*Back Home by Chris Hardie*

**‘He doesn’t throw anything away’: Frugal fashion fans respond to Hardie column**

Ralph Lauren needn’t be concerned, but it appears my predilection for old clothes is a fashion trend shared by others.

My recent column about wearing clothes until they fall apart found favor with some of my regular readers. Apparently, the desire for form over fashion and frugality over fineness isn’t just my dressing domain.

Karen Huettl of Green Bay wrote to tell me that I sound just like her husband Robert.

“He doesn’t throw anything away,” Huettl said. “His friends tease him about putting duct tape on his shoes. He’s 75 years old and has enough clothes that he could go months without wearing the same thing, but seems to navigate to the same old clothes. He’s always working outside, so that means, ‘old clothes.’ I was lucky enough to get him in a suit for our grandson’s wedding last July.”

Good for you, Robert. I applaud your efforts and determination. Duct tape doesn’t do any good sitting on the roll. And there’s nothing wrong with wearing a suit every once in a while. I have a few that date back to the 1980s.

Curt Rohland of Chippewa Falls is another fan of old fashion.

“Chris, I sure identified with your penchant for repurposing (I’ve come to love that newly repurposed expression) worn but usable clothing,” Rohland said. “My family pokes fun at the visibly deteriorated shirts and jeans I hang on to for my yard and garage work.

“You even mentioned duct tape and twine as a way to save old clothing from the trash bin. That has worked for me! Thanks for affirming my refusal to let semi-wasted clothing go to waste.”

Dan and Lynn Henderson from Holmen sent me a note of thanks. “With us, your article definitely found two appreciative readers and kindred spirits. With all the anxiety constantly filling the news, it was the best and funniest column we’ve read in a long time.”

Patricia Baumer of Marinette commented on my 1994 June Dairy Days race t-shirt, saying it was “too bad making quilts with the sports/activities t-shirts wasn’t thought of back then.”

Clearly, clothes do wear out, but how long do they normally last?

A study in the United Kingdom determined the average lifetime for an item of clothing is 2.2 years.

However, the National Institute for Consumer Research in Oslo, Norway did a study of 620 clothing items that 16 households consisting of 35 people disposed of during a six-month period.

That study showed the clothes that went out of use had an average total life span of 5.4 years and had been with the current owner for the past four years. Clothes for children and teenagers had shorter average life spans, while adults above 51 disposed of clothing 4.6 years older than average.

Of course the Norwegians would be more fashion frugal than the Brits. When it’s dark half the year, does anyone really care what you’re wearing?

The study said the total life spans of the clothing ranged from brand new to about 50 years, but 8% of the garments were never used and every fifth garment was never used or had been used only a couple of times.

There were no specific mentions of tuxedos or cocktail dresses, but I suspect those may fall into the seldom-used category.

But apparently, there is an opportunity for more research, as the study suggests a closer look at the active use period and the number of use times and differences between various consumer groups.

Thankfully, it was a short active use period for those colored parachute pants and velour shirts I used to wear in the 1980s.

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