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HARD AT WORK; BUTCH REID DOESN'T LIKE MISSING A DAY, AS HIS RECORD SHOWS

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Norman "Butch" Reid finally took a sick day this year after nearly 25 years working at the Ramada Inn Airport.

He didn't like it, but a case of bronchitis and a stomach virus prevented Reid, 48, from going to work.

"I've seen him come to work sick before, but this time he was really sick," says Doris Burdette, the hotel's food and beverage director.

Since 1972, the mentally-challenged Reid has worked in the hotel's kitchen.

Co-workers say they can depend on Reid to be on the job, even when he feels bad. When a storm is expected, he lugs a change of clothing to work so he can stay overnight.

"I just like my job," says Reid, his blue-gray eyes peering from behind thick glasses. "The people make work fun."

"I like to work with anybody," he says. "I like Gladys (Middlebrook, the banquet manager) because she is a fun person to work with. We tease each another."

Reid's tasks at the hotel include washing dishes and stocking the food and beverage department. He also has security responsibilities.

His co-workers recently threw a party to mark his 25th anniversary at the hotel. Reid received a certificate of appreciation signed by Greensboro Mayor Carolyn Allen and U.S. Rep. Howard Coble (R-N.C.).

The big guys were there, too. Executives from Williamsburg (Va.) East L.P., the owners of the Ramada, came to Greensboro to present him a plaque and to applaud his constancy, loyalty and dedication.

Reid has been around the place longer than most people - even the present owners.

Reid was hired in 1972 by Albert Pick, then the owner of the hotel, and Art Flynn, former manager, to work at Albert Pick Hotel. His employment came through the Greensboro Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Reid is one of the few aspects of the hotel that hasn't changed during the last quarter century. He stayed on at the hotel after its name was changed to the Americana Hotel and again when it became the Ramada Inn Airport.

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His co-workers say Reid holds the hotel's history in his memory, along with the birthdays and anniversaries of every hotel employee.

"The rest of us have filled our brains with unimportant things," Burdette says. "Butch remembers the important stuff.

Patricia Veal of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, a state agency that offers rehabilitation and job placement services to people with disabilities, has worked with Reid since 1976.

"He's a remarkable gentleman," she says. "He sets an example. He works, he's a tax-paying citizen, and he doesn't allow anything to get in his way."

Sue Cooper, director of sales at the Ramada Inn Airport, has worked with Reid for nine years.

"The hotel is small enough that all of us work together," she says. "Butch is always helpful if we need anyone to complete any tasks - he bends over backward to help."

In 1989, Reid was named the hotel's employee of the year. He also received a \$ 1,500 bonus for his hard work.

"He's employee of the year every year," Burdette says.

His strong work ethic was developed early in his life from the grandfather who helped raise him. Bud Reid was a custodian at Stokesdale Elementary School, where Reid was a student.

Memories of helping his grandfather every afternoon are clear in Reid's mind.

"We'd clean the classrooms, wash the blackboards, and empty the trash," he says.

Reid was raised in Summerfield by three aunts and a grandfather. The family moved to Greensboro in 1984.

He still has strong ties to his family. His aunt, Betty Moore, drives him to and from work every day. She lives next door to the house where Reid lives with his two sisters.

"He is really modest," Moore says. "He has always been a hard worker and really sets his mind to what he does.

Although the hotel has changed through the years, Reid has been constant - and always on the go. "I'm a nonstop person," he says.

"I like working here because everybody cares about me," Reid says. "I feel very appreciated. People help me do things if I need help. Everybody gives me a pat on the back."

"There were more people in the kitchen before they downsized," Reid says. "Now there are less people. I do some things that I always used to do, but now I have to do the whole job, not just a part of it."

But Reid doesn't mind the extra work.

"I like the new responsibilities," he says. "Time passes faster."

Although there is space on Reid's gold name tag for a first and last name, title and position, he simply says "Butch." There isn't enough space for all of the work he does.

The simplicity of his name tag shows what he means to the hotel - he plays all roles, and everybody knows his name.

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