

Diamonds for Aggie rings need good quality, price

By Susan Hopkins

Battalion Staff

Everyone knows diamonds are precious gems, but few people know why. And with the blooming of azaleas and the chirruping of birds, wedding engagements and "senioritis" will undoubtedly inspire many Aggies to make their first diamond purchases this spring.

However, buyers should know exactly what they want and what to expect when they

begin searching for that "perfect" stone to go in their everlasting Aggie or engagement rings.

The diamond is the hardest substance known to man, which allows its many facets to have a luster and precision cut unequal to any other gemstone. It also has a brilliance, which captures and returns light to the human eye in a shower of colors, called fire.

However, the diamond's preciousness stems not only from its beauty and chemical composition, but also from its rarity. More diamonds are being produced today than ever before, but only one carat of rough diamond will be recovered from 250 tons of diamond ore (called blue ground) blasted in Africa.

With this rarity comes a natural diversity of both quality and price that every diamond purchaser should be aware of. Carat weight, clarity, color and cut (known as the "four C's") are the qualities that determine the price of each stone.

The weight of a diamond is measured by the carat. There are 100 points in a carat — like cents in a dollar — and 142 carats in one ounce. Thus, a 45-point diamond weighs a little less than half a carat. The average size of an engagement ring in the United States is about 47 points, and since larger stones are more

rare, they have a greater value per carat.

Because they are products of nature, most diamonds contain small imperfections. If these inclusions cannot be seen by the naked eye, they have little effect

on a diamond's beauty, or the way light passes through it. Under Federal Trade Commission rules, a diamond can be

called flawless only when no imperfections are visible to a trained eye under 10-power magnification in good light. Jewelers will normally point out any inclusions that may be in a diamond you are considering.

Most "white" diamonds have a slight tinge of color that adds warmth to a stone's unique personality. The best way to see the true color of a diamond is to look at the stone through its side against a white background. Although most diamonds are a shade of white, they also come in a variety of colors — pale yellow, canary, pink, red, green, blue and brown; these "fancies"

are valued for their depth of color, just as white diamonds are valued for their lack of color. Cut refers to both the make of a diamond (the way the facets, or sides, are arranged), and to its shape. They are cut according to an exact mathematical formula, but for a diamond to have a perfect make, the angles between any two facets must be accurate to within half of a degree. This produces the greatest fire and brilliance.

With a basic knowledge about

diamonds, a stone can be selected (although the searching is often a long and tiring process) that will best suit both the quality and price needs of every person.

Steve Austin, of Diamond Brokers International, Inc., in College Station, said special prices are offered on stones for Aggie rings. He said that 10- and 11-point diamonds, starting at \$100, are most popular for

males, while women prefer the smaller \$25 to \$50 stones for their more dainty Aggie rings.

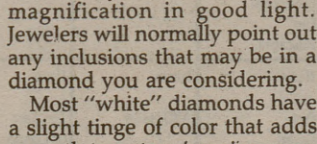
Zales, in Manor East Mall, sells 10-point diamonds for mens' rings starting at \$135, while three- to five-points for women start at \$50. Teresa Ramirez, assistant manager of Zales, said the diamonds they offer are full cut. They have 58 facets, or sides, which allows more light to bounce from the stones.

In contrast, some diamonds put into Aggie rings by The Balfour Company, by way of Texas A&M University's registrar's

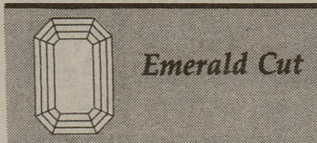
office, are single cuts, with far fewer facets. These and other diamonds may be mounted in existing class rings, or may be ordered for less cost at the time a ring is purchased from Balfour.



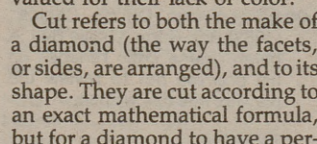
Heart Shape



Baguette



Emerald Cut



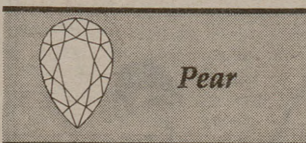
Single Cut



Brilliant



Oval



Pear



Marquise

Arizona goes hog-wild over calendars

TEMPE, Ariz. — Miss Piggy, take heart. When the students of Arizona State University went crazy over calendars this year, you and yours weren't left out. First there was the traditional Pikeboy calendar, featuring "The Girls of ASU" in seductive poses for this annual fraternity project. It drew protests and cries of sexism. Then there came the calendar "The Men of ASU," which was an instant hit with women on campus. But now, there's the ultimate. Three ASU students have come up with "The Hogs of ASU," featuring shots of 12 local pigs. The trio believes the pork-lovers calendar will outsell both of the others. They've even included six males and six females to avoid any claims of discrimination.

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