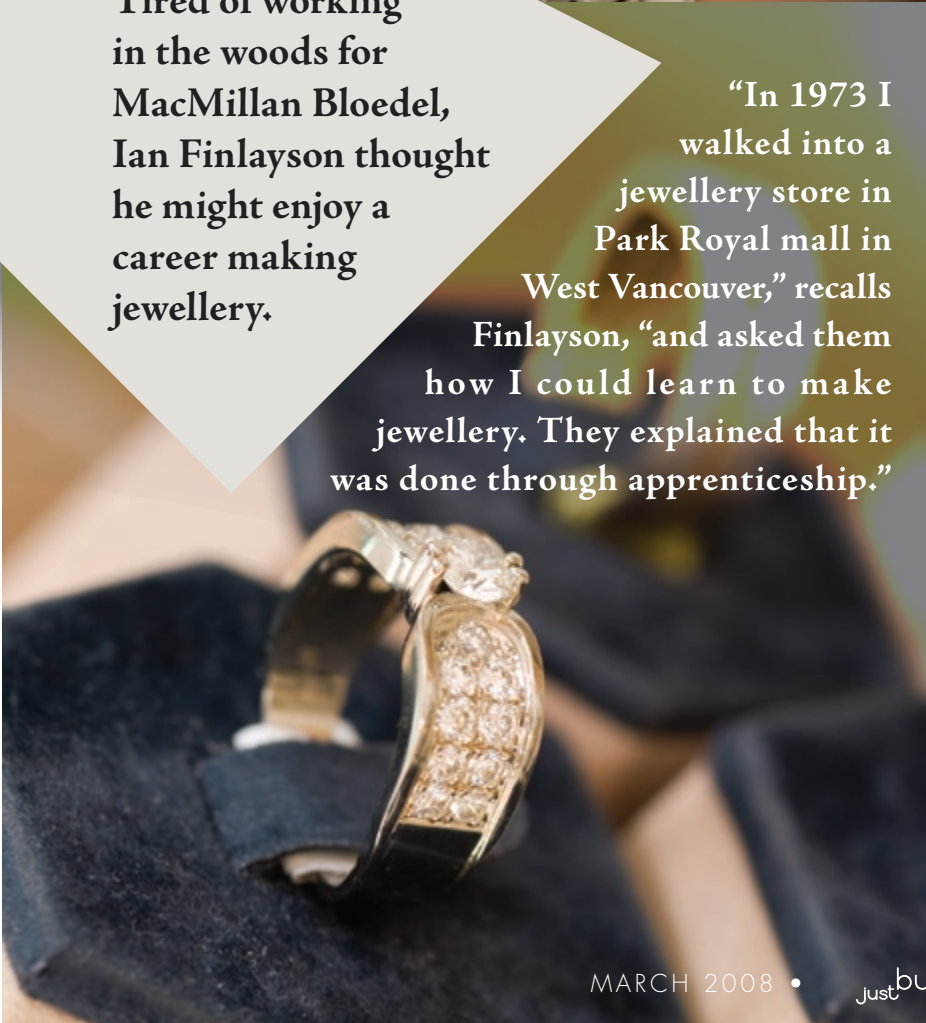


Hidden Business
A Gem of a Family Business

by Claudia and James
Redfern

Tired of working in the woods for MacMillan Bloedel, Ian Finlayson thought he might enjoy a career making jewellery.

“In 1973 I walked into a jewellery store in Park Royal mall in West Vancouver,” recalls Finlayson, “and asked them how I could learn to make jewellery. They explained that it was done through apprenticeship.”



Claire Finlayson



Darcy Gertz

Ian Finlayson

Sporting a fresh haircut and suit, he introduced himself to Tony Cavelti at his Vancouver studio. “Impressed by my persistence as I kept phoning and showing up at the studio, Cavelti agreed to take me on for a four-year apprenticeship. I was the only English-speaking novice in the shop and the first Canadian to finish a goldsmithing apprenticeship with Cavelti.”

In addition to learning how to handcraft fine jewellery using traditional European techniques, the training included one evening a week of school. “It didn’t

take long for me to discover that Cavelti was a renowned master jeweller and, at the time, a three-time winner of the De Beers Diamonds-International Award,”



Finlayson recalls. The prestigious design award can be likened to the Academy Award for film.

