

Crystal's Crystal

*Long-Haired
Country
Girl's Hobby's
A Fragile One*

What's in a name?

For Crystal Gayle, a 7,700-square-foot store loaded – appropriately – with Baccarat, Waterford, Lalique and Orrefors. The tiny singer with the long, long hair has been running her own shop, selling crystal and gift items, since 1987.

A customer entering "Crystal's" for the first time is

overwhelmed by the sheer volume of gorgeous stuff displayed throughout.

Turn right and there's a wall of the finest crystal bowls, vases and glasses. Turn around and an array of handcrafted jewelry catches your eye. Children's toys. Music boxes. Porcelain figurines.

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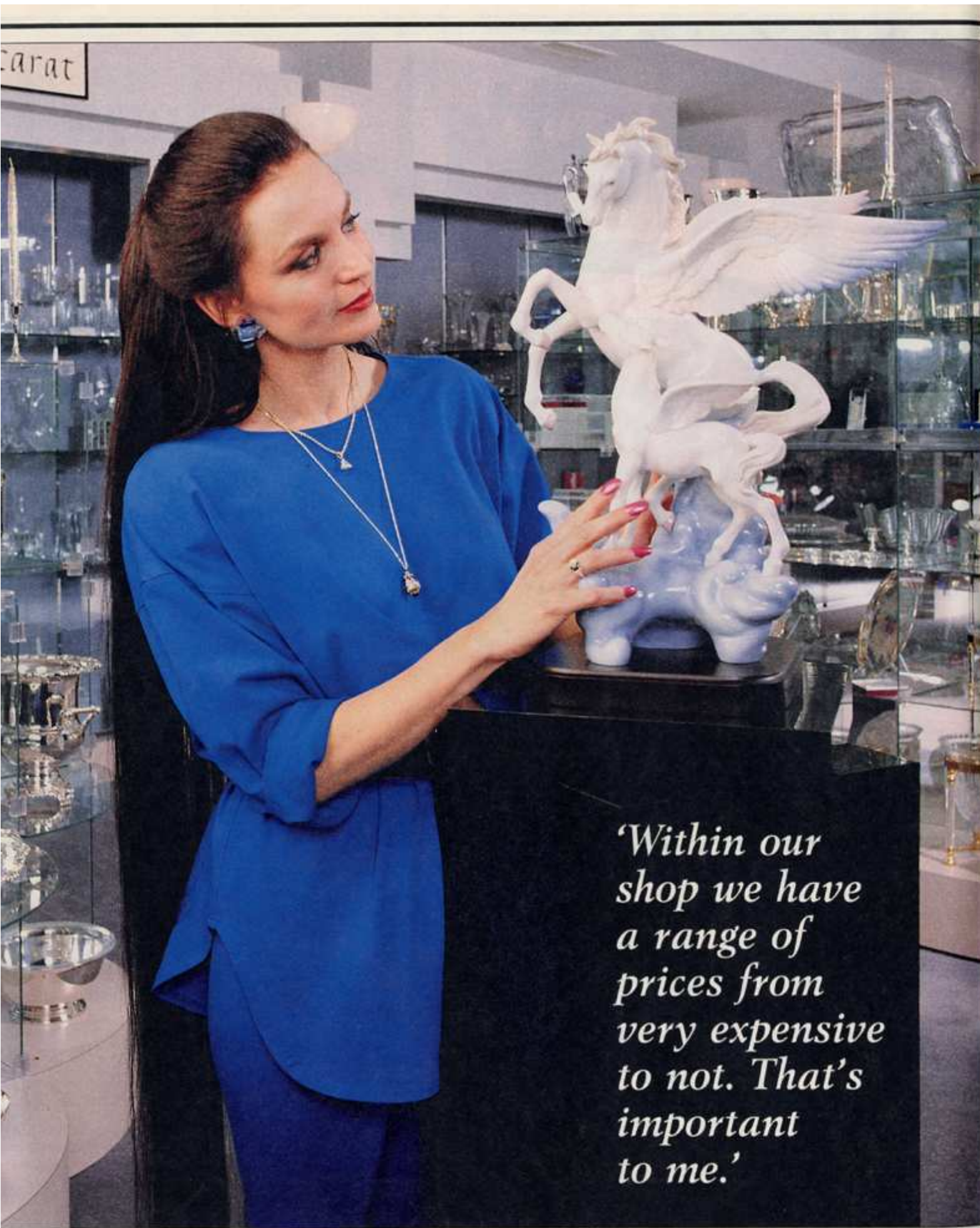
Story By Nancy Sweid • Photos By Dean Dixon



Crystal's
for fine gifts & jewelry



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'Within our shop we have a range of prices from very expensive to not. That's important to me.'



