



by  
Amy  
Stavis

For more than 100 years, Jeannette Specialty Glass (JSG) produced industrial lighting glass in the once-rich glass region of southwestern Pennsylvania. Now JSG OCEANA forges its own identity with unique, durable, and innovative collections that are fabulous, functional, and fun.



A SIGNATURE JSG OCEANA COLLECTION IS ALINA, FREE FORMED GLASS IN SIX SIZES AND SHAPES. EACH UNIQUE PIECE IS SIGNED BY THE CREATING ARTIST. SHOWN HERE IS ALINA CLOVER IN THE GREEN REFLECTIONS HUE. "ALINA REALLY SHOWS OFF OUR GLASSMAKING ABILITIES," SAYS KATHLEEN SARNIAK, PRESIDENT. "NOT ONLY IS IT BEAUTIFUL BUT IT'S FUNCTIONAL."



**ASSORTMENTS  
COME IN SEVEN  
COLORS: CRYSTAL,  
CRYSTAL REFLEC-  
TIONS, SEA GREEN,  
CHAMPAGNE GOLD,  
GREEN REFLECTIONS,  
GOLD REFLECTIONS,  
AND BLACK NICKEL  
WITH COORDINATING  
METALS IN  
BRASS, COPPER  
AND SILVER.  
"OUR PRODUCTS  
ARE BEAUTIFUL  
YET FUNCTIONAL,"  
ENTHUSES  
PRESIDENT  
KATHLEEN SARNIAK.**

**JEANNETTE, PENNSYLVANIA**, at the turn of the last century, was proudly referred to as *Glass City* thanks to the numerous glass manufacturers which started sprouting up after an abundance of natural gas was serendipitously stumbled upon. The impact this glass industry held over the region was of such great import that the town was even named for Jeannette Hartupée McKee, the wife of a local industrialist who founded his own glassworks. Back then successful enterprises – like Jeannette Glass, American-Saint Gobain, Fort Pitt Glass, and Westmoreland Glass, among others – supplied the nation with everything from plate windows and streetlight glass to decorative tableware, providing perhaps as much as 85% of the world's industrial glass needs. Bustling, thriving, and prosperous, the tight-knit community of Jeannette was a force to be reckoned with.

But that was then.

By the 1970s, Jeannette, like many other small manufacturing towns throughout America, was hard hit by low cost Asian imports that forced a once flourishing industry to virtually vanish, leaving only two companies: St. George Crystal (which at press time closed up shop as well) and Jeannette Specialty Glass (JSG). The latter, remarkably, is a 104-year-old operation. For seven decades, it remained in the hands of its original owners, the Crock family, when it was known as Jeannette Shade and Novelty, specializing in industrial glass production. (Fun fact: the company produced the glass components used in the *Walk/Don't Walk* lights found on practically every street corner in America.)

In 1976, the company finally changed hands when it was acquired by Ted Sarniak. Under his aegis, JSG has done an effective job of staying a step ahead of the competition, not bad for a made in the U.S.A. brand

**A COUPLE RECENT LAUNCHES ARE SHOWN BELOW. THE MONARCH BOWL STAND (AT CENTER) COMES IN SEVEN COLORS AND RETAILS FOR \$238. THE NEWPORT OVAL PLATTER AND VASE ARE PART OF A FOUR-PIECE COLLECTION THAT RANGES FROM \$150 TO \$250.**

operating from the same factory – now 100,000 square feet – for more than a century. Sarniak, as a matter of fact, has become something of a pro at keeping ahead of the growing competition. “In the past 15 years we’ve changed our production line four times,” he proffers. “When the lighting production industry went to Taiwan, we started making pressed glass for specialty manufacturers like Westinghouse. When that business started eroding, we moved into the high-end giftware market.”

And that’s where we come in.

Six years ago when others were fleeing

tabletop production Sarniak plunged in. He conceived JSG Oceana whilst on a seaside vacation. The longtime glass veteran (prior to purchasing JSG, he put in a decade at Lenox helping create their first crystal assortments) was captivated by the sparkling and shimmering Atlantic, not all that unlike the glass he worked with for decades. Then and there he resolved to find a way to morph JSG’s industrial glass prowess into functional tabletop art. Much trial and error ensued over the next three years until the industrial engineer developed the cocktail – he calls it Hard Roc Glass – that yielded a durable, scratch-, stain-,





and impact-resistant, oven-, dishwasher-, and microwave-safe product, as beautiful as it is strong. Sarniak calls it the *Hercules of Glass*.

