

95-year-old worker just doesn't know how to quit

● “You got to do something,” says Eddie Kalow, who has been busy for 32 years with his so-called retirement job at a Fridley grocery store.

By PAUL LEVY
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Eddie Kalow planned to celebrate his 95th birthday this week the same way he's spent most days the past 32 years — working at his “retirement” job at BoB's Produce Ranch in Fridley.

“Retirement? What's that?” Kalow asked recently, while replenishing the banana display at the grocery store that has been an Anoka County landmark for more than a half-century.

Kalow turned 95 on Tuesday. Arriving for work some days before dawn — yes, he still drives — Kalow is the oldest of a half-dozen retirees who work for store owner Bob Schroer. One was a school principal, another from the insurance business. All have been faithful customers of the store for decades.

“Their wives wanted me to save their marriages,” Schroer said. “They wanted me to get them out of the house.”

A former laborer in the cement business, Kalow had worked his entire life and saw no point to quitting at age 63.

Kalow, the son of a railroad worker, spent his formative years working the family's small farm in Faribault. He said he never attended high school and began working full time after the eighth grade.

Fast-forward a few decades. Kalow and his wife, Arrah, were faithful customers of BoB's, and Schroer often told him, “When you retire, come and work for me.”

So, for nearly 20 years, Kalow made deliveries. Then he cleaned the parking lot, until Schroer decided he didn't want his prize employee working outside in the cold.

Kalow has been since assigned to cut vegetables and fruit for the store's deli department — a crucial job for a store that has gained a regional reputation for its fresh produce.



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Eddie Kalow, who has worked for the past 32 years at BoB's Produce Ranch in Fridley, turned 95 Tuesday.

“I straighten out the bananas, then I go to the back room to cut vegetables and goof off,” he said. “Mostly, I just love coming here.”

His hearing isn't what it once was. But other than that, Kalow, who quit smoking 60 years ago, is remarkably spry and said he's in good health.

In Schroer, 72, he's found a good running mate.

Both men are widowers. Nearly every Saturday, they get together for lunch at a local sports bar. Eat lunch. Watch a game. Share a few words of wisdom.

These are particularly busy times for Schroer, who will soon open a second BoB's Produce Ranch in Otsego, near Elk River.

“Guys like Eddie keep everyone around here going,” Schroer said.

“What else are you going to do?” said Kalow. “You've got to do something. You can't just go home and put your feet on the davenport.”