

## ‘Sip a little tea with Goldie’ at ‘60s shop

By Catherine Whittenburg  
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Of the more than two dozen stores in Claret County offering antiques and vintage wares, only one welcomes visitors with a door-mat suspended OVER the door. It reads, "GOD BLESS OUR PAD." It hangs near a psychedelic refrigerator. Which sits beside a gigantic billboard of Jim Morrison. Who stares across a baby grand piano covered in candles and beads at an old bookcase. Which holds books such as "The Andy Warhol Diaries." None of which are for sale.

Sound like scenes in any of the antique shops in Beaufort or Morehead? Probably not.

### Memory lane

Don't bother hunting through conventional vintage merchandise shops in search of a collection like this. To find it, just dig through Yesterdaze Closet. Actually, the

bold displays at Yesterdaze Closet, a 1960s memorabilia store, precludes the need to do much digging at all.

A fanfare of '60s items greets visitors as they step over the threshold. Two minutes of wandering leads them to a Doors' gold album, hot pants, Barbie and scores of other souvenirs from the peace-love-drug era of the 20th century.

The only thing customers might have difficulty in discovering is the location of the store itself. Yesterdaze Closet is tucked away in the quiet Courtyard Shops of Morehead Plaza on Arendell Street, in the shadow of Belk department store.

### Began early

Phyllis Ellsworth-Smith, 35, merrily invited me to relax in a gigantic nest of pillows during our interview. As I fumbled around for a pen, she poured cups of "Calming Tea" from her Chinese tea set. Primitive, exotic music drifted

through the dimly lit shop as we began to chat.

Ms. Ellsworth-Smith confined most of her observations about the '60s to memories from her childhood.

"I didn't miss the '60s! It started in '64 with the Beatles, when I was 5," she explained. "I grew up in Los Angeles, right in the middle of it. There was never so much going on in such a short period of time. It was like the biggest box ever opened, with so much inside. It was deeper than Pandora's box. You never knew what was going to jump at you."

### Colors, long hair

Ms. Ellsworth-Smith's child's-eye view during the 60s greatly affects her perspective on today's decade.

"It wasn't all about drugs. And I'm proof of that," she said. "I wasn't interested in drugs. I was teeny. I liked the colors. And I

knew Vietnam was going on, but I didn't really think so much about the bad stuff until I got older."

"I loved watching the people, the girls with their teased-up hair and their false eyelashes; the boys with the big afros and the ponytails down their backs. I looked at them and would think, that's what I want to be when I grow up."

While she maintains a casual, cheerful demeanor, Ms. Ellsworth-Smith takes her business seriously.

"Just like people collect Victorian pieces, I'm preserving the '60s," she explained. "All of it, from Kent State to Vietnam. From Jim Morrison who died at 27, to Twiggy, who was so thin she made us realize that big curves like Barbie's weren't everything after all."

### Home is different

Collecting vestiges of the past has always been a passion of Ms. Ellsworth-Smith. Her home reflects an affection for nostalgia and antiquity that extends beyond her interest in the '60s.

"In my house, it's different," she said. "My bedroom is decorated in Victorian and my kitchen is Depression-era. I just like older things. I also had this little room, 'the '60s room,' which I decorated like a teen-ager's bedroom. It was like a time warp."

As Ms. Ellsworth-Smith began to fill the room with more collectibles, friends encouraged her to open a store. Despite her initial resistance, she eventually began to consider the idea, having visited vintage shops while vacationing in California.

"It's so different," she said.  
(See Flashbacks Pg. 5B)



Phyllis Ellsworth-Smith of Morehead City brings her memories of Los Angeles during the 1960s to life in her vintage memorabilia shop. (Photos by Catherine Whittenburg).



# Flashbacks from the '60s

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"Walking around in California, nobody cares what you're wearing or doing. People there always wear bell-bottoms and other things from that period. I remember wearing bell-bottoms to the stores here in '89 or '90, and seeing people whispering and laughing and pointing at me. It made me feel stupid. It wasn't like I was naked!

"So I thought, maybe I could open up a vintage shop here like the ones in California, right? Open it for people who want to wear the clothes, maybe have some memorabilia for sale, but also be able to showcase all my stuff."

## Time, money

Ms. Ellsworth-Smith's devotion to collecting first-rate items demands a substantial investment of both time and money. She is a regular client at national memorabilia auctions, and makes massive purchases during her annual trips to California.

"I have contacts all of the place," she said.

