

I'm a Chicago native and a fourth-generation (at least!) crafter. Rocks and gems have fascinated me since as far back as I can remember, and I am delighted to share that fascination through my jewelry. And Arizona is the perfect place to do it.

One cold, snowy, gloomy afternoon in March of 1981, my husband asked me, "What would you think about moving to Arizona?"

We were standing in the kitchen of our house in Indiana. The house was less than two years old; we had built it ourselves and hadn't even finished the interior yet. Moving anywhere was about the furthest thing from my mind. Yet my reply wasn't really an expression of surprise. It had nothing to do with our miserable weather. Nor did I think about leaving family or the logistics of moving to somewhere I'd never been before. Instead, the very first words out of my mouth were, "Well, they have really neat rocks there."

It was four more years before we actually made the move, and I immediately began to indulge my fascination for the rocks. We went rockhounding. We bought lapidary equipment. I learned how to cut and polish stones, how to wire wrap. We started doing craft shows, making a little money, having a lot of fun.

He's the one who sliced the first chalcedony stones so that they looked like feathers. Angel feathers. And then in 2005 I lost him to cancer.

Getting back on my feet with the stones and jewelry and other crafts wasn't easy, especially without a partner. But I was determined not to give it up. Even when I had to cut back on my crafting in order to work a regular job, I refused to quit. This is what I loved, and somehow or other I was going to make it work.

Maybe it's because so many members of my family were do-it-yourselfers that I've always had an appreciation for the handmade. Wearing clothes my mother sewed or sweaters my grandmothers knitted was a source of pride that carried over to when I was old enough to make and knit and crochet my own and my children's clothes. I love just about anything handmade, and I love being able to make it myself. The more of the work I can do, the more pride I take in the finished product. Many of the stones I use are ones I've found or dug out of the ground myself, then cut, shaped, polished, and wrapped in precious metal wire. Some of the wood I use comes from the trees in my yard.

I've never been one to follow the crowd, preferring to make my own path through life. That's how I look at my crafting. Each piece is an individual design, an individual creation. Nothing handmade is ever quite perfect. The imperfections, as my grandmother used to say, are what give it character, what show that it's handmade.

Mother Nature tends not to be perfect either, and that's why I love working with natural materials, like stone and wood. I'm still learning my craft, and I hope I never stop improving. But while what I make may never be perfect in a manufactured sense of the word, it's always going to be my personal best effort so that I can take pride in selling it, and my customers will take pride in buying it. And I hope everyone will enjoy looking.