

# FEEDBACK

## The Second Hand Nation

Join the Shopping Revolution

Carie Mesrobian

**G**rey 50's formica-top table, \$10 at yard sale.

Vintage blue and chrome high chair, \$5 at thrift store.

Milk glass candy dish full of housekeys, 75 cents at junk shop.

White kitchen curtains with pom-pom detailing, \$3 at church rummage sale.

Keeping all these things out of the landfill to outfit home in high style at low cost, PRICELESS

I am a bargain hunter. I am a vintage collectible aficionado. I am a college-educated woman who has never been able to launch a career financially worthy of my astronomically-priced liberal arts degree. I owe more in loans than I will ever be able to put back into the U.S. economy even if I live to be 100. I am a citizen of the Secondhand Nation.

What does this mean? Just come to my house for coffee one day and see! Almost everything in it has come from a thrift store, a yard sale, a charitable relative, or a dumpster. The vintage vinyl sofa. The shaggy orange area rug. The chrome colander hanging in the kitchen. Hell, the coffee cup you are drinking out of and the Krups coffee maker perking on my counter – both diverted from the waste stream to service my family each morning.

I started thrifting in college. Back in those rosy days of the early 90's when a trip to Ragstock and \$50 reaped three grocery sacks full of funky duds. After graduation I outfitted my first apartment with décor from the Salvation Army and learned the joys of receiving my parents'

cast-off couches. When I got married, my mother and I made guest tables centerpieces with milk glass ice cream dishes from Goodwill, 25 cents a piece. The year my husband and I bought our house, we were blessed by the dumpster gods with a Weber grill in perfect shape and some lawn chairs I refurbished with \$5 worth of spray paint. The Secondhand Nation has no boundaries – it can be found by any dumpster or yard sale. The citizenry moves about in fine, name-brand clothing bought off the rack from Savers or Value Village, searching for lampshades, silverware, Tupperware and Go Go's records. This is a hunter-gatherer culture, which values the thrill of the thrift and seeks bargains that color coordinate with a deep environmental sensibility and Sallie Mae loan books.

Yet, I am not cheap. I hate coupons and penny saver advertisements. I will not darken the door of Wal-Mart or be persuaded to join a price club. Neither am I a minimalist or critic of consumerist behavior. Fan of fads and slave to style, I love shopping. My closet is bursting. Nobody delights in tchotkes and gewgaw like me. There are many reasons I thrift, and yet just one: it is addictive.

Knowing that I have a choice when it comes to retail prices is amazingly empowering. Knowing that I am allowed to shop as often as I feel the urge with relatively small pocketbook impact is fantastic. Knowing that the mighty U.S. economy floods us with consumerables that get cast off very easily makes me feel like there is a place for me – and it's not the Galleria.



Photos by JANET H. LAMB

Some people will say, well, you can't buy everything secondhand. Who says thrift store merchandise isn't new? Target, for instance, no longer bothers with clearing merchandise at lower than 75% off; they merely donate these items – tags still attached – to charitable organizations (hello, Goodwill, Salvation Army, Value Village!) So yes, Virginia, you can buy underwear at a thrift store – just make sure it's still in the package.

Tupperware, Christmas decorations, hair products and earrings (yes, the pierced kind). But I am an intrepid thrifter (and am not afraid to boil, scrub, launder, drench in rubbing alcohol and run through the dishwasher anything that strikes me as a little gnarly).

### Join the Secondhand Nation! Tips for the Beginning Thrifter:

**Be Kind to the Staff.** Just because they are working at a secondhand store does not mean they are second class citizens. Remember – they might not be getting paid, they may be volunteers, they may not be happy to be there. Still, be kind. Don't leave a large mess for them, harass them to see what's 'in the back', ask to borrow the phone, or let your young children run wild under the clothes racks. One of the great things about thrift stores is that you are almost never pestered by over-eager sales clerks. Enjoy it!

**Make Donations.** Imagine that you are offering these items up for sale at a garage sale. If anything is heading toward a "free box" or not much more, pitch it. Remember that thrift stores can recycle some things (especially unwearable clothing) and make some money on it but generally their garbage bills are steep. Call and inquire with the staff about what things would be acceptable. And don't be a dillhole and dump stuff at their doors after hours.



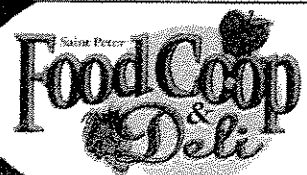
For some items, you might have to get over some vague squeamishness about not buying things already shrink wrapped in cellophane. This may take time and some may never get to this level of patriotism in the Secondhand Nation. I myself am nutty and will admit to buying coffee filters, baby bottles, diaper covers, sheets and blankets,

Continued on next page...

From Static, September 2004

# Filled with Nature's Vibrant Flavors.

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**Consider Gift-Shopping.** Though it sounds miserly, thrift stores can yield amazing gifts for others. Old books, collectible records, craft supplies to make an art project or knit a scarf – a little planning and you can avoid the mall at Christmas time.

**Smell Before You Wear.** No, thrift stores don't iron and launder before hanging on the rack. I once dressed my baby in a cute little shirt before realizing that she reeked like cigar smoke. Not a pleasant combo.

