

Shop Talk

FAMILY JEWELS

Richard D. Eiseman Jr. is continuing the dazzling legacy in Dallas of his late father by offering high-quality, high-fashion pieces.

By Holly Haber

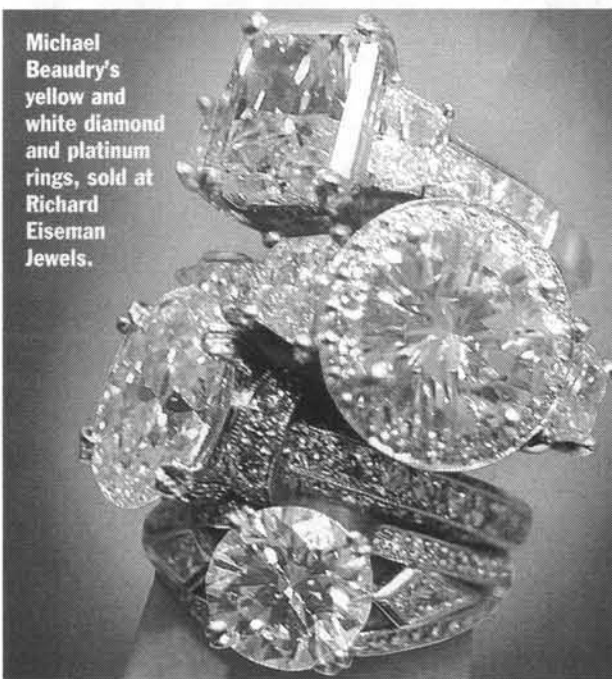
When Richard D. Eiseman Jr. doubled the size of his family's venerable fine jewelry store at Dallas' NorthPark Center last November, he did it with a liberal fashion strategy and a conservative fiscal plan.

"Now we can offer so many things that we couldn't before," Eiseman said, as he sat in one of two new private clientele rooms at the rear of the Richard Eiseman Jewels store. "The foremost part of our expansion was not to increase our business — it was to better service our clients and give them more to choose from. We still have got classic quality, but now we've got fashion as well, from Cathy Carmendy or Michael B. or Rodney Rayner and others."

Eiseman based the business model for the expansion on keeping the business profitable even if it suffered a drop in sales. But that's hardly likely since the past three years have been unusually strong for the company, producing annual sales exceeding \$10,000 a square foot, or \$13.5 million.

Eiseman was able to increase the store from 1,350 square feet to 2,950 square feet by leasing the corner store adjacent

Michael Beaudry's yellow and white diamond and platinum rings, sold at Richard Eiseman Jewels.



to his prime spot near Neiman Marcus. The fine jeweler never closed while its new half was remodeled to match the warm woods, pale marble and cream carpeting of the original store.

When it mushroomed seamlessly into the new space, Eiseman was prepared to showcase 35 percent more inventory — a fashionable assortment emphasizing colored stones and intriguing design.

"The whole palette has to be covered, and it has to be covered every day," Eiseman said. "So this gives us the ability to expand collections and have great depth in a collection."

The new lineup features dainty, colorful styles by Cathy Carmendy, who works with a range of minerals including turquoise, coral, ruby, tanzanite and aquamarine. Another new highlight is elegant vintage-style diamond and platinum jewelry by Michael Beaudry, who is known for bridal styles.

Eiseman also acquired a few Dallas exclusives, including bold jewelry glittering with large colored stones entwined with diamonds by British jeweler Rodney Rayner; organic fine jewelry by Mattioli of Italy and streamlined cufflinks and accessories by Dunhill of England.

The company sold 12 of Rayner's color-saturated styles

during the holidays, reflecting the increased interest in colored semi-precious gems mixed with precious metals and stones.

Another bestseller is Tahitian pearl jewelry by Cathy Carmendy in black, gray, pistachio and eggplant.

While jewelry is the mainstay, Eiseman has a healthy watch business focused on deep selections of six luxury brands: Cartier, Ebel, Baume & Mercier, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Rolex and Bedat & Co.

"The number of watch clients is the same, but the number buying multiple watches has grown," Eiseman said. "Watches are now a fashion item. A man can have a great evening watch, a great complication, a fun watch and a watch with style, and a woman can have platinum, yellow gold, jeweled and nonjeweled to go with her other jewelry."

Eiseman, 45, grew up in the business founded by his father, after whom he is named. He began organizing stock in the store when he was 13 and was selling Seiko watches at 14. "It's been 31 years since I've been playing in the jewelry store," he said.

His father started the business in 1963 by opening a leased fine jewelry department within Titcher-Goettinger department store in downtown Dallas.

The Richard Eiseman Jewels store, located at Dallas' NorthPark Center, grew last November from 1,350 square feet to 2,950 square feet.



Richard D. Eiseman Jr.

PHOTOS BY GEORGE HENSON

During the Sixties and Seventies, Eiseman expanded to a string of 14 leased salons within specialty and department stores before consolidating into Frost Brothers in 1980. When that company closed in 1988, Eiseman kept his store open within a fraction of the old Frost Brothers space at NorthPark while the mall shopped for a larger tenant. Mall owner Ray Nasher stored his renowned sculpture collection in the vacant space behind the jeweler, which Eiseman fondly recalls as a "private museum of Nasher sculpture."

After Barneys New York took the location in 1990, Eiseman moved directly across the corridor to its current spot. Barneys subsequently closed, and Tiffany & Co. now occupies the storefront across from Eiseman.

The younger Eiseman began to manage the business in 1990 as his father succumbed to Parkinson's disease. He noted with some pride and poignancy that he was 44 when the new expansion opened, the same age as his father when he started the company. The elder Eiseman died in 1996. His wife, Louise, continues her longtime roles as a community emissary for the company and charity fundraiser.

"The jewelry business to me is providing elegance, design, fashion and quality that will give lasting value and years of pleasure and be something the next generation covets," Eiseman said. "We've got cutting-edge design that can pass the test of time, and it does not have to be exceptionally expensive."