To Give Away or Not

Donna Jones

I have a problem that has bugged me for decades: a metal cabinet crammed full of 40- to 60-year-old handmade clothes. I will never wear these clothes again and I almost never even look at them. You are wondering why don’t I just photograph them and donate them to a worthy cause. This is easier said than done.

When I was a girl, my grandma, mom, and I would go shopping for school clothes. I would search for clothes I liked. My mother would inspect the length of the skirt, make sure the tops were appropriate, and make a decision about whether we could afford it. Finally, my grandma would check their quality to see if they would last. Often, my mother would veto an outfit because it was too expensive or too short. I would sulk. Grandma would come to my rescue by offering to make it for me. She said, “I’ll draw it and we’ll go to the yardage store and you can pick out any type of material you want.”

When we got home, my grandma’s bedroom turned into a sewing room for the next week. You could hear material being ripped, scissors clanging away, and the old fashioned sewing machine clicking along. You knew something went wrong when Grandma said, “Oh sugar!”

The parts I hated the most were the fittings and the hem pinning. She gently but firmly reminded me to stop fidgeting. “Stand still,” she said, “or the hem will be crooked.” Grandma put a lot of love and hard work into the clothes that she made for me. Sometimes I raced to the store with my new outfit just to stand in front of the store window comparing them. There was hardly any difference. I was lucky to have my grandmother do this for me. She had won blue ribbons at the county and state fairs for her needle work. She also sewed clothes to make extra money.

Once, Grandma made a long-sleeved, low-cut, black velvet evening dress with a mid thigh slit up the front. It was stunning, and I felt like a runway model in that dress. I draped a plush silver fox stole (this was before I knew about how furs were made) around my shoulders and a fake diamond necklace around my neck. Fancy earrings topped off the outfit. How could I possibly part with that
Donna Jones has three rules for shopping:

1. **Her rule:** Pick out what I like.

2. **Her mother’s rule:** Make sure it is appropriate and affordable.

3. **Her grandmother’s rule:** Make sure it is of good quality.

What are your three rules for shopping?

1. 

2. 

3. 

Donna Jones is a student at Project Read and she lives in San Francisco, CA.