Following his exceptional apprenticeship, Finlayson heard about a position with Alois and Therese Lander, the only other western Canadian winners of the De Beers Diamonds-International Award. During his 15 years with the Landers, Finlayson expanded his expertise handcrafting exquisite pieces that were sold mostly through Swedish Jewellers in Vancouver.

Busy raising their three children during that time, Finlayson’s wife Claire laughs, “I didn’t really know what he was making at work until he started pointing to ads featuring his pieces in glossy magazines.”

In 1991 the Finlaysons moved to the Sunshine Coast to raise their family. “We opened Finlayson’s Goldsmiths and operated it out of our home. I did the books and looked after the customers while Ian managed the creative side of the business,” recounts Claire. “I just wanted Ian to be able to work at the bench and stick to what he does best, so in 1994 I enrolled in a jewellery-

design course at the Gemological Institute of America [GIA] in Los Angeles.”

The GIA is the world’s largest and most respected nonprofit centre of gemological research and learning. After completing the course, Claire took over designing the custom pieces for their customers, leaving Ian to pursue his love of crafting at his jeweller’s bench.

Not only exceptionally talented at jewellery design, Claire truly enjoys working with customers. “Purchasing custom jewellery is personal and can be expensive,” she attests. “I listen and learn about each customer’s vision and budget for a piece before sketching out ideas for them to consider.” Claire is empathetic to the customer’s feelings. “I understand that while they are waiting for the piece to be created they wonder if they are going to like it when it is finished. It can be a stressful experience.”

Happily, for over 15 years customers have been writing thank-you letters, embracing the Finlaysons in gratitude and bringing them wine and chocolates in appreciation. “We’re in the business of love,” explains

Claire, “creating treasured pieces that celebrate life events: a wedding, an anniversary or other special occasions.”

Finlayson’s Goldsmiths is a family affair. Their son Simon completed a four-year apprenticeship with his father and is a certified goldsmith. After working for a year with a West Vancouver jeweller to broaden his experience, he now executes many of Claire’s delicate designs. It seems only natural that Simon has inherited the best from each parent and enjoys both his craft and working with customers. Another talented goldsmith, Darcy Gertz, has worked with the Finlayson family for seven years.

Simon offered a quick course in gemology at the Finlayson’s home studio by explaining what he calls an “eBay tragedy.” He’d been asked to re-size engagement rings purchased on eBay by a young couple he knew from his school days. Simon advises against buying jewellery on eBay and it was soon evident why. Under a microscope, an untrained eye could easily see the cloudiness of the large diamond set in the crudely made ring. The diamond looked like beach glass – no sparkle, no fire. Flecks of dark debris, invisible to the naked eye, hid in the ancient gem’s core. Simon then presented a “VVSI” Canadian diamond for scrutiny. On the 10- point scale for clarity, this is a diamond that is nearly flawless. The diamond refracted and reflected light; it had fire. The lesson: bigger is not better when it comes to gems. Clarity, weight, cut and colour must all be factored into the equation of what makes a desirable diamond.



Simon Finlayson

The beautifully appointed home office and workshop with three jeweller’s benches are all that’s needed for the Finlaysons to focus on their passion for creating fine handcrafted custom jewellery. “By being small we don’t need much work to pay the bills,” Claire says. “Staying small allows us to remain exclusive,” Ian adds.

Bigger is indeed not necessarily better – with diamonds as well as family-owned businesses. JB



SUNCOAST RACQUET CLUB INDOOR COMMUNITY TENNIS

The spring of 2008 will herald the opening of the only indoor tennis facility on the Sunshine Coast. The two professional style courts will have state of the art lighting, radiant heating and will offer tennis players a safe, clean and friendly atmosphere.

The objectives of the club are the following:

- bring tennis facility membership to 150 to allow for future expansion of additional courts
- develop community involvement through school programs, clinics/lessons and public drop in
- register 3-4 tennis tournaments by the end of the year
- create potential rental usage for special events such as birthday parties, corporate events, fund raising tournaments and school grad (or teen) nights

The facility is replacing the “Bubble” which for 20+ years was on the site of the old Wakefield Inn. With generous support from the District of Sechelt, club members and the board of directors we are now approaching the final stages of completion.

Membership will be capped to the first 120 members to sign up and we currently have 95. Once the 120 is reached a waiting list will be drawn up, with the desire being to add two additional courts, once the waiting list reaches 150. Future plans may include squash and racquetball once the 3rd and 4th courts are completed and covered.

**As membership is limited please contact either
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