

# Bentley and Donovan go their separate ways...



But not before their going-out-of-business sale  
nearly doubles their previous year's sales volume in only nine weeks!



Tracey Bentley's career in retail jewelry began in 1989 when he worked with the owner of Tallmon Jewelers to learn and eventually take over the business when the owner retired. Mike Donovan joined the staff a couple of years later after shopping with his wife for an anniversary ring and remarking that the store seemed like a nice place to work. His wife's encouragement to inquire if they were hiring landed him the job and a future friendship and partnership with Bentley.

In 1994, the Tallmon owners offered to sell their business to Tracey and Mike, but after careful consideration and consultations, they declined the offer. Their attorney knew of another jewelry store for sale and Tracey and Mike decided to purchase LeRoy's Jewelry in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. The owner had recently died and the family wasn't interested in continuing the business. On April 8, 1994, Bentley Donovan Fine Jewelry was launched.

"We built our business on customer service," said Mike. "It's the only thing different you can offer your customers. Everyone can have the same inventory, but it's customer service that sets you

apart." Bentley Donovan became members of NE/SD Jewelers Association, RJO and JA, where Tracey served one term as president.

By 2006, with the business growing and prospering, Tracey and Mike decided to expand, more than doubling their showroom to offer greater merchandise selection.

Although the larger store continued to be successful, the business could no longer sustain two owners and was too much for one, so in 2009, Tracey and Mike decided to close the store and go their separate ways. They researched their options both on-line and by visiting other jewelers who had been through the experience and decided to use Wilkerson and Associates – the leader in transitional events for retail jewelers. Wilkerson came in, evaluated their situation and developed a comprehensive going-out-of-business sale.

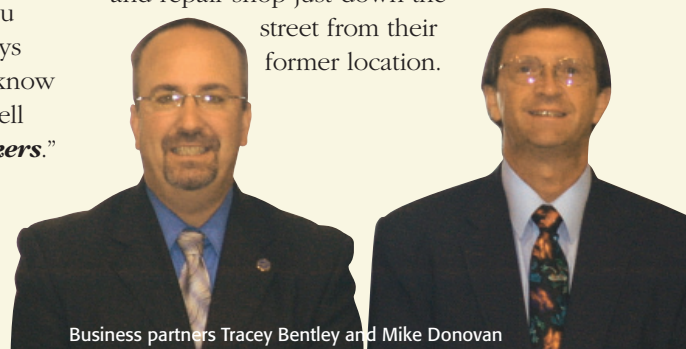
"The consultant team that Wilkerson assigned to us was a perfect match for our staff and our customers," said Mike. "Everyone took to them as if they'd been with us for years." Added Tracey, "You should do whatever the consultant says to do, even if you don't agree. They know what works!" He continued, "If they tell you to use sign walkers, **use sign walkers.**"

When word of the store closing spread, Tracey and Mike were overwhelmed by the community sup-

port and, to their delight, customers old and new rushed to the store in pursuit of fine jewelry at great savings. The Bentley Donovan reputation enhanced the entire experience because people already knew of their excellent history and their honesty.

The sale was a tremendous success and surpassed the goal set by Wilkerson. Looking back on the rewarding experience, Mike said, "With the help of Wilkerson, we nearly doubled our previous year's sales volume in only nine weeks!" Tracey added, "The weekly settlement made it much easier to know where we were at instead of having a large lump sum due at the end." Bobby Wilkerson, president, added, "We are delighted when we can bring hard working people to the next stage of their lives...when they can see the rewards of a lifetime of hard work."

Bentley and Donovan parted ways but will remain lifelong friends. Mike decided to leave the jewelry business entirely, while Tracey says he could just never get out of it. He plans to open a small jewelry store and repair shop just down the street from their former location.



Business partners Tracey Bentley and Mike Donovan