



CHAD ELLIOTT  
Oceanside Jewelers, Oceanside, CA

# Feature Friday – Chad Elliott

## Welcome to Oceanside Jewelers!

My business card says Owner and Master Jeweler, only because adding janitor, bookkeeper, and maintenance worker didn't seem appropriate. A typical day is a combination of bench work and setting, counter sales, office work, and then maybe some flasks get invested and put into the oven. In between those tasks, I work with my awesome staff to make sure that they have the support they need. One of my staff members is a GIA® Graduate Gemologist. The other is a young college graduate who majored in art. They both bring two different ways of looking at things in the business which keeps it very progressive and creative.



We are jeweler owned and operated, providing a unique experience where we work very closely with the customer in designing a piece. We start with raw ideas and then build those concepts into sketches and notes that the customer can understand. From there,

we usually build a CAD model, presenting the customer with a way to visualize the piece and adjust it prior to outputting, if needed. The customer can again participate in the design

process by perhaps seeing the physical model or roughcast piece before setting and finishing. Our customers are always amazed at how much it takes to make their item. We also have a very, very large inventory of loose colored gemstones and diamonds on display; people love to look at the multitude of colors we offer.

Most of our sales are custom bridal and engagement. We have a good internet presence in our area, allowing our customers to see what we do and the quality of work that we provide. Through the web, they can get a feel of who we are in comparison to other jewelry stores. They can read reviews and can bring into our store their ideas and the confidence that they will receive a quality product.

Also, jewelry repairs are very important to our business. Repairs provide a small, yet steady stream of cash flow. This can really help in times when other areas are not performing and then becomes a bonus when business is booming.

### **Chad Elliott, Master Jeweler**

I was born in New York City. However, I grew up in Miami, Florida, spending a lot of time in the ocean – fishing, scuba diving, and surfing. I started in the jewelry store and workshop at a very young age. Two very close family friends owned a couple of discount



jewelry stores in Miami, where my mother worked part-time. As a young boy, I would spend a few days a week there after school playing with the tools. My first income came from tips for wrapping gifts during the holidays, but I really was more interested in being in the workshop. One day the manager asked, “Hey Chad, can you size this ring?” So began my career as a jeweler. By about age 12, I was working as a paid

apprentice in the jeweler's room.



I briefly left the industry and moved to Puerto Rico where I worked in El Yunque, which is the rain forest of Puerto Rico. Upon returning, I went back to work for the same family jewelry store. A few years later, I opened a jewelry and art gallery on South Beach in Miami. After about 5 years, I vowed to never own my own store again and moved to Los Angeles. It was in Los Angeles that I began to work on larger, flashier, more ornate pieces. This experience really helped to broaden my abilities and my confidence as a jeweler as I produced and sold larger items. Approximately five years later, I had the opportunity to move to the area that I live and work in now, a small coastal town in North County, San Diego. I now have a wonderful wife and two young boys. I spend a few mornings a week volunteering at their school teaching art.

Personally, I do not like to sell. I like to facilitate the transactions. When a customer has an idea, my job is to share my knowledge and help to figure out how to best accomplish their vision. This could include helping them to scale their dream idea into something more practical or affordable by showing them what quality of materials fit their budget. I really enjoy the satisfaction of seeing the end result of hours of bench work and doing my own bookkeeping helps me sleep at night.