So far the enterprise is showing Herculean possibility. With Sarniak's wife Kathleen – recruited after 20 years in retail – to head the operation, sales have doubled one year to the next thanks to the new categories of kitchen, bath, and tabletop. Employees have quadrupled to 100, and factory size doubled in 2004. Most importantly, it continues to prove this little company that could continually metamorphosizes to accommodate changing times and climes. "We're so excited and motivated by this new direction," Kathleen Sarniak rejoices. "It won't be long before we're a major


high-end player. We're privileged to carry on this glassmaking tradition with a proud American heritage."

**H**ere's the thing. How on earth is a made in the U.S. glass factory not merely surviving but thriving in modern day America? Hundreds of once established, once prosperous, businesses ran out of pink slips shuttering their doors. What has JSG done differently to enable a century – and counting – of production, production that's still 100% manufactured in these united states? The Sarniaks say it's their skillful ability to morph production long before the death knell tolls. Consider their di-

THE NEW LUMINOUS SILVER BOWL STAND (ALSO AVAILABLE IN COPPER AND BRASS) SHOWS OFF JSG OCEANA'S SONORA BOWL. "THESE ARTFULLY DESIGNED ACCESSORY PIECES ARE A MUST FOR BRINGING CLASSICAL ELEGANCE TO A DINNER PARTY," SAYS JSG OCEANA PRESIDENT KATHLEEN SARNAK.



The Green Reflections  
Alina bowl and a variety  
of dinner plates offer new  
and exciting ways to set tables.  
JSG Oceana execs call it  
"Uncommon Elegance."




verse production over the years: in addition to the *Walk/Don't Walk* glass and streetlight bowls, these folks produce artglass sinks for many major Vegas hotels (Ringo Starr and Celine Dion are among their fans). They made the glass for the majestic dancing fountains at the Bellagio Hotel. They continue to produce outdoor lighting, mirrors, stepping stones, and tiles. And now they're intent on duplicating those successes in their table and gift assortments. "Our mission is simple," advises Kathleen Sarniak. "We provide the highest quality glass home décor products. We have a superior glass that's comparable to no other and every day we come out with new designs and ideas."

Sarniak credits her husband – she endearingly calls him a "glass genius" – who has been extremely prescient at picking the right product for the right time. "Ted's always thinking," Sarniak proudly purports. "He's amazing at engineering glass that can withstand extreme temperature changes and still look beautiful." Necessity, no doubt, has been the mother of invention for the Sarniaks. Every time cheaper imports have busted in on their territory, they've figured out ways to jump ship, change course, and establish new and improved collections. "We're always thinking of ways to diversify," suggests Kathleen. "Ted's always having these AHA moments."

The latest flash of eureka happened in 2001 on that ocean-side vacation which inspired the development of that borsilicate sink, as stunning as it's strong. "New technologies

and innovations have allowed glass to become a designer's dream," agrees Kathleen. The roll-out included nine fashion colors (there are now 17 hues available), hits from the start but really catapulted after fawning coverage on HGTV. That exposure, Kathleen informs, "legitimized us completely." Sinks – \$400 to \$2,000 – provided the perfect perch into tableware.

With that jump, a new company was established, JSG Oceana, and a new team was brought on including Melissa Wyzkiewicz, director of sales and marketing, Christina Yerep, marketing coordinator, and, overseeing it all, Kathleen Sarniak, who has high hopes for the fledgling division. She expects yearly sales to top \$10 million by 2012. "I see us completely changing this category," Sarniak certifies. There's oven-to-tableware planned for later this year that, she enthuses, will revolutionize the industry. "Can you imagine?" she rhetorically asks. "Gorgeous glass pieces that go from the oven to table service."



or now, dinnerware, serving pieces, and giftware are available, about 200 SKUs in all, \$30 to \$500, in a variety of colors, many available with metallic (gold, platinum, copper, brass, bronze) accents. Marketer Wyzkiewicz says they'll focus on the homegrown appeal of JSG Oceana in all marketing and advertising. "Made in the U.S.A. is a source of national pride and becoming more so every day," Wyzkiewicz



**FROM LEFT:**  
**JSG OCEANA'S**  
**KATHLEEN SARNAK,**  
**PRESIDENT/COO;**  
**MELISSA WYZKIEWICZ,**  
**DIRECTOR OF SALES**  
**AND MARKETING; AND**  
**CHRISTINA YEREP,**  
**THE COMPANY'S**  
**NEW MARKETING**  
**COORDINATOR.**  
**"WE ALL WORK**  
**WELL TOGETHER,"**  
**NOTES WYZKIEWICZ,**  
**"BECAUSE WE ALL**  
**WANT WHAT'S BEST**  
**FOR THE COMPANY."**

reminds. A not-so-favorable dollar overseas and growing dissatisfaction with Chinese manufacturing may improve the company's odds getting placed, she suggests.

