

Strikes, Spares, and Gutter Balls: A History of Women's
Bowling in Twentieth-Century America.

by

Emily Verfurth, B.A. History and B.A. English

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Approved

Dr. Julie Willett
Chair of Committee

Dr. Jorge Iber

Dr. Randy McBee

Dr. Jeffrey Mosher

Dr. Ethan Schmidt

Dominic Cassadonte
Interim Dean of the Graduate School

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As bowlers, as women, and as members of the Women's International Bowling Congress, we intimately share a history and a place in an organization that grew to be the largest of its kind, an icon that represented women all across the world. It was an international organization created for women and administered by women for eighty-eight years, all sharing a commonality; their love for the sport of bowling. It is the women that I shared space with in hotel rooms, airplanes, long drives, and bowling centers that I owe my gratitude for sharing their lives with me as we bowled our way across America. On many occasions my endless questions about the history of the WIBC kept many of us up until the wee hours of the morning as we discussed, remembered, and collaborated on women's individual growth as members of the Women's International Bowling Congress. I especially want to thank Polly McQueen for her nearly fifty years of industry journals, the *Woman Bowler*, and for her faith in me to research and write this study along with her permission to reproduce important moments of her life on the lanes. For over forty-five years, Polly organized teams that included women coming together as teammates from dozens of cities and states working to provide us with matching bowling attire, safe comfortable travel, strong competition on the lanes, and with so much fun in all the marvelous cities that hosted our state and national tournaments. Also, special thanks to Lucille Harrington of Monahan, Texas who was my bowling buddy for ten years and a special friend who always welcomed me into her home on many occasions as an overnight guest as well as a bowling partner and a formidable scrabble opponent. Also, my sincere gratitude goes to Dottie McNutt of San Angelo, Texas, who I bowled with for ten years in our ladies travel league and two senior leagues. Dottie's remarkable ability to orchestrate and coordinate bowling leagues and tournaments will always leave me in awe and I thank her for always being available to talk to me about the many aspects of women's bowling.

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ABSTRACT

Strikes, Spares, and Gutter Balls: A History of Women's Bowling in Twentieth-Century America is a study that spans over one-hundred years of American history from 1895 through 2005. Women's bowling history is intricately linked to the Women's International Bowling Congress (WIBC) founded in 1916 by a small group of women who liked to bowl. The WIBC grew to be the largest women's organization in the world with over 4,200,000 members by 1979. Because of women's participation, bowling became the most popular participant sport in the United States until 1980 when membership started a downward spiral. By 2000 the WIBC lost over 2,500,000 members and in an effort to save the sport, the American Bowling Congress, the Women's International Bowling Congress, and the Young American Bowling Association agreed to a merger that combined all three groups and thus ended the WIBC as a single-sex organization creating the United States Bowling Congress in 2005.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------|--|
| AAU | Amateur Athletes Union |
| ABBA | American Blind Bowlers Association |
| ABC | American Bowling Congress |
| AIAW | Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women |
| AJBC | American Junior Bowling Congress |
| BPAA | Bowling Proprietors' Association of America |
| BVL | Bowlers Victory Legion or Bowlers' Veteran Link |
| BWAA | Bowling Writers of America Association |
| CIAW | Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women |
| CWA | Committee on Women's Athletics |
| CWBA | Chicago Women's Bowling Association |
| DGWS | Division for Girls' and Women's Sports |
| <i>FIQ</i> | <i>Federation Internationale des Quilleurs</i> |
| IOC | International Olympic Committee |
| NAGWS | National Association for Girls' and Women's Sports |
| NAIA | National Association of Intercollegiate Athletes |
| NBC | National Bowling Council |
| NBHF/M | National Bowling Hall of Fame |
| NCAA | National Collegiate Athletic Association |
| NCR | National Cash Register Company |
| NIRA | National Industrial Recreation Association |
| NNBA | National Negroes Bowling Association |
| NWBW | National Women Bowling Writers Association |
| NSGA | National Sporting Goods Association |
| SWF | Women's Sports Foundation |
| TNBA | The National Bowling Association |
| USBC | United States Bowling Congress |
| USNAB | United States National Amateur Bowling |
| USOC | United States Olympic Committee |
| WAA | Women's Athletic Association |
| WBA | Women's Bowling Association (state or city) |
| WIBC | Women's International Bowling Congress |
| WNBA | Woman's National Bowling Congress |
| YABA | Young American Bowling Alliance |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Growing up in a small West Texas farm and ranching community meant a limited choice of entertainment. Teenagers could be found at the drive-in movies, watching the Friday night football games, driving the drag, or more often than not, hanging out in the local skating rinks and bowling alleys during the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, my first real boy-girl date started at the local bowling alley. Undaunted by the smoke-filled room of the saloon that housed the bowling lanes and the fact that my date bowled in the local after-school bowling league, I was ready to impress him with my untried abilities. How hard could it be to roll a large, round, hard rubber ball down a long wooden lane and knock down ten heavy wooden pins? I rolled out my first ball and it went straight for the gutter. I rolled out my second ball called the pick-up and it headed for the opposite side. Instructions from my date seemed straightforward and easy to follow. When my turn came up again, I rolled out the ball and it actually stayed on the lane knocking down several wooden pins. When the tenth and final frame came up I had managed a score of 36. I was not sure who was more embarrassed, my date or me.

The tenth frame was my last chance to make an impression and possibly provide me with a second date with a cute young man who loved to bowl. The last frame of a game provides the bowler with three tries. If you make a strike with the first ball, you get two more rolls. Trying to remember my date's instructions, I courageously picked up the ball, took my place on the right dot, and looked diligently at the arrow I had been instructed to roll the ball over. The ball hit perfectly just to the left of the headpin. All the pins fell down, slowly, but they did fall. I was ecstatic! I received a hug from my

friend and high-fives from the other couple that came with us. Strike! My score jumped up to 46 and I had two more rolls. Duplicating everything I had just done, I engineered a little more power from my back-swing and the ball sailed down the lane and hit the headpin straight on. Pins did fly but when the sweeper cleared the lane two pins still stood, one on each end of the back row. Even as a bowling newbie I knew this was a bowler's dreaded nightmare, the 7-10 split! What happened next cannot be explained, at least not by me. Without any thought that I might come close to picking off one of the pins, I let my last ball rip down the center of the lane. Just when it was a few inches from where the headpin should have been, the ball curved back to the right about 90 degrees and tapped the tenpin which jumped back against the backboard. My ball and the tenpin hit the wall together. The ball went to the right into the gutter and the tenpin went to the left with a little extra momentum taking the seven-pin with it. I could not believe it. I had converted the 7-10 split in my very first game! Of course, I did not realize at the time that the 7-10 split was the most difficult spare to make. My friends were shouting and our bowling neighbors grimly extended congratulations. I finished the game with the lowest score I would ever bowl, a total of fifty-six points.

Excitement over converting the spare made me completely unaware of the covetous looks my date was sending out. I had made the biggest error in my dating history and on my first real date. I converted the 7-10 split! I would continue to have many first-dates that started out in a smoke-filled saloon rolling hard rubber balls down long wooden lanes aimed at heavy large wooden pins but I was never asked out again by that cute young man. I love the sport of bowling today just as much as I learned to love it when I was a teenager. Yes, I have converted the 7-10 split three times in my forty-five

years of bowling but none was ever as sweet as that first time when I was fourteen and on my first real “boy-girl” date.¹

My experiences were in numerous ways quite typical of many teenagers. Young people often started bowling on first dates, church outings, with parents, and sometimes with grandparents. Just like my first date, it has often not been expected that a girl could be as good a bowler as her male cohort.² Many have simply assumed that men’s physical structure almost always ensured the male bowler to be more powerful and thus a higher scorer. However, as more women entered the sport of bowling, they discovered with practice, patience, and persistence their technique and style could and would bridge any real or imagined gap created by a man’s powerful back-swing and “jet-like propelled” release. To be sure, many variables add into the mix which makes a woman or a man a really good bowler that often have less to do with physicality and more to do with skill. Gender-neutral skills found mostly in individual sport usually require more consistency, accuracy, and concentration rather than brute strength. However, in many sports such as boxing, football, and weight lifting physical stature and strength may carry the athlete farther than style and technique. And because of the presumed differences in men’s and women’s bodies, women are pushing themselves harder than ever to achieve physical equality in sports.³

Recent research delineates the technological and economic growth of the bowling industry in the United States and its impact on the American way of life (from blue-collar worker to the local entrepreneur) but scholars have paid less attention to gender. Andrew Hurley’s study of *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture (2001)*, places the rise of bowling alleys during and

following World War II. Hurley tells the story of the struggle to perfect the automated pin setter which eventually replaced the boys and young men who risked bodily injury to earn a couple of bucks.⁴ Automated pin setters were actually invented in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The physical structure of these early designs was complicated, impractical, and too expensive for local proprietors to install.⁵ However, the devastating injuries to the human pin setters, many times boys as young as eight years of age, along with the changes in national laws pertaining to the employment of underage children moved inventors to improve and modernize the equipment used in bowling alleys. By the beginning of World War II, the perfected automated pin setter replaced the human pin setter, industrial leagues included both men and women, and the interest and participation in bowling doubled and then tripled by the middle of the 1950s.⁶ Hurley points out that the bowling industry peaked in the 1970s but this study will show that bowling as a pastime remains one of the most popular participant sports in the United States, but admittedly both the image of bowling and sporting experience has dramatically changed.⁷

Women were not completely absent from the sport of bowling in the late nineteenth century, but their presence was marginal as they faced the defining codes of gender and respectability. They braced against the social order that prescribed them to be the “weaker” of the two sexes. Public education, religious orders, and family units placed men and women in specific roles that left little room for re-organization. In Patricia Vertinsky’s study of women, doctors, and exercise in the late nineteenth century, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, the vision of helplessness and hopelessness was linked to the inexplicable condition of childbearing women who were inevitably sealed to a fate of weakness and fragility.⁸ Motivated by the evolution of the American city and with

open-mindedness, courage, and strength, women moved out of their mold and “pushed through the glass ceiling” to establish their presence in the sporting world where they could compete, play, and even beat their opponents whether they are a man or a woman. Specific feminine-type sport play, such as golf, tennis, and track first introduced women to the public as athletes and by the turn of the twentieth century, women could be found competing professionally in boxing, hockey, wrestling, racing, and also playing organized school sports such as basketball, softball, volleyball, and even bowling.⁹

