



Three Decades Of Success End On High Note For

SUSANN'S
CUSTOM JEWELERS

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For 30 years, Denny Bales sold the quality jewelry that made weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and special occasions in Corpus Christi, Texas extraordinary. Susann's Custom Fine Jewelers was a destination store for customers who returned time after time. Even the recent economy hadn't dented the store's appeal.

So closing the doors was the last thing on Denny's mind—until his out-of-state landlord demanded a multi-year lease.

For Denny, who didn't want to move Susann's to a new location and didn't feel confident enough in the financial climate to be tied to a long-term agreement, the future took an unexpected turn. In February of 2012, he decided to close the store.

"We've really never had a bad year," he explains. "It would have been a lot easier had the last few years been crummy." He didn't rule out the possibility of opening a smaller more specialized jewelry store in the future. To do that, however, he had to maintain the integrity of Susann's relationship with its customers to the very end.

The answer: Wilkerson and Associates.

"When I first met the Wilkerson team at their headquarters, they took me on a complete tour and introduced me to everyone. I didn't think that many nice people could exist under one roof," Denny relates. But it was expertise that really told the tale. "They had this thing planned out before they got here. They were here from open to close—even ate their lunch in the store. They were very good at training our staff. They worked well with my advertising guy. They spent a good deal of time with our customers. They are the very best sales people I have met in my life."

The results have been equally pleasing. "The thing any jeweler hopes for is to eliminate inventory—especially aged inventory," Denny says. "Wilkerson and Associates exceeded expectations. We were a \$3.5 million store, and we did \$3.6 million in the first half of the sale. My older inventory was gone!"

Denny smiles, and pets his ever-present companion, Admiral, a black-and-white Great Dane. He'd realized early on that Bobby Wilkerson, Rick Hayes and the whole Wilkerson staff knew how to close a store better than he did. "The smartest thing I could do," he confesses, "was get out of their way."

Now, Denny Bales can continue his work with the Gulf Coast Humane Society, where he serves as president, and contemplate future business activities, confident that Susann's Custom Fine Jewelers ended its tenure on the high note it had maintained for 30 years. "We were pleased with the Wilkerson approach," he concludes, "and we were pleased with the bottom line. Very pleased from start to finish."



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