

BY ELIZABETH COSSICK

VIR@L Style

Marietta's Rhoda Vickers transformed her 1979 split-level into a showplace ... and became an online phenom in the process.



Rhoda and her dad, Al.
Photo by Christopher Oquendo

Rhoda Vickers is the graceful, creative, magnetic personality behind the enormously popular blog, Southern Hospitality. With over 250,000 unique visitors and 500,000 page views per month, to say she's kind of a big deal is not an overstatement.

She started the blog in 2007 as an outlet for her decorating projects while living in Birmingham. Her followers loved tagging along to tag sales and seeing her turn defunct finds into drool-inducing décor. Then, in 2011, she went through what she calls "a very bad divorce," and her readers went through it right along with her.

"My followers saw me go through this dramatic transition. I blogged about moving from Birmingham back to my hometown of Marietta," Rhoda says. "They rooted for me when I was putting in bids on foreclosed homes. They celebrated when my \$70,000 bid got accepted on this home. And they fell in love with my then-85-year-old dad, Al, who helped me renovate this house. My dad became everyone's hero."

Her following skyrocketed. "Everyone was on the edges of their seats, watching us transform this place," she says. "We gutted the kitchen, added Ikea cabinets, laid down flooring, replaced all the lighting, redid the basement and laundry room, added a porch to the front. Every project went on the blog."

Blogging is more than a glorified home scrapbook for Rhoda, though; it's her full-time job. "I'm proud of myself for making a career at age 50 out of something that didn't even exist as a job a decade ago," she says. Corporate sponsorships and ad networks pay her bills, and partnerships with brands like Home Goods, Ballard Designs and Birch Lane have outfitted her home with many "perks" — including a full set of patio furniture.

As impressive as that is, her down-to-earth take on it all is refreshing. "I got into blogging at a fortunate time, but I think the reason I've been successful is because I stay true to who I am," she muses. "My followers definitely see me as a real person."

"And if I'm having an off day, I just put my dad on the blog," she quips. "It brings them all in!"



Follow Rhoda at southernhospitalityblog.com, and also on FB, IG and Pinterest.

Photos by Matt Druin | matthewdruin.com





basement



laundry room



family room

RHODA'S Highlight REEL

WHAT DO RHODA'S FANS LIKE MOST ABOUT HER STYLE?

1. SHE MIXES IT UP. "I am very traditional and love antiques, but I don't want to look granny. I like mixing it up with modern prints, like this Schumacher Chaing Mai Dragon fabric."

2. SHE DOESN'T TREND AWAY FROM COLOR. "I love color. A lot of trends in blog-land are so neutral, very gray and beige. I could never live without color; blues and greens are my go-to."

3. SHE GETS THRIFTY. "I like the collected look. I don't want things all off the showroom floor. A lot of my blog early on was going to yard sales and showing what I found. My readers like that I'm very frugal!"

4. SHE LOVES HER SOME CHALK PAINT. "I just painted the desk in the family room kelly green. I got the desk for \$10, and it's solid wood. Chalk paint is the DIY-blogger's best friend."

5. SHE DECORATES FOR LIVABILITY. "With all the blogs out there, people get confused on what they really like. It can be gorgeous, but could you live with it? Just carve out spaces where you can relax. And then apply paint!" ●



foyer

kitchen



porch