

History

A Gem of a History

For the Boyajians, making jewelry is a family tradition.

by Michaela Vattimo
Community contributor

William Boyajian of Port Royal Jewelers is a popular jewelry artisan and beloved philanthropist in Naples. What many don't know about him, though, is that his long-standing family business actually began in Collier County 45 years ago, with ties to the jewelry industry dating back to 1905 in West Hoboken, N.J.

Offering pearls and precious gems from the Mediterranean countries, customers soon realized that Boyajian jewelry was truly unique, especially in the U.S. during the early 1900s. Some members of the family also traveled to

the outback of Australia to mine for rare gems and stones that would later be created into one-of-a-kind designs.

Keeping to this tradition of mining and offering unique gems from all over the world, Leo Boyajian and his wife (William's parents) moved to Collier County and opened their first store on Marco Island in 1968. The busy jeweler and staff relocated to Naples' Fifth Avenue in 1974, naming it Landmark Gems LTD.

Once young William graduated from Gemological Institute of America and the prestigious Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., he returned to Naples and opened Port Royal Jewelers in 1992.



William Boyajian, center, and his parents at their Landmark Gems LTD store on Fifth Avenue South in 1976.

Photo courtesy of William Boyajian

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Photo courtesy of William Boyajian

From the Outback to Fifth Avenue

One of Leo Boyajian's many adventures was to Australia, where he became the first American to purchase a fine fire opal. He spent many months in the opal mines and bought stones directly from the aboriginal miners. When he returned to the U.S. in the late 1940s, he started his collection with the opals he'd collected there. In 1968, he opened Landmark Gems in Naples.

Clockwise from top, Leo Boyajian mining for opals in Coober Pedy, Australia, in 1948, just after World War II; a ribbon-cutting ceremony with the Chamber of Commerce after the re-imagining of Leo's company and the opening of William's first store on Fifth Avenue South in 1991; Leo Boyajian at seven or eight years old in New York. —Information provided by William Boyajian

Photos courtesy of William Boyajian



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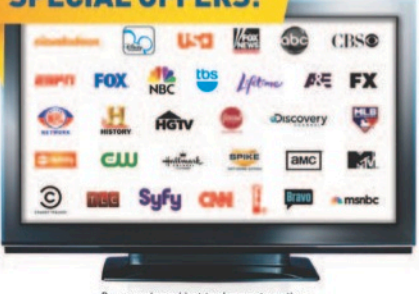
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