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O. Henry

The Art & Soul of
Greensboro

Our Favorite Waitresses

*An Ode to the
Gate City's
Goddesses of Grub*

Fish Tacos Meet Strawberry Shortcake • A Tale of Three Pies • The City We Once Knew



Finally, with full water glasses raised, we salute Sandra Bollinger of the Green Valley Grill, a waitress so beloved by the devoted patrons of this iconic Greensboro dining scene she's almost a legend herself.

The High Point native took up waitressing at her hometown's Old Plank Restaurant immediately after graduating from High Point College with degrees in psychology and sociology in the late 1970s. "I planned to work only one year. Like most college grads I was uncertain what I would do next. Graduate school didn't really interest me. I took a job at the Old Plank waitressing and found I had a knack for it. The money was good and the work was something I naturally enjoyed."

Eventually it was on to Greensboro's Franklin's off Friendly, where she worked until owner Bill Sherrill gave up his interest in the popular eatery. She took off eighteen months to spend in Spain with her sister and returned to Greensboro just as Dennis Quaintance and Mike Weaver were opening Lucky 32. She was among the first to sign up, delighting customers and earning a record number of "stars" in the restaurant's innovative employee rating system until she made a jump to the company's posh Green Valley Grill, where she's been ever since. "In every best sense of the word, Sandra really is a star among stars," says Quaintance. "She's earned more stars in our system than anyone for her exemplary service and really acts as a model for a lot of our younger folks. We stress great service and nobody does it better than Sandra," he says.

"It helps that I really love what I do and have been with the company twenty-five years," Bollinger points out — which explains why at a time of life many veteran waitresses would be hanging up their order pads and thinking about kicking back, Sandra Bollinger still works seven days a week, taking only Saturday afternoons off as a rule of thumb.

"I have regular customers whose tastes and dining habits I know by heart," she points out. "Learning to read a customer's likes and dislikes and food preferences is important because you really customize the dining experience to their desires. Sometimes they want to chat with you and other times they want to dine in silence. A good waitress picks up on all of that."

She pauses, smiles and reflects. "I've been doing this so long it's basically second nature. The restaurant is like my second home. I want our customers to feel the same way about dining with us." **OH**