While the sport of bowling dates back many centuries with progressively evolving rules, and regulations, it has been in the past one-hundred and twenty years that women and girls have come into their own in the sport due to changes in many unwritten laws, rules, restrictions, and traditions that restrained the growth of sporting women in the past.¹⁰ However, even as early as the late 1880s, women could be found sneaking into the back doors of local neighborhood saloons long after all the men had finished their nightly drinking and bowling. Their numbers were relatively few compared to the number of men who bowled for several reasons. Women did not normally have the time to spend pursuing interests outside the home.¹¹ Additionally, men were not willing to share their public space with women during the nineteenth century and bowling was mainly conducted in industrial cities in working-class neighborhood drinking establishments. Usually a saloon had as few as one and as many as six lanes added on the back of their building. Many of the earliest bowling alleys were actually attached to the outside of the saloon. Consequently, women were seldom seen inside these “seedy-type establishments” and their participation required a certain amount of secrecy.¹²

During the first and second world wars, industries in the United States turned to

women to uphold the economy and they worked in every facet of labor. Individual industrial bowling leagues (exclusively male space) kept the American bowling alleys open but when the war took men overseas women replaced them in the bowling alleys as well as in labor. Many bowling alley proprietors, for the first time in US history, offered childcare services, designed continuous bowling around the clock, and even arranged with labor officials to provide women workers with time off from work to bowl during their league hours during the day. But when the war ended, men returned to their work and also took back their bowling leagues. However, women had become use to working for wages, they enjoyed playing a part in the financial sectors of family life, and growing numbers of women loved the sport of bowling and demanded to have their own leagues as well as their own positions in the American work force. By the cold war years bowling alleys were no longer found only in the backrooms and alleys of bars and saloons. Individual and independent bowling centers grew out of the flourishing post-war economy. These bowling centers offered a clean, safe, and inexpensive atmosphere for the entire family's entertainment. To promote the new family-oriented bowling center, advertisements spread the word with ads depicting bowling as a family sport.¹³

The new and improved bowling centers for the working-class family provided jobs for managers, restaurant cooks and servers, bartenders, cleanup crews, lane and equipment maintenance, child care workers, and usually provided a sport pro to repair, drill, and sell bowling balls, bowling shoes, team shirts, skirts, and trousers. At least one bowling alley could almost always be found in the small communities that maintained bars, saloons, or ale houses depending on what region of the country they were located in. Many towns had two or more bowling alleys that had grown out of these local saloons.

However, only a small portion of small town bowling alleys (usually towns with a population of 5,000 or less) survived past the 1970s.¹⁴

A major deterrent to the growth of bowling centers in smaller communities were the military bases. Most military bases kept six-to eight-lane bowling alleys available as entertainment and relaxation for the soldiers. This took bowlers out of the towns' bowling centers adding to their lack of financial resources and the ability to remain open.¹⁵ However, even with all the problems that small town bowling centers encountered, bowling continued to grow in the larger industrial cities and the media continued to report bowling to be the number one sport in the United States. One source recorded over 90,000,000 people bowled at least one game in the last decade of the twentieth-century.¹⁶

One of the major contributions to keeping bowling centers open came from the participation of local, state, and national associations all capped under the codes of the Women's International Bowling Congress (WIBC) and the American Bowling Congress (ABC). For eighty-eight years, WIBC officials encouraged all women bowlers throughout the nation to join the Women's International Bowling Congress. Consistently, locally sanctioned tournament organizers encouraged bowlers within each state to participate for high scores, prize money, and coveted trophies. Even the junior bowlers who were learning advanced bowling skills during after-school programs and early Saturday morning in the American Junior Bowling Congress (AJBC) leagues competed in local, state, and national championship tournaments. Many of these young bowlers would continue to perfect their game hoping to earn bowling scholarships to the universities that offered them.¹⁷ Many have gone on to bowl professionally with

outstanding results, earning monetary rewards along with great admiration from the audiences who attended either in person or through home television viewing. Televised professional bowling games entertained and taught many youth and adult bowler “wannabes” the basics of good bowling techniques with programs such as *Championship Bowling* which emerged during the 1950s. Before televised bowling, radio sport reporters such as Sam Weinstein and his program the *Tenpin Tattler*, who predicted the future of bowling “rested with the women,” announced weekly bowling results across the nation along with Angelo Biondo, the bowling editor of the *Chicago Dailey News*, who was called the “dean” of metropolitan newspaper bowling writers since 1937.¹⁸ Also, for over fifty years national and local newspapers, magazines, and newsletters recorded high game scores, and announced local, state, and national competitions.¹⁹

Above all else, the growth of the Women’s International Bowling Congress is also an outstanding example of women’s strength and desire to be accomplished athletes. The following study will discuss and explore the growth of women’s bowling and the WIBC from the late nineteenth century to the merger with the men’s national bowling organization, the American Bowling Congress, in 2005. In 1916 Dennis J. Sweeney and about forty women assembled together in St. Louis after a two-day men’s bowling tournament and organized women’s bowling in what would become known simply as WIBC, or the Women’s International Bowling Congress.²⁰ The resulting organization, the United States Bowling Congress or USBC, now combines the men, women, junior bowlers, and US amateur competitions into one large community with many diluting associations that include international, national, state, and local bowling groups. From forty members in 1916 to over four million members in the later part of the twentieth

century, the WIBC archives provides a rich array of untouched resources for the study of women's bowling.²¹

The WIBC in itself plays one of the most prominent roles in telling the story of women's bowling in the United States. In 1936, John Hemmer of Chicago published the *Woman Bowler* and it quickly emerged into the national newsletter for women bowlers across the United States, in Canada, and intermittently throughout South America and overseas.²² The Women's International Bowling Congress Archives, including the Hall of Fame and Museum first located in St. Louis, are massive and available to the public at their new home in Arlington, Texas. The WIBC organization, over the years, conducted surveys and questionnaires that provide periodic evaluations pertaining to women's bowling as well as youth or junior bowling. The Women's International Bowling Congress also provided historic time lines in several publications following the first fifty years and the first seventy-five years of their organization. Additionally, the WIBC conducted surveys over the nearly ninety years of their existence that compared, in general, the differences between women and men bowlers.²³ This study will also briefly cover women's collegiate bowling and women's professional bowling. However, it will look more closely at the youth bowling programs that grew up in junior high and high school physical education classes and after-school programs. These after school programs were designed to provide structured play and guardianship for students who would otherwise be unsupervised.²⁴

A rich array of primary sources reveals the triumphs of women bowlers as well as the cultural constraints they encountered. Sources range from trade journals, newspaper articles, photographs, invention patents, to scrap-books, personal letters, and author-

conducted oral histories. Top bowlers in the field, both men and women, have written on the topic and there are many copies of “how-to-bowl” guides, some written specifically for women. Ellen Forslund’s *Bowling for Women* is one of the first and best known instructional manuals for women. The *Woman Bowler*, a monthly journal, was dedicated to women’s bowling as it delved into their lives, their ambitions, and their bowling scores. There is also *The Bowlers Journal*, a more recent monthly journal for men and women bowlers. The WIBC published a few journals in the form of timelines such as *The First 75 Years: A History of the Women’s International Bowling Congress, 1916-1991*.

Also material culture such as advancements in bowling balls, bowling shoes, and bowling apparel as well as bowling bags, wrist bands, and sliding powder can provide an interesting view of the growth of women’s sports fashion, ideas about gender, and trends in consumer culture. Advertisements tell us much about the image of the bowler. Bowling apparel and bowling equipment took up most of the advertising space in the bowling trade journals but pop culture media advertisers, for years, used bowling as campaigns for sodas and beer like Coke, Dr. Pepper, 7-Up, Schlitz Beer, Seagrams Whiskey, and the Ballantine Beer Company to recruit bowlers to the local bowling centers as well as sell their products. Cigarette campaigns, the most proliferate consumer marketing agendas during the “heyday” of bowling, also advertised their smokes displayed with bowlers puffing away in a bowling center. Also, with scientific discoveries proving that smoking was dangerous to the health of the nation, the national cancer society used bowling ads and famous bowlers to encourage smokers to quit. National beauty queens were also used in advertisements to promote bowling as a means

of exercise and to obtain good health. The faces of youth bowlers reflected the example of the “all-American boy and girl” and were used to offer young Americans a role model they could follow and exemplify.²⁵

The following study also contributes to a larger history of women and sports. Studies such as Susan Cahn’s *Coming On Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sport* (1994) offers a look at a “new type of athlete” as it “looks at the battle over Women’s Competitive Sport,” and discussing in depth topics such as the “mannish athlete and lesbian threat.”²⁶ D. Margaret Costa and Sharon R. Guthie’s *Woman and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (1994), Todd Crosset’s *Outsiders in the Clubhouse: The World of Women’s Professional Golf* (1995), and of course Elizabeth Etue and Megan Williams’s *On The Edge: Women Making Hockey History* (1996) are particularly useful because their studies provide insight into why women athletes, who were visible in sports, were invisible in earlier studies of American sport history. Mary Jo Festle’s study of public attitudes, the politics of equality, women’s private ambitions, and Title IX, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women’s Sports* (1996) is necessary for any sport history study along with Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackelford’s remarkable history of women’s basketball, *Shattering The Glass* (2005).²⁷ Other sources used to understand the importance of women’s sports during the twentieth century include *The Women’s Sports Encyclopedia*, *Individual Sports for Women*, and *Fundamentals of Sports for Girls and Women: Team and Individual*.²⁸

This dissertation argues that the founding of the Women’s International Bowling Congress brought American women together creating the largest single-sex organization in the sporting world that provided women with a resource that would enhance their lives

by creating a "glue" that bound women together from all walks of life, offered women an opportunity to expand their life experiences through new friendships and athletic competition, that helped instill pride in their abilities to compete in a man's world and to survive, endure, and grow in times of national distress and personal despair. Women not only entered this, at one time "all white and all male" space, they transformed the sport of bowling making it a much more inclusive activity which made it into one of the most popular sports in the United States. Bowling was the most popular participant sport in the United States from the 1920s through the 1970s and by far exceeded baseball (what many identify as America's all-time favorite sport) or any other participant sport played anywhere in the United States up until the last two decades of the twentieth century. Thus the first two-thirds of the study is about the growth of women's bowling while the latter chapters discusses the problems that finally ended the women's single-sex organization-the Women's International Bowling Congress, and the WIBC's controversial merger with the men's American Bowling Congress.

