

Merging Contemporary & Traditional

at Bradshaws, in Stratford

By JILL ELLIS-WORTHINGTON

Photos by TERRY MANZO

Shepherding a century-old business through economically challenging times could be a big challenge, but Jeremy and Carrie Wreford are up for it. In fact, the couple is actually enjoying the process of modernizing a venerated retail icon.

Starting as a fine china and crystal shop, Bradshaws was founded in 1895 by John Bradshaw. The Wreford family took over from three generations of Bradshaws in 1975 when Bill and Gordon, Jeremy's father and grandfather respectively, purchased the store.

Progressing beyond their roots is how Jeremy and Carrie are updating the store. "Reassessing lines in the store is a continuous process," explains Carrie. "Making sure we have the right assortment of products is a constant evolution."

Part of that evolutionary process has involved adding jewelry to the store's stock and deleting some items that have gone by the wayside over the years. "If



- 1 — Proprietors Carry & Jeremy Wreford
- 2 — Authentic Models Sky Hooks
- 3 — Railway Spike Knives



- 4 — Michel Design Works Soaps & Lotions
- 5 — Umbra Venus Jewellery Stands
- 6 — Pottery Canoes by Susan Robertson
- 7 — Hand Bookends by Indaba
- 8 — Bodum Bistro Blenders



we'd just continued as a crystal and china store, in this marketplace we'd be in very big trouble," explains Carrie. "It's just not in demand the way it used to be."

Choosing to add the Pandora Jewelry line was "the best decision we ever made," according to Carrie. It is now their best selling line, and customers who come into the store to buy bracelets, charms and watches notice the wide array of other products and become Bradshaws shoppers.

Besides having an innate understanding of the business, having grown up with the Bradshaws' heritage, Jeremy brings his experience as a set designer in the film industry. He has a great feel for what works visually for displays and the store in general. Carrie worked in the Roots Canada head office as a graphic artist, so her strength in marketing is paying off for Bradshaws.

Maintaining their offerings of quality kitchenware is an emphasis for the couple. Presently, Emile Henry and Le Creuset are top-sellers, but the continuing trend toward home cooking and entertaining has convinced them to look at adding more to feed the growing demand for distinguished products. With an open concept design of kitchen/living room spaces the norm in contemporary houses, home cooks don't want ugly pans and worn tools on display for all to see. "We stock items that look good and are very functional when you buy quality," says Carrie.

She adds that more people are following the European habit of "buying once and having it (cookware) forever." This is a motto that the Wrefords can get behind, as they "curate" all the cookware and kitchen



9 — Menu Jewellery Trees
 10 — Bohemia Crystal Hand Made Glass
 11 — Belvoir Fruit Farms Cordials
 12 — Once Upon a Tree Serving Boards & Bowls
 13 — Assorted Salad Bowls; 14 — Turkey Hill Maple Syrup



items sold at Bradshaws. Admitting that they have “an embarrassing amount of cookware,” the Wrefords love to cook, and many of their personal favourites are offered at the store.

Travelling extensively, the couple use their trips as research and for professional development. “In Paris or London, or wherever we travel, we are always going to culinary stores. Or when we dine and something is served in a vessel we really like, we take note,” says Jeremy.

Though the core of Bradshaws will always be its Ontario Street store, according to Carrie, the duo knows that the world is quickly moving toward web-based shopping. In September of last year, they launched their online store. “This is a huge opportunity to service our current customers and gain new ones instead of opening more (bricks and mortar) stores,” says Carrie. “This will be a big push for us.”

Recognizing that the introduction of Wal-Mart and Target into Stratford’s retail mix will change its complexion, the couple emphasizes that whether customers are once-a-year visitors from



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the U.S., folks from southwestern Ontario that visit during the theatre season, or locals who stop in weekly, providing excellent, personal customer service is top of mind for the Wrefords. “There are lots of places where you can go and buy a knock-off, but the shopping experience is very important and we want to give our customers the best experience they are going to have.”

15 — Breville Espresso Machines
 16 — Quality Serving Tools, Utensils & Gadgets



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