

Secret Shopper

SHELTER GOES UNDERCOVER



by **Samantha Carpenter**,
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magazine.

Customer Service

Lowe's Wins Homeowner's Bid over Home Depot

About ten months ago, our family bought a Redbone Coon Hound whom we named Sophie. The first mistake we made was leaving her unattended in the house. She already had been known (and still is) for chewing up shoes, toys, etc., but on this day she took her mischief to a whole new level: she dug a hole in our carpet all the way to the wooden sub-floor.

That left us with the question of what to do—but not for long. We decided to replace

the carpet with hardwoods floors, since our hallway leading into the living room already has hardwood.

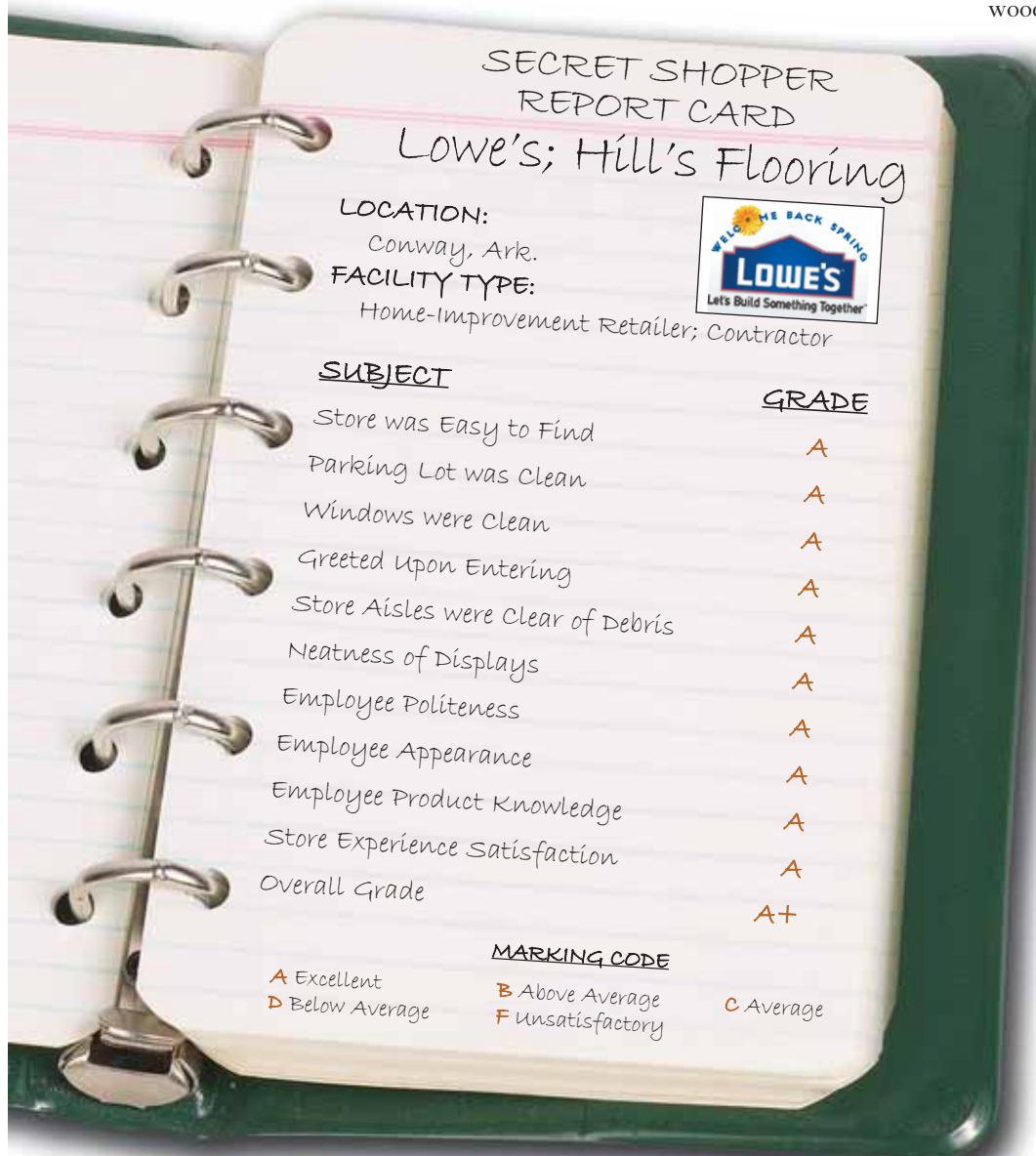
The following Saturday morning, we decided to price hardwood floor product and installation. We first visited Lowe's where a very helpful employee named Vicki helped us price different types of wood (with installation prices included). She also explained why we would need to go with hardwood flooring in our house and not laminate; we have a wood sub-floor and a crawl space under

our house, so hardwood was our only option. Vicki was so helpful that we decided to have the contractor who works with Lowe's come out and give us an estimate. The estimate cost us \$30; we also took home two samples to help us decide which looked better with the existing hardwood in the hallway.

Not a Homey Feeling

We then drove to Home Depot to make sure that we were getting a good deal at Lowe's—and it was during this visit that we realized we were going to use Lowe's and for more reasons than one. We walked to the flooring section where they were holding a class on installing tile flooring. There was not an associate to be found—except the one teaching the class. I said to my husband, Jeff, "You would think they would make sure to have another associate in flooring if the other is teaching a class." We stood there for about 20 to 30 minutes as we stood there without getting any help, alone with our impatient 5-year-old twins.

We then walked up to the customer service desk, where Jeff asked to speak to someone from



flooring. While he was asking his question, the phone rang, and the customer-service associate answered it right in the middle of the question. I could tell from his face that this wasn't going to be pretty.

After finishing with her phone call and hearing the rest of Jeff's question, the woman at the customer-service desk called her contact in flooring department. My husband interjected, "Have him come up here with his book." She hung up the phone and said he was cutting some vinyl flooring for someone and then he would come up front.

We waited another 15 minutes for him to appear. He kept trying to push Jeff on the lower-cost install (because the store's flooring choices were more expensive), but Jeff kept explaining to him that that's not what we needed. By this time, his blood pressure had boiled over.

A Contractor Call

Darrell Hill of Hills Flooring came on a Thursday to measure our living room and let me know exactly what we would need in order for him to install the hardwood in the room. The Bruce hardwood flooring in oak gunstock, plus quarter-round t-mould to go between our hardwood and tile in the dining room, plus installation was estimated to be \$2400. We then went to Lowe's the following Saturday to pay for the job. The transaction was smooth and seamless.

Hill called us that Sunday and we scheduled to have the hardwood installed on Monday, February 25.

When that day arrived, Hill and his co-worker, Seth Ferguson, arrived to install the hardwood floor. It took them from about 9 a.m.



until 7 p.m. to install the flooring. They were extremely professional, and I chuckled to myself because Hill even had on a Lowe's Racing hat. In the end, the hardwood looked beautiful. 🏠

Darrell Hill (left) owns Hills Flooring and contracts with Lowe's on jobs. Seth Ferguson (right) is learning the trade from Hill.

