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Changing Times Bookstore.

about". It is one of the reasons that the Potts do not see big chain bookstores as progress. "A million books in a store does not necessarily make it a good bookstore. A big bookstore yes! A good bookstore? Most likely not, but again it depends on how you define a good bookstore. And almost certainly you won't find staff there with the kind of qualifications that you'll find in Changing Times where James and Audrey hold Europe equivalents of Masters degrees between the two of them in Language Arts, Developmental Psychology, Health and Nutrition.

Changing Times is a different kind of bookstore in the sense that more than 75% of the inventory consists of "Remainder books". In short that means Publishers' returns from overstock at retail outlets. Every bookstore has the right to return books to the Publisher after three

months for a credit. There is usually nothing wrong with these books except that they did not get sold for a variety of reasons: the price was too high, the book seller bought too many (chain stores quite often do) etc. For the publisher these returns can become quite a logistic and other nightmare. That's where the Remainder wholesaler comes in. He buys these books sometimes on title, usually as an unsorted mix at starkly reduced prices, that is the main reason why the prices of books at Changing Times are quite often so unbelievably cheap. Usually less than 50% of the regular prices and it is not unusual to find books at less than 20% of the original price. But there is more to it than dumping a pile of remainder books in the store, or in front of a K-Mart or other outlet.

It requires careful selection, sorting through thousands of books to find the gems, the real buys, the books with lasting value, the books that have collector's value. And that means weekly trips to the wholesaler. The main warehouse where they get their books from has over 85,000 square feet of display area and another 25,000 of receiving and sorting. It is open for the general public at the same great prices as at Changing Times, but the assortment is for many people just too overwhelming. Changing Times is a different kind of bookstore with this kind of time and effort spent on the remainder aspect of the book business. Of course they do also carry what is often called "The front list" the best sellers, hot off the press, but the Potts admit that they may sometimes lag behind a bit because of this balancing of the front list and their remainder inventory. It happens quite often that they ordered in their frontlist and before it had arrived they came across an assortment of remainders with the result that side by side on the shelf you would find Angela's Ashes for \$12.99 and \$27.95, or mass market paperbacks with a three dollar price difference. That quite often requires a bit of explaining.

Seat of the Soul, recently on Oprah, always sold for \$7.99 at Changing Times, now they have to charge the regular 20% off cover price. Yes, the best sellers are usually at a 20% discount at Changing Times. Why did they come downtown? The Potts are downtown people, because they are native Europeans. According to James and Audrey, in Europe the only place where any retailer would dream to go is downtown. If and when you can afford it you buy your place downtown. Downtown is where the action is. And this is not just a slogan, it really is. People go downtown when they are on the prowl, when they want to buy something special, when they want to have a good time while doing it. Downtown is a breath of fresh air and shopping malls are looked upon with disdain. They are work, you only go there when you have to. Downtown makes buying a gift, whether it be for yourself or

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someone else a fun thing, downtown is special, downtown has a special quality that shopping malls have tried to imitate but have never really managed because downtown means individual ownership and that means individuality. It means character.

The Potts own the lovely 5,500 square feet of former Barrett's office supplies building and have been there now for just over two months. They are delighted with the reception. "There are days", says Audrey, "That you almost walk on air because of the comments from old as well as new customers; everybody loves the spaciousness, the airiness, the relaxed atmosphere". With three bookstores downtown, downtown Belleville is certainly becoming a very attractive place for a lot of shoppers from far and wide.

