

15 MINUTES

'Something different'

After being in the trucking business for nearly two decades, Michelle and Martin Van Gundy were ready to get off the road and into a more settled life-style, so they opened Needful Things—an antique store in Paradise (8247 Skyway)—in the summer of 2018. After being open for just a few months, the Camp Fire hit, forcing the couple to take stock of their business. Last month marked a year since they expanded the operation by opening a spot in Durham. It was there they decided to grow their inventory, buying an 8,000-square-foot space where they now sell new furniture and kitchen appliances, as well as antiques and miscellaneous goods. Visit the Durham location at 9371 Midway. It's open daily, from 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

What made you interested in switching careers?

Martin: We wanted to retire from the road, and I had a life's collection of antiques, so we put that towards a new business.

Did you lose your business and home in the fire?

Michelle: No, the business didn't burn. We had some stuff in mini storages that we lost, but the main loss was the people; they've scattered. Paradise was known for its antiques, and we were starting to gain a good reputation, but all of that was gone after the fire. We weren't actually displaced at our home,



PHOTO BY RACHEL BUSH

but we lost a property, and that breaks my heart, because that's where I raised my kids. Martin: Our Paradise shop is still open, and my brother Michael runs that.

Where do you get your merchandise?

Michelle: We sell a lot of items that have been returned from department stores. We also get things from estate sales; we work with Judy Bristow from Pro. Sales by Judy. Our stock is always changing. Our regular customers like seeing that every time they come in there's something different.

Do you have a favorite type of product you sell?

Michelle: I love the antiques, but the money is in the newer merchandise. I also love our collection of books. We have many more that aren't out yet, and we're going to add them to our

collection and bring them out periodically. I have good deals on the books because I think they're important.

Was there a learning curve in starting a new profession/opening a business?

Michelle: Oh, yeah. There's been a lot of experimenting on what we buy and we're learning what people want.

Do you have any customers who know you from your Paradise shop?

Michelle: We do. When we first started doing this, we were meeting people from Paradise who were restarting, and we outfitted a few of them with furniture for their new homes. We try to help out when we can, especially if it was someone who rented in Paradise, because their stuff wasn't covered by insurance. I love Paradise.

—RACHEL BUSH

THE GOODS



by
Meredith J. Cooper
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Farmstead farewell

A year and a half ago or so, I had the opportunity to get a private tour of **Orland Farmstead Creamery**. Anyone who knows me knows I love cheese, so getting an inside look at the process, from cow to the table, was both fascinating and fun. I knew there was a science behind it all, but seeing how much work really goes into each batch—not only making the end product taste good and reach the proper temperatures for safe serving, but also maintaining consistency—gave me a new appreciation for the craft.

While on the farm, my tour guide led me out to one of the pastures where the cows were grazing. It was a hot day, I remember, and as we made our way back toward the barn, we saw a half dozen piglets running around inside one of the pens that lines the entry to the milking room. They were ridiculously cute. We bottle-fed a young calf. And I met **Paul Schmidt**, one of the creamery's founders, hard at work tending to the farm's daily chores.

Schmidt was a third-generation dairyman who bought the property in Orland in 1977. He teamed up with **Valerie Miller** in 2012 and they formed the creamery. Their cheeses, all soft, are both unique and delicious. The ricottage—a cross between ricotta and cottage cheese—is divine. I eat it plain, but it adds an unexpected yet perfect finishing touch to dishes like **Crush's** bolognese (plus, insider tip: Order it on the side at **Grana** anytime).

Sadly, Schmidt died suddenly this past weekend. Miller posted a message on social media saying, among other things, that "I believe he died doing what he loved—caring for his dairy cattle." She says the future of the creamery is unknown at this time, but to stay tuned for updates as well as memorial details. I think I speak for many local cheese lovers when I say that Schmidt will be missed, as he has played a part in many a delicious meal, and that I wish Miller and the rest of the farm the best.

GIVING I'm a sucker for a feel-good story, and a double-sucker for animals, especially dogs. So I was happy to hear that this past October's **Walk Woof Wag** event raised a substantial amount of moola for the **Chico** and **Paradise Animal Shelters**. The event was started in 2014 by **Bryce Velasco**, then an eighth-grader at Marsh Junior High. Seeing young people start things that grow real legs is awesome. It's now sponsored by **Friends of the Chico Animal Shelter**, **Canine Connection** and the **North Valley Community Foundation** and, with final numbers tallied, it raised \$20,000 for the two shelters. Way to go!

BREAK TIME For the next few weeks, you may not see my smiling face on this page, and I apologize in advance for not keeping you all up to date on local business happenings. But do not fear—I'm taking a short hiatus to tend to some family issues and promise to be back at it in a few weeks.

HAVE LYME?

Think you might have Lyme?

Monthly Support Group

Monday, February 17
5:30-7:00pm
Northwood Commons Clubhouse

We Share Facts/Information
Help Line: (530) 877-6666

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