Marketing, the team agrees, is a critical component in all future sales strategies. "We know that many retailers instantly fall in love with our products," says Kathleen, "but that

love affair ends fast if we don't treat them with the attention and concern they deserve. We're in this industry to become an iconic brand. We want retailers to know that JSG Oceana is a major contender, in it for the long run." That's why an ambitious multi-prong marketing strategy – trade shows, advertising, packaging, and an easy-to-navigate website



**"We're always evolving our technology and innovation to whole new levels," affirms president Kathleen Sarniak.**

– is well under way. "We know that it's important to introduce the trade to who we are the right way from the start," Kathleen acknowledges. "Retailers see how beautiful the product is but it's equally important they understand how beautifully functional it is."

Thus far, the JSG Oceana account base is 100 strong, all high-end independents. "We work well with our retailers," notes Wyzkiewicz, "and

we're working hard to grow that base." The Sarniaks are optimistic about tripling that figure. "There are so many avenues for us," Kathleen maintains, "particularly as we add

services – like custom engraving and monogramming – to our technical abilities. Our accounts are so happy these pieces can go in the dishwasher as well as the oven. It makes for an easy sale. Everyone loves the product even if they're not putting it in their stores... yet. It's just a matter of time before they see we're committed to the category and we're a stable and established company they can count on." □

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- Royal Doulton ..... (800) 662-4463
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**Ad Index**

ACE TRUCKS.....	83	CONIST.....	115
ADHAR COLLECTIBLES.....	79	MAOPPE.....	57
ARTS AND.....	93	MANICURE ART CRYSTAL.....	85
ATLANTA MARKET CENTER.....	111	MARY ALPER DESIGNS.....	39
BEAUFORT.....	56	ASACI.....	29
BEVERLY.....	73	BINDY CONG.....	48
BELLE.....	58	BONITA GLASS.....	87
BEVERLY BRENNER SILVER SHOP.....	133	CHOCOLATE USA.....	54
BY CONDONVILLE.....	44	MOTTAHEDIN.....	37
CHARLES WOOD FURNITURE ART.....	77	MUSTARD & CO. MOUNTAIN.....	69
ERICHARD.....	36	NAMES.....	60
GLA.....	63	NINE CERAMICS.....	71
GRACE.....	49	NOBIAKE.....	12-13
COLLEEN.....	52	ONIDA SILVERSMITHS.....	34
HORTON.....	64	OPRE FOR SCOTLAND.....	31
HORN.....	95	PALABACE.....	72
HORN.....	10-17, 134	PICKARD.....	75
INTERNATIONAL SILVERSMITHS.....	101-110	PIMPEREL.....	76
LEON.....	178	POCE.....	37
LEWIS.....	65	PORTMEIRION.....	66
LEON.....	36	PRIMITIVES BY KATHY.....	47
LEON.....	18-19	REED & BARTON.....	43
LEON.....	42	RECT SILVERSMITHS.....	32
LEON.....	51	RICHARD COHEN.....	20-21
LEON.....	38	RICHARD DINOW.....	36
LEON.....	39	REDEL.....	55
LEON.....	133	RITZENHOFF.....	60
INTERNATIONAL SILVERSMITHS ASSOCIATION.....	103	ROSENTHAL.....	70
LEON.....	100	ROYAL CHINA AND PORCELAIN.....	67
LEON.....	45	ROYAL DOULTON.....	33
LEON.....	46	7 W 34 STREET.....	94
LEON.....	10-13	SIGNATURE HOUSEWARES.....	58
LEON.....	41	SARVIS DESIGN.....	78
LEON.....	27	SABLE TOP'S UNLIMITED.....	32-33
LEON.....	8-9	THE RESIDENTIAL.....	40
		230 FIFTY AVENUE.....	47
		VAGABOND HOUSE.....	36
		WATERFORD.....	41
		MILTON ABRAHAM.....	38