Chapter II opens with a discussion of the rise of modern sports but more specifically it reveals the story of the emergence of women's bowling in the United States that began in the late nineteenth century. This chapter argues that the escalation of American technology greatly impacted sport and created an environment conducive to the advancement of women and their roles as athletes in American society. This chapter will follow the timeline that the sport of bowling underwent when women exerted their rights to become active participants and excel as athletes in a sport that once had been "no place for a woman." This chapter also discusses the segregation of bowling that included white women, black Americans, and men and women of color and the steps that

led to the integration of American bowling. This chapter will introduce the story of welfare capitalism in regards to sport and the development of industrial sponsored bowling leagues and other company programs aimed to improve employees' health, mental attitude, and corporate loyalty.

Chapter III presents the history of the Women's International Bowling Congress, at one time the largest women's sports association in the world that includes its unprecedented growth and success before, during, and after two world wars, the Cold War, and the devastating conflict with Vietnam. This chapter continues the argument and clearly identifies industrial manufacturing as the cornerstone of industrial sports leagues. Also Chapter III introduces the Amateur Athletic Association (AAU), the National Association for Girl's and Women's Sports (NAGWS), and the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and how they influenced women's sport during the early part of the twentieth century. Chapter III ultimately argues women bowlers began amateur bowling careers as team members bowling for fun in local leagues which gained prominence, popularity, and physical skill that led many of them into the Women's International Bowling Congress Hall of Fame.

Chapter IV discusses the evolution of bowling fashions and bowling equipment during the twentieth century. Establishing a pattern of behavior and breaking conventional rules of dress, many returning teams of women bowlers that participated in the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament began "Puttin on the Glitz" to the delight of the crowds and established a following that bespoke of the unmitigated joy women felt when they competed in these yearly tournaments. Changes in technology in the second half of the twentieth century, from fashionable sportswear to

matching bowling equipment became an billion dollar plus industry unto itself.

Chapter V discusses the “golden years” of bowling that occurred during the 1950s through the 1970s. This was a period in bowling industry expansion that included leagues for physically impaired bowlers, mixed leagues for men and women, senior leagues, youth leagues, and an increase in military base bowling centers. Also, chapter V argues that it was during this time that advertising campaigns were first broadcast through radio and television stations across the US increasing and expanding new interest in the sport of bowling. This chapter argues that it was during the 1950s that bowling became a family-oriented activity and bowling proprietors recognized the need for family bowling centers that offered childcare, fast food, and around-the-clock bowling leagues. It was during the 1950s that this sport really became the kind of activity that anyone could participate in at any age thus making bowling the most popular individual or team participant sport in the United States.

Membership in the Women’s International Bowling Congress, the American Bowling Congress, and the Young American’s Bowling Association all experienced a continuous decline in membership that began in the 1980 bowling season. Chapter VI discusses the decline of league bowling and its effects on the Women’s International Bowling Congress. This chapter argues that no one specific reason explains this decrease in interest but that several things occurred that helped lead to more and more bowlers dropping out of sanctioned league play as a worldwide economic recession led to the decrease in family income. Women who had not worked for wages before found themselves out in the workforce with little or no extra money for leisure. Also, the integrity of the sport of bowling was in question due to illegal practices such as “ball

soaking” in order to create better contact with the ball and the lane and the application of “short oil” that contributed to illegal strikes that lead to higher scores and lower handicaps. This chapter also argues that discord between bowling center proprietors and the Women’s International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress led to problems between the national associations and the local associations. The last two decades of the twentieth century saw more people out on the lanes doing their own thing in open play while sanctioned leagues seemed to be as unpopular as bowties and multicolored bowling shoes.

Chapter VII of this study will show the desperation that the Women’s International Bowling Congress leaders felt as they tried to regain their membership. Many different projects were offered such as in-school bowling leagues for youth, more awards for honor games, better funded tournaments for women and special tournaments for seniors. This study argues that no matter what the WIBC tried membership continued to decline, from 1980 with over 4,000,000 members down to less than 1,500,000 in 2000. The last chapter and epilog discusses the merger that was “the last resort” for all three national organizations to save their associations.

While many believe the merger that took away women bowlers’ autonomy in sports saved women’s bowling as a sport. This study argues that a merger between the Women’s International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress was the final act that ended the unity of women’s bowling with a loss of nearly three million bowlers by 2005.

Questions I answer with this study reflect the gendered tension inherent in the history of this sport that I first experienced as a teenage girl. Many ask is bowling a sport

or a hobby? How does this question shape notions of class and gender and our understanding of what defines an athlete? Has this been an exclusively white and working-class form of recreation? And how has this changed over time? Why have men been assumed to be better bowlers than women and when and where did men accept women as serious competitors on the lanes? What have female bowlers thought about their male counterparts? Did the majority of WIBC women league bowlers really want to merge with the men's organization? Bowling was often one of the few accepted realms of leisure for married women that allowed a temporary escape from husbands, children, and chores.²⁹ This study will provide a history of women who bowled from the late 1880s to 2005, a comparison of men bowlers and women bowlers, a critical appraisal of the bowling industry, and a discerning look at the future of women's bowling. Most importantly this dissertation will explore, evaluate, and record the history of women who bowl by using their own stories and life experiences on and off the lanes.³⁰ Central to the bowling experience for American women, was the Women's International Bowling Congress-one of the largest women's sporting organizations in the world reaching 4,200,000 members in 1978. As women bowlers, they were proud of what the WIBC stood for, but it was not just about bowling or sports, the Women's International Bowling Congress became the core of women's lives. Being part of such an organization was significantly important because it proved to an American society dominated by men that women could make their own decisions and create their own victories and remind themselves and others that they are equal to men on and off the lanes.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹ See Emily Verfurth, *Oral Histories*, 2005-2009. The oral histories for this study contain two different age groups; the first group consisted of twenty women bowlers in the age group from twenty to forty-nine with the second group consisting of twenty senior women bowlers from the age of fifty and upwards. All of the interviews were used in this study to qualify conclusions and survey summaries. However, not all interviews were included in the study as quotes or personal stories. Most of the oral histories conducted indicate that young people who bowled started bowling about the same time they started dating, either in church groups or college groups. Most youth that bowled had at least one parent, sibling, or grandparent that bowled.

² See Emily Verfurth, *Oral Histories*, 2005-2009.

³ Sharl L. Dworkin, "Holding Back," *Social Perspectives*, v 44, no 3, pp 220-250.

⁴ Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture*, (Basic Books: NY, 2001), 139-143.

⁵ See United States Patents, 19 April 1881, # 240,334.

⁶ Hurley, 126-127.

⁷ See United States Patents, from 1881-1965 and Hurley, 123-125.

⁸ Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century*, (University of Illinois Press, IL, 1994).

⁹ Steven A. Reiss, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports*, (University of Illinois, IL., 1981) See also John R. Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950*, and Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of recreation: America Learns to Play*, and Raymond N. Mohl, *The Making of Urban American*, and M. Shlesinger, *The Rise of the City: 1878-1898*. Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball*, (The New York Press, NY, 2005).

¹⁰ Vertinsky. For an overview of American sports, see John A. Lucas and Ronald A. Smith, *Saga of American Sport*, and Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectators*. For a classic look at Women's sports, see Allen Guttman's *Women's Sports: A History*.

¹¹ Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic*, (Oxford University Press: New York, 1990). Kathy Piess, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*, (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1986). Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (Basic Books: Minneapolis, 1988).

¹² Hurley, 107-193.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

¹⁴ During the 1950s and 1960s bowling alleys relied almost entirely on local leagues to remain open. When people living in small towns moved into the larger urban areas, the local bowling alley, many times, shut down. This author's home town of San Angelo, Texas once held four bowling alleys during a time (1950-1970) when the population was around 50,000. Today there is only one bowling center and San Angelo's population is little over 100,000. See Andrew Hurley, pages 125-130 and also see, Emily Verfurth, *Oral Histories*, 2005-2009.

¹⁵ Many military wives and their children started bowling on military bases either overseas or in the United States. See Emily Verfurth, oral interviews and written questionnaires from 2005 through 2012. Military bases, at one time, contributed up to ten bowling centers depending on the size of the base. Military bowling centers (see later chapters) supported all other military base sports and the income from bowling provided funding that was crucial to maintaining independent living on military bases during the heyday of bowling.

¹⁶ Dottie McNutt Interview located in the author's private collection.

¹⁷ Many universities provide scholarships for high school bowlers during the twentieth century. Students with highly developed bowling skills and high scholastic standards could earn partial and full scholarships to the universities that offered them. For current data on bowling scholarships go to bowl.com.

¹⁸ Weinstien, Sam, *Ten Pin Tattler*, and Angelo Biondo's "Ladies Man," *The Woman Bowler*, November 1962, v 26, no 10, pp 24, 26, 27, 42.

¹⁹ "Championship bowling," *Tenpin Tattler*. Also, almost all local newspapers record league bowling scores and local bowling centers provide high team and individual scores in their centers' newsletter.

²⁰ Augie Karcher author and Karen Sytsma, ed., *The First 75 Years: A History of the Women's International Bowling Congress*, (Women's International Bowling Congress, WI), 2-3. There is no publication date included.

²¹ The Women's International Bowling Congress (WIBC) was located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin before the merger with the men's American Bowling Congress. The merger created the United States Bowling Congress in 2005 and moved to Arlington, Texas in January 2010.

²² John Hemmer, editor, *Woman Bowler*, all issues from 1962-1993.

²³ *Woman Bowler*, (WIBC Inc., Ohio, 1964), v 28, no. 9, p 42.

²⁴ Not all public school systems offered afterschool sports programs. Texas began their after school bowling programs before Title IX in the early 1960s. These programs were more popular with the middle-school students, ages 12-14.

²⁵ See also consumer magazines such as *Times*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Look*, *Life*, and the *American Observer*, *American Girl*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *National Geographic*, and *Saturday Evening Post*.

²⁶ Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994). Also see Susan Birrell and Cheryl Cole, eds., *Women, Sport, and Culture*, (Human Kinetics: United Kingdom, 1994).

²⁷ Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball*, (The New York Press, NY, 2005). Max McElwain, *The Only Dance in Iowa: A History of Six-Player Girls' Basketball*, (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 2004). Also see Jennifer Hargaves' *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History of Sociology of Women's Sports*, and Gai Ingham Berlage, *Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History*.

