



A Family Affair: Dora Mae's Roots

Playing with some her of grandmother's old jewelry pieces gave wife, mother and garden designer Ashley Schrimsher an idea for something new. She started taking the pieces apart and remaking them with other elements creating something different. And Dora Mae Jewelry was born.

According to Schrimsher, Dora Mae Pemberton, now in her 80s, was a talented woman who sewed, collected antiques, sang and played the piano. Perhaps most notably, she was an inspired poet and Schimsher now names each piece with phrases from her grandmother's book, *The Selected Poems of Dora Mae Pemberton, 1966 – 2000*.

"My family has always been into antiques so I find things through dealers I know. They will call me when they have an estate sale. I've been to places from DeLand, New Smyrna and Mt. Dora," says Schrimsher. And the shopping is also a family affair as Schrimsher often has her mother accompany her on the hunts.

Although she was inspired by her grandmother's pieces, she is quick to point out that she never sold those. Her collections now consist of earrings, bracelets and necklaces. She uses what she calls fine costume jewelry or collectible costume. It has to meet her criteria of high quality, good design and appropriate patina — not too shiny. She usually goes for gold toned designs instead of silver. "I enjoy looking for tiny pieces as well as gigantic, fun Victorian pearl pieces," she explains. "Sometimes I want a little modern or industrial feel so I'll add something newer."

Her inventory at any given time is about 100 pieces. She started the business with about 25 and then kept making more. Although she tries not to get too crazy creating since her children are young. "I really love it, although running a company can be tough. My kids are my priority right now," she adds.

"I've got customers from 18 to 25 and 50 to 75. And now they'll be even younger since I launched a new line called Mini Mae for two to seven year olds. My daughter and I sometimes wear matching necklaces when we go out together," says Schimsher. She sells the pieces online at doramaejewelry.com, which she admits is a little hard since they are one of kind. A selection of pieces is available at local boutiques Thread, Zou Zou, Coco and Sultre and she does trunk shows in homes, too.

