

LADY MAYOR MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The cowbell on the front door clangs as another customer walks into the mayor's office. The office is the W.L. Randall General Merchandise store, owned and operated by Mayor Hallie Randall. In a setting as unique as herself, Hallie Randall conducts business, handles community affairs and plans for Fruitvale's future.

At a time when education was not considered important for a woman, 'Miss Hallie,' as she is affectionally known by all, attended Lon Morris College. She received her bachelor's from North Texas State University and her master's from East Texas State University. Se began teaching in 1926, advancing to principal of Fruitvale ISD in 1941. She retired in 1972, with a total of 52 years in the teaching profession.

An ambitious, civic-minded person Hallie Randall was not content to retire and do nothing – so she ran for mayor in 1972. During her three terms in office she has dedicated herself to the advancement of Fruitvale.

A senior center and nutrition site in Wills Point gave her the idea that Fruitvale could benefit from a similar facility. Se contacted the Area Agency on Aging for information and details on applying for funding. The fire station in Fruitvale was renovated as the site for the center and in March, 1978, the first meals were served. The senior center serves about 50 meals a day. Two recreational directors and two cooks for the site are supplied through CETA Commenting on how the center changed the community, Miss Hallie said, "The thing I love most about this place is that before, these people just sat at home alone and just inside. Now they come here and forget about how they hurt." Currently, Fruitvale has been approved by HUD for 20 units of low rent housing for the elderly. Mayor Randall hopes to locate these units directly across the street from the senior center.

Although the senior center is near to her heart, the apple of Hallie Randall's eye is the Emergency Children's Shelter recently completed in Fruitvale. The \$90,000 facility is a labor of love built by the citizens of Van Zandt County who donated materials, labor and effort.

The facility is staffed by a husband and wife team with experience in managing children's homes. The emergency shelter is for abused, neglected or abandoned children. It will provide temporary car for children until more permanent decisions can be made on their futures.

The children's shelter is currently awaiting its state license to begin operation.

Land for the Emergency Children's Shelters donated by Miss Hallie two years ago. Other private citizens and the count donated furniture. Church organizations and various individuals have combined efforts to stock the shelter with everything necessary to make it a warm, comfortable and attractive place to house children. The shelter proves Miss Hallie's belief. "You can do anything you want if you can get people to work together. Nothing is too great."

Besides a dedication to Fruitvale's present and future needs, Miss Hallie feels a responsibility for preserving the past. Still operating the general store her husband established in 1910, she collects memorabilia of the people who settled the community. The store interior, new in 1915, has shelves

lined with the treasures that was Fruitvale's heritage Worn plows, an old old cream separator, a wood burning pot-bellied stove (still the main source of heat), rolling pins, bread bowls, the old barber chair, ceiling fans and an old jukebox are all on display in the Fruitvale "museum".

In 1976, Miss Hallie and several other local women designed and made a quilt for exhibit in the Van Zandt County Fair. The Quilt represented the heritage of Fruitvale. The ladies found negatives of building, homes, churches and people that were established in the early days of the community. The negatives were enlarged to an 8 inch by 10 inch size and transferred photography onto 100 percent cotton squares. The squares were stitched together with red, white, and blue fabric and then quilted. The quilt won first prize at the fair.

The mayor of Fruitvale serves her community well, She's a leader, a doer and an intelligent, sensitive woman young beyond her years. And to the citizens of Fruitvale Hallie Randall's even more – she's a friend.