

The Norton Shows

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Dear Exhibitor,

Thank you for a good March show. Attendance, as we projected and registered, consisted of about 12,000 buyers. Almost 11,000 buyers pre-registered and the balance registered on site. Most exhibitors had a good show; some, thankfully, had a "great" show.

Comments ranged from exhibitors reporting Saturday was their "best first day"; while others stated their records indicated they had sold more March 2010 than in March 2009. Several new exhibitors were very pleased with show results and are returning for all our remaining shows in 2010. A new exhibitor from Kentucky, Jamie Dugger, "All Bling Things", stated she had a great show and had developed a good repeat customer base from The Norton Shows, plus she had learned a lot about how to set up her display and price her merchandise. She further commented that vendors and buyers were so nice to her and that she will now be a permanent exhibitor. Kimberly, a long time exhibitor (almost 23 years) who owns Golden Ribbon in Atlanta along with her husband, James, wrote that 95% of the buyers they merchandise at The Norton Show place re-orders!!! following each show. Kimberly continued that she and James meet, on average, five or ten viable new-buyer companies from Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, etc. In addition, Kim stated that Norton exhibitors also source from them. Importantly, Kim adds that The Norton Show is the only market they have kept except the Vegas-show because they really do have a significant percentage of buyers who re-order who like to preview at The Norton Show, stipulating that a greater percentage of buyers want to take their merchandise with them. Kimberly, in essence, concludes that sales in November are a "big plus" and covers all profits, insuring the need for March, June and September participation. To be inclusive, some fine jewelers sold very well, some did not. Let's all hope that our economy recovers soon and that markets will improve for our fellow exhibitors. We're all in this together.

We are pleased to announce and welcome you "home to Gatlinburg and the Gatlinburg Convention Center" June 5, 6 and 7 and all future shows. As we stated prior, we are "returning home" as a result of overwhelming requests. Exhibitors miss the camaraderie, convenience of restaurants and motels "across the street", entertainments and also reports their sales were best in Gatlinburg. All wrongs have been righted, so we'll move on positively. Tom and I just returned from a meeting at the Gatlinburg Convention Center, efforting to expedite move-in and move-out and finding extra booths, etc. We will have a two day move-in, hopefully from Thursday, 10:00 am to 8:00 pm and Friday, 8:00 am to 11:59 pm just as before and Tom will work with exhibitors who bring tractor trailers, large trucks and vans, staggering arrival and unloading. Two full days for move-in will help traffic flow smoothly and eradicate wait time for set-up. We are confident we'll be fine and we'll all be happy. Most buyers are elated! I might add the city of Gatlinburg is elated also! We're excited!

The Norton Shows are placing exhibitors on floorplan now. Please submit contracts and deposits and indicate where you'd like to be located before we are sold out. We are monitoring floorplan and trying to keep exhibitors apart, or at least, one exhibitor to an aisle, who carry similar merchandise. Doing so is not always possible but we do attempt. Exhibitors, please list what you will be selling so that we might place you correctly and bring only what you tell us you want to sell.

The internet and technology has drastically changed the way we all conduct business, promoters, exhibitors and buyers, affording us new opportunities to advertise, communicate, etc. We are excited over a promotion/outreach which we, hopefully, will initiate later this year, online with an entertainment newspaper, dealing with our fashion shows, similar to the ones we promoted in the past. We'll keep you informed as events unfold.

The Norton Shows will always send you a confirmation prior to each market, showing Booth Numbers, Booth Fees, Deposits Paid and Balances Due with Set-Up Info, Motel/Hotel Discount Rates accompanied by Floor-plan, designating your Booth Location. If we have an e-mail address on file, we will send via e-mail Show Exhibitor Kit, Electrical and Telephone Forms, Market Guidelines and further info dealing with your participation with The Norton Shows. On occasion, we cannot reach you via e-mail as your domain refuses us access. Please check your domain to make sure you are open to The Norton Shows, nortonshows@gmail.com. If you prefer we mail set-up info to you, please advise us. Exhibitors may also go to our website, www.nortonshows.com, Exhibitor Page and download all info. We recommend the last option.

