



Tooker Walton, 83, was born in Jackson, Miss. She moved to Albuquerque with her husband in 1968, after he'd retired from the Army.

"When I first came, I volunteered at the Indian Hospital as a "gray lady," she says. "In 1970 I started with the thrift shop," she added.

That's the St. John's Thrift Shop, now at 1406 Central S.W., which is operated by the St. Martha's Guild of St. John's Episcopal Cathedral. "Everything is clean and lovely," Walton says.

She worked for years at the shop as a full-time volunteer and is still the shop's treasurer, although she's cut back on her

hours because of vision problems caused by macular degeneration. "But until January, I was still working at the shop on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and I still do the books."

The shop operates entirely on volunteer help and donations.

With her Army-wife experience of running a thrift shop in France (with additional prior volunteer time as an active member of the Red Cross and president of an officer's wives' club), she helped increase the St. John's Thrift Shop annual net income tenfold within two years.

Now, it provides about \$2,000 a month to the cathedral and about \$10,000 a year to local charities and non-profit organizations serving the needy.

"Today, it's very difficult to get volunteers," she says. "Most young women are gainfully employed to maintain their livelihood. And usually even much older people, not required to retire, are working longer now than in the earlier days."

The shop's oldest volunteer is a woman of 103, Walton says, and the youngest volunteer is just 13 years old.

Walton has also been an active member of the League of Women Voters for 40 years and belongs to a book club, itself more than 100 years old, that meets twice a month.

Walton's actual first name is Dorothy. But she's been Tooker to everyone ever since she was a little girl and a baby sister called her that.

The St. John's Thrift Shop (phone: 242-6751) is open Wednesdays through Saturdays, from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM.