

Vintage clothing' wearers seek high fashion bargains

By Pat Miklos
Staff Reporter

They bought their entire wardrobes for less than \$40. They're experts at browsing through thrift shops and coming out with gaberdine, cashmere or silk. They say "vintage clothing" instead of "used clothing" to describe their wardrobes.

Who are they? C.J. Rice, sales clerk at Fringe and Tassel, 735 O St., a vintage clothing shop, said they are people who buy vintage clothing, and they can be divided into three groups.

"There are the business women looking for classic, well-made suits. Then, there are the college students, willing to be different and looking for something fun. Also, in the last few years we've finally noticed more men getting into vintage clothing," Rice said.

Contrary to the opinion of the non-vintage clothing wearer, those who do wear it are not quirky or bizarre in any way. "They're the 'stylish set,' mostly 18 to 25," said Jill Svendgaard, manager of Blondie's, 835 N. 12th St. She said a few devoted university professors are among her customers.

Svendgaard said most buyers will just add a nostalgic piece or two to a modern wardrobe — mix and match the present and the past. So, for exam-

ple, clipping on a pin, circa 1940, and dangling vintage rhinestones from the ears will compliment 1985 fashions.

Designers look to history for fashion inspiration. "It's rare that completely new and different styles emerge," said Thelma Thompson, UNL extension clothing specialist. "Both designers and consumers tend to long for the 'good old days.'"

Lately, especially, it seems that what is being worn from vintage shops inevitably pops up in the mainstream.

"Sometimes people are just ahead in their interpretation of fashion," said Doug Ferrar, manager of The Hitchin' Post, 144 N. 14th St. "Not to stereotype anyone, but what patrons of the Zoo Bar wear is different from what you'd find at The Exchange. Recently though, those two styles meshed."

Because dollars are few, another explanation for vintage garb's popularity is a practical, economical one.

It's cheap chic. A full-length wool coat from Miller & Paine might sell for \$150. Vintage price: \$35, maximum.

"But dressing in yesterday's clothes is not a fresh concept, salesclerks say.

"The vintage clothing business has been going strong in Lincoln for 15 years," Svendgaard said. The difference is in what people are picking up. The preference trend follows a 20-year cycle,

hence the "Jackie Kennedy" — early 1960s look — is in vogue today. Svendgaard said the big sellers are oversized wool sweaters and 1940s-style men's single-breasted wool overcoats.

"The uncommon fabrics — silk, flie, gaberdine, crepe — are not easy to find today. When shopping vintage you can find it and find it cheap," Rice said.

"The first visual impact a person makes tends to be lasting so it's important," Thompson said. The vintage-clad group shares a common pride in its uniqueness and in the ingenuity it takes to put together just the right outfit.

"I wear used clothing because it's cheap and if you search long enough you can find beautiful stuff that's better quality. I've found cashmere and wool . . . just beautiful stuff," Chris Hugly, a junior majoring in English and history, said.

Consumers cannot march into a vintage clothing store with the same shopping attitude they normally have, Rice said.

"The shopping mentality is different," she said. "Clothing may not be in your size, there may be a little tear, but looking is more fun."

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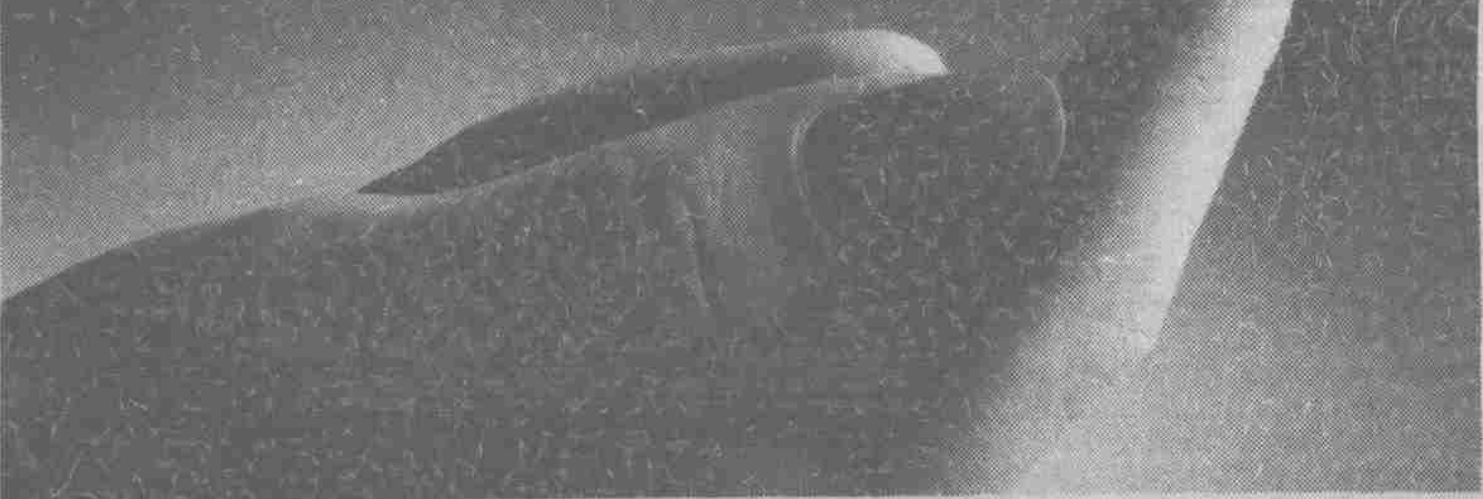
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