

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Beauty in the Beast

Students find hidden antique treasures in unexpected places

By Katie Wigginton
THE BATTALION

another customer came in and brought the two vases up to the little counter to purchase.

"It is not hard to sell things," Kennedy said. "There will always be the right thing for the right person."

If the right thing is vintage, then Aggie fans of retro styles need look no further than the backyard of Texas A&M.

Northgate Vintage, on the floor above the Nipa Hot restaurant, offers students an alternative shopping experience. The Northgate store displays classic cotton T-shirts that are adorned with a variety of slogans, icons and shades.

"Our clothes help differentiate yourself from everybody else," said Donny Dao, a senior industrial distribution major. "The comfort level of vintage clothes is just unmatched."

Dao reminisced of one occasion when he was looking for a particular Ivy League T-shirt but could not find it for months. Finally, his friend Ryan Ewing, who now owns Northgate Vintage, discovered the shirt and passed the distinguished vogue to Dao free of charge.

"I think the relaxing feel of a vintage T-shirt brings a nostalgia and memory behind it that you can find cool or just fun to laugh at," Dao said.

Not only do vintage T-shirts bear fond memories of popular icons from the '70s and '80s, they reignite a trend of long-buried fashion while giving the vintage shopper an original sense of style.

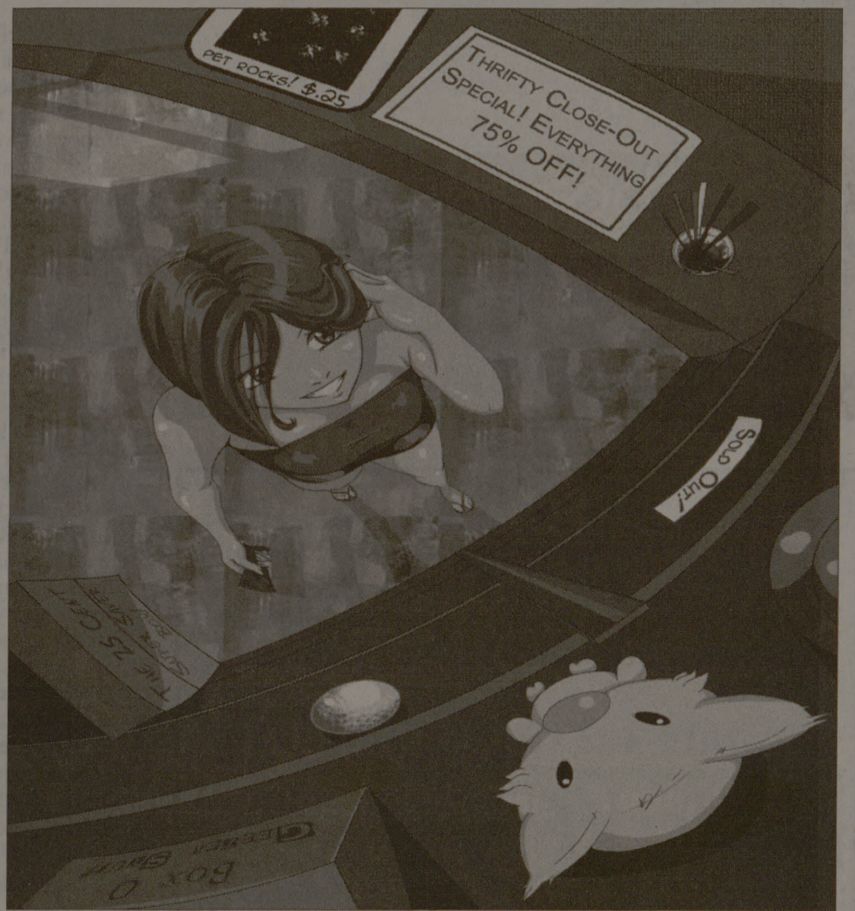
"The great thing about vintage shirts is that it still retains the look of style at a better price. It used to be just a way to be unique and different. Now, it's just the way to be," said Mike Weeks, a junior communications major.

Weeks, along with Dao, sees his hobby of vintage shopping as an escape route back to the Michael Jackson-glove-wearing days and away from the adult pressures and responsibilities of being a college student.

Unlike customers who actively seek to find that Victorian tea pot or Rolling Stone concert T-shirt, Brooke McElroy, a senior theater major, said she keeps everything she has collected in her life protectively tucked away in her hometown closet.

"I don't ever get to a point where I don't have a place to put something," McElroy said.

McElroy's collection has everything from prom decorations to



GRAPHIC BY IVAN FLORES • THE BATTALION

duplicate programs of plays she participated in or saw in her childhood.

