

For 15 years, Kathy Strader has served many local diners frequenting El Cap Sports Pub in St. Petersburg. She works with speed and accuracy, but, she concludes, the bottom line is ...



LOCAL FAVORITE ■

El Cap Sports Pub has been open for 34 years at 3500 Fourth St. N. in St. Petersburg. The pub is known for its great tasting and affordable hamburgers.

'They just want their hamburger'

STILL ON THE MOVE ■ Right: Kathy Strader, waitress at the El Cap Sports Pub, zips past manager Rodney Jones, right, on Tuesday night as she and others prepare the pub for closing. Many co-workers say that Strader is fastest in her job.

THE USUAL ■ Below, Strader takes an order from Scott Roix during lunch hour Wednesday afternoon. Roix ordered the usual: the World Champ hamburger with everything.



Photos and story by

LA SHINDA CLARK

"The usual?" waitress Kathy Strader asks her regular customers who rush in during lunchtime.

And what is "the usual" at El Cap Sports Pub in St. Petersburg? A hamburger, 4 inches tall, with lettuce, tomato, mayo, onions and two slices of pickles stacked on a beef patty.

Strader, 41, has stayed at El Cap, 3500 Fourth St. N., for 15 years, not just because of the regular

customers, but the money.

"The bottom line is the money," said Strader, who is married with three teenagers. Sometimes the customers don't care about who takes the order; they just want their hamburger — and fast, she said. "Some of them would not care if a robot served them."

Customers can order a plain World Champ for \$2.70 with fresh "100 percent pure beef," seven days a week from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Strader never has to worry about the lack of customers because people hear about the restaurant by

word of mouth.

She has several regulars, like Wells Belcher, who lives nearby and comes in everyday for a meal or something from the bar.

Her cook, Jeff Carlson, credits Strader with being the fastest waitress at the restaurant.

"Sometimes I have a hard time keeping up with her, but I try," Carlson said before the 11 a.m. crowd came pouring into Strader's section of the restaurant. Carlson has been working with her for three years.

Strader, a native of Long Island,

N.Y., is still as quick as a 20-year-old waitress. Within minutes she flows through her section taking an order for a table of eight, then she carries out a huge order of hamburgers and fries for them.

During happy hour, the sports pub comes alive as fans crowd the bar to watch a baseball game.

As the dinner crowd dwindles, Strader breezes by the counter, where a copy of the first issue of *Sports Illustrated* is displayed on the pub's walls along with numerous sports memorabilia — she is still on the move.

CALM AFTER THE STORM ■ Kathy Strader takes a moment after the rush hour crowd Wednesday afternoon to arrange tables in her section at the back of the pub.