SUMMATION FROM TOM NORTON, derived from life experiences. Tom, an owner of The Norton Shows with Linda and Nikke, is a savvy businessman with an impressive business and leadership background: prior co-owner with Linda of eight retail stores in Gatlinburg and partners with a Knoxville location for over 20 years; past Mayor of Gatlinburg, a City Commissioner for many years and served on Charter Board of Directors of the Gatlinburg Convention Center. In fact, Tom served as Mayor during the planning and building stages of the Gatlinburg Convention Center, traveling throughout the United States, researching convention centers and finding a design to fit into our land mass. And, many years ago, Tom was a struggling young businessman, husband, father, friend, who also planned, studied, figured and worked very hard to “make ends meet and to be successful in the business world”.

Tom ruminates: The past five years has brought new challenges to our business world as we know it today. 2010 is a new day for all of us. We must change with the changes. One of my favorite football coaches, Johnny Majors, often used a quote while addressing the University of Tennessee’s football team, “We must circle the wagons!” Are we at that point? Customers are buying differently today than they did yesterday. Exhibitors set their booths up differently. We must improve on all aspects of the show business. It will only get better when we get better.

Walking through our March show, I was surprised to see signs printed on cardboard and mounted on racks. Tables were not draped and some people were selling out of open boxes. Customers are not, and I quote, looking for this type of atmosphere. Closing and booth breakdown time is 4:00 pm. Many exhibitors broke down early and started packing at 2:30 pm with buyers still on floor trying to buy. As reported to me by a buyer: Our buyer asked an exhibitor for a particular item who replied that she had already packed.

Business is too badly needed for us to conduct business in this manner. “Let’s circle the wagons!” and be the best market we can be. Set up your booths in a manner the customer will find appealing and appreciate. Doing so will only make you successful as well as The Norton Shows.

Linda, Nikke and I look forward to welcoming you back to Gatlinburg and the Gatlinburg Convention Center. You are the main part of our success. We wish you Good luck and Great Business for the remainder of this year and beyond. And, business will “get better when we get better”.

LINDA’S SUMMATIONS: There are a few things for which we wish to apologize. Firstly, we had about eight cancellations at the last moment, leaving empty booths in the middle of show floor. Exhibitors had already set their booths, preventing us from filling in the empty spaces, correcting the problem. Secondly, about six exhibitors did not properly drape their booths, extending drape to floor, but instead used small coverings or plastic, resulting in unsightly booths. Thirdly, about four exhibitors posted handmade signs in their booths. Some of these we removed, some we asked exhibitors to remove. Regardless, all three concerns will not occur again. And, exhibitor, if you are the offending party, make corrections in your operation to follow The Norton Show guidelines as we shall vigorously enforce at future shows. **EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY: PLEASE DRAPE ALL TABLES IN BOOTH, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE, WITH ATTRACTIVE COVERINGS. WE WILL PERSONALLY CHECK EACH BOOTH. THOSE WE FIND NOT IN COMPLIANCE WILL BE DRAPED BY SHEPARD DISPLAY COMPANY AT EXHIBITORS’ EXPENSE. CARDBOARD BOXES MUST BE STORED AND COVERED. NO DISPLAY AND SELLING OUT OF CARDBOARD BOXES. NO CARDBOARD SIGNS.**

WARNING: We received two complaints of rudity concerning the same exhibitor. We realize the exhibitor was experiencing difficulties but that's no excuse. **WHY BITE THE HAND WHICH FEEDS YOU?** The Norton Shows work very hard and expend time and money to attract Buyers to a friendly, hospitable environment. We've, over the years, heard complaints about other markets and their rudity. Those markets are either out-of-business or on their last legs. Rudity in business is a death sentence.

