

BRUCE CHAPMAN/JOURNAL

ABOVE: Maintenance supervisor David Shoaf shows off the 19-foot-wide sweepster rotating broom used to keep the airport's runways clear of snow.

RIGHT: Mike Stratton, a member of the maintenance crew, drives the 10-foot snow blower back to the maintenance area.



Airports

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responsibilities, including cutting the grass in warm weather and stormwater inspections at businesses at the airport.

In bad weather, Piedmont Pied International Airport in Greensboro uses two separate crews on 12-hour shifts — airfield and “landside,” a category that includes roads, sidewalks and parking lots.

The number of personnel used depends on how many are needed, but there are typically eight to 10 people, said Kevin Baker, PTI's executive director.

Each airport has a plan in place to keep its runways clean.

“There are certain FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) regulations that we have to adhere to,” Shoaf said.

If needed, Smith Reynolds has a kitchen, upstairs cots and emergency power if crew members have to stay overnight. PTI makes rooms available at the airport Marriott for crew members who don't want to go home between their shifts.

Both airports use heavy machinery.

Smith Reynolds has four major pieces of equipment. There's a 1979 model snowblower that Shoaf

said “works just like it was off the showroom floor.”

The airport also uses a 1989 Oshkosh truck with a 19-foot blade on the front and a GMC dump truck with a 10-foot blade.

Currently, its No. 1 piece of equipment is a 2004 Freightliner dump truck with a 19-foot sweepster rotating broom.

“We will clean the entire airport and make it 100 percent usable, usually within 24 hours,” Shoaf said.

Johnson called their small crew a family and said she loves her job.

“There's a lot of teamwork out here,” Johnson said. “Everybody works together.”

PTI's airfield and landside crews also work together, using a combination of large plows, rotating bristle brooms and a snowblower for its primary snow-removal machinery.

Baker said that snow removal is quite a science.

“They have snow symptoms every year put on by the Airports Council International where they talk about ways of handling this,” Baker said.

For example, crews tend to use brooms for light and fluffy snow and plows for heavy, wet snow.

The crew at PTI initially starts moving snow off the older of the airports' three runways before moving on to the other runways, fol-

lowed by the parallel taxiway on the terminal side of the runway.

Other staffers at PTI help out when needed, including the airport's off-duty firefighters.

For ice, both airports tend to use chemicals, but only if necessary because they are expensive.

“If you have freezing rain and it freezes to the pavement and bonds to the pavement, then you normally have to use chemicals,” Baker said. “They call them bond-breaking chemicals.”

Smith Reynolds' crew uses an airfield deicer that's a sodium formate/acetate blend. It doesn't use salt. “Salt will eat the bottom out of an airplane,” Shoaf said.

So what do maintenance crews do this time of year as they wait to see if there will be snow?

At Smith Reynolds, the crew upgrades equipment and gets ready for the grass-cutting season.

It also maintains about 5 miles of fence line, keeping trees off the fence and people from slipping through it.

But Shoaf reminded people that there's still a lot of winter left.

“Some of the biggest snows that we've ever had were in March,” he said.

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Robinson

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“I went all over the place — Davie County, north of Winston-Salem. I usually wouldn't approach a place if it wasn't integrated,” Robinson recalled. “I drove through Clemmons West and saw this English Tudor-style home next to all these brick homes. It stood out. I love the home and never saw a reason to move out.”

All five of his kids attended West Forsyth High School.

All also play music.

“They had to,” Robinson said. “It seems like everyone who plays in a band or sings in a choir goes on to do other things well. They have great self-awareness. Plus, it's a lot of fun.”

That was something Robinson discovered early, dating to that bugle that he and his friends found. After wearing out taps with his bugle, he pinned for another horn, a trumpet.

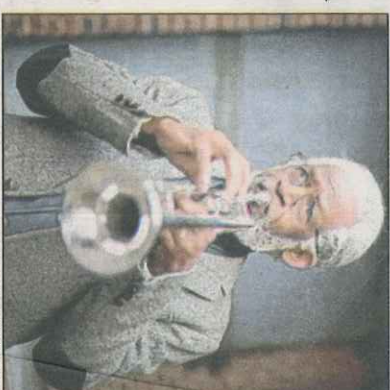
His grandmother finally relented, splurging on one at a pawnshop. Robinson still remembers the price: \$69.70.

By that time, Robinson had already developed the lip muscles needed to play the trumpet.

“Once I got a trumpet, my mother's friend told me to come over to his house because I had to hear something. He put on a Miles Davis record and then a Chet Baker record. Immediately, I knew: ‘This is it.’ It just registered with me,” Robinson said. “I played all the time. I couldn't stop.”

Robinson became so entranced with trumpets that when the Atkins High School band marched in parades, he would walk alongside the trumpet section, ignoring the rest of the parade.

Harry Wheeler, the band director at Atkins High School — then an all-black high school in Winston-Salem — was



LAUREN CARROLL/JOURNAL

Joe Robinson played jazz around the world in several foreign countries.

a legendary figure in the community, nurturing the musical careers of many young people, including Robinson.

He recognized early that Robinson was a serious jazz student.

“I used to cut class just to hang out with him,”

Robinson said of Wheeler. “I went to school for the music program.”

After a stint at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, a homesick Robinson returned to Winston-Salem armed with the knowledge that the life of a jazz musician was not all glamorous.

“I thought, ‘I can't live like this.’” Robinson said after seeing some of the Spartan living conditions of musicians in the Northeast.

“I had this wonderful girl, and I couldn't put her through this. Ninety percent of jazz musicians had a rough life if you weren't going to be someone like Dizzy Gillespie.”

Robinson got a job and started a family with Alfreda while finding gigs with area musicians, including bass player Matt Kendrick.

The two have played together in various combos for more than 30 years.

“He's a really creative player,” Kendrick said. “When he's on, it's really something else. We've made some great music over the years.”

Robinson's main love is what he calls “straight-ahead” jazz from the bebop school — David Clifford Brown and Gillespie.

With his quartet and as a member of other combos, Robinson has played jazz around the country as well as in a few countries. He has played such events as the John Coltrane International Blues and Jazz Festival in High Point. Robinson has also recorded three albums.

The number of outlets to play jazz in the area has dwindled in the last several years, reducing his work.

If he plays locally, it's more likely to be in Greensboro or High Point or at private parties and homes.

In Clemmons, he has played at Cinnaron Steak House on U.S. 158.

One outlet has been at area schools as part of the Carolina Music Ways program, which exposes students to the state's rich musical heritage.

At these school shows, Robinson plays trumpet with a band of musicians that covers several genres, including old-time, blues, gospel, jazz and R&B.

The shows are rollicking, with kids and teachers clapping their hands and singing along.

One will be held Feb. 26 at Lewisville Elementary.

Robinson has been with Carolina Music Ways, a nonprofit organization, since the early 2000s and sits on its board.

“When you go to schools and the kids react,” Robinson said, “I know we are getting future musicians.”

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