

ABOUT ME

My first jewelry-creating experience happened in 1982, while I was working at a jewelry supply company in Albuquerque, NM. As I assisted customers, my curiosity was piqued, and I began asking questions about the stones and tools and metals—what they were for, how they worked. I saw the raw materials walking out the door, and the finished product walking back in. Wow! I read a couple of books. Hmm... Then I got a little piece of brass, cut it into two triangles, hammered them with a ballpeen hammer, poked a hole in the top of each, and hung them from earwires. Bang—I was hooked!

I made jewelry for myself, my friends, my family. Simple at first, then more complex as I learned new techniques and became bolder in my creative thinking. I loved it! But before too long, I had more things than I could possibly wear, and my loved ones, I think, were beginning to dread gift-giving occasions in fear that they would have more little white gift boxes to open! In April of 1984, Contemporary Concepts was officially born when I applied for my state tax license so I could start selling some of my creations.

Modestly, my sales began to increase, but I still had my job with the jewelry supply company. I slowly started to realize that although it would be tough to give up a steady paycheck, my hobby had become my passion, and I was going to have to take the plunge and devote my full time to doing what I really loved. In the summer of 1986, I moved to Florida to pursue jewelry making and the craft show circuit. By this time, I was working less and less with sheet metal, and more and more with wire and gemstones. This, I felt was where my creativity could really flourish. (The truth of that thinking is up to you!)

For more than six years, I did craft shows full-time—about 45 shows per year. I took a couple of weeks off in the summer, and a couple of weeks off at Christmastime, and the rest of the time I was on the road every weekend. I traveled the length and breadth of Florida. One summer I went to Michigan and Ohio for several weeks to do shows. Another summer I headed to New England. I was young, I loved what I was doing, and I'm infinitely grateful for the experiences!

Now I'm older. I have a husband and a little boy. I still love what I'm doing! I still do craft shows a couple of times a month (with the help of my most excellent mom Penny Smith, and my dear friend Norma Johnson—check our show schedule on the News page to see where we'll be next). But now Contemporary Concepts has a permanent home as well. In December of 1992, I opened a retail store in Historic Cocoa Village (www.cocoa.org). It's 500 square feet tucked in the corner of the courtyard of a beautiful building called the BelAire Arcade, built in 1924. The Village is several square blocks of buildings dating back as far as 1890, lining the west bank of the Indian River. Brick-paved sidewalks, tree-lined streets, quaint old-fashioned street lights. Lots of art galleries, gift shops, and antique stores. A huge park with an amphitheater and playground. If you're ever in the area, you must come and spend a day with us! My shop is even located right next door to the best fine-dining restaurant you'll ever treat your tummy to—Café Margaux (www.margaux.com).

Best of all...I don't get up and go to work in the morning; I get up and go play!

Janne Etz