### **Why I Love My Job**

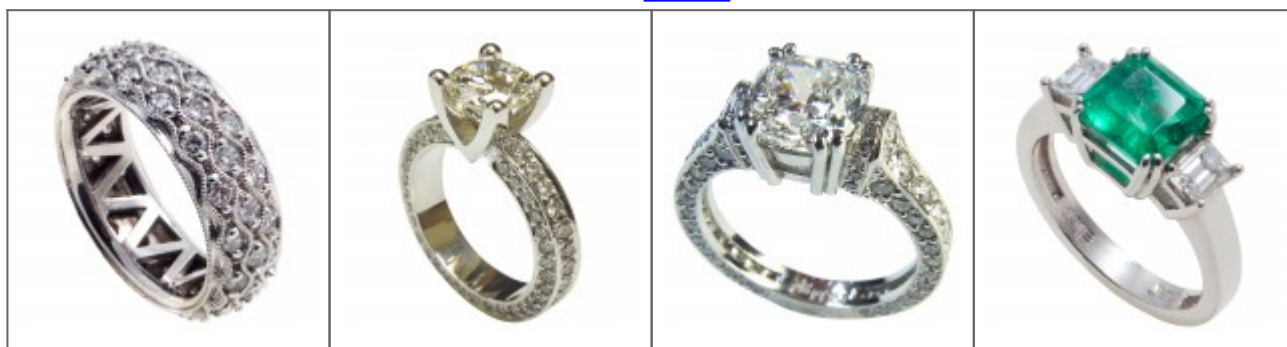
It is really wonderful that every time I deliver a piece of jewelry, it's a happy moment for my customers as well as myself. More often than not, the item is more beautiful than they expected. The look of elation, smiles, and in many instances, the hugs, is what I love best. People never forget who made their most cherished pieces. I've had the opportunity

to work on many different kinds of projects for many different customers. I was fortunate to win an AGTA® Spectrum Award and a PGI Platinum Honor in 1990s before moving to California to work with a number of designers. While working with these designers, I manufactured many items for their celebrity clientele.

There is one really unique item and experience that I will never forget. A customer brought in a disc of glass with a prism of the Star of David in it. It was created by Yaacov Agam, an Israeli sculptor and experimental artist best known for his contributions to optical and kinetic art, who had given similar prisms to Elizabeth Taylor and Nancy Reagan. The client wanted me to design a simple frame to hold the prism, so I offered up a simple, modern lorgnette or monocle in gold and silver. The client said, "Wow, great. Let me show Agam and make sure he approves." A few days later, she returned with artist himself.

What really made this experience memorable was when I showed him a piece of art I made in high school that I kept in the back of the store. It was a corrugated assembly of two images that showed one or the other depending on what side it was viewed from. The technique bears his name and was a popular design for billboard advertising. He loved to see that his concept was taught in U.S. public schools and also really liked the frame I designed.

A few special pieces I've created • [Visit our website to see more](#)





## Operating Old-School

Being in the business for thirty-three years, you could say I am an old-school jeweler. When the [GRS® Benchmate®](#) became popular, well, that was technology back then. GRS® [Gavermax®](#) was pretty high tech when I was young as well, so when I got my first [laser welder](#) around 1999, it was like total magic. Now with [CAD](#) and [3D printing](#), if you don't change and progress, you just can't compete. Sure there is a value to the old school tools and techniques, but today's young jewelers may never know it or ever really need it.

Once, there was an eternity band with trillion cut diamonds that I fabricated completely by hand. This was almost 20 years ago when CAD/CAM was not an option. Even laser welders were new at the time, and I did not have access to one. The inner and outer rails were both cut from strips of platinum with triangular azures cut in the inner ring to line up with the individual triangular galleries of the outer ring with each individual gallery at a slight angle from the next. I made a third ring that would be placed between the inner and outer ring during assembly to maintain a perfectly even gap while I soldered each prong on individually. Once one side was complete, I removed the spacing ring and soldered prongs on the opposite side. Setting this ring was a bit challenging,



with each individual prong holding the points of three separate trillion diamonds. The final diamond wound up



to be a

sort of keystone that needed to be trimmed to fit into the ring. It really was a totally awesome project. It was challenging, fun, and probably something that most modern jewelers will never have the opportunity to do by hand. Especially since they can just build and print one with CAD.

When it comes to Stuller, I grew up working with the company. They were always around the shops that I worked with. There were always items being ordered, whether they were findings and clasps for manufacturing, heads and mountings for counter sales, or simple bands. There was always something that they had that was easy and quick to get.

## **Words of Wisdom**

At the end of the day, a jeweler's job is truly never done. There is always more to do: customer jobs, new models and ideas, inventory, and stock work. It seems that there is always a reason that you can stay in the shop and work late. Learn not to. Enjoy your life. There will be work again tomorrow.