

I don't like new clothes. I don't even like "new" used clothes. On the rare occasion that I buy something new, I often don't wear it for months, even years. I go to our closet--which is not very large, anyway--and pull out the same old favorites time after time.

For one thing, new garments just don't feel as comfortable as the ones I have been wearing for a long time. I remember when "prewashed" or "stonewashed" denims first became popular. They were an improvement over the harshness of new jeans. But, they still are not as good as a pair of denim pants that are worn thin in the knees or have actually developed holes here and there.

Then, too, there is the question of waste. How much do we really need to consume? I read somewhere that in certain countries where much of the population is very poor the term for used clothing--usually sent from the throwaway culture of western countries--is "dead man's clothes." In other words, if a person's clothes are available to be reused, it is because he has died.

But, even during my university years, when my social conscience was probably less developed than it is now, I didn't like new clothes. I remember one sweatshirt of which I was particularly fond. I was wearing it when I came home one weekend while I was in college. It was a tan shirt with dark maroon lettering--a typical sweatshirt with the school logo on it. I had arrived home very late, and had not arisen at my typical early hour. When I got up, I couldn't find my sweatshirt. I put something else on and went down to the kitchen where my mother was mopping the floor with a newly acquired mop rag. My sweatshirt had taken on a new persona and was beyond redemption as a garment--even with my apparently low standards.

My mother obviously knew that she would never get me to give up that sweatshirt by persuasion, entreaty, or order. So, she'd taken matters into her own hands while I was sleeping. But, I remember the shirt with fondness yet and still cannot understand what was so bad about a comfy sweatshirt with a few holes on the stomach and cut off sleeves.

I understand that some of the clothing in resale stores comes from

donations after someone has passed away. And, I know that there are people who have gained or lost so much weight that they can no longer wear the same clothes. It is good that these garments can be put to use again. But, I don't believe that most of the clothing I see at Goodwill or other resale shops comes from those sources. I really think that people get tired of their clothes and want something new. And that, to me, begins to involve a moral or ethical issue. How can we justify indulging ourselves in new clothing--or appliances, gadgets, furniture, or other possessions--just because we want something different or more up to date?

So, for a number of reasons, I continue wearing the same old things day after day, week after week, year after year. "New to me" clothes are usually gifts from friends or purchases at a resale store. My garments become truly "worn out" before I discard them. I have seldom been fashionable, but I have almost always been comfortable.

I do make one exception, though. I love new socks. Nothing feels better on the feet than brand new socks. I don't mind holes in the knees of my jeans, and threadbare t-shirts feel great on a hot summer day, but I don't like holes in my socks. Wool socks can be darned, but if I am wearing white cotton socks in my running shoes or under a pair of wool hand knit socks, the holes are a source of discomfort. So, when I buy new socks, they don't lie in a drawer for months before I put them on. The very next morning, I pull out a pair of pristine new socks, and my feet rejoice.

This whole subject came to mind because of my current knitting project. I had a blue wool handmade sweater that was my "everyday" sweater. It hung on the back of the chair where I sit at the table, and I put it on almost every morning, at least during the winter, spring, and fall. It took away that breakfast time chill before the fires warmed the cabin.

That sweater had become uncomfortable. The sleeves had stretched out, the buttons had disappeared, the neck had become too large. So, I ripped it out one day, washed the yarn, and dried it and put it away. After Christmas, I got out the yarn, found a pattern I liked, and

began to make a new sweater. Now, I have a sleeve and a half to knit, and soon, the blue sweater will once again hang on the back of my chair where I can grab it first thing in the morning to ward off the chill. I'll have the satisfaction of a sweater that fits better and probably looks nicer without the guilt of having cast something aside that still had many useful years left.

And, while I admire the ability of some women to walk confidently down a slippery sidewalk in fashionable boots with four inch heels, I am happier and safer in my old rubber barn boots with hand knit wool socks inside keeping my toes toasty. So, I will leave to others that knack of looking like a million dollars. I would rather just be comfortable.