

## WHAT THEY WERE THINKING



Rozie Hendricks, Galesburg, Ill., Feb. 10, 2001

*"I've been living in Galesburg since 1960. I used to be in a mental institution, shoved in there with a lot of people that weren't supposed to be in there. When I got out, I asked around town if anyone needed help and started volunteering. I had to establish my credibility. People think someone who comes from an institution is dumb and stupid and all that."*

*"I have elderly people that I help. I've been with them for a long time, most since 1979. Some have passed on, and I've picked up new ones here and there. I get food and all kinds of things for them, though I don't have strength to carry the packages anymore. I also volunteer in my friend's shop, The Majestic Lady. I help hang up clothes and pick things up off the floor. I do her banking and a couple of other people's banking who are in their shops all day. And I direct people to different streets."*

*"I've had a hard time. My father was a mean man; he wasn't very good to us kids. I was in foster care as well. I never got the help I needed. A family got nasty with me and hurt me real bad. I haven't been treated too well, but I just like to help people for what I can help with. It's the old-fashioned way. I'm no hero. I just try."*

INTERVIEW BY CATHERINE SAINT LOUIS

Photograph by Chris Verene

# The New York Times Magazine

JUNE 17, 2001