**Use Common Sense.** Be cautious about purchasing eye makeup, nail polish, lipstick (contact with skin or mucous membranes, eww) wooden cutting boards (lair of hidden bacteria) home permanent kits (stupid, stinky, out of style) underpants without tags (uh, mucous membranes, need I say more?) and home electronics (many are untested, many are ridiculous like electric can openers, crimpers, etc.)

**MCRI Thrift Shop**

111 Sioux Road  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 388-3867  
<http://www.mcri.info/index.html>  
Hours: Mondays through Saturdays  
9:30 am to 5:00 pm  
(Mondays & Thursdays until 8:00 pm)  
**Benefiting:** people with physical, emotional and developmental disabilities

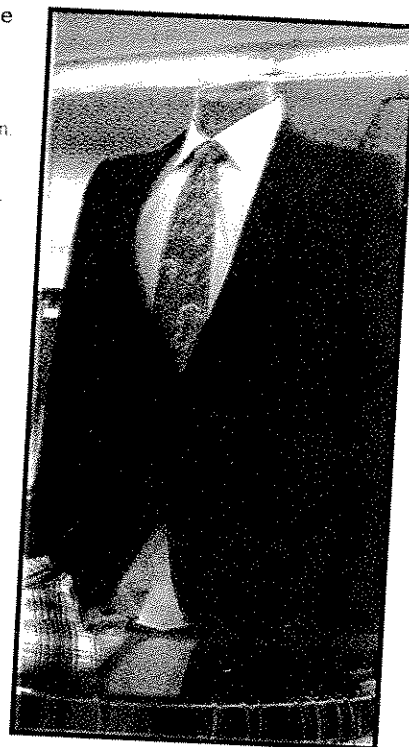
This place has really gotten organized! They've got a great craft section and a fun little holiday area where you can buy a plastic wreath in July if the mood strikes you. The book section is especially well ordered. Most Thursdays there are sales and mad dashes for carts. MCRI started in 1963 with a rummage sale and now is a fantastic store with a professional staff and over 200 volunteers helping out. Come support them and find some fun deals.

**AGAIN: Thrift and More Store**

482 Raintree Road  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 345-2409  
[www.mnvac.org](http://www.mnvac.org)  
Hours: Monday 9:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Friday-Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
**Benefiting:** people living in poverty in Southern Minnesota

A newer joint but already doing well in the organization department (the secondhand nation loves law and order!) The children's section is considerable, they carry lots of furniture and they have a fun little craft and linen section worth a look-see. A few too many romance and microwave cookbooks, but this little place is roomy and clean (and in need of volunteers! Give them a call and see how you can help!)

Got any great thrift stories or secrets? Send them to [secondhandnation@hotmail.com](mailto:secondhandnation@hotmail.com)



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# STATIC FILM FEST

1st STATIC Film Fest—October 13—T.J. Finnigans—6 to 9 p.m.  
**SUBMIT YOUR SHORT FILMS AND WIN PRIZES!!**

DIRECT ALL QUESTIONS to:  
[info@freeSTATIConline.com](mailto:info@freeSTATIConline.com) or (507) 344-2141

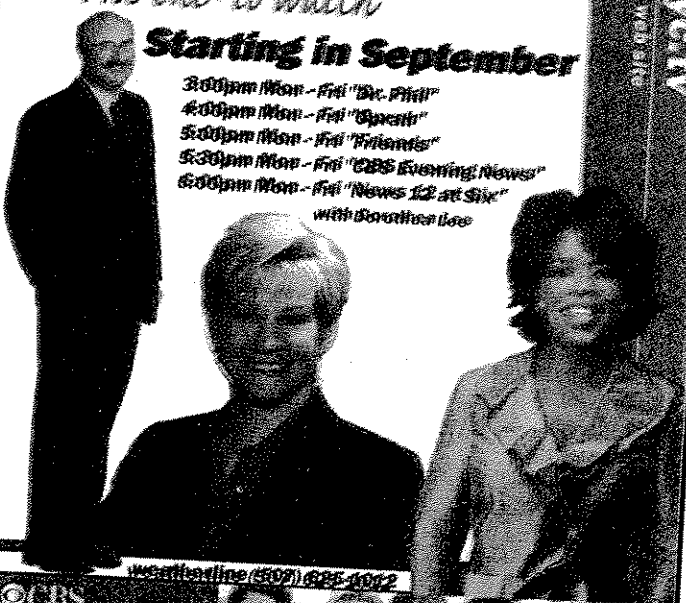
- GUIDELINES for SUBMISSIONS:**
- Submissions: DVD or VHS only
  - 20 minute time limit
  - Limit 2 entries per person
  - All categories welcome including Animation
  - Please mark the tape with the title of your project, your name, and contact information
  - Please mark if the film is for exhibition only
- SEND SUBMISSIONS to:  
STATIC Film Fest Entries  
729 S. 2nd St.  
Mankato, MN 56001

All entries must be postmarked by Sept 30, 2004.

STATIC Magazine reserves the right to choose which films will be played at the viewing. No video tapes or DVDs will be returned. Prizes will be awarded to the winners. All judges decisions are final. Peoples' Choice Awards will be voted on by the audience at the viewings.

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- 5:00pm Mon - Fri "Friends"
- 5:30pm Mon - Fri "CBS Evening News"
- 6:00pm Mon - Fri "News 12 at Six" with Dorothy Lee

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