

JOHN FORD AWARDED PLATINUM HONORS IN CLASSICAL DIVISION OF AGTA'S SPECTRUM AWARDS

Shannon SoRelle | Courtesy Photos

The phone rang early Monday morning October 21 at John Ford Jewelers located on what we call the little apple, Galveston Island. The call was from the big apple, Manhattan to be exact, from the American Gem Trade Association and they wanted to speak to John Ford. The call was answered by his assistant, Tammy Deem, as he was on a long distance call. She got John's attention as it was the AGTA calling and they needed to speak to him right away. She asked the caller, "Good news?" The immediate response, "Very good news!"

Ford said he was just speechless when the caller identified herself and congratulated him on winning the AGTA Spectrum Platinum Honors, Classical Award for a black opal and diamond ring he entered into the competition a month earlier. The only response he could get out was "thank you, that's incredible please email me a copy of the press release."

Anyone would be at a loss for words given the fact that a Spectrum Award is called the "Oscars" of the jewelry industry. Hundreds of pieces of jewelry from many of the top designers in the world are entered every year into the competition. Each year the AGTA assembles an expert panel from different disciplines in the jewelry industry to judge the competition. The judging occurred during October in New York. The winners were publicly announced to the world on October 21. Later that same day, John got his call from Manhattan at an exclusive reception held for the press. There was more good news for John as jewelry insider and Editor of Jewelry Trends from the Red Carpet to the Jewelry Box, Cheryl Kremkow, placed her vote for the second piece of jewelry John had entered, an elaborate black opal and diamond necklace for the Editors' Choice Award.

Q&A WITH JOHN FORD

What this award meant to you personally?
"It's a tremendous honor for me personally and professionally to win a Spectrum Award. This award is what every jewelry designer in the world hopes to win, I am very flattered."



Photo by Irene Amiet

When did you start competing in the Spectrum Awards?

"This was the third year I submitted an entry into the competition. About four years ago I was in a group at the AGTA trade show in Tucson looking at the Spectrum Award winning designs when a friend in the business, that likes my designs, asked why don't you ever compete? You could win. I laughed and said hell in the last 25 years I've hardly ever taken pictures of my designs let alone tried to enter a competition. Then the gasp came you don't have a design catalogue of all your designs? No sure don't."

So you decided to enter, what happened over those three years?

"The first design I submitted was a black opal naturally shaped in the outline of the state of Texas, it was a hit in Texas but seen as a bit too regional for national and worldwide consideration, regardless it's one of my all-time favorite pieces. In the second year I decided to continue promoting my

newest collection, called the Lightning Ridge Collection, and entered a beautiful ring made with a free form Lightning Ridge, Australia black opal. The ring I designed was in 18k yellow gold with diamonds. I was a strong contender for a 2013 award, but was told it just fell a little short. The ring was the chosen by Vanessa Voight of Q+A Co. UK as their vote for the Editor's Choice Spectrum Award and I was very proud.

For the third year, this July, I bought an opal in Lightning Ridge, Australia that just had character, like looking at the earth from space. When I saw it, I knew it was going to be my Spectrum Award entry in platinum and accented with many diamonds. The second piece I entered this year was an opal and diamond necklace that I designed for a very special lady in Galveston that I routinely manufacture exquisite pieces of jewelry for. This lady has incredible jewelry instincts and working with her has made me better at what I do. I can't thank her enough! When the distinguished Cheryl Kremkow, picked her piece as her vote for the Editor's Choice Spectrum Award it was gratifying."

John, the ring is named "The Maxine" ... please tell why?

"The ring was named in honor of Maxine O'Brien, the manager of the Lightning Ridge Miners Association Ltd., in recognition of all her hard work and dedication promoting Australian Opal. When I asked her opinion on naming the ring the Maxine or the O'Brien, she choose "Maxine". I joked with her that when the ring won she would have to come to AGTA Gem Fair to see me receive the award."



John and his son Christopher with Shannon Barrett and Brendon Lunn - the heart and soul of Lightning Ridge true opal miners.



John Ford and Maxine O'Brien, manager of Lightning Ridge Miners' Association.

The big question, how do you think the award will affect your business?

"This recognition puts me on the national scene as a jewelry designer and manufacture of fine jewelry. The exposure I will receive both nationally and internationally in fashion and jewelry publications will be unprecedented. I have a wait and see attitude, but I intend to continue to keep designing unique pieces of jewelry and position my collections on a more national basis. This is essentially what I've done since I've as we exhibit at twelve or more jewelry shows a year around the United States."

Well, I hope this doesn't mean you're leaving the little apple?

"No, it just means I will be traveling more! I'm sure on most Monday nights you will be able to find me at the Press Box wearing

shorts and sandals conversing with my friends. Galveston is home."

John Ford Jewelers is located at 2114 61st Street. Visit JohnFordJewelers.com and lightningridgecollection.com to view more from the black opals, or call 409-740-1463.