

Cut, Color, and Clarity

Diamonds to Match the Mood

By JAQI THOMPSON  
Emerald Staff Writer

Engagement rings have come a great way these last few thousand years—from a simple band of plaited grass to the platinum and diamonds of today. Wedding bands are more recent than engagement rings, and though of more sentimental value, they are of less material significance.

The quality and fashions of diamond bridal rings has almost reached a point of perfection today—at least in the diamond itself. The cutting of a diamond is done according to a mathematical formula, which results in maximum dispersion and brilliance. Less than a century ago, diamonds were cut to give the most carat weight. This created "lumpy" diamonds, as one local jeweler put it.

Today all jewelers agree the carat is the least important of the four "C's" of quality. Cut, color, and clarity are the other three. A diamond cannot show its beauty unless it is cut skillfully and precisely. Color and clarity are natural characteristics in a diamond

and can't be improved by man. The rarest diamonds are pale, pale pink. They cost five times as much as fine white, or colorless, diamonds. White diamonds—there are 200 shades of white—are the best diamonds practically speaking.

Current Styles

The three Eugene jewelers interviewed each had something different to say on the current fashions and styles of today's bridal sets. One believes today's young couples are repeating a trend of 40 years ago, and favoring rings with more than one diamond—that is, rings with small side diamonds, instead of a solitaire.

He also feels the fancier shapes—emerald, marquis, oval and pear—are becoming more popular, although the classic round still leads in popularity. These shapes cost no more to cut than the round.

In the lower price range—\$200 and under—he said he sold more yellow gold bands, but that white gold was preferred by those who bought higher priced rings.

This jeweler felt a one-third carat center stone was the most popular weight with University couples. The price of such a stone is not in direct proportion to the cost of a stone of a full carat, however, as the larger stones are scarcer which adds to their price.

Depend on Individual

As to a popular trend, or fad, he said there shouldn't be one. The style should depend only on the individual woman.

He also pointed out the importance of getting a die-struck, rather than cast, band. A die-struck band is superior in every way, including beauty, to a cast band.

A third jeweler also stressed the importance of the woman's hands in choosing a ring. "I look at her hand first," he said. He added there are about one-half dozen styles that are right for a particular woman.

He did feel, though, there is also a popular fashion in engagement rings. In his opinion, young couples favor the solitaire, and a simple, light style, with a white gold band. He thought the white gold harmonizes better with the "prettier" clothes of today than does the conventional yellow gold.

He said also that 25 per cent of the brides wanted a band that "twisted or twirled." These bands cost no more than the plain circle type.

He noted a trend of the last three years, repeating an old trend, of trios, or threesomes—a wedding band for the groom, too. Perhaps 30 per cent of the couples either buy a threesome, or else come back later to find a man's band in the same style as the bride's rings.

Most University couples spend about \$150 on a ring set of one-fourth to one-half total carat weight, but often the groom also buys a strand of pearls or a diamond pendant for the bride, he stated. This is another revival of a past custom.

Even though "diamonds are forever" they must be cleaned and

cared for so their brilliance doesn't dim, and so they won't fall out of their setting.

The ring should be taken to the jeweler's once or twice a year to make sure the diamond is still tightly set. If a diamond is loose it will turn itself around and gradually saw itself out of its prongs.

A jeweler will also clean the ring, but it is easy to do this at home. Just use a small brush, soap, water and ammonia, with a final rinse in alcohol to remove all traces of soap film.

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