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The Virginia Bazaar Flea Market, Antiques & Collectibles

July - August 2004

by Donna Hopkins

The Virginia Bazaar is really a bazaar, a flea market, a bake sale, and your favorite local produce stand all rolled into one neat package. Outside, friendly vendors sell whirly gigs, hand made wooden birdhouses and wishing wells, antiques, collectibles, used household goods, curios, and the like. Farmers display fresh vegetables, bedding plants, and hanging baskets in all their bounty ready for sale. Inside, visitors will find shops and stalls with merchandise and bargains for every need and desire. With its clean wide aisles, level cement floors, and climate controlled environment, the market is cool, comfortable, and inviting.

The Virginia Bazaar has the unique distinction of offering the best of the peaceful, quiet, rural country life while still being conveniently located alongside I-95, at exit 110, in Ladysmith. The 67,000 sq. ft. building is situated on 100 acres of land that was formally a dairy farm. The nearest "neighbor" is about 5 miles down the road, and on warm summer days you can still get a whiff of cow manure. How's that for the simple life?

The Bazaar is open year-round, every Sat. and Sun. 9 to 5. With paved parking for 1400 cars, no admission or parking fees, accessibility for folks with disabilities, and an ATM machine on site, every customer is guaranteed a great shopping experience. There are plenty of clean, well-maintained restrooms. And, watch out Dads, you may have to change a diaper or two in this place that even provides changing tables in the men's restrooms. No excuses here!

The Virginia Bazaar is managed by Burt and Libby Doggett. This husband and wife team is like two dynamos in action. They make it look easy--greeting shoppers, dealing with vendors, and coordinating the special event of the weekend. Not to mention all the paperwork, organization, and planning that must go on behind the scenes. It's not unusual to see Libby "get a little nutty" and drive around the parking lot in her golf cart, checking out the action. She jots down license plate numbers and states to find out where shoppers are from--and calls out winning plates at random to give out "Market Money" or tickets to special events. If you are lucky, you might win tickets to the Virginia Motor Speedway where you can cheer for Tim Shelton in his #55 Monte Carlo sponsored by The Bazaar.

The Bazaar recently celebrated its 4 year anniversary, surviving world events that would cause any business to struggle. Through the trauma of 9/11, the sniper that terrorized the east coast, hurricane Isabel, and down turns in the economy, The Bazaar has not only survived, but thrived! Libby and Burt have had the amazing experience of watching people grow their businesses. They know first-hand the good feelings that come when you see your family succeed. And that is just what The Bazaar is all about--family.

There is a family of vendors, people working together to create a community where everyone is looked after and cared for and there is pride in the product or service. Vendors come from all over the United States and world--Nigeria, Kenya, Hungary, Germany, Sudan, Korea, and China.

Every vendor has a story. There is the gentleman from New York who works in a window factory Monday through Thursday and then packs up his wares in banana boxes to make the trip each Friday to The Bazaar--selling a little of this and a lot of that, anything and everything.

And there are vendors, like Queen Milton who have been with The Bazaar since it started. From her music shop, she can help you find that special "oldie but goodie" you need to serenade your sweetheart or play for your kids so they can hear "real" music.

The managers have taken great care to provide a safe environment for families with no pornography, drug paraphernalia, guns or weapons for sale. The Bazaar sponsors lots of kids events like the Easter bunny visit with egg hunt, and trick or treating at Halloween time. Libby recognizes, "If you make the kids happy, the parents are happy, too!" And happy parents are happy shoppers!

Like all good families, The Virginia Bazaar strives to give back to the community. On Sundays, the vendors gather for a non-denominational worship and fellowship service. Shoppers are welcome to join the service, too. They take up a collection which is used to support a variety of worthy causes such as fuel assistance for those in need and adopting families at Thanksgiving and Christmas. On June 5-6, The Bazaar sponsored a community weekend where local churches, community service and non-profit organizations are invited to hold rummage sales, and fundraising activities. And every year, The Bazaar is home to the Caroline County Fair with rides, games, petting zoo, agricultural and craft exhibits, and, of course, great food.

For many of the shops the name says it all, like Bill Bugs Bait and Tackle, Antiques of Tomorrow Furniture and Accessories, Kwon's socks and gifts, and Suzie's Ceramics. But for a few of the shops, like Boondoggles, the name sparks a little conversation. The owners of this shop are quick to explain that they first heard the expression "boondoggle" used by Grandma Walton of the beloved TV show. Boondoggles reminds everyone who passes by of simple times, happy memories, and those little things that make life really special.

A visit to the Bazaar is really a treat--in more ways than one. Customers can eat their way through this market that features delectable goodies for every taste. Check out Connie's Candies for the hand made peanut brittle that won the First Place Blue Ribbon at the county fair. At the Gourmet Chili and Herb Company visitors can sample hot sauces, salsas, peanuts, jerky, and more. Stop by Maui Wowie for fresh fruit blends, Lil' Orbits for mini donuts covered in powdered or cinnamon sugar, and the Kiddi Korner for popcorn and sugar roasted nuts. Don't forget to sample the Pearl Valley cheese homemade by the Amish. Take home a jar of McCutcheon's apple, pumpkin, or cherry butter from Gifts from Nanas. Share lunch with family and friends in the food court with a wide variety of choices including barbeque, fried fish, crab cakes, soft serve ice cream, and if you hit the right day, homemade sweet potato pie.

Visit The Virginia Bazaar and join the family! Find out more about the market, vendors, events, and directions by visiting their website, www.vabazaar.com. I'll see you there for a Blue Christmas with Elvis in July! I'll be the one rocking around the Christmas tree!