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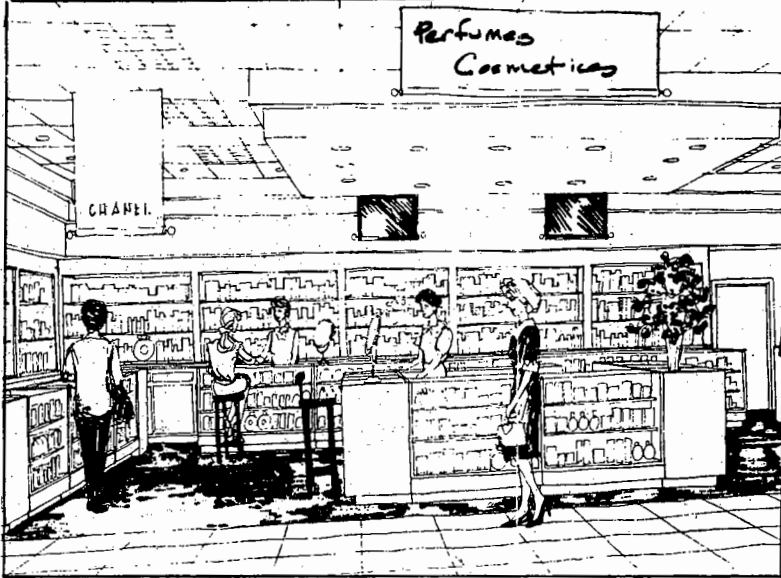
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An artist rendering depicts a portion of the perfume and cosmetics boutique to be featured in Houston Jewelry's Westheimer location.

Longtime downtown store to close soon

Houston Jewelry plans to expand Westheimer site

By JIM MAGILL
 ThisWeek

A family-owned jewelry store which has been a downtown fixture since 1953 is closing up shop, but the company is combining the closing with the renovation of its much larger location in the west Houston area.

Houston Jewelry & Distributing Co. is conducting a liquidation sale at its location at 1301 Fannin in the First City Financial Center.

At the same time, the company is conducting a major renovation at its store at Westheimer and Gessner, which also serves as the corporate headquarters of the company which has been in the same family for three generations, said Rex Solomon, a company official and grand-

son of the founder.

The liquidation sale started with a private sale Oct. 2 for invited customers. The public sale began Oct. 4.

"We mailed out over 100 cards to our existing clientele for the private sale," Solomon said. "We've been averaging over 1,000 people a day since the sale began."

Rogers, Pena & Associates, of Houston, is handling the liquidation of the 10,000-square-foot store. The company was also responsible for the liquidation of Front Row and was involved in the liquidation of Frost Brothers.

"Everything will be sold down to the bare walls," said David Pena, owner of the liquidation company. He estimated the sale would last four to five weeks.

Pena estimated the sale would include inventory "approximately in the neighborhood of \$2 million."

"If the merchandise doesn't sell, we'll take progressive markdowns."

See LONGTIME on Page 15.

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The PASTA & CLAM BAR
 5640 Westheimer at Chimney Rock
 Reservations (6 up): 960-1230

Longtime downtown store to close

Continued from Page 12.

ere's some great buys," he said. Merchandise is currently marked down to 40 to 60 percent of the retail price. He said the markdowns are eating some great values. "It's a count store to begin with," he said.

Solomon placed the value of merchandise offered for sale at the downtown store at closer to \$3 million.

"We brought in some stuff from our Dallas stores. Over a third of it has been sold," he said. Solomon said the liquidation is helping people get an early start on the Christmas

shopping season.

"People who never heard of us are coming downtown. They're saying, 'I never realized Houston Jewelry carried this.' We've put ourselves back onto the cutting edge," he said.

"We feel that we're offering for the public a tremendous opportunity. We have left the good stuff there. Rolexes were gone in the first 30 minutes," he said.

Solomon said of the 16 employees in the downtown store, some people are opting to retire, while others will be transferring to the Westheimer location.

"We are offering all the employees the opportunity to apply for po-

sitions at Westheimer," he said. "We'd like to see the people stay with us. Our Christmas hiring will start with that pool of people."

The original Houston Wholesale Jewelry store was founded by Solomon's grandfather, Abe "Honey" Donsky in 1953 on Main Street.

"It was on corner of Main and Rusk in an upstairs room," Solomon said. The store was so successful that within a year Donsky moved to the Houston Club Building. "It was so incredibly busy that many times during Christmas they had to shut doors and not let people in until someone else came out."

In 1961, two competing jewelry stores joined forces to get the state Legislature to pass a law disallowing retail establishments to use the word "wholesale" in their name unless they were closed to the public. The company was incorporated under the name Houston Jewelry and Distributing. Houston Wholesale Jewelry became a buying agent for Houston Jewelry and Distributing.

Solomon's grandfather was one of three brothers involved in the jewelry business. Honey's two brothers, Nathan and Ervin, founded Sterling Jewelry and Distributing Inc. in Dallas in the 1930s.

In 1973, the three brothers decided to merge the three companies under the corporate name Sterling Jewelry Inc. At the time of the merger the company built the store at Westheimer and Gessner and designated it as the corporate headquarters.

The location of the downtown store changed several times over the years.

"In '66 my grandfather bought a building on the corner of Milam and Rusk," Solomon said.

Honey Donsky sold that building in 1984 and moved the store to the current location.

At the time, the owners thought their building was going to be linked to the downtown tunnel system and another major retailer was going to move next door, developments that never took place. Solomon said these two factors and the lack of pedestrian traffic in that part of town convinced the owners to close the location.

"It's a beautiful store. Had it been located a few blocks away, we would have been located in a wonderful position downtown," he said.

Solomon's father, Andrew Solomon is Honey Donsky's son-in-law.

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2350 North Belt East - Suite 270
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Best time to call (check one)

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

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