²⁸ Robert Markel and Susan Waggoner, and Marcella Smith, eds., *The Women's Sports Encyclopedia*, (Henry Holt and Company: New York 1997), 67-74. Also see Dorothy S. Ainsworth, ed., *Individual Sports for Women*, (Philadelphia: B. Saunders Company, 1955), 99-120 and 353-377. Also Dorothy Humiston and Dorothy Michel, *Fundamentals of Sports for Girls and Women: Team and Individual*, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1964), 149-164.

²⁹ See Emily Verfurth, Oral Histories and Surveys, 2005-2009. See also, earlier interviews and articles found in *Behind the Foul Line 2001-2003* written by the author and located in the author's files.

³⁰ Ellen Forslund, "Bowling for women," *Woman Bowler*, (Women's International Bowling Congress, Inc., Ohio, 1947). Augie Karcher, author and Karen Sytsma, ed., *The First 75 Years: A History of the Women's International Bowling Congress*, (Wisconsin: Women's International Bowling Congress). No publication date is available.

CHAPTER II

“NO PLACE FOR A WOMAN:” THE RISE OF BOWLING

In the early 1930s, Polly McQueen lived in a small rural community in west Texas. The town had a small bowling alley built into the back room of the local “beer joint.” “My sisters and I couldn’t go in there but my brother worked behind the lanes as a pinboy.” Polly was curious about the place mainly because she was told by her father to stay away but one day she and her sister tried to sneak in through the back. “My brother looked up as we slipped in the door. He was really mad and threw a mud clod at us and hit me in the head. If he had told my father I would have got a whipping.”¹ As far back as the late 1890s similar reports of women trying to enter bowling alleys were reported across the country. Some stories noted local townspeople standing guard at the entrances of bowling establishments in order to arrest and punish those women who tried to sneak into the building. Women were barred from most bowling alleys, in some cities, as late as 1940. These women risked their reputations and happy homes by invading the sanctity of male space. It was reported that several women were even “tarred, feathered, and run out of town.”²

The story of women’s bowling begins during a period in United States history when America experienced a momentous turning point. Just in one single decade, the 1890s, a renewed upsurge of European migration transformed the industrial areas of the country introducing to the American landscape a rich array of traditions from individual homelands. Immigrants brought with them their own languages, religions, and customs and built their communities forming new American societies. Additionally, lingering

hostilities following the American Civil War increased ethnic isolation, encouraged class separation, and created additional political chaos and panic. Out of the chaos following the war a new culture of consumption and leisure was constructed which moved the nation towards a more liberal political arena that would dominate the twentieth-century as well as an explosion of single-sex associations which re-defined the roles of men and women in both labor and leisure activities. In hindsight, the nation during the early decades of the twentieth century experienced a time of heightened political crisis, severe national economic depression, and an extremely grave period of personal disorientation. However, the development of American sports during the twentieth century offered women an ideal arena for social change and a chance for equality in all areas of sports participation from physical education classes, after school sports programs, to women's inclusion into elite sporting clubs originally designed by men for men only.³

This chapter discusses the rise of modern sports in the United States and the Americanization of bowling through the traditions and homosocial space built by white immigrant men, and the response of American women through the organization of the Women's International Bowling Congress (WIBC). It explains the advances in technology and its impact on the sport of bowling in early twentieth century America. It discusses the segregation of bowling among minority groups such as white American women, African Americans, and other men and women of color through legislative measures adopted by the American Bowling Congress (ABC) and the integration of bowling with the organization of the Women's International Bowling Congress (WIBC) and the creation of the National Negroes Bowling Association (NNBA). Ultimately, this chapter argues that the rise of bowling owed much to immigration and urbanization as

well as changes in technology, labor, and gender mores. Indeed, the development of the sport reflects contradictory impulses that were initially designed to keep the sport exclusively white and male but like many other leisure activities became much more inclusive of women and minorities.

Several factors contributed to a rapid rise of modern sports in the United States following the American Civil War, some more significantly than others. Industrialization, immigration, urbanization, population growth, politics and politicians, national consumption, moral consciousness, and a desire for wealth pushed Americans into a complex system of sporting activities that developed into a national collective enterprise. While the growth of sports benefitted many segments of American society, it also encouraged stratification of communities and neighborhoods along lines of race and class. For decades the sporting industry remained tied to urban politics where professional teams were owned or directed by local politicians and city bosses creating difficulty in defining the boundaries of many sporting activities such as baseball, basketball, softball, swimming, running, and bowling and at the same time creating confusion about which of these popular activities were considered to be “sport” and questioning how twentieth-century Americans defined the games they played.⁴

Defining sport is challenging because of the multifaceted nature of what we perceive as competition, leisure, or play. Allen Guttman, one of America’s earliest leading sport historians and author of *A Whole New Ballgame: An Interpretation of American Sports* (1988), defines sport as a form of “play,” first entered into simply for the “intrinsic pleasure of the activity.” But more precisely, he delineates sports as “games” because the play is regulated by rules that must be followed by all participants

and inspires competition between players. Modern sports evolved through social and cultural forces and reflect specific historical themes such as ideology, social class, ethnicity, racism and sexism, social deviance, social control, and social change. Guttman describes these themes as changing over time and places sports in three distinct time periods; pre-Columbian sports, pre-modern sports (up to the American Civil War), and modern sports that dominate sports activity today.⁵

While many see the rise of sports as a by-product of economics and social interactions, Guttman describes it as the “logical evolution of modern societies.” He points out several major characteristics of modern sports; (1) *secularism*, unlike early or ancient sports that arose from spiritual or sacred traditions, (2) *equality*, at least in theory, (3) *bureaucratization*, because of the local, state, and national administrations of modern sports, (4) *specialization*, due to roles and specific playing positions, (5) *rationalization*, which involves rules, training, and equipment, (6) *quantification*, because numbers determine winners and losers, and (7) *the obsession with records* which display individual or team achievements. Guttman predicted that these characteristics would become more heavily entrenched into sports in the future and will be due in part to post-modern technological advances and a universal orientation and political control of the sporting industry.⁶

Early advances of technology found in the communication and transportation industries created new opportunities for international competition and changed the structure of sport institutions all across the globe. American politicians provided the major push for the growth of modern sports by encouraging and promoting national participation in competitive play in the United States and in international playing fields.

Stephen Riess discusses the interactions of sports in urban societies in his own study, *City Games: the Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports (1989)*. He believes that sports played an important and major role in the social and political lives of Americans across time. Riess shows how politicians campaigned for urbanization, which spurred population growth in most major American cities, leading to life-changing alterations in work patterns that created more leisure opportunities for the working class. Local, state, and national leaders changed the demographics of the United States when they took over much of the nation's major industrial cities' unoccupied lands to provide space for large parks, sport arenas, clubs, and other recreational facilities, which led to the unprecedented growth of middle and upper class sport participation.⁷

However, public swimming pools and playing fields once located in the barrios and poorer sections of the larger cities would begin to shift away from working-class communities and increasing numbers of people found that they could not afford to travel to or play in the middle and upper-class sport arenas. Consequently, working-class men, women, and children which included much of the nation's immigrant population, participated in specific games such as basketball, baseball, and football because these games could be played in the neighborhood streets, in back street alleys, or on school campuses. Out of necessity, ethnic groups also created autonomous niches as they engaged in sporting leisure in neighborhood saloons where they competed in activities such as bowling, billiards, and dart games. Riess points out that sport participation played a major role in the Americanization of European and Latin American immigrants especially with second-generation immigrant children. It was due to the influence of immigrants, especially German immigrants, trying to build bridges between their

homelands and their new adopted country that the Americanization of bowling occurred when it did.⁸

While the origin of the sport of bowling is widely diverse, most historical data indicates that some form of the game to be several centuries old. Church clergy are reported to have been the first to bowl in their courtyards as a way to release stress and dispel evil spirits. Bowling in the United States originated from the centuries old sport of kegling or nine pin bowling which many believe was first played in the older countries of Europe. Dutch settlers brought their version of nine-pin bowling to America but the sport was banned in most states because of excessive wagering.⁹ When states banned bowling, many found ways to circumvent laws by adding an extra pin creating a new version of the game. In the third century in Germany, men were encouraged by their religious leaders to “*keigel heide*” or “club the heathen” when they rolled wooden balls at wooden staves which represented various evils and when a stave fell, religious fanatics of the times saw it as a “devil done-in.”¹⁰ German immigrants introduced bowling to American industrial cities during the mid to late nineteenth-century by forming “German” leisure centers called *Turnvereins* or Turner Clubs.¹¹

Turner Clubs usually included gymnasiums that contained two or more bowling lanes. Also, German immigrant entrepreneurs added bowling lanes in the basements, backrooms, and the alleys of their neighborhood saloons, taverns, or beer gardens along with billiards and dart throwing areas.¹² As early as 1848, American journalists freely discussed the contributions that Turner Clubs made toward the Americanization of German immigrants. One leading American journalist reporting in the *Atlantis* (1857) debated the pros and cons of German influence in American societies. “Singing

societies, theater clubs, Free Mason lodges, political clubs of all parties, and other organizations are found wherever Germans live, even in the smaller cities.“ Some believed that the German influence on American societies was detrimental while others saw the Turner Clubs as a gateway to Americanization. “Many of these societies, especially the musical groups, are a means to greater fellowship and they do build bridges between Americans and Germans.” History records the Turner Clubs as one of the earliest attempts of German immigrants to build an ethnic network across the United States, which eventually “showed promise for outstanding results in social and political matters.”¹³ In 1859, there were 5,000 members and increased by 1880 to 13,912 members and then tripled by 1890 to 35,912. Turner Club members were mainly first and second generation Germans. Nearly all of the working-class members of the Turner Clubs had skills as ale brewers, cigar makers, craftsmen, or printers. Turner Clubs and bowling centers still exist and can be found scattered across the country. Some of these clubs are over 100 years old. One such club facility in San Antonio, Texas provides tenpin bowling as well as ninepin. The ninepin lanes are the original ones built in 1900 and they still utilize pinboys or pinsetters that manually stack the pins using nineteenth century technology. Turner clubs were built in cities such as Cincinnati and New York City as early as 1848 and by 1854 twenty-one Texas communities had a Turner club with over 600 members and six of the first twenty-one remain open today. Turner clubs can also be found in many other cities such as Akron, Ohio and Aurora, Illinois and Baltimore, Maryland.¹⁴

