

Dress Full Circle

By Alice French

There is a thrift store in Athens called the 'Litter Box'. It benefits not only the animals at the shelter across town, but also the customers who come in to shop every Saturday from 9-3. The way it works is this; there are two sides to the store. On one side, shoppers can "fill a bag" (a 13 gallon trash bag) for only \$5. Though that side is mostly clothing, there are also housewares, books and various other items. On the other side is the "Treasure Box" where nicer things like furniture, home décor, dishes and more are individually priced. Donations come in all the time, like when someone is moving and has a garage sale whatever doesn't sell goes to the 'Litter Box'. And when donations are made, a team of volunteers takes them in, unpacks, organizes, prices and maintains the inventory to be ready for sale each Saturday.



As a volunteer, I've seen a lot of interesting things come through that door. You can only imagine the story behind some of those things.

One day, my friend (and fellow volunteer) Karen, was going through some clothes when she came across a dress that didn't just catch her eye, she *knew* this dress.

Flashback to the year 1974 in Ocilla, Georgia where Karen Sumner had met, fallen in love with, and was planning to marry the love of her life, Bob Seibold. Karen had been raised in South Georgia and learned to sew at a fairly early age, so, for this special occasion she would make the dress for their engagement portrait. It was a simple, fitted, but elegant, turquoise dress. And it would mark the beginning of their next chapter in life together.

Bob was a pilot in the Air Force and Karen had a career in nursing. In 1978, they had a beautiful daughter named Lauren and life was good. Over time, there were a handful of moves due to Bob's occupation. And with each move there was always the purge and subsequent garage sale of things that didn't need to be moved. But the girls didn't seem to mind and went with the flow, always looking forward to the next new place!

In 1997, Bob became ill and was hospitalized. His heart was not strong and he needed a new one. This was, so far, the most stressful chapter in Karen's life. Thankfully, Bob had an outstanding care team and the essential support needed for Karen and Lauren to get through it. A successful transplant gave them another chapter in life. In fact, they got 16 more years!



Karen and Bob Seibold. Karen is wearing the dress in this article.

Fast forward to 2011. The Seibolds discovered Safari Waters Ranch in Larue, Texas and built their dream home for retirement. Lauren had just finished law school, Karen was still working from home and Bob was enjoying retirement. But, as will happen, his health started to fail and in March of 2014, we lost Bob. Karen and Lauren, devastated by their loss, clung to each other and nurtured the strength and purpose they needed to carry on. Not a great chapter, but one that was, no doubt, part of a plan.

Karen eventually started getting out more and became more active in the community. One of those endeavors was volunteering in nearby Athens at the 'Litter Box'. So one day, while volunteering, Karen was going through some clothes when she came across a dress that didn't just catch her eye, she knew this dress. It was a simple, fitted, but elegant, turquoise dress.

True story! That dress came full circle!

Think about it. Every time someone makes a donation to the 'Litter Box', there's potential for the history attached to that donation to hold a fascinating story. But more than that, each donation made and sold benefits the animals at the shelter. So on behalf of the animals, thank you for donating. And thank you for shopping at the 'Litter Box'.



Note: A recent article in the Athens Daily Review reported that as of December 31, 2017 the Henderson County Humane Society will no longer be managing the shelter. However, The 'Litter Box' will remain open and use the money raised there to provide free or low-cost spay and neutering of county animals in an effort to make a difference in the pet population.



If you're looking for a great gift for a friend, there are gift certificates available at the shelter in Athens and at the Litter Box thrift shop. Litter box bucks can be redeemed at the Litter box thrift shop for many wonderful items. They come in denominations of \$1.00 and \$5.00.