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Slice: Being a concierge can involve quirksBY DANE STICKNEY
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Joseph DeRozza thumbs open his sharp blue pinstriped suit coat.



Joseph DeRozza's ever-present wireless headset lets him answer calls from the building's residents.

He shimmies out of the jacket and wraps it around the back of a wooden chair.

"We don't want lint," he says, breaking for a dramatic pause, "on our jacket."

He turns to what he calls his best friend in the world - a combination washer-dryer hidden in the closet of a plush 2,300-square-foot condo atop Omaha's Brandeis Building. The pad boasts stainless steel appliances, massive en suite bedrooms and spotless frieze carpet.

DeRozza, the building's concierge, grabs a pile of white linen from the dryer and retreats to the master bedroom to crisply fold fitted sheets. One of his many daily task is washing sheets for executive suites, condos where potential buyers can try out the units.

The fabric billows as he tosses the sheets in the air.

It's only a matter of minutes before his cell phone - a small earpiece permanently looped over his ear - rings.

"Thank you for calling the concierge at Brandeis. I'm Joseph. How may I help you?"

DeRozza can't even begin to estimate how many times he delivers that line each day into his personal cell phone in his ear or the building's cell phone in his pocket or the land lines sitting atop either of his workstations.

The 27 residents and handful of workers in the condo and apartment complex always have something for DeRozza to do.

A woman on the seventh floor needs her \$20 bill broken so she can tip the man delivering her groceries. Oh, and can DeRozza let the deliveryman in?

DeRozza scurries to a lockbox full of petty cash and counts out bills before taking one of dozens of daily elevator rides.

A woman on the ninth floor would like a cup of coffee, which DeRozza makes daily and offers in a commons area, but she can't open a locked door on her floor to get it herself. DeRozza prepares her coffee. He knows she likes it with one packet of sugar and two creams.

He makes it and darts into the elevator again.

For a concierge, the tasks are limitless.

A man once called in a panic. He was bringing his girlfriend to his apartment and had forgotten to make the bed. DeRozza did it.

Another man was on vacation and had forgotten to unplug his clock to save power. He couldn't stop thinking about it. DeRozza unplugged it.

Another resident, also out of town, remembered he had left a bunch of grapes in his fridge. He didn't like the idea of letting them spoil. At the man's request, DeRozza ate them.

DeRozza routinely picks up food orders for residents and often makes dinner

GALLERY :

- Just so...Brandeis Concierge

SLICE
OUR STORIES. OUR LIVES

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recommendations. Sullivan's is a fine, nearby steakhouse, he says. Vivace can't be beat for Italian. And he has been known to get tenants into the Omaha Press Club using his membership.

The concierge often consults with Brandeis security guard Glenn Miller when issues arise - locked doors, parking problems, barking alarms. And, occasionally, DeRozza tosses a few "In the Mood" jokes at Miller, a hulking, gravel-voiced man.

"He doesn't have an orchestra," DeRozza says. "Can you believe that?"

It takes a special breed to be a concierge - someone always serving someone else. DeRozza took a roundabout way into the profession. The San Francisco native moved to Omaha in 1964 to work at an Air Force radar station on North 72nd Street. He eventually became manager of the 1600 Farnam Building, where he worked for 16 years before it was sold.

The manager at the Brandeis heard that DeRozza needed a job and tapped him to become one of two full-time concierges.

A concierge's motivation certainly isn't money. DeRozza wouldn't reveal his salary but said hotel concierges are lucky if they make more than \$25,000 a year. Tips help, of course. And he lives in the building - a renovated department store - with his wife at a discounted rate.

To further help make ends meet, DeRozza runs a small gift shop - Joseph's of Omaha - in the Brandeis food court every weekday during his lunch break.

The real reward for DeRozza is helping others. He tears up when telling the story of a couple in his building that he helped during rough times. They rewarded him with a heartfelt card, two jars of fruit preserves and a \$100 bill. The words of thanks were far more valuable than the money.

DeRozza isn't completely altruistic, though. His job has a major perk. It requires that he wear nice clothes. And the 62-year-old who appears 20 years younger relishes looking the part.

His perfect-fitting suit coat hides a light-blue-and-white striped shirt with a crisp white collar. A bold purple-pink tie pops against the suit. A well-manicured salt-and-pepper goatee and styled black hair with silver creeping toward his temples complete the look.

He is also a cologne junkie, wearing Drakkar today. Folks notice.

The woman who wanted her \$20 broken creaks open her apartment door. DeRozza hands her the cash. She thanks him before pausing.

"You always smell so good," she says.

DeRozza smiles, cocks his eyebrows and gently bows his head.

"Thank you for noticing."

His obsession with appearance goes beyond his own looks.

He opens the front door to the Brandeis lobby for a housekeeper vacuuming the area. He keeps a close eye on her. She accidentally ruffles the rug, and he points to the spot with a smile. She bends down and straightens the area and pushes her vacuum away.

DeRozza keeps looking at the rug. The housekeeper has left two dusty footprints on the dark walkway.

"That won't do," he says.

"That will," dramatic pause, "not," dramatic pause, "do."

DeRozza dashes to a closet and pulls out a vacuum that looks like a 1980s relic. It's his personal machine. He thinks it has perfect suction, and using his own eliminates the bureaucratic step of asking his bosses for a new vacuum. He sucks up the dust, straightens the rug and smiles.

"Now, that is what it's all about. The details.

"The," dramatic pause, "details."

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