'I love to shop anyway, so this is a way to shop and not really go overboard, personally.'

The biggest contribution Crystal makes to the store is going to the market and buying up inexpensive knickknacks and more costly works of art that fill the shelves of "Crystal's."

The singer/shopowner smiles when she talks about her trips to the market. "I love to shop anyway, so this is a way to shop and

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Crystal Gayle

Handblown glass sculptures. You could spend an entire day examining the merchandise.

And it all began when an Irish talk show host took note of her first name and found a clever way to honor his American guest.

"I was in England doing *The Val Donegan Show* and he presented me with a Waterford crystal decanter. That was my first piece of crystal and from then on I started collecting pieces. And I got gifts of crystal.

"Then I started giving presents of crystal and that's where the store came from," Crystal explained as she sat by the gems and jewelry section of her store in Nashville.

"I would always have to shop out of town for these presents, so I thought, 'One of these days I'd like to have a nice little crystal shop.'

"The little shop turned into a much larger shop and it takes a lot of work, as anyone in retail well knows. But we have a lot of fun with it."

No, Crystal doesn't stand behind a counter, ringing up sales on the cash register. But you'll likely find her walking through the store when she's in town, checking up on things.

"If I'm here and somebody wants to know something about the merchandise, if I know the answer, I'll tell them. I never come in and say, 'I'll be here all day.' I just pop in, go over business, talk to Tommy Quinn, the manager of the store, talk to the sales staff."



Crystal shows off a favorite item to Bill Gatzimos.

not really go overboard, personally."

Quinn, the store's manager, wholeheartedly backs up his boss. "Being a great shopper, she's a great buyer for the store," he said.

"I'm much more conservative so when we go out together, I'll stand there and say, 'Oh, I don't know if we can sell that,' and she'll say, 'Let's get the whole wall.' And she's always right, too."

She gets attached to pieces once they're in the store and she may come in, notice something's gone. We've sold it and she's almost sad about it, but I just tell her not to worry, we can get another one."

As you'd expect, sometimes missing pieces aren't sold, they're in

Crystal Gayle



Crystal with her sisters, Loretta Lynn and Peggy Sue Wright

Photo By: Ferreira/DWI



Crystal's shop is chock-full of pretty gifts.

pieces. This is fragile merchandise for the most part and it breaks.

Crystal knows this firsthand. "The very first piece broken in the shop was broken by me," she admits. "We were cleaning everything, getting ready for the opening. I had cleaned the sliding glass doors to the display cases and then I went to put the crystal in it. Before I realized it, I had picked up this \$100 champagne glass and I struck that glass door and shattered the champagne glass."

"You know when they do that to boats? Well, I christened the store."

Tucked away in a corner of the store, alongside Crystal's American Music Award, her Academy of Country Music Award, a Waterford bowl that Crystal cut herself and that very first decanter that began her collection, sits a shattered champagne flute glass, etched with gold. "Our first broken piece of crystal. Broken by Crystal Gayle Nov. 15, 1987." Other items in the store also bear the singer's mark.

The logo out front is her signature, and callers to the store hear Crystal singing if they are kept on hold.

A stand containing Italian-painted wooden music boxes are spe-

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cially equipped with Crystal's signature song, "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue." The musical machinery plays a delicate but lush rendering of the song, taken straight from Crystal's own arranger. Though the larger boxes can cost \$600 or more, smaller boxes cost under \$50.

"Within our shop we have a range of prices from very expensive to not. That's important to me, because I want anybody to be able to come in and find something," said the savvy businesswoman, as she points to the "Under \$25" shelf.

And if that "anybody" comes in at the right time, they might get to say hello to the famous owner, ask her a few questions about the merchandise and hear her records playing in the background.

She'll be as nice and helpful as can be, even if they don't buy the \$75,000 glass cactus table.



When she's not in her store, Crystal's onstage, as she is here in Chesapeake, Va.

Photo By: Anthony Sylvestro/Shooting Star



Crystal's "Crystal's" staff (from left): Todd Eaton, Stephen Tedeschi, Lucy Taylor, Peggy Sue, Tommy Quinn, Rachel Bevans, Crystal, Margaret Keeling and Bill Gatzimos