Exhibitors at our March market were checked for illegal merchandise. Authorities were looking for counterfeit designer copies of jewelry, ladies' handbags, sunglasses, etc. Two exhibitors had illegal jewelry. Tom and I had checked one of the booths and had spoken to the exhibitor during the November 2009 market and the exhibitor had assured us that he did not carry illegal merchandise. The exhibitors were fortunate that legal charges were not filed but who knows, perhaps charges will follow. No illegal purses were found but we shall continue to watch this. The Norton Shows **EMPHATICALLY, REPEATEDLY STATE THAT ILLEGAL GOODS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.** Exhibitors, please tell us WHO is selling fake, illegal merchandise. Don't cover for those exhibitors who harm your business by contributing to circumstances which will impede your sales.

Now, about Golden Ribbon's listing of states from which they receive business. Buyers come from Tennessee hugely, next, Kentucky, then both the Carolinas and the Virginias, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana, then a nice pocket from Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, a grouping from Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania, followed by Kansas, Arkansas, New York, Colorado, Michigan, Texas, etc. and a representation from Canada, the Caribbean islands, and Central and South America. Their buyers from Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois are not by chance. The state of Tennessee, Sevier County and the city of Gatlinburg advertise our cities and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park very heavily targeting these states via television and print as their populations are within a day's drive of Gatlinburg and, then, we, The Norton Shows, come right back, double dip, also targeting these areas by advertising and invitation. We leave nothing to chance, we are working for you in these states.

We include the following personal formation to reiterate and demonstrate, our business background and experience, insures that we understand retail and wholesale business. We can identify with exhibitors who are experiencing difficulty. We understand GOOD days and BAD days, GOOD shows and BAD shows and mediocrity. We understand working hard to make money, to pay bills, to stretch our monies. We've been there, done that. When we were young and owned multiple stores, we were factored and paid our bills early to ascertain discounts. Not all! We couldn't pay everyone early or, on occasion, even on time; many companies gave us dating and worked with us because our orders and re-orders were large and important to them. We opened and closed a very expensive store, but, non-profitable, in a Knoxville location. We bit the bullet and it didn't taste good. But, we *paid* all our bills. We understand GAINS and LOSSES. We understand ups and downs in the retail and wholesale market. We understand the pleasures and difficulties of our industry. Reference "factoring". Who is "factored" now? Is "factoring" viable now? Most stores can't afford this now. They don't have the dollars-to-buy that we used to budget into our needs and inventory. Many storeowners can't afford to buy minimums. They want to purchase what they hope to sell; then, they'll reorder. And that's where we come in. That's our niche. The Norton Shows and YOU, our Exhibitors, offering merchandise cash-and-carry, in the amounts storeowners want to try, to purchase. Don't limit their amounts. Help them. Advise the stores about what sells best, what they'll need to reorder. Create the marketplace and you will reap benefits. And, give the storeowners receipts. Many, many times, storeowners phone us, trying to locate the particular exhibitor who sold rhinestones! We don't have a clue! It's a needle in a haystack situation.

On one occasion, Gatlinburg experienced a huge flood. The Little Pigeon River flooded its banks and encompassed the Parkway. Canoes and small boats were the mode of transportation. Inventory stored in our basements, stacked high up on shelves, was destroyed. We did not lose hope. *We did not cry foul and ask for discounts for goods already delivered to us. We didn't blame the weather man.* Instead, along with many of our young peers who also suffered monetary loss, we wrote each of our suppliers/companies/exhibitors letters, explaining to them our loss and asking if we could pay on our invoices monthly as we could not pay in full. All companies replied YES and were happy we had notified them so that they might work with us. In short, we paid our bills and kept our good relationship with our suppliers. WE ARE STILL LEARNING. WE ARE STILL RESEARCHING, STUDYING, WATCHING, LISTENING, TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO MAKE THE NORTON SHOWS MORE PROFITABLE, ENJOYABLE AND ATTRACTIVE FOR OUR BUYERS, OUR EXHIBITORS AND FOR US. No one has all the answers. It's a work in progress. One of our favorite sayings is this: *"Always work hard. Be on your toes. Watch out for a younger fellow or group to come along who'll work harder, who are smarter and more enthusiastic and who are hungrier than we are".*

