

Signature Keepsakes Engravable Mats

Nearly seven years ago, the founders of Signature Keepsakes were searching for an alternative to a traditional wedding guest book. At the time, they could not find anything unique and permanent, so they settled for a paper mat signed by a pen. Over time, however, the signatures on the mat began to fade, and this treasured keepsake soon became an eyesore. After losing such a valuable memory from their wedding day, they decided there had to be a better way to design such a mat. After much research, they came up with the idea of a metal mat that could be inscribed with signatures. Because the only way to inscribe the names was with a hard-to-use mechanical inscribing tool, they came up with a diamond-tipped pen that was easy to use, would not wear out and did not require batteries. At this point, the couple knew they had a unique concept and patented the product and concept as the Signature Keepsakes Engravable Mat.

Over the past few years, the mats have been continually improved, and thousands of satisfied customers have used them at their own special events. Beyond weddings, they are ideal for anniversaries, coaches' gifts, retirements, graduations, bar and bat mitzvahs,

teachers' gifts or any other special event that requires an everlasting keepsake.

In late 2007, Signature Keepsakes was acquired by Kennesaw, Ga.-based Southern Moulding. "Southern has been diligently looking for new ways to help our customers increase sales in their shops," says company spokesman Anthony Leonardo. "As more and more big-box stores and chains chip away at independent framers, finding products that help them grow revenue has become a crucial goal for us. Last year, Southern Moulding met with Signature Keepsakes and immediately saw the potential the product had for the picture-framing industry. With hundreds of thousands in sales per year, none of which was being fed through our industry, we decided to acquire the product and the company. We felt that framers could use it to capture revenue that was unavailable to them before."

In September 2007, Southern invited and hosted Signature Keepsakes at DECOR Expo in Atlanta, and its

booth was a huge success, Leonardo says. Since then, many shops have purchased sample Signature Keepsakes Mats to showcase in their shops. "The initial sale more than pays for the low, initial sample investment," Leonardo says. "Tests held with a franchise coordinator have shown that the product drives sales in a new area." Southern believes it can add another \$100,000 per year to framers' revenues with Signature Keepsakes Mats.

The Signature Keepsakes Engravable Signature Mat comes pre-cut in standard sizes of 11" x 14", 16" x 20", 18" x 20" and 20" x 24". It is sold to the framing industry as a Signature Mat Kit, which includes the Signature Engraving Scribe, a micro-fiber polishing cloth and a 5"-x-7" guest-instruction card. Custom sizes can be purchased with reasonable minimums.

The Signature Mat is made from a specially treated aluminum alloy that resists scratches, fading and tarnishing but cannot be cut on standard mat cut-



"The Signature Keepsakes mat is a unique product and easy to work with when framed. It's a great item

for weddings and engagements, co-workers leaving, and can be used as a permanent card for graduations and many other occasions. I am very satisfied with the product and the excellent customer service I have received from everyone at Signature Keepsakes. I ordered two mats and had one of them engraved with "Together Forever, Mickey & Minnie", and I used the display mat to test the product with the signatures of other famous Disney® characters. After I displayed the signed mat, I soon sold the mats to a couple getting married, an independent film company and several others on backorder. I have since made another display and increased my order."

—Steve Feld of Fastframe in Mesa, Ariz.

ters. Once signed, the signatures are permanent, creating keepsakes that will last forever. The mats can also be personalized with engravings. When framing Signature Keepsakes Mats, the glazing goes underneath the metal matboard because it is only needed to protect the picture that is framed.

"When we promote the Signature Mat at bridal events, the brides just go crazy over the silver metal mat and love signing it," says Gary Shimer, founder and inventor of Signature Keepsakes and marketing/sales/product development associate for the product. "Many people love the concept of signing paper matboard, but they do not like the end result, which is often a very cluttered look with smeared signatures. Signatures on the metal mat appear subtle, yet very legible, and do not detract from the focus of the piece: the picture in the center."



"Engravable mats have been instrumental in drawing new customers to our Web site, www.miframes.com. The uniqueness

of the Signature mat has increased our site's hits and brought in younger customers because it's something new and has a very high cool factor. The demo unit with an engraved www.miframes.com logo and multiple engraved fonts has been a big selling point."

—Brian Atkinson of Custom Digital Picture Framers in Tonawanda, N.Y.



For more information on Signature Keepsakes Engravable Mats, call 800-646-1380, e-mail info@signature-keepsakes.com, or visit www.signature-keepsakes.com.

"Signature Keepsakes Mats give our business that special something. We knew right away that our brides would absolutely love this keepsake. We have found that it also does well with school fund-raisers and teachers. We can't wait to market this right along with our business, Lasting Keepsakes Floral Preservation, at our bridal shows. We have already sold many of them, but we haven't even scratched the surface."

—Susan O'Hanley and Jealea Spears of Lasting Keepsakes in Las Vegas

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