At the turn of the twentieth century, these bowling alleys and cultural centers provided recreation exclusively for German American immigrant men who worked for

industrial companies or small German American business owners in the larger urban cities such as Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. Most immigrant men of this generation felt strong connections to the homosocial spaces they created for themselves, particularly where they spent their leisure hours and in their quest to maintain their fraternity of brotherhood they loudly proclaimed midnight hours, saloons, and bowling alleys to be “no place for a woman.”¹⁵

Most of these German immigrant men, encouraged by physicians of the time, enforced the rules that prevented women from entering, drinking, and conjugating in spaces specifically designated for the working man. As Patricia Vertinsky points out in her study *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (1994), doctors encouraged women to remain passive in all of their physical activities due to the fragile condition of the female body. They believed “puberty for boys marked the onset of strength and enhanced vigour(sic); for girls it marked the onset of prolonged and periodic weaknesses of womanhood.” These nineteenth-century ideologies grew into powerful forms of social control over women’s lives and followed them into the twentieth century. Many believed that women’s bodies were irreparably and “eternally wounded” due to the purpose and function of their reproductive systems from the onset of menstruation in women’s teenage years until the onset of menopause in their late forties and early fifties.¹⁶ Because of society’s narrow constructs of masculinity and femininity and lingering Victorian values, women who participated in sporting activities could and would find their sexuality and femininity challenged. While men’s participation in sport and fitness activities labeled them as “heterosexual,” sporting women in the early twentieth century found they were locked

into the age-old “double standard” and were seen by many as being “mannish or homosexual.”¹⁷ Mary Jo Festle looks at this double standard in her study *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women’s Sports* (1996). She explains how the strategy of apologizing by appearing feminine outside the sports arena was adopted by most all sporting women from physical education teachers in high schools, college coaches, and even by the female athletes themselves. Inexplicably, sporting women found themselves at odds with sporting men and restrained by nineteenth-century reasoning. Consequently, at the turn of the twentieth century, women and girls remained publicly excluded from most sporting arenas including that of the bowling alley.¹⁸

The history of women and bowling also owes much to American corporate strategies such as welfare capitalism that came of age in the 1920s but was firmly rooted in the nineteenth-century. To undermine the power of labor unions and mitigate industrial conflict, industries looked for different methods to encourage workers to identify with rather than against the employer. Such policies are often associated with the 1920s when companies offered a range of benefits to employees such as stock purchasing options, company medical care, and worker representation on company boards. Including women in some of these industrial leagues and company sporting events was also seen as good public relations. To be sure, much of these offerings did little to improve the lives of the working-class, but the creation of company sport teams was a major contributing factor in the growth and modernization of bowling in the United States and the cornerstone of working-class communities along with the development and organization of American industrial amateur athletic sports leagues that grew up around the industrial manufacturing companies.¹⁹

One of the best examples of the success of industrial athletics began in the 1880s, when George Pullman built the model company town of Pullman located on the outskirts of Chicago, Illinois, something specifically for the employees of the Pullman Palace Sleeping Car Company. Within the town's boundaries, Pullman designed and constructed the first and the most complicated athletic and recreational program in the United States. The program was designed to promote company loyalty, provide wholesome recreation, and retain social control over the employees of Pullman Palace Sleeping Car Company. Pullman's program served as a model for other large metropolitan industrial cities throughout the United States.²⁰

The Pullman Company sponsored many national amateur competitions. The athletic organizers were Pullman Company executives with league members from every level of labor with just a little over half being blue-collar workers and with almost as many white-collar workers. The Pullman Company was also one of the first industrial plants to offer lunch-time sports competition so that all employees who wanted to do so could compete. Pullman's championship competitions drew crowds of up to and over 15,000 spectators per competition. George Pullman built top of the line gymnasiums and he believed that "these athletic facilities would attract workers to his shops, provide a rational substitute for the vile amusements in Chicago, and bring fame to his company."²¹

Following George Pullman's example, industrial companies, the first sponsors of sports leagues and individual sports teams in the United States, provided incentives that encouraged athletic competition for and among employees. Chicago was one of the foremost industrial cities to organize sports and to encourage the sport of bowling. By 1851 Chicago boasted of five licensed bowling alleys and by the end of the century was

considered to be the one of the nation's leaders in bowling centers with over 500 scattered throughout the city. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Chicago businesses supported athletic leagues when employees organized to form baseball teams and bowling leagues for interdepartmental play and to oppose commercial competition in specific industries. As early as the late 1880s, Chicago had at least four baseball leagues organized by occupation with an abundance of bowling teams. Company employers were commissioned to coordinate their athletic and recreational programs in order to utilize the city's parks and playgrounds. Sixty baseball leagues competed in Chicago with the city hosting a national tournament in 1909. It was during the 1920s, in a significant move towards American inclusivity, industrial sports offered opportunities for African Americans and the increasing number of women in the public work force and by the 1930s, baseball and bowling headed the list of employee appeal. By the late 1930s, two hundred twenty-five Chicago firms had over 1,700 bowling teams and two hundred sixty-four companies sponsored nearly 1,000 softball teams.²²

Encouraged to compete, labor unions also began to offer their own programs as an alternative to employer programs. The Chicago Association of Street, Electric Railway and Motor Coach built a million dollar facility just for employees and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers constructed a sizable gym and organized a comprehensive sports program for 16,000 of its members. The American Communist Party of Chicago also tried to "counter the efforts of capitalists with its own Olympics" held in 1932. Thousands of recreational sports leagues were formed in every major area of sporting activities to encourage fitness, keep morale high, and to maintain labor's allegiance.²³

Despite these industrial leagues, women and girls were more likely to encounter exclusion in the early twentieth century bowling alleys, yet young boys and their labor were an invaluable part of bowling culture. Boys as young as seven years of age frequently found work in bowling alleys as pinsetters making three to nine cents per line of bowling.²⁴ For young boys, their earnings were crucial to make ends meet. “Earnings of the pinboy can be classed as pin money in amount as well as income source.”²⁵ While this type of work offered pocket money for many youths and kept them off the streets, especially during the long years of the depression, being a pinboy was dangerous dirty work, and many thought it corrupted moral character. “Cash in the pocket looks good to a boy, good to his parents and friends, too. But when this cash is earned at the expense of sleep as well as time and energy needed for schoolwork and recreation, he loses more than he gains.”²⁶ Bowling alleys did very little business during the day so young men and boys worked in the evenings and late into the night resetting bowling pins, sweeping up litter, and emptying spittoons. Young boys, while associating with the older pinboys who many considered to be “drifters, bums, and down-and-outers” learned to smoke cigarettes, drink beer, and curse as they went about their chores.²⁷

Pinboys sat at the end of the alley on a raised bench to keep their feet and legs from coming in contact with a bowling ball or a bowling pin. After a ball was thrown, the pinboy cleared the lane of fallen pins and returned the ball to the bowler and at the end of a frame they would pull an overhead rack down and replace all ten pins for the next bowler. It was a slow process and many of the smaller boys had trouble keeping up. Accidents occurred frequently from flying bowling pins and pinsetters suffered verbal abuse from bowling alley proprietors as well as inebriated bowlers. Senior men bowlers

often reminisced about their pinboy days with stories of pinboys being hit in the head by bowling balls when bowlers did not wait for the pins to be cleared.²⁸ However, several things occurred simultaneously in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century that helped end the employment of these underage human pinsetters; prohibition, child labor laws, and the perfection of the automated pinsetter.²⁹

Between 1890 and 1920, the heightened awareness and social conscientiousness of the Progressive Era brought about many changes in the private and public lives of Americans. Most importantly, the Anti-Saloon League, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and the Prohibition Party were influential in the prohibition movement to stop the manufacturing, the sale, and the transportation of alcoholic beverages. Prohibition was a powerful force in state and local politics from the early 1840s through the 1930s. Thirty-six states approved the Eighteenth Amendment in 1917 and it was ratified 16 January 1919. Several state legislatures such as Kansas and Maine had previously enacted statewide prohibition. The cost of prohibition was high due to the lost of tax revenue and the increase in black market or illegal bootlegging industries and many historians consider it a "complete failure." However, the loss of liquor licenses helped remove alcohol from the majority of bowling alleys for about fifteen years while some proprietors found ways to serve "undercover" boot-leg alcohol to their patrons. Eventually prohibition ended (1933) but by this time bowling had become popular for the sport itself, which allowed bowling alleys to clean up their facilities putting the consumption of alcoholic beverages as an enticement for bowling instead of the other way around. Many ex-tavern owners turned their saloons into bowling centers during the prohibition years making them more acceptable to women and children.³⁰ By 1926

Chicago alone had 168 bowling centers with an average of six and one half lanes each, thought by many, to be the minimum required to make a profit.³¹ While prohibition did not entirely remove the human pinboys from the bowling scene, it made their jobs easier and led to the advent of child labor laws which would eventually increase the minimum age of workers to sixteen.

At the turn of the twentieth century, child labor began to decline as labor reform became more successful. Union organizations, women's political movements, middle-class consumers' leagues, and the National Child Labor Committee pushed for the improvement of child labor law reform that eventually led to the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 which would set federal standards for child labor that included minimum age requirements and place a cap on the number of hours a child could work. States differed in their concept of fair labor standards and the differences in rural and urban labor kept child labor laws from being as effective as they could have been.³²

But unlike child labor laws that took years to standardize, the automated pinsetter permanently removed human pinsetters from American bowling alleys.³³ The automated pinsetter did not replace human pinboys until the middle of the twentieth century. However, the first recorded United States patent for an automated pinsetter was issued to William D. Pittman of Fairfield, Texas in April of 1881.³⁴ Many improvements followed Pittman's invention but the construction of these early mechanical pinsetters appeared extremely complicated to manufacture, weighed several tons, frequently broke down, and were too expensive for most proprietors to purchase. Fred Schmidt, hired by the Brunswick Company (the oldest bowling product company in the United States) in the

late 1930s, created an automated system that used mechanical suction cups to pick up and return pins.³⁵ However, Brunswick refused to finance Schmidt's patent, which was eventually bought by American Machine Foundry (AMF) in the 1940s, one of the largest recreational equipment companies in the United States, and by 1951 had perfected the *Pinspotter* which enabled the production of a reliable automated pinsetter at a more reasonable price.³⁶ Most bowling alley proprietors, unwilling at first to replace human hands with a machine, eventually found the mechanical pinsetters to be more reliable and cost efficient than the consistent turnover of employees. The Women's International Bowling Congress, for example, first used automatic pin-setting equipment during the WIBC Championship Tournament at McCook Bowl in Dayton, Ohio in 1957. By 1960 the automated pinsetter could be found in almost every bowling center throughout the country.³⁷