She even has books from her junior high library that were never returned.

"Everything has such sentimental value to it, and I don't want to feel guilty if I got rid of it," McElroy said. "Some things though are just irreplaceable."

To reserve space for newfound memories, McElroy said she occasionally donates to community theaters, her mother's art classroom and the Humane Society.

The door opens and a chime rings throughout the store. Plates with intricate designs painted on them are lovingly displayed on the wall from ceiling to floor. Displayed in a dowdy glass case are old-fashioned baseball cards and rusty thimbles that trigger a curiosity of their history.

Further down the road, a flight of unpolished stairs alongside a Northgate building leads to the open walkway of Northgate Vintage that welcomes students to mellow tunes, familiar atmosphere and T-shirts to match. The laid-back staff emanates a vibe of comfort while offering a colorful array of classic pearl snap shirts, and faded blue jean skirts alongside a stack of java-drinking art for those with taste that is anything but mainstream.

Antique shops and vintage stores provide the adventurous customer with more than just a good bargain. They can enrich a shopper with an untold story or recycle an adolescent fashion sense long forgotten.

Mary Kennedy, owner of the Tin Barn Antiques and Collectibles in Bryan, said she believes everybody has to love the antique quality of things. Whether antiques help a self-employed business or are a symbol of cherished teenage memories, Kennedy continues to believe that every page torn or stored away hole-ridden item can and will be found with "a beauty in it."

"When I was a kid, I was not taught to admire it (antiques)," Kennedy said. "Now I see a personality and character that is brought out of the object and wonderful to picture."

Kennedy managed to see the light within these one-of-a-kind items through a chain of unfortunate events.

After her mother died, an inheritance was left to her and her sister. Wanting to do something useful with the money, Kennedy decided to open her business without having any knowledge about the vintage market.

Thirteen years later, Kennedy has expanded her inheritance four times.

Now Kennedy's store is full of archaic items ranging from plates to pots to books and bows, and each treasure contains its own stories, some of which are quite comedic.

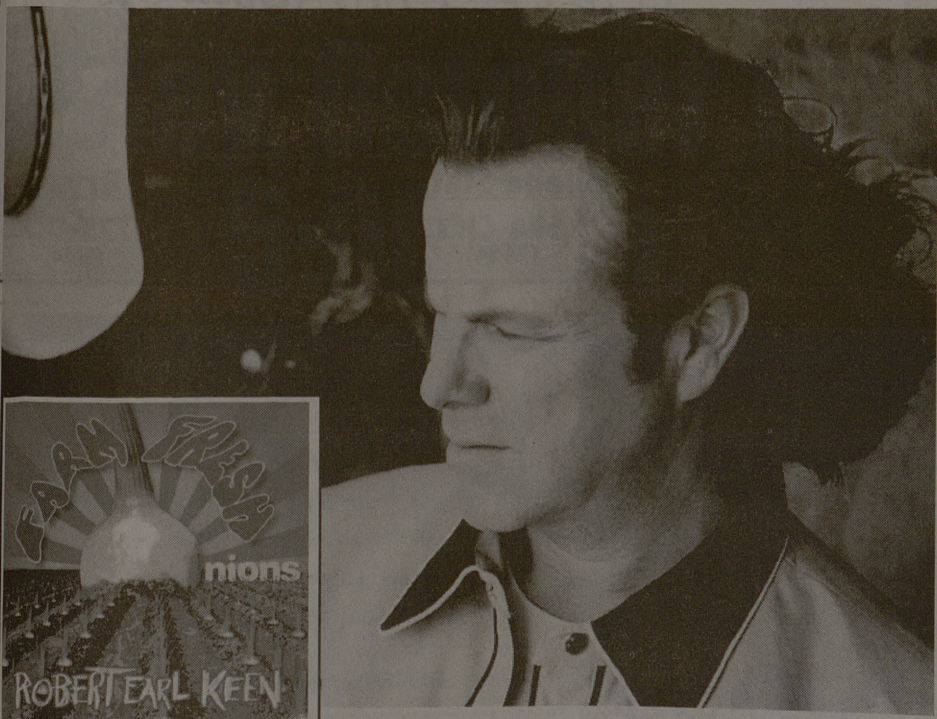
Kennedy laughs about one particular story of a woman who brought a pair of bright yellow vases that were "rough on the outside." The woman wanted to get rid of the glued-up vases for no more than \$3.

Kennedy began to grin as she saw something more to the rough diamonds and wrote a \$15 price tag on them instead. Years later,

Robert Earl Keen

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