

Good Deals

not your ordinary secondhand store

Story & photos
by Dave Fisher

Specializing in military surplus, owner Bob Buckhaults stocks 'almost' everything

You name it, chances are Bob Buckhaults has it, especially when it comes to outdoors gear.

Buckhaults, owner of Good Deals in John Day, has been at it 21 years and his 600-square-foot secondhand store reflects a labor of love during that time. While he started out as a military surplus store and continues to specialize in military paraphernalia, he learned a long time ago if you're going to make it in this small Eastern Oregon community you have to diversify. That said, one can find – in addition to military camouflage – clothing and packs, fishing poles and reels, tackle, camping gear, knives, horse tack, DVDs, sprinklers, hand grenades (not live, of course), even bird houses fashioned from old cowboy boots.

As hunting season draws near, locals and hunters from all over stop on their way through John Day.

The former OTI (Oregon Technical Institute) graduate grew up in Southern Oregon in the small town of Selma, 30 miles south of Grants Pass.

"I can't tell you how small it was because we didn't have a sign with the population on it," he said with a laugh.

As a member of the Josephine County fair board, his dad used to screen military surplus for the county and that's how the younger Buckhaults first got interested in all things military. The fair board over the years garnered a sound stage, tractors, forklifts, hydraulic fluid, tires and more... whatever was needed.

"Military surplus isn't just camo clothing and packs. That's my niche because this is a hunting town, but the military has everything you can think of," said Buckhaults, noting that a lot of the items he receives from the military are brand new and never been used.

While one may think Good Deals is a store for men, Buckhaults says that's not necessarily true. There are a lot of women who hunt, too, and among the inventory are pots and pans, along with camp cookware and utensils.

One of the more unique items is birdhouses made from old worn cowboy boots.

"My dad makes the birdhouses and he sells a lot of them out of here," said Buckhaults. "So many, he can hardly keep up."

It was his dad who helped him get started years ago and Buckhaults, to this day, describes it as a family business.

"It's been a good business. It's a lot of hours, but I can't really do anything else," said Buckhaults, noting injuries have taken their toll over time. Perhaps the most serious was when a tree fell on him in his early 20s fracturing his backbone in 13 places.

Still, he enjoys what he does, which helps explain his longevity.

"I like people and enjoy my customers. I have some who come in almost on a daily basis."

As hunting season draws near, business picks up. Along with the locals, hunters from all over the state, even out of state, make a point of stopping on their way through John Day. Many are repeat customers Buckhaults sees year in and year out.

"It's kind of neat," he said of the seasonal aspect of his business.

A word of caution, however, to those who rely on him being open this time of year. Turns out, Buckhaults is a hunter, as well, and has been known to hang a sign outside his store reminding customers, particularly hunters, to shop early because he may be out of town himself. Otherwise, his store at 437-B West Main Street is open seven days a week during the summer and early fall, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

Things around town slow down during the winter months and Buckhaults' business hours reflect the change of seasons; however, he remains undaunted.

"I like the pace here, it's a nice little town," he says of John Day. "It took a long time to be accepted and after 21 years I'm still at it, but it's a great place to raise kids. I grew up in a small community and I love living in a small community."



Bob Buckhaults, owner of Good Deals secondhand store in John Day.



A popular item at Good Deals is birdhouses fashioned from old worn cowboy boots.