Reference Tom and Linda's retail businesses many years ago. For about twenty years, we owned stores which were rated among the top ten gift boutiques/shops/galleries in America. We carried prestigious, very expensive Porcelain: Edward Boehm, Cybis, Ispanky, Granget, Rohm, Goebel, Tay, Capidomonte, Royal Worchester, Royal Dalton, Wedgwood, Richard Ginori, Bing & Grondahl, Royal Copenhagen,

Haviland, Picard, and many more; English Bone China; Limoges from France; Crystal: St. Louis, Lalique (we sold two Lalique tables and several chandeliers, Val St. Lambert, Daum, Pate Verre, Orrefors, Waterford, Swarovski, German cut crystal, etc.); Woodcarvings by the famed House of Anri; Italian Ceramics; Pewter by Don Polland and others; Western Bronze by Guilari; Contemporary Art Glass, including Dale Chihuly, Steve Correira, Charles Lotton, Richard Jolley, Mark Pieser, Harvey Littleton, Dominic Labino, Rob Levin, John and Kate Littleton, Vernon Brecha, Orient and Flume, Phoenix and hundreds more; Framed Art; LeRoy Neiman Serigraphs; Limited Edition Prints by the Leading Artists of the Day, John Ruthven, Richard Sloan, Richard Timm, Mary Rose Wampler, etc; Enamelled Art by Mingolla; Cloisonné and Plique le Jour from China; Golden and Red Imari from Japan; Exquisite French Faure; Home Décor and Furniture; Mirrors; Verni Martin Cabinetry from France and Spain; Executive Gifts; German Tapestries; Greta von Nessen (My sister and I sat many delightful hours examining and choosing beautiful Eastern European glass jewelry, cc 1920s, while learning details from the gracious lady); Exquisite 22 kt Gold Bracelets, Necklaces and Pendants from India; 14 kt Gold and Diamond Bracelets, Earrings and Necklaces and so many more lovely collectibles. We owned two boutiques and carried top of the line merchandise: Rudi Greunrich (sp) (Remember the evening gowns which dipped very, very low in the back; such a scandal); Betsy Johnson when she designed for companies other than her own (Linda still owns vintage clothing by Ms. Johnson who is now buying back her early designs); Givenchy, American Climax, Hang Up, Paul Ropp, Campus Casuals (Drexel Hoffman), Ursula of Switzerland; creamy, buttery leathered Ann Taylor purses, furs, leathers, swimwear. etc.

As for Linda and Nikke's background in the industry. Linda, with background of journalism and creative writing, worked at NASA for eight years as a Contract Negotiator's Assistant, converting astronauts' waste into drinkable water; followed by opening, owning, purchasing, ordering, selling, conducting/sharing responsibility for day-to-day operation of eight shops; and, now, trouble shooting and promotions for The Norton Shows. Linda's parents, Morton's Antiques, owned and promoted antiques shows throughout the South, teaching their children detailed minutia of operation. Nikke was a Sociology Major at UT and served as Executive Secretary to the CEO of the Gatlinburg Convention Center and Board of Directors in the early days, followed by creating and owning Norton's Gatlinburg Gift and Variety Show, LLC and is a hands-on mother of two sons, 18 and 15.

We urge you to join us! Band together as Exhibitors, working for the good of all, as Alexandre Dumas, French author of "Les Trois Mousquetaires", stated so many years ago, "All for one and one for all." Hang Tough! Never Give Up! Think Smart! Work Smart! Be courteous to fellow exhibitors and to our very important Buyers. It's dumb to be rude to others. Remember the Golden Rule, always treating people the way you'd like to be treated.

We thank you for your loyalty and participation in The Norton Shows. Please let us know how we may help you. We are a phone call or e-mail away.

Tom, Linda and Nikke