

YOU DON'T STAY IN BUSINESS FOR 30 YEARS WITHOUT DOING something right, especially if you're selling jewelry, an industry in which customer care is at least as important as the gems on display.

For Tony Tsirigotis of Park Jewelers in Lake Mary, September 13, 2014, marked his 30th anniversary providing high-quality diamonds, precious gems, and superb customer service. Jewelry has been Tony's infatuation for more than half his life, a profession he entered a day after arriving in the Orlando area from New York. A product of hardworking Greek immigrants, Tony was taught at an early age how to treat others with respect and was instilled with a strong work ethic.

While Tony understands jewelry is not something everyone needs to survive, he does recognize the allure and personal attachment people have to his craft. Jewelry leads to conversation. There is always a story. It makes people happy.

"I have a total passion for this," Tony says with a smile. "Happiness keeps me in business. I love making people happy."

Tony remembers his first sale 30 years ago like it was yesterday.

"I made my first sale...for \$350," he recalls, noting the transaction was the catalyst that launched his career. "The customer trusted me to help choose the right diamonds. I realized that I could do this."

But a business does not thrive for 30 years on passion alone. Unwavering consistency, offering a quality product, and exceptional customer service are the true cornerstones of Tony's longevity.

Tony is so consistent and reliable, in fact, some of his customers have no qualms waiting until the last minute to make a purchase before a special occasion.

"You will always see Tony Tsirigotis behind the counter," Tony says, referring to himself in the third person. "A customer may come in the day before or the day of a big event for that special gift, and they know I will guide them in the right direction."

Selling quality merchandise builds trust and keeps customers coming back. That's why Tony only sells diamonds that are rated to be the best in the industry.

Tony's personality and his passion for his chosen profession are on full display when it comes to taking care of his customers. For one thing,

there is no upselling at Park Jewelers. You won't even find the term in Tony's vocabulary. Whether your budget is \$200 or \$10,000, Tony will show you only items in your price range.

"We want people to come back and to come back for generations," Tony says, noting it's a thrill when a client who purchased an engagement ring returns with a son or daughter about to do the same.

"What a feeling that is for me."

When Tony's customers return, they'll always find the latest trend-setting pieces in the glass cases at Park Jewelers, but they are also welcome to drop in anytime for cleaning or maintenance or to have a new, custom piece designed from existing jewelry. Besides Tony, Park Jewelers has a full-time jeweler on staff with more than 18 years of experience to assist customers with jewelry maintenance and repair, watch batteries, pearl cleaning and restringing, appraisals, and ring resizing.

Diamonds, specifically, need maintenance as settings inevitably start wearing away.

"We do diamond settings while you wait,"

says Tony. "It's a relief for everyone. The customer doesn't have to worry about leaving their precious stones behind. If a ring is being custom-made, we make the ring and then ask the customer to bring in the stone at the end. I only need it for 45 minutes."

A by-product of Tony's longevity is his enormous customer base. He not only remembers names with mind-boggling accuracy, but Tony also relishes the stories behind each particular customer's visit to his store. They drive him. Tony revels in the gift-giving aspect of the business and the smiles it puts on faces.

He also understands the magnitude connected to each diamond engagement ring that leaves the store. Tony wants each one to be perfect.

"It's a huge step, financially and emotionally," he says. "It's the next step in life. To me, that's what has kept me in this business – happy occasions."

"People love jewelry," Tony continues. "They need it. It's insane what it does for people. I sold an engagement ring, then weeks later, the bride-to-be comes in with her fiancé and gives me a big hug and thanks me... Thanks *me!* How could you not love that?"

– Kevin Fritz



*Thirty years and thousands of diamonds ago, a young Tony Tsirigotis stands behind the counter at his first job in the jewelry business (circa 1984, Altamonte Springs). Three decades later, legions of loyal clients (and their children... and grandchildren) rely on Tony for his unmatched expertise and customer service.*

