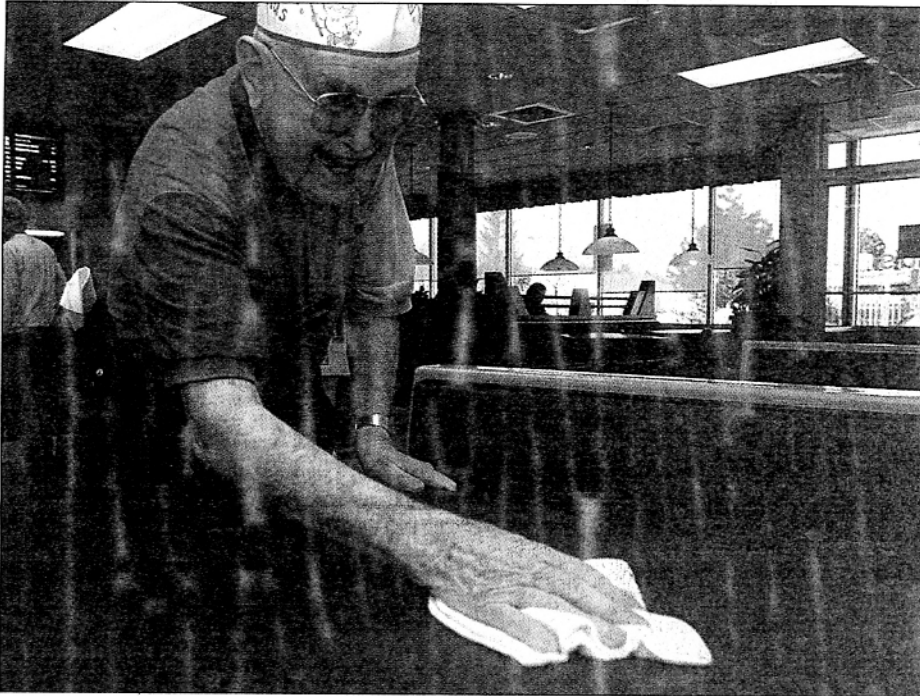


Man to celebrate 80th birthday while on the job



Sun photograph by LISA YANICK

Robert "Tubby" Johnson wipes down tables at McDonalds on Pickard in Mt. Pleasant Wednesday as part of his job as a greeter there. Johnson will celebrate his 80th birthday working his normal four-hour shift at McDonalds Friday.

By LINDSAY ALLEN
Sun Staff Writer

MAR 14 2002
As he approaches his 80th birthday on Friday, Robert "Tubby" Johnson seems to hold the keys to a long, happy life.

"The only thing that's important is keeping busy and to find something you like — and have fun," the 79-year-old said. "That's the way I look at life. Have your clean fun and don't hurt nobody."

Tubby, a greeter at the East Pickard Road McDonald's near Meijer, will celebrate his birthday the same way he's spent three days a week for nearly five years — working a four-hour shift, interacting with customers and keeping the restaurant's dining room tidy.

Most people his age retired years ago, but not Tubby — he's held a full-time job since age 14.

He did try to retire nine years ago, but on the very day he gave up his job as a truck driver, Tubby was offered a position as a greeter at Kmart, where he worked for four years before moving on to McDonald's.

Some people would call him crazy, but Tubby said working makes him happy.

"I love to work," he said. "I enjoy it, and I enjoy people."

"They've got some of the best people in the world coming in here."

While working with people young enough to be his children or grandchildren would be strange for some people,

(See Birthday, Page 2)

Birthday

MAR 14 2002
(Continued from Page 1)

Tubby has fun with his co-workers.

"I get along with everyone, and they treat me nice," he said. "I treat 'em like family. I get along with 'em, and if I can't, I walk away from 'em. I never argue with anyone — not even my wife."

"I don't know if I've got any enemies here or in the United States. People say, 'It's hard to get along with everyone,' but it's not hard if you really want to."

A father of three and a grandfather of four, Tubby got his nickname from an uncle at age 9-years-old.

"I was pretty fat then," he said.

And the name just stuck, Tubby said.

"Nobody knows my real name — I never did go by 'Robert,' I never did go by 'Bob.' I always went by 'Tubby,'" he said.

He is the son of a coal miner and one of 12 kids who grew up on a farm in southern Illinois, where he said he learned about hard work and respect.

Now, years later, Tubby said he shows respect for his wife, Billie, by leaving the house for a few hours each week and working.

"It keeps me from being underfoot," he said. "A lot of men stay at home and give their women trouble. You're not supposed to do that."

"Women have their things they like to do during the day."