

August 31, 2004

>>top shops

- Absolutely Fabulous, 1309 Cambridge Street, Cambridge.
- Amvets, 80 Brighton Avenue, Allston.
- Black and Blues, 89 Holland Street, Somerville.
- Bobby from Boston, 19 Thayer Street, Boston.
- Boomerangs, 716 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain; 298 Washington Street, Brighton.
- Café Society, 131 Cypress Street, Brookline.
- The Closet Upstairs, 223 Newbury Street, Boston.
- Dragon Fly, 1297 Cambridge Street, Cambridge.
- Encore Exchange, 318 Harvard Street, Brookline.
- Garment District, 200 Broadway, Cambridge.
- Goodwill, 449 Cambridge Street, Allston.
- Gumshoe, 40 South Street, Jamaica Plain.
- Great Eastern Trading Co., 49 River Street, Cambridge.
- Oona's, 1210 Mass Ave, Cambridge.
- Planet Aid, 306 Newbury Street, Boston.
- Poor Little Rich Girl, 416 Highland Avenue, Somerville.
- Rewind, 1736 Washington Street, Boston.
- Salvation Army, 187 Columbus Avenue, Boston; 328 Mass Ave, Cambridge.
- Savers, 1600 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury.
- Urban Renewals, 122 Brighton Avenue, Allston.

Hints for hunting

- 1) The key to thrift shopping is not to get overwhelmed. The carefully captured chaos that fills most secondhand shops can be dizzying. Focus on one rack, and just move around the store in a clockwise direction, looking at one piece at a time, one rack at a time.
- 2) Try to shop out of season. This may not be possible in smaller boutiques, but the best vintage coats for the best prices are lingering in soon-to-be-stored-away racks at the beginning of the spring.
- 3) It helps greatly to have something in mind, such as a particular time period, style, designer, or item. The store's staff usually have mind-blowing knowledge of what's in their shop, and their assistance can be invaluable.
- 4) Think quality. Quality designs and quality materials that have been well cared for will continue to stand the test of time. Silks, wools, leathers, and cashmeres are ideal long-term investments — but not if they've been worn into the ground. Check all seams, cuffs, and zippers for wear. And look for stains, because some may wash right out. Any repairs or alterations you may need should be mentally added to the purchase price.
- 5) Look for unusual details. Funky buttons, embroidery, beading, and unusual patterns and materials are what make vintage pieces so unique.
- 6) Haggling does work in many establishments. A little-known secret is that in



Absolutely Fabulous

almost any thrift shop, you can bargain the price down by at least 10 percent. You may have to deal directly with the owner to practice this ancient art.

7) Always try things on. Size tags are usually nonexistent and almost always inaccurate. Not only was a 1963 size eight more equivalent to a 2004 size four, but proportions were completely different. Women's bodies were much curvier, and most items had custom alterations.

8) Build a relationship with your favorite shop. Owners love to keep top clients in mind when acquiring new merchandise. Then, the next time you stop by, they may have a little something put aside for you. @