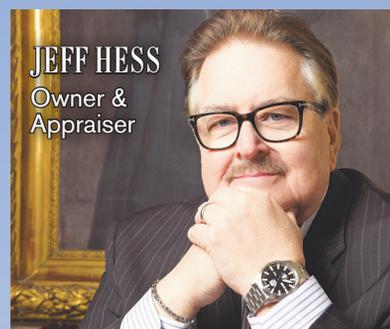


Pearls of varying origins

WHAT'S IT WORTH?



JEFF HESS
Owner &
Appraiser

NOT YOUR USUAL PEARL NECKLACE

On the heels of our recent whimsical article on the popularity of pearls worn by men (with included definitions of pearl beads, cultured pearls and rare natural pearls), we bought hundreds of strands of nice larger cultured pearls and 3 small strands of natural pearls from local residents (one natural strand we paid \$25,000 for as it was signed, numbered and large with original paperwork from 1937).

A local woman came in with the puzzling pearl necklace, pictured. The clasp looked

very early and the pearls were a bit misshapen. Katrina Hess, who earned a Certificate in Pearl Study from GIA, confirmed my hunch that these pearls might be natural. We urged our client to allow us to send them to GIA for confirmation. We do this for hundreds of people per year in Tampa Bay and Florida.

And the results were, well, a can of worms!

While GIA confirmed our suspicions that they were natural, they noted, "Various shapes, various mollusks, some saltwater, some freshwater and various colors and sizes."

Valuation was a nightmare. We called on several

of our natural-pearl collectors (remember: natural pearls, unlike Mikimoto and other cultured pearls that are seeded into the mollusk, pale in value compared to the far more rare, naturally occurring thick-nacred pearls that result from a small, random piece of irritant inside a mollusk); all passed on making an offer. Why? Because there was no consistency. While multicolored strands have brought up to \$50,000 for nicely matched, near-perfectly round all-saltwater or all-freshwater examples, this one was difficult to explain to an end user.

As stunning as they were, we only offered \$3,000 for them with an option to put them in one of our auctions for an auction estimate of \$5,000 to \$7,000 with a \$4,000 reserve (with us taking a 20% commission).

At the end of the day, the client passed, deciding to keep them instead of selling them.

We still wonder how this necklace would have fared at auction, since it had two rather rare (but small) natural blue color pearls.

If you have large or fine-quality cultured or Mikimoto pearls, or older pearls with platinum or old cut diamond clasps, give us a call or send us an email.



Always buying natural or Mikimoto cultured pearls.

Three former sothebyscom associates and five GIA graduates on staff.

Call or email us if you want to deal with Tampa Bay's leading expert on fine jewelry. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



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