

Dana Kraus: Glamour in a country setting

SHARON — Dana Kraus epitomizes the ideal Town and Country life.

Her Northwest Corner home is nestled in an open field with uninterrupted views. Her company, DKF Estate Jewelry, has an office up here, but much of her work takes place in New York City (or in foreign capitals such as Paris, where she spent last winter while working on several estates).

Kraus started her own business in Northwest Connecticut, after many years as the advertising director of high-end publications such as *Gourmet*, *Elle* and *Fortune*. She and her husband were raising two young boys here in the county but alternating commuting in to the city every day, taking the train from Dover Plains in the pre-Wassaic train stop days.

It got to be too much and she and her husband needed to reinvent to remain in Litchfield

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County. Clients came forth with projects and suggestions. The answer came somewhat serendipitously when a woman in town (knowing Kraus' background in sales) asked her to sell a large collection of George Jensen jewelry. Kraus is a jewelry historian and book collector so she was able to sell the entire collection. Referrals came. And a new business was born.

Kraus and her small staff travel the world to meet with private sellers and buyers of fine, primarily signed 20th century jewelry. Like an art dealer, Kraus sometimes finds a piece first and then finds a buyer for it, and some-

times is asked by a client to track down a special piece or a special type of jewelry. The DKF collection consists of names from Schlumberger to Verdura to Van Cleef and Cartier, as well as new designers like Nicholas Varney and artist jewelers like Pol Bury and Calder.

For Kraus, it's the human connections that matter more than just the jewels. Every piece that she sells or acquires has what an art dealer might call a provenance but which she refers to as "the story." And it's the stories that Kraus is really all about. While she's working in a very visual non-essential business and living in an exquisitely styled home, Kraus does in fact embody all the best of life in the rural Northwest Corner.

She's down to earth, fun and funny and not easily impressed, with herself or anyone else. It is perhaps these qualities that have

helped her build her luxury business to the point where she has been featured in profiles in the *Financial Times* *How to Spend It* and *Vogue* magazine and, most recently, in *Forbes* magazine.

The article (filled with lavish praise) did send some new clients her way and furthered the DKF online presence.

But, like a true New Englander, Kraus isn't sitting at home waiting for someone else to do the heavy lifting. She is a skilled and active marketer, having learned a great deal during her years working in New York City's publishing industry and forging partnerships with the marketing and advertising experts at the world's most famous luxury brands.

She is savvy about how to get the most out of social media without overexposing her company and creating viewer fatigue.

Living in Litchfield County, it's been challenging for DKF to get sufficient internet speed to be able to be a successful presence online. It took six months of meetings with town officials before she was able to get a high-speed connection at

her local office; having that connection has made an enormous difference to her ability to live and work from here, she said.

But above all, it's the human connections that she excels at. Kraus cares, about her clients and about the jewelry, which she treats with a mix of respect and humor.

On a recent weekday she had just returned from creating photographs of some of her vintage pieces, working with Salisbury's Sarah Blodgett ("I try to support local businesses, whenever I can," she said of her decision to trust her marketing to a Northwest Corner artist).

Because of the photo shoot she had several pieces of the DKF Collection laid out exquisitely with labels in linen-clad boxes. Jewelry is kept elsewhere for security reasons and DKF is available by appointment only. She generously draped several pieces around this reporter's neck and handed around some fine art earrings for a closer examination. There were no archival gloves anywhere in sight.

To learn more about Kraus and DKF Estate Jewelry, email her at bijouxdk@comcast.net or go to www.dkfestatejewelry.com. All visits are by appointment.