

The Burkeville Squad Shop Where grace turns rags into riches



Long trains constantly interrupt the flow of life in Burkeville, blasting the town with ear piercing horns and powdering the air with fine coal dust. But the discomfort and impatience felt at the clocked crossing can be turned into a blessing if you notice the Burkeville Squad Shop a few yards from the tracks. Park your car and go in.

Run by Grace Bobb and “Sis” Woodward for the last nine years, the Squad Shop is Burkeville’s “major happening,” as one faithful customer put it. Only the fire department’s yard sale puts the Shop in a shadow—but that is only for a day. The Squad Shop shines all year long, three days a week from Thursday

thru Saturday.

“You wait all week to see what’s in the shop,” said a lady who pointed out that everything she was wearing came from the shop, “good quality stuff, too,” she added.

The Squad Shop is probably one of the most efficient enterprises in the county: absolutely everything that goes in comes out with a new usefulness. Clothes, shoes, belts, hats and material hang from racks in the back of the store or pile up in boxes. Pots and pans, dishes, fans, furniture, in fact, any kind of household item—“some we can’t even identify,” said Mrs. Woodward—are displayed where there is room. All the proceeds go to the Nottoway County Emergency Squad, said Mrs. Bobb proudly.

“We make our money on the furniture and appliances,” she continued in a hushed voice, as if she were sharing a business secret. Every item of clothing is sold for \$.25 but a couch might go for \$25 and a refrigerator may bring \$40. Mrs. Bobb was sorting out a fresh box of old socks. “this gets to be hard work sometimes,” she said. Every sock was getting careful attention from the two ladies. Those that had no mate went into a separate pile.

Children were romping around the furniture or examining the items on the counter. No one minded because what could they break: all this stuff has already survived years of children’s curiosity.

So far this year the shop has given the emergency squad \$4,000, and “it has been the best year yet,” said Mrs. Bobb. Speaking for the squad, E.G.Fisher said the two women had “hearts of gold.” The shop is a major financial asset for the recue service, contributing from \$5,000 to \$10,000 each year, he said.

With only light and oil bills to pay and the supply of unwanted clothes inexhaustible, the shop seems to run effortlessly, like a play instead of a business. Laughter comes easy and there is time to reflect on what is important in life: service, dedication, generosity...

There was a break between trains and now th squeals of children could be heard. Light came in through the open door and hit a silver hair of Mrs. Bobb as she was laughing at one of the children. Then the lightness in her laugh spread everywhere.

The box of socks had been sorted into several piles and a customer was waiting to pay for a bag of clothes. It was time to go and thank the trans for providing the opportunity to experience the Burkeville Squad Shop.