

## A NANCY BRANDT PROFILE

# Jonathan Byrd has interests from restaurants to Bibles

By Nancy L. Brandt

For Arizona Senior World

Jonathan Byrd has his fingers in a number of pies, both in Arizona and Indiana. Since 1995 he has built two hotels in Goodyear, broken ground for a third and acquired an interest in a Chandler hotel.



A giant of a man at six feet five inches tall, Byrd has always been involved in a number of enterprises. As a youngster he banked his first earned \$1,000 by the time he was nine years old.

He credits his father for instilling in him a work ethic that has served him throughout his life.

At age 11 he became the clean-up boy in his Dad's restaurant. "My first job was to wash all the windows. I was going to get fifty cents for doing that. When I got done my Dad looked at it and said 'that's not acceptable' and showed me everything. All I wanted was my fifty cents. He said 'as soon as you wash the windows you'll get it.' I did the whole job again and got my fifty cents. That was a good lesson that I never forgot about doing the job right."

Jonathan took over management of the restaurant at the age of 15 while still going to school when his father had a physical collapse. "This is my 40th year in the restaurant business," he told me recently. He later bought the restaurant, the first of many he has owned over the years. His goal was to one day have a cafeteria where people could go through the line and select exactly the items they wanted. That dream became reality in 1987 when he broke ground in Greenwood, Indiana, for what is believed to be the largest cafeteria in the world.

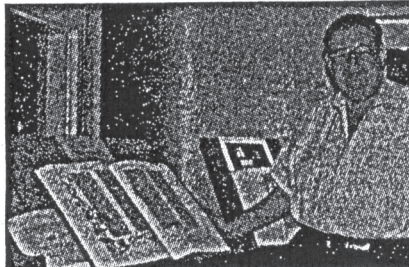
It wasn't the restaurant business that brought him to Arizona, though. It was his Indy Racing Team racing at Phoenix International Raceway. He saw the beauty of the country and its potential and decided he wanted to be a part of it.

A number of years ago Byrd began collecting antique Bibles. Today he owns one of the largest collections in the world. When people call Christie's or Sotheby's looking for a rare Bible they are referred to Jonathan Byrd. The income derived goes to support ministries around the world. Jonathan jokingly told me that he sold Moses his very first Bible.

"One day Sotheby's had a young lady call us. She said she wanted to buy a Bible for her father." She told them what her budget was. "We went through everything

and when we were done she said, 'Okay, I'll do that.' She gave us her name and address." She said her name was Holly Heston. "We sent it to her but before I hung up I said, 'Holly Heston? I'm sure you get asked this a lot, but are you any relation to Charlton Heston? She said, 'He's my Dad. He's never owned a Bible before and I thought it would be nice for him to own a Bible.'"

A short time later that same Bible was used by Heston in a documentary on the history of the Bible. Since Heston is known for his portrayal of Moses in the movies "I can say I actually sold Moses his first Bible."



JONATHAN BYRD  
in the Antique Bible Museum

Byrd and co-owner of the Bible collection, Dr. Craig H. Lampe, have opened an Antique Bible Museum in the Hampton Inn and Suites on Litchfield Road in Goodyear where they display an impressive number of very old and rare Bibles. The museum is open to

the public. There is no admission fee.

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