

Skeptic Finds His Fortune in the Truth About Pearls

BY GENEVIEVE FLAVIN

A skeptic in search of knowledge, Joseph Goldstone, 2710 Lakeview av., 20 years ago betook himself to the orient and harvested a \$3,000,000 a year business.

In advance of the adventure, he had spent five years in research on the cultured pearl industry, while assisting his father, a druggist in Bennett, Ia., a hamlet of 300 inhabitants. Here he had learned the "jewelry business" at a counter in the prescription center. Meanwhile, he had subscribed to trade trend reports issued by a New York concern.

Goes to Japan

"Those bulletins indicated great American interest in the cultured pearl, as a substitute for the more expensive oriental or wild gem. So, when I had saved \$4,000, I decided to take a trip to Japan to determine myself whether the cultured pearl actually was grown in the oyster, as purported, or whether it was merely a myth

concocted for the gullible purchaser," Goldstone said.

"I could not speak the language, nor did I believe that the cultured actually was developed in the same fashion as the rare wild gems. I knew one thing, however; I wanted

[Continued on page 8]

ORIENT SHOWS SKEPTIC BASIS FOR BUSINESS

Cultured Pearl Not a Myth, He Learns

[Continued from first page]

to get into some phase of the industry," said Goldstone, president of the Imperial Pearl syndicate, 5 N. Wabash av. [Chicago is world center for the industry.]

Centuries ago, the Chinese had discovered the culturing of pearls by inserting a small idol in the kidney, or pearl-bearing sac, of the oyster. But it was the Japanese who, 35 years ago, took over the commerce.

Take Train, Tram, Boat

When Goldstone arrived in Japan, the American commercial attache arranged an appointment for him with the late T. Kitamura, aged head of the Pearl Growers association. Kitamura spoke no English, and Goldstone no Japanese.

"Want to see a pearl farm?" Kitamura inquired thru an interpreter.

"Soon we were on a train. Next we transferred to a tram and finally boarded a motor boat for a trip to the farm in the Ise river. This was a series of poles reaching like planking over a goodly area. Suspended in series three deep into eight feet of water, were cages of pearl-bearing oysters," Goldstone recalled.

Learns How It's Done

"As we walked along the poles, I slipped and tore my leg," Goldstone said. "So we repaired to a nearby laboratory, where an oyster surgeon gave me first aid. Next he took oysters from the farm basket, which had been brought in, and made an incision into the oyster on the lab table. Then he squeezed out the cultured pearl, creamy-sheened, beautiful," Goldstone said.

Cultured pearls, he learned, take three to seven years to develop, after the pearl surgeon first inserts a minute round bit of pig toed crab shell into the pearl-bearing sac of the oyster. The irritant causes flow of a substance, which coats the nucleus and the pearl results. This is the same process as that which produces the wild pearl, which generally forms about a grain of sand that finds its way into the oyster kidney.

When Goldstone told Kitamura his ambition to enter the business, the Japanese gave him \$100,000 worth of gems to take home. No collateral was passed, no commitments demanded.

Revives Export Trade

"When I got to New York, I did not have the \$10,000 import duty, but a bank loaned me the sum," Goldstone said. Thus from 1933 until World War II, Goldstone's import

business totaled several million dollars.

During the war, there was no pearl business, but in 1947 Gen. William Marquette asked Goldstone to come to Japan to revive the cultured pearl export trade.

Gen. Courtney Whitney arranged an interview with Gen. MacArthur, who, Goldstone said, "knew more about the cultured pearl industry than any living authority I have met in the business. I remember the general said, 'A woman who does not own a cultured pearl necklace is like a Rembrandt without a frame.'"

Goldstone, operator of major pearl farms in Japan, said that since the reopening of trade, cultured pearls carry a bit of America in them. The crab shells used for impregnation of the oysters are obtained from the Mississippi river bed and shipped to Japan.

In 1950, Goldstone, with Dr. Herbert Prycerth, then head of the government fisheries in Beauforth, N. C., developed a solution for relaxing the muscles of the oyster, making impregnation easier, and reducing fatalities from 60 to 15 per cent.