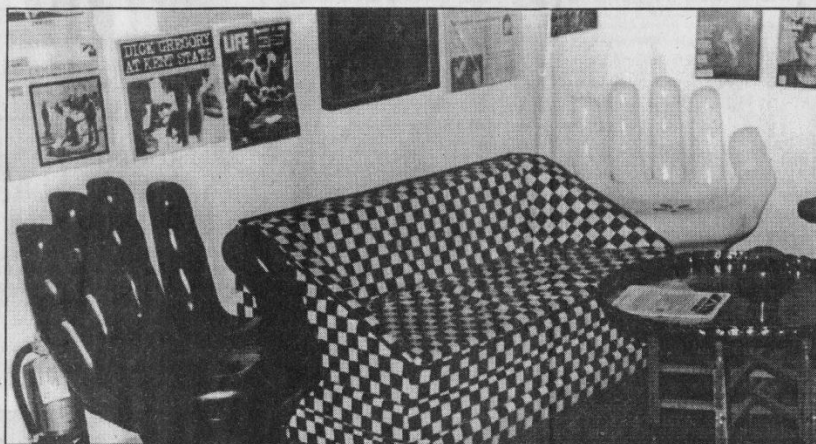
During an auction at Sotheby's in New York this year, she bid on "Double Fantasy," John Lennon and Yoko Ono's last gold record award, as well as a guitar autographed by the Doors. Despite her "pretty ridiculous" bids, she was unsuccessful.

"There's always someone out there willing to be even more ridiculous," she said. "I have to think carefully. It's not like I'm going to resell this stuff. You have to make such a quick decision, because you might not get another chance."

## Not for sale

Yesterdaze Closet can be a bit confusing to first-timers. While nearly everything on display in the center of the store is for sale, most of the items on the walls and bookcase are not, to the frequent disappointment of new clientele.

"People just aren't used to coming into a store and hearing, 'I'm sorry, it's not for sale,'" said Ms.



Accompanied by popular magazines, album covers and newspapers of the '60s, Ms.

Ellsworth-Smith's flair for art deco would have made Andy Warhol proud.

Ellsworth-Smith. "They pick up everything, and they want it. People just don't read the signs."

As if on cue, a customer walked up and pointed to something on the wall. "Is that for sale?"

Ms. Ellsworth-Smith stifled a giggle and sighed.

"No. Nothing on the walls is for sale."

## Holistic approach

It is not difficult to understand why Miss Ellsworth-Smith's customers become absent-minded and forget to read the notices on the wall while they shop. In addition to hypnotic music, subtle lighting and kaleidoscopic colors, the proprietor's own sense of peaceful living lends a distinctively warm, relaxed atmosphere.

"I quit eating pork and beef and Aug. 3 made two years of no smoking or drinking," she said.

Ms. Ellsworth-Smith prefers to find comfort in healthier indulgences, such as herbal teas. It's no wonder, then, that she takes offense at misinterpretations of her shop being drug-oriented.

"That's another thing," she lamented. "People think it's some big drug place. Like, right behind you there's a bong, but people don't realize there's no bowl on it. I bought it at an antique shop and had it made into a lamp! We used it as lighting for poetry readings."

## Conscientious

Ms. Ellsworth-Smith is a master of details, both professionally and personally. Her intricate store displays seem to correspond with the unmistakable sense of conscientiousness with which she acts and speaks.

"I'm not a brain surgeon, but I've always prided myself on having good sense and a good heart," she said. "You know, being able to tell right from wrong and treat others the way I want to be treated. Even little things, like spiders and squirrels. Maybe I'll never handle big things out in the big world, but here I can handle these little things. That's as much control in life as I want to have — to be able to deal with the common things."

## Bridging gaps

Perhaps her concern even for the welfare of a mere spider makes her particularly aware of unkind comments she hears about her store. "At the beginning, I wasn't used to people being hurtful and negative," she said. "You have people who open the door, stick their head in and then look at each other and say, 'Ugh!' and make faces. That hurts my feelings. I'd hear them and think, 'What am I doing?! I'll just take my toys and go home! I won't share!'"

Fortunately, a generous aggregate of more appreciative customers also find their way into Yesterdaze Closet. Ms. Ellsworth-Smith remarked that watching generation gaps narrow as families shop in her store is particularly rewarding.

"I have great people that come in. Like older people, who come with their kids and say, 'Honey come here. This is what your mom wore. And this record! We had this record!'" Kids and parents come in and pick out things to buy together."

## All grown up

Yesterdaze Closet is more than just a business venture, a tribute to the 1960s or an extra source of display space. For Ms. Ellsworth-Smith, there exists a deeper, much more intimate significance. She emphasized that maintaining both financial independence for her business and a satisfying level of creative self-expression are her two primary, though often conflicting,



Conventional display items, such as this mannequin, are transformed into artistic statements in Ms. Ellsworth-Smith's shop.