Much like the shift to the automated pinsetters and safer bowling alleys, women's entrance into sport was an uphill battle. Even though women were not normally allowed to bowl or to join men's bowling clubs, after the American Bowling Congress (ABC) organized in 1895 in New York, they were allowed to attend their husbands' national tournaments as spectators. It was during these competitions that many women developed a strong desire to try their hand at the sport. After the men finished their games, women could throw a few balls down the lanes for fun and compete among themselves. As women became more interested in bowling, the American Bowling Congress took steps to insure that women, along with men of color, would not be allowed to bowl or become members in the ABC by pushing its delegates to adopt a "white men only" clause in its constitution. Following one of these men's yearly tournaments in 1916, a group of about

forty women and one man, Dennis Sweeney an advocate for women's equality (also a bowler, a bowling proprietor, and a sports reporter), met at the Washington Alleys in St. Louis to discuss the possibilities of organizing a woman's bowling club. Sweeney believed that "Bowling will never become a major sport until it is accepted by women." This was the first meeting of the Woman's National Bowling Association (WNBA). Co-founders included Cornelia Berghaus, Ellen Kelly, and Catherine Menne, all three wives of members of the American Bowling Congress and all lived and worked in St. Louis.³⁸

In 1917, at a meeting held at the St. Louis' American Hotel, following the first WNBA Championship Tournament, WNBA leaders drafted a constitution and bylaws and reduced annual dues from \$1.25 set in 1916 to twenty-five cents, a more reasonable amount that would help bring in new members. Catherine Menne, whose husband, Henry Menne, was president of the St. Louis Bowling Tournament Company, was elected first president of the Women's International Bowling Association. The American Bowling Congress, eager to keep women out of their way and also keep some control over ABC members' wives, agreed to help set up tournaments for the women and the WNBA made plans for the second national bowling championship competition to be held in 1918 which would follow the men's tournament. Thirty-two teams, seventy-two doubles and 185 singles, competed in the 1918 Woman's National Bowling Association tournament in Cincinnati. The first official WNBA annual meeting was held March 12 at the Sinton Hotel in Cincinnati. In 1919 Zoe Quin of Chicago, Illinois was elected second president and under her leadership, WNBA incorporated in the state of Illinois. Also in 1919, the WNBA hosted the first tournament competition held without the assistance of the ABC in Wabash Alleys in Chicago. The women's bowling association now had 1,005 members

of which 347 came from the Chicago area.³⁹ Following the men's lead, at the 1921 convention in Cleveland, Ohio the WNBA amended its constitution to restrict membership to "individual bowlers of the white female sex." In 1923 Emma Jaeger from Toledo, Ohio and one of WIBC's first "Stars of Yesteryear," won the third consecutive singles title at the Championship tournament with a series of 603, a record that would last until 2005. Competition that year consisted of 106 teams with a prize fund of a little under \$5,000.⁴⁰

Thanks to prohibition and the new and improved image, bowling alleys offered women new incentives to join leagues, especially when they introduced bowling to their children. The American Junior Bowling Congress organized in 1935 and rapidly became one of the most popular activities for students of all ages and by 1965 there were 9,526 leagues with 77,602 teams and 292,238 boys and girls that were bowling on lanes all across the United States.⁴¹ Over four-thousand adults volunteered their time to organize junior leagues, keep league records and association notes, and provide classes to teach bowling fundamentals in clinics and schools. The American Junior Bowling Congress (AJBC), designed to teach youngsters to bowl, also encouraged character building, team play, and sportsmanship that would prepare the youth of America to become responsible adults. Adult leaders envisioned youth bowlers as the members and leaders of the future of the men's American Bowling Congress and the Women's International Bowling Congress and promoting the American Junior Bowling Congress became a national goal for bowling leaders across the nation, something that will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.⁴²

Embracing women did not mean an end to exclusivity in the bowling alley. The “Caucasian clause” excluded men and women of color including African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans from bowling in the American Bowling Congress and the Women’s International Bowling Congress. However, in August of 1939 in Detroit, Michigan, people of color took matters into their own hands and organized the National Negroes Bowling Association (NNBA). The purpose of the new organization was “to foster and promote the game of Ten Pins among both men and women.” With a slogan that stated “Promoter of Sportsmanship, Fellowship and Friendship,” anyone could belong to the National Negroes Bowling Association “without regard to race, creed, or color.” NNBA clubs popped up in Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Detroit, Indianapolis, Racine, Toledo, and Wisconsin.⁴³

The National Negroes Bowling Association leaders including first president Wynston T. Brownen, vice president L. Huntley, secretary Richard Benton, and treasurer Brownie Cain encouraged black bowlers to develop their skills and to “actively participate in the fight for equality in bowling.” William Jack Marshall of Montgomery, Alabama, (a baseball player for the Kansas City Monarchs) was often referred to as the “number one bowler” in the National Negroes Bowling Association. Famous black baseball player Ted Page, who also bowled and owned his own bowling alley in Pittsburg along with heavyweight champion Joe Louis who built his own twenty-four lane bowling alley in Detroit, Michigan in 1942 were both members of the NNBA. William Pierson built the first black-owned bowling alley in 1940 in Cleveland, Ohio.⁴⁴

The NNBA held their first tournament the same year they had organized, 1939, with only men competing, however women started bowling with the men during the next

season. The best NNBA bowlers came from Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit with members from these three cities winning every team and doubles events for three years running. In 1941 the NNBA was incorporated under the state laws of Ohio and in 1944 the bowling association was renamed The National Bowling Association, Inc. (TNBA) and by this time bowling was considered the most popular sport for Americans of color. In 1945, TNBA organizer Joe Blue was honored after his death with the establishment of the Joe Blue Award for Outstanding Achievement. Following in Joe Blue's footsteps, TNBA bowling members actively fought for equality and made progress towards the integration of bowling in the United States, Canada, and Bermuda. In 1950 black American bowlers could legally join the American Bowling Congress and the Women's International Bowling Congress and in 1978 J. Elmer Reed, an African-American man from Cleveland, Ohio became the first black bowler to be inducted into the American Bowling Congress Hall of Fame. In 2000 the first three African-American women bowlers to hold office and form the first all women cabinet in the TNBA include President Cornell M. Jackson of Lanham, Maryland, Vice-President Alesia A. Bryant of St. Louis Missouri, and executive secretary Margaret S. Lee of Brooklyn, New York.⁴⁵

The National Bowling Association adult programs included league bowling competition, celebrity bowling tournament, high score achievement awards, four regional tournaments, national championship tournaments, five classic tournaments, the Rhodman Classic Roll-off, individual national honor awards, intra-senate bowling competition, the TNBA Hall of Fame, the King and Queen contests, sponsor appreciation awards, and several charity and fund raising programs. TNBA junior bowling programs include league bowling competition, high score achievement awards, four regional tournaments,

national junior championship tournament, honor awards and scholarship awards. As of 2010, The National Bowling Association's Junior Bowling Program has over 8,000 members between the ages of six and twenty-two and The National Bowling Association, Inc. has over 23,000 members in 100 local chapters throughout the United States and Bermuda. The TNBA had substantially grown in membership, which included a large number of Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans but eighty percent of the association membership remained African Americans.⁴⁶

As the popularity of bowling moved across the United States, a need for standard and fair regulations became evident. The National Bowling Council (NBC) was organized in October of 1943 in order to establish a uniform and fair set of rules that would embrace national, state, and locally sanctioned leagues, and to standardize bowling centers and bowling equipment. The NBC promotes all phases of bowling and coordinates and protects the interests of all groups connected with the game. The National Bowling Council was originally composed of officials from the American Bowling Congress, the Women's International Bowling Congress, the National Duck Pin Bowling Proprietors Association of America, and the manufacturers of bowling equipment and supplies. The primary purpose of the American Bowling Council was to analyze ideas and solve potential problems in the best interest of all bowlers. The ABC became a strong supporter of the American Junior Bowling Congress and promoted in-school programs to help teach American youth how to bowl and to further popularize the sport. Alberta E. Crowe, future WIBC Hall of Famer, was elected to represent the Women's International Bowling Congress within the NBC.⁴⁷

Perhaps the most progressive and innovative event in bowling occurred during the middle of the twentieth century when Minneapolis's mayor, Hubert Humphrey chaired a National Committee for Fair Play in Bowling in June of 1948 seeking to integrate the sport of bowling within the American Bowling Congress and eighteen months later both the WIBC and the ABC revised their constitutions by removing the "white-members only clause." The men's American Bowling Congress removed the entire "white men only" clause unintentionally leaving the American Bowling Congress open to women and all people of color. This would lead to legislative disputes in later years when women took the opportunity to join men's leagues and compete in ABC local, state, and national competitions.⁴⁸ The "Caucasian clause" in the Women's International Bowling Congress's constitution would stand until their 1950 convention in St. Paul, Minnesota when it was unanimously voted to allow all women bowlers of any race the opportunity to become members of what was now named the Women's International Bowling Congress.⁴⁹

The development of the bowling industry, a process that touted exclusivity and democratization, emerged gradually in the United States for several reasons. Foremost, the sport of bowling, traditionally homosocial space for white German immigrant men, primarily originated in America in the establishments of disreputable and sometimes notorious institutions created by and for German men to spend time away from their blue collar jobs and their families. Additionally, bowling, a loud dirty game that required throwing a heavy wooden or hard rubber ball down an oily wooden lane in order to knock down ten heavy wooden pins, at the turn of the twentieth century appeared rough, masculine, and even somewhat immoral.

However, the effects of industrial labor strategies and prohibition, along with efforts and desires of ordinary men and women, lead to collective efforts to make bowling more democratic. Although there were often backlash organizations such as the American Bowling Congress in 1895, the Women's International Bowling Congress in 1916, the American Junior Bowling Congress in 1935, the establishment of the National Negroes Bowling Association in 1939 helped make the game of bowling more respectable and inclusive sport. With the creation of the National Bowling Council in 1943 to guide, interpret, and regulate the legalities of the sport, by the 1960s bowling officially became the most popular participant sport in America. The following chapter will take a closer look at the rise of separate women's bowling organizations and the effects they had on the sport and on the lives of women who bowl.

NOTES

CHAPTER II

¹ See Polly McQueen Interview by author.

² "Thank you plucky 'ansisters,'" *Woman Bowler*, May-June 1963, v 27, no. 6, p 57.

³ Eric Foner, ed. "The 1890s: A Time of Crisis in American Life," *The New American History*, the revised and expanded edition. (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1997), 117-121.

