

REGION

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10"

TEN INCH TUESDAY

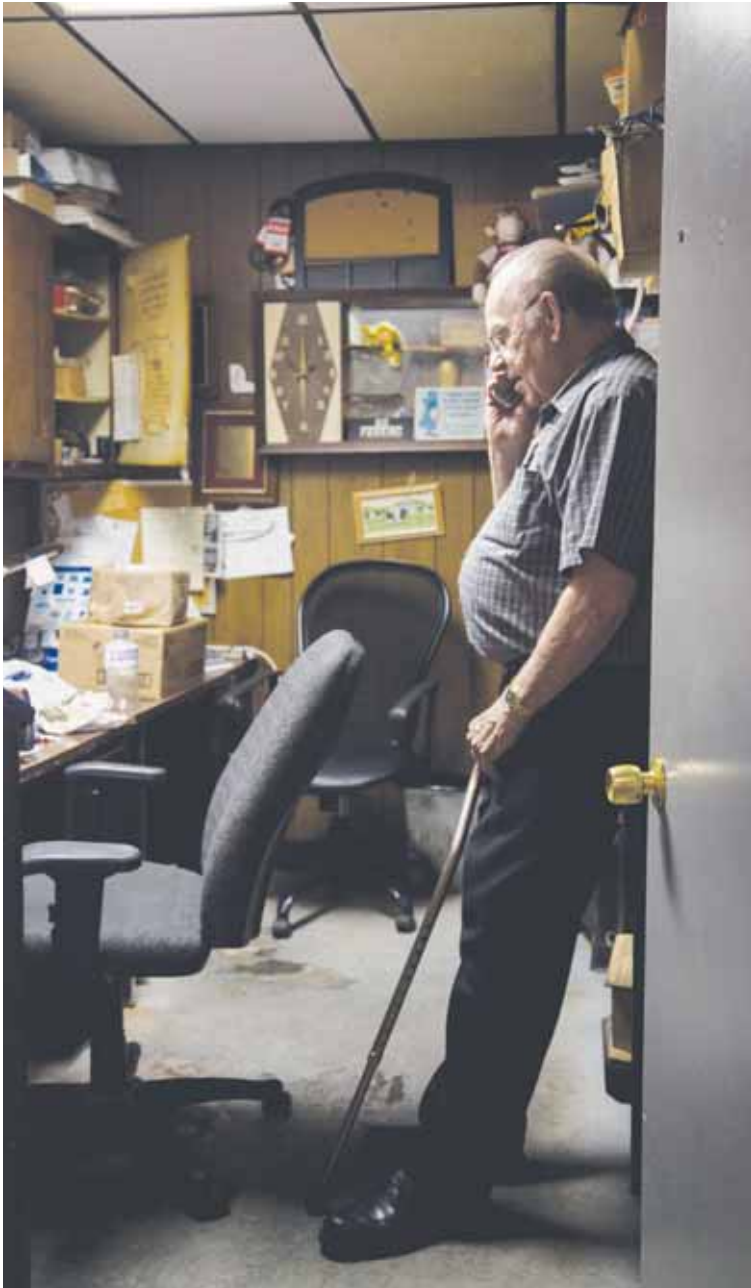
One topping pizza for \$5.95

All day, every Tuesday.
drink purchase required

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MOTHER BEAR'S PIZZA





Rose Thomas dines with Bud Powell. After her husband Stan passed away, the Waffle House is the only place she feels comfortable going alone. The restaurant closed after 46 years Sept. 4. It will be replaced by a luxury apartment building. **LEFT** Eric Powell watches as the Waffle House is demolished two weeks after it closed. **RIGHT** Owner Bud Powell makes phone calls after his restaurant permanently closed.

A bittersweet end

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PHOTOS BY ANNA TEETER | apteeter@indiana.edu

On the last morning,
before the waffle
irons went cold and
the pictures came
down, before
the lock refused
to lock, before
the claw crashed
through the roof,
the old man paced.

Tap, tap, tap. Bud Powell's alu-
minum cane led the way as he circled the
floor of Bloomington's Waffle House.
His Waffle House.
That Wednesday in September, the
owner didn't know what to do with
himself. The smell of frying oil, the
same greasy perfume that had greeted
customers for 46 years, wafted into
his nose as he wandered past the vi-
nyl booths. He sat down, then stood
up again. Bud — everyone called him
Bud — checked on the dwindling sup-
ply of breakfast sausage, peered into
the nearly empty freezers, tried to ex-
plain to his regulars why it had to be
this way.
"It's time," he said over and over.
At 79, Bud was tired. Except for
Christmas, the restaurant was always

open, day and night. Now a develop-
er wanted to replace it with another
apartment building for college kids.
The offer was too good to pass up.
"Where are we gonna eat?" the old-
timers kept asking.
"I don't know," Bud said. "Where
am I gonna eat?"
This had been his place for 16,767
mornings. None ever felt like this.
The weariness showed in his eyes,
behind the wire rim glasses and in
the hunch of his shoulders. After
the Waffle House was torn down, he
knew that he wouldn't see most of his
customers again.
Tap, tap, tap. Bud plodded past the
grill, where the last of the eggs siz-
zled. The ever-dependable waitresses
whizzed by, balancing plates, like today

was no different.
Most of the students had stopped
visiting years ago. The smoking ban
forced out the puffers. Many of the
regulars grew so old that they died or went
to nursing homes.
Once Bud decided to close, it all
slipped away even faster. Some of his
staff had taken other jobs. The gum-
balls emptied out of the shiny red ma-
chine. No one bothered to mark the
white board with the daily special.
They would close at precisely 3 p.m.
Bud checked his watch, ignoring the
broken wall clock, its hands frozen for
more years than he could remember,
stuck in time.
It suited the place.

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