

BIRKS . . . *The Leader in Diamonds*

By CINDY LeBROCC

One of the oldest traditions handed down to us by early man has been the exchange of jewels, valued originally as sacred tokens.

Historians assume this was due, perhaps, to their rarity and to the inexplicable, mysterious light hidden in their depths, hinting at a strange divinity and supernatural power against evil.

This fascination has persisted even to our ultra-modern age, where surprisingly enough, young men still purchase the King of all gems, a diamond, for the women of their choice as a pledge of their love and an emblem of purity and good luck.

Mary Campbell, manager of Birk's Jewellers, Oakville has for many years been involved in assisting young people at this momentous occasion in their lives and has, through time, evolved some interesting philosophy invaluable to young engaged couples and their parents.

One is impressed with her deep concern for the young people and she is admirably backed by store policy. She states very firmly that this is the most important commitment a young man makes to a girl at the onset of the life they plan together . . . the first formal pledge of their love and affection.

If it should start off with misunderstandings, it could leave deep resentments. "I guess, through the years I have become a bit of a philosopher with a lot of horse sense," she comments.

"First of all, young people should speak very frankly to each other, especially in the area of the price of the ring. A diamond

counter is such a public place and some of the young men are still shy, I'm pleased to say."

Sometimes one must chat for a while and with tact, hopefully arrive at just what range of price is suitable. These youngsters embarrass so easily and one must be patient for the message to come through. "I really care about them, you know," she says.

Ideally, she feels is when the young man comes in alone to make his selection, knowing what he wants and what he is prepared to pay. One has to agree that it is foolish for a young man to go into debt, always remembering that it isn't the size of the diamond that is meaningful.

If he and his fiancée feel that she should make the choice, a wise course would be to have the young lady come in alone, make several tentative selections which would enable her young man to make his final choice and settle the transaction on his own. The girl is surprised and happy that she has had some part in the matter, even though the final say is his.

"I try very hard to make things as comfortable as possible, keeping the sentiment of the occasion at the forefront," says Mrs. Campbell. She adds, "They are usually so excited and I want everything to go just perfectly for them."

For instance, at Birks, they will hold a wedding ring for a young couple for as long as needed. The diamonds are fully guaranteed and, most important, the quality of the gem is explained very fully and carefully at the onset to the purchaser.

Latterly, there has been a great demand for larger stones at a lesser price, which has

led Birks to introduce seven grades of diamond. As a result, one might buy two diamonds of equal size, paying approximately \$4,000 for one and approximately \$900 for the other . . . the price, differing with the grade or quality of the gem. A Birks top grade stone is called a "gem quality."

An interesting point is that a ring with the stones in excellent condition may be brought back at any time and credited to another ring of greater value.

Custom-made mounts are available and may be made to your own design, subject to possible suggestions from the consulting gemologist. These mountings are understandably more expensive as only one mount is made.

Cast mounts are made by Birks several at a time so sell for less. If desired, a cast mount may be slightly altered to accommodate a stone. The most popular setting is the Tiffany setting, four or six claws.

The four gives the stone a square appearance and the six a round or floral look.

Mrs. Campbell cautions that a ring should be checked every six months against possible loss of a stone. These estimates are most carefully and comprehensively done for the customer, noting possible imminent weaknesses in the setting through wear.

The Birks' guarantee covers for one year against loss and damage and periodic cleaning is done as part of their service.

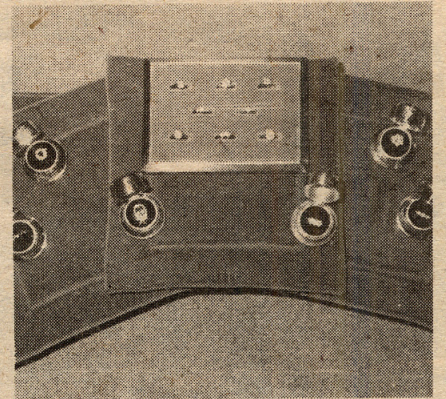
Mary Campbell knows that romance and business do mix, that sentiment and down-to-earth business sense in buying a diamond are the order of the day. What she adds and makes her so special is her own brand of "tender, loving care." Something

you can't buy!

In closing our brief look at diamonds, one tends to realize that as the years pass, we do not prize the jewels in our possession merely for their market value, their rarity, indestructibility, or even their beauty.

When you think of it, they are peculiarly personal possessions, centres of happy memories connected with the highlights in our individual lives, bringing us a special kind of happiness as the wearer.

Jewels are the most lasting of human monuments. They survive when all other records have passed away. They are a destiny.

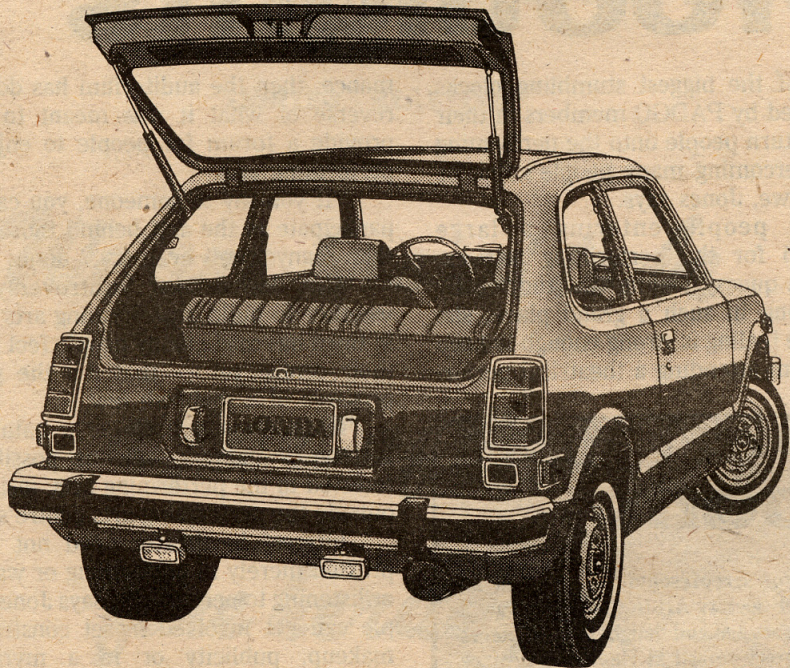


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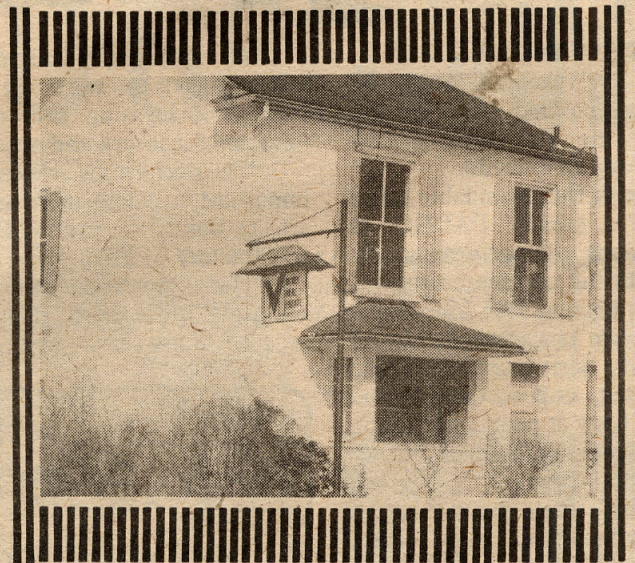


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