

Rockledge's Berben has the badges

BY EMILY HEINZ

Correspondent

When police badges, medals, and plaques are given out, they are a symbol of honor and responsibility. Have you ever wondered who was responsible for making those items? If they were handed out in Philadelphia, it was most likely from Berben Insignia.

Berben Insignia has been in the business of making and repairing badges for one hundred years. Currently located at 820 Fox Chase Road in Rockledge, Berben Insignia is still a main supplier in badges and medals for the police and fire fighters of Philadelphia as well as all over the country.

The original owner, Wolf Berstein, traveled over from Russia. He was a medical doctor but due to language limitations he did not practice in the United States. He began Berben Insignia in 1908 in Center City on Jeweler's Row.

The company was then purchased by Jules Gelbstein in 1957. He maintained the company in the same location for five years.

It was in 1962 that Herman Aion purchased the business. He continued his business on Sansom Street before moving to 10th and Arch. When the city began building the commuter tunnel, Aion was forced to relocate to 12th and Cherry. Following that, the city began building the Convention Center and Aion then had to move again. Making his final move, Aion chose Rockledge to be the home for Berben Insignia. At the time, the company also made uniforms. In January 1987, Aion sold the uniform company and concentrated on working with the metals.

Herman Aion was a jeweler and a benchman. It is said he worked hours and hours at the bench perfecting his craft of jewelry making. After passing in 2001, Aion's daughter, Elyse R. Aion took over the ownership and running of Berben Insignia.

Elyse joined her father's team in 1996 and says, "It's the best thing I ever did." She has her master's degree in health education from Saint Joseph's University. After working for several years in health and wellness programs, Elyse decided to join the family business. Now she is the driving force behind it.

Elyse prides herself on the customer service of the company. "Once we get a customer, we rarely lose them." Berben Insignia is willing to go the extra mile for their customers. "We highly value our customer," Elyse adds. When calling Berben Insignia during work hours expect to speak to a person, not a menu. They are even willing to come in on off hours for special requests.

Not only do they specialize in police badges



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Elyse R. Aion of Berben Insignia in Rockledge, suppliers of badge, medals and plaques for departments and businesses.

and medals, but in addition, jewelry, plaques, awards, vanity plates, cufflinks, and more. What makes Berben Insignia even more unique is that they not only make badges but repair them as well. "A department will call with some broken badges," Elyse explains. "We will have them repaired that day, if not the next."

Many Philadelphia police use Berben Insignia. "Cops will come in with their id and I can solder their number on in five minutes while they wait," Elyse continues. In addition, the badges that come out of Berben Insignia

are guaranteed for life.

"We are a highly ethical company," Elyse says with pride. "We stand by all of our products. We are an authorized Blackington dealer. There are only a certain number of dealers that sell Blackington to the public. They are the oldest and best in the business."

It appears Berben Insignia is also one of the oldest and the best in the business. One hundred years later and still going very strong Berben Insignia can be reach by phone at 215-663-8787 or by their website, www.police-badges.com.