

Exceptional one-of-a-kind gifts from Irreplaceable Generational Artifacts

Family members who are looking for memorable gift giving ideas have turned their sights from department stores and gift shops to the drycleaners. Not just any ordinary drycleaner, but to celebrity dry cleaner and consultant, Johnny Xirouchakis, of Manhattan's Aphrodite Cleaners/Crystal Services. Johnny has a comprehensive knowledge of fabrics and chemistry and has extensive, hands-on experience with numerous different kinds of materials.

Over the years, he has cared for heirloom gowns from three generations of brides. In recent years, Johnny has been sought out to restore priceless family treasures such as hand sewn quilts, military and scout jackets and uniforms, flags and vintage clothing of all types. Symbolic religious items such as prayer shawls, christening and baptismal gowns and communion dresses have all been brought in for Johnny to work his magic on.

Johnny has devised a program that is now dubbed his "CPR" approach. This stands for Conservation, Preservation, Restoration. In the "Conservation" stage your garment will go through a chemical stabilization process to assure that there will be no further harm. There are no changes to the design in this process; however, supportive backings such as fusible webbing or tulle replacement may be part of it. The original integrity of the piece is the object of this process.

When considering the "Preservation" process, reports Johnny, it is important to note that there are many myths about storing and vacuum-sealing gowns. The environment the gown is to be stored in is critical; it should be PH neutral in a museum quality box. All metal fasteners, zippers, clips should be removed for true museum type preservation. As always, it is best to consult a professional to have your garment cared for.

Finally, if determined necessary during the "Restoration" phase, the gown may be special bleached to restore brightness and remove oxidized stains or water rings. Sizing may be added to restore body, and oils may be added to restore luster. Panels may be changed, as well as repairing or replacement of original lace, buttons fasteners or anything within the scope of the original construction. Doing whatever is necessary to make a vintage or antique quality piece functional and wearable is the call of the day.

For Holiday Gift Giving, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Anniversaries, Birthdays, or just about any special occasion, there is no more special gift than a one-of-a-kind heirloom or collectible that has personal significance. Preserving something belonging to a loved one is precious. Now is a good time to identify what items your family might wish to restore and do so while it is still possible.