⁴ Stephen Riess. *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports*. (University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago, 1991), 4-5.

⁵ Allen Guttman. *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of American Sports*. (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1988), 1-190.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Riess. On sports and American urbanization see pages 13-48, and on sport and American industrialization see pages 53-92.

⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁹ International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame,

<http://www.bowlingmuseum.com/Visit/HistoryofBowling.aspx>

¹⁰ "From stone age to jet set," *Woman Bowler*, December 1971, v 36, no. 1, p 24. See also "Things you never knew about bowling," *Woman Bowler*, May/June 1964, v 28, no. 6, p 44.

¹¹ German immigrants tended to live, work, and play within their own ethnic neighborhoods. See Doug Schmidt's *They Came to Bowl: How Milwaukee Became America's Tenpin Capital*. (Wisconsin Historical Society: Wisconsin, 2007), 4.

¹² Doug Schmidt. *They Came to Bowl: How Milwaukee became America's Tenpin Capital*. (Wisconsin Historical Society Press: Wisconsin, 2007), 4-6.

¹³ Anonymous, "Das deutsche Leben in Amerika," *Atlantis*, January 1857. To learn more about Turner Clubs go to <http://www.ulib.jupui.edu/kade/adams/chap5.html>. Also see, "Likes attract German clubs and the public display of Germanness," 1-6.

¹⁴ Reiss, 86-89, 96-98. See also, Robert K. Barney, "Knights of cause and exercise: German forty-eighters and *Turnverein* in the US during the Ante Bellum Period," *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport*, December 1982, v 8. For a quick history see "Turnverein Movement," *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/TT/vn2.html>.

¹⁵ Guttman, 1-5.

¹⁶ Patricia A. Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 49-58.

¹⁷ Shari L. Dworkin, "Holding Back," Negotiating a Glass Ceiling on Women's Muscular Strength," *Sociological Perspectives*, v 44, no. 3, pp 333-350.

¹⁸ Mary Jo Festle, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sports*, 1996, pp 4-7.

¹⁹ Reiss, "Sport and the Urban Social Structures," *City Games*, 83-86.

²⁰ See the *Chicago Recreation Survey*, Chicago Recreation Commission, 1937-1940. Also see Floyd R. Eastwood, *Industrial Recreation: Its development and Present Status, 1940*, and Wilma J. Pesavento, "Sport and recreation in the Pullman experiment, 1880-1900," *Journal of Sport History*, Summer 1982, v 9, no. 2, pp 38-62.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Pinboys wages varied though out the country. See Lazelle D. Always's survey of Pinboys, "Up Your Alley: a Mail survey of pinboys." National Child Labor Committee, New York, Publication No. 410, 1953, pp 1-31. Always's intention with this survey was to inform the public of the evils of children working in bowling alleys and to influence state legislatures to adopt stricter child labor regulations and to improve working conditions in bowling alleys.

²⁵ Ibid.

- ²⁶ Ibid. Also see Jack Hicks, "Pin boys recall life on the edge of the gutter," *European Stars and Stripes*, 4 April 2001, p 18.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ See Ginger Owezarszak's oral interview with Newman Keys about his experiences as a pin-boy in San Antonio, Texas, 15 June 2002, pp 1-5.
- ³⁰ Hurley, 159-167.
- ³¹ See Steven A. Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Society and the Rise of Sports*, 77-81.
- ³² The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Wage and Hour Division. Also see Child Labor Public Education Project online, <http://www.continuetolearn.uniow.edu/laborctr/child.labor/about/us.history.html>.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ United States Patent Office, No. 240,334, April 19, 1881.
- ³⁵ The Brunswick Company remains the number one bowling products manufacturer in the United States.
- ³⁶ The American Machine Foundry (AMF) was actually the first to produce automated pinsetters which was their first bowling product. Eventually all bowling centers had to be AMF approved before opening their doors to the public.
- ³⁷ Hurley, 139-143.
- ³⁸ "Though the years, A decade-by-decade story of WIBC's success," *Frames & Lanes: Special Commemorative Final Issue*, Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, pp 1-10.
- ³⁹ Augie Karcher and Karen Systma, ed., *The First 75 Years: A History of the Women's International Bowling Congress*, (Women's International Bowling Congress: Wisconsin, no date), 2-7.
- ⁴⁰ *Frames and Lanes, Special Commemorative Final Issue*. Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, pp 6-7.
- ⁴¹ "AJBC shows substantial gains in membership, associations," *Woman Bowler*, April 1966, v 40, no. 5, p 54.
- ⁴² "AJBC vital to WIBC," *Woman Bowler*, May-June 1963, v 27, no. 6, p 55.
- ⁴³ Arthur Ashe, *A Hard Road to Glory: a History of the African-American Athlete*, 1988.
- ⁴⁴ *Ebony Magazine*, May 1947.
- ⁴⁵ See, "TNBA from the beginning," <http://www.tnbainc.org/history/nbaglory.html>.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Hurley, 187.
- ⁴⁸ Go to www.tnbainc.org/history/nhttp://wbaglory.html. See also, Andrew Hurley, 108-109.
- ⁴⁹ Hurley, 108-109, 187.

CHAPTER III

FROM LOCAL LEAGUES TO THE HALLS OF FAME: THE RISE OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL BOWLING CONGRESS

“They couldn’t vote, but they could bowl!”¹ In 1915, Ellen Kelly of St. Louis, Missouri, with the help of Dennis Sweeney, a newspaper reporter and the manager of Washington Bowling Alleys and Billiard Parlors, arranged a meeting for women interested in the game of tenpins. After watching the men bowl in the 1915 American Bowling Congress’s national tournament in St. Louis, Missouri, Ellen Kelly wondered why women could not have their own bowling club. Women had been bowling “on the sly” since the middle of the 1800s and the wives of ABC members attended their husbands’ leagues and tournaments and were allowed to bowl on the lanes after the men had rolled their last games. While most men did not want women in their bowling alleys, Dennis Sweeney a strong advocate of women’s rights, encouraged women to bowl by helping Ellen Kelly organize an association of St. Louis women into the first local bowling association in the United States. Sweeney provided Kelly with the names of ABC members whose wives might enjoy a bowling club. Kelly and several other St. Louis women bowlers wrote hundreds of letters to women across the country requesting they too organize local women bowlers into city associations and invited all of them to St. Louis in 1916 to bowl in a national tournament. Eight teams attended the 1916 tournament and after the last balls rolled down the lanes, the Women’s National Bowling Association (WNBA) organized with about forty women present plus one man, Dennis Sweeney, a man who believed that “bowling will never become a major sport until it is accepted by women.”² Forty women voted to form an organization “to provide and

enforce uniform rules governing women bowling in leagues and tournaments, agreed to hold an annual national tournament and to encourage good feeling and create interest in bowling among women.”³ In 1916 the founding members of the Women’s International Bowling Congress created the groundwork for thousands of women’s bowling leagues, local and state bowling associations, and social networks that swept across the continents of North and South America and eventually embracing women bowlers in Africa, Asian, and in most of the European countries. By 1964 the Woman’s International Bowling Congress (WIBC) registered 2,600,000 members that bowled in 114,000 leagues with a record 5,071 women competing in that year’s championship tournament.⁴

The Women’s International Bowling Congress in turn offered women an opportunity to expand their life experiences and reach personal goals through new friendships and athletic competition. From the beginning, the Women’s International Bowling Congress was created and designed *by* women who bowled-*for* women who bowled and when it grew into the largest women’s athletic organization in the world it became a source of pride for the women who devoted their lives to the service of its members by keeping the WIBC an association for women only. This chapter will discuss the history and unprecedented growth of the Women’s International Bowling Congress, the adoption of the WIBC Championship Tournament, and the founding of the WIBC Hall of Fame and Museum.⁵ The bonds formed by thousands of women bowlers created a genuine sense of solidarity that remains intact today. This chapter argues more specifically that the success of the Women’s International Bowling Congress was due almost exclusively to the determination and dedication of the women who took the reins of leadership throughout the twentieth century. The Women’s International Bowling

Congress, through strong leadership and as a non-profit organization, offered hundreds of services to its female members that made bowling a competitive sport on the national level. For women who bowl, bowling is not just a pastime but also a passion. The WIBC's high score awards, free emblems for superior bowling performances, national tournaments with rich prize funds transformed the lives of women, many of whom started playing in industrial leagues. It also offered a bowling news service that offered for example, standardized rules of government, bowling instructional kits with supplies and aides to teach proper bowling techniques, field service representatives to conduct bowling seminars for league formations, national promotional programs to recruit new members, and sanctioned membership protection. In more recent times, the Women's International Bowling Congress reached out to women living abroad within the American military services as wives of soldiers or as soldiers themselves and to women of foreign nationality. WIBC leaders broadened women's bowling programs by introducing its members to world-wide competition in tournaments such as the *Federation Internationale des Quilleurs* (FIQ), the Tournaments of the Americas, and more recently the World Olympics.⁶

The Women's International Bowling Congress, however, is embedded in a larger history of industrial leagues. Lynne Emery credits the tremendous increase in industrial manufacturing to be the cornerstone of industrial sports leagues. She noted, "Had industry not sponsored women's basketball, it is doubtful that the Amateur Athletic Union's (AAU) national basketball championship could have existed. The list of national tournament winners is a who's who of industrial teams."⁷ The Amateur Athletes Union (AAU) was first created as a men's organization in 1888 with the purpose of governing

men's amateur sports which included industrial sports leagues. The AAU soon realized it needed and wanted control over women's sporting activities when its leaders anticipated the awareness and eagerness for sporting activity of sports-minded women industry workers as well as amateur women athletes in high school physical education and university sports. Because of conflicting interests with the Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA), which eventually become the National Association for Girl's and Women's Sports (NAGWS), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) which both claimed a priority or jurisdiction over women's amateur athletics, the AAU had to first gain recognition by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) as the governing body of American amateur sports. By the 1920s the Amateur Athletes Union took over women's amateur sports in swimming and track and field and later added basketball, volleyball, and gymnastics, which established the AAU's authority over the most important arenas of sporting women.⁸

With the encouragement of the Amateur Athletes Union, industrial companies viewed the sponsorship of women's sport as good public relations tools improving their image as a progressive thinking company that went hand in hand with welfare capitalism. As discussed in chapter II, company teams were designed to maintain a cooperative labor force. Lynne Emery points out that the industrial leagues were first created for men's recreational sports groups and that industrial support of women's sports only began when industry started employing thousands of women interested in sporting activities. In the early 1800s, cotton mills were the first sponsors of women's sports teams where eighty percent of the employees were women. In the late 1800s, shoe and boot making companies and cigar factories began providing opportunities for women workers to create

and join sports leagues. Finally, in the twentieth century, the emerging war industry supplied thousands of women employment as well as opportunities to participate in their favorite sports.⁹

Following the example of George Pullman who built the first industrial sponsored gymnasium for factory workers in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, industrial league sponsorship of women's and men's amateur sports competition gained popularity among the American industrial unions beginning at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁰ A study conducted nationwide looked at the beginning of industrial sponsored sports in the early 1920s. Out of fifty-one companies surveyed only fifteen of the total offered no sports programs for women. Of the thirty-six that did provide sports sponsorship, eight had tennis teams, six had basketball teams, six had bowling teams, while four had volleyball teams, with only one company each providing hockey, golf, and indoor sports. While education and job position played a major part in which employee played what sport, teams were mostly composed of blue-collar workers. Another study completed in 1940, looked at 639 industrial companies and found thirty-five percent provided bowling teams, with one company having over six hundred. The sport of bowling placed first as the most popular industrial-sponsored women's sport, with basketball and softball tied for second.¹¹

Industrial bowling leagues on the rise before, during, and after World War II created sporting leisure and competitive sporting opportunities for blue collar workers as well as white-collar workers. To gain employee confidence, industry managers enthusiastically paid for league dues, purchased team uniforms, held tournaments, and many times provided free time during working hours for employees to compete

throughout the bowling seasons and provided end of season banquets for league members. The greatest growth in the sport of bowling occurred in the postwar decades when the Women's International Bowling Congress grew to an unprecedented membership of one million in 1958 and more than two million by 1961. According to the National Industrial Recreation Association (NIRA), "Bowling has ranked as the number one sport in U.S. business and industrial recreation programs for more than a decade. Surveys indicate that 93 percent to 95 percent of U.S. and Canadian firms sponsored bowling teams and leagues for employees."¹² Dr. Lousi K. Eilers, executive vice president of Eastman Kodak, said " . . . our company is convinced that the money spent to encourage healthy spare-time activities pays big dividends—both for Kodak and for the people of the company."¹³

Bowling quickly became company sport. The *Administrative Magazine* conducted a poll that showed that 58 percent of all companies surveyed ranked bowling as the leading employee sport. The National Bowling Council (NBC) also conducted a survey of company employees and determined that bowling was indeed and by far the leading sporting activity in the United States due to the ease of which bowling can be administrated and managed when involving large numbers of workers. Credit for this can be contributed in large part to the NBC kits designed to help recreation directors or business leaders establish their bowling leagues. The popularity of industrial bowling leagues inspired the National Industrial Recreation Association to sponsor bowling tournaments within each company throughout the year. The company bowling programs include the National Cash Register Company (NCR) in Dayton, Ohio who has been sponsoring recreation programs for employees since 1895 in which 75 percent of its

employees participate. Women bowlers have been members of the bowling program since 1943. Over the years the NCR sponsored teams for eleven of the WIBC Championship Tournaments, for twelve state tournaments, and all local association tournaments, and organized and conducted an annual tournament just for NCR employees.¹⁴ The Dayton Industrial Athletic Association then composed of seven industries which included the National Cash Register Company, sponsored bowling leagues since 1943. Also, the Ford Motor Company located in Dearborn, Michigan, in 1972 had 337 members in their Wives Club that sponsored daytime bowling leagues and mixed night-time leagues for couples.¹⁵

Corporations today remain just as concerned with worker productivity as their early twentieth century counterparts and many still use the same or similar philosophies of welfare capitalism. Out of the Raytheon Company in Andover, Massachusetts 500 men and women bowled in an all men's league and a mixed league. The Solar Division of International Harvester out of San Diego, California, sponsored bowling programs for the children of company employees. Not only did the Owens-Illinois plants in Alton, Illinois and Toledo, Ohio sponsor bowling leagues for their employees and their families, they offered teaching clinics for first-time bowlers and more advanced lessons for improving one's game. In these companies bowling leagues were organized for all members of the employees' families and they planned banquets and parties to celebrate high achievers and end of season leagues. Industrial leagues like the Johnson Wax Company of Racine, Wisconsin and the Lockheed Corporation of Burbank California still maintain coed company bowling teams with hundreds of women bowlers entered in special tournaments across the United States.¹⁶

However, just as important as industrial sponsorship of leagues and teams to the history of women and bowling, was the development of a separate women's bowling association. While organizing in 1916, in October 1917 under the presidency of Catherine Menne, Woman's National Bowling Association, to later being changed to the Women's International Bowling Congress, members met at the American Hotel in St. Louis and drafted a constitution and bylaws, and set annual dues at \$1.25 first and then immediately lowered them to twenty-five cents per member. Membership dues in the Women's International Bowling Congress were raised for the first time to fifty cents in 1955.¹⁷ This, in itself, is significant because the women's club remained a nonprofit organization that would provide a dedicated and continuously growing service to all of its members until the day it merged with the men's association in January 2005, something discussed at length in a later chapter.

When preparing for the national championship tournament, the Woman's National Bowling Association asked and received approval from the American Bowling Congress to hold its second national tournament in the Cincinnati Armory in 1918. Prize money for this competition totaled \$1,347 with the winning team's score of 2,479 and a top team prize of fifty dollars. The American Bowling Congress (ABC) insisted on organizing and governing the Woman's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament and did so in 1916 and 1918. A national tournament was not held for the new women's club in 1917. ABC members believed that since the only way women were going to get to bowl was on American Bowling Congress approved lanes. Many men resented this intrusion and arguments debated solutions that would permanently forbid women from competing on or being inside their bowling alleys. Control of the

women's club was the "lesser of two evils" and they reminded women that they could only bowl under their jurisdiction. Under severe conditions and with great angst, bowlers accepted these terms for several important reasons. First and foremost, a handful of forty or so women bowling those first couple of years were unsure of rules and regulations and many were used to being told what to do because their own husbands also bowled and were in fact members of the American Bowling Congress. While hundreds of local and state bowling associations were starting to form all across the country, the Wisconsin Women's Bowling Association (WBA) was the first state group to organize in 1920, incorporate in 1921, and to become the first state group to affiliate with the Woman's National Bowling Association. In May 1921, at the WNBA yearly convention in Chicago, the constitution was amended in order to sanction local leagues, bond the secretary and the treasurer, as well as accept local city associations with at least thirty members into the national organization. It also increased tournament entry fees from three dollars to four dollars per bowler per event in national competition.¹⁸

The average size of one bowling league among those associated with the Women's International Bowling Congress included twelve teams or less in any given season. A league is two or more teams bowling according to an agreed upon schedule and it is normally organized to encourage competition and good sportsmanship within the boundaries of a city association. A city association is made up of all the sanctioned women's leagues within a particular area to be defined by the WIBC. This might include one town or several cities or even an entire country with the purpose of service and guidance to the leagues within its boundaries. The national association was the governing body of the Women's International Bowling Congress and offered its members

a national championship tournament with top money prizes in all competing events with prizes eventually ranging from \$20,000 to \$250,000 depending on the number of women bowlers competing in any given year.¹⁹

The Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament quickly became the focal point for women bowlers throughout the country and WIBC officials spent much of their time each year preparing for this event. Increased revenue for local bowling centers, as well as other community institutions, pushed city mayors and other political entities to encourage local bowling proprietors to aggressively seek sponsorship of the yearly event that would eventually grow into the largest women's athletic competition in the United States. Cities interested in sponsoring this popular event eagerly vied for a position, arranged three years in advance, to represent women's bowling. A city had to be chosen by a majority of association delegates to sponsor the national competition and months of preparation kept everyone busy from the president of the Women's International Bowling Congress down to the individual presidents of each local association. Deadlines for eligibility were strictly enforced by the Women's International Bowling Congress ensuring plenty of time for the hosts of the tournament to prepare their bowling centers for the four month-long tournament and the influx of thousands of bowlers to congregate on their lanes. Choosing a city to hold the tournament involved decisions that emphasized appeal to the majority of women bowlers that entered the tournament. Distance, comfort, and entertainment for the bowlers weighed heavy on the organizers minds. Bowling centers had to be inspected and carefully considered by many criteria such as the availability of hotel accommodations, cleanliness, modernity of the lanes, enthusiasm of the center's employees, the availability

of a pro-shop for the hundreds of problems that could and probably would occur, local attractions to entertain bowlers when their daily bowling ended, a variety of restaurants to choose from, and even services such as daycare for young mothers. The Women's International Bowling Congress's officials started the ball rolling but it fell to the local team captains to organize the bowlers who wanted to compete in the Championship Tournament.²⁰

The first woman to win a national bowling title in the United States was Birdie Humphrey of Cincinnati, Ohio and the daughter of a bowling proprietor who was also a bowling champion. Humphrey began bowling at the age of fourteen using a sixteen-pound bowling ball. A sixteen-pound ball is the heaviest ball made and it is very unusual for young girls to bowl with a ball of this weight. Few adult women can maintain control of a sixteen pound ball while most adult senior men who have bowled for years with a sixteen pound ball, have to decrease the ball weight as they age due to loss of strength. Nine years before the formation of the Women's International Bowling Congress, Humphrey won the 1907 American Bowling Congress' Ladies Championship Ten-pin Tournament. National women's bowling tournaments in the first decade of the twentieth century were casual get-togethers mainly represented by the wives of bowlers following ABC events in which their husbands competed.²¹ Local leagues soon became the national arena for women bowlers to practice and improve their game and the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament provided the "real" sport for most WIBC bowlers.

After the founding of the WNBA, the national championship tournament rapidly became one of the most principal goals for many women who bowl in the United States

for several reasons. The national championship tournament also offered an opportunity for women bowlers to compete with other women with similar bowling abilities introducing them to more challenges such as lane conditions that demanded they fine tune their skills.²² There are several differences between league bowling and tournament bowling. As in most other competitive sports, the home team usually has the advantage. A league bowler gets use to routinely bowling on the same lanes and usually with the same oil patterns but with slight differences not noticeable to novice or open bowlers (those bowlers that bowl occasionally and usually only for fun). Tournament bowling usually offers a drastic change in oil patterns and when tournament bowlers compete from different parts of the country they are always going to have to adjust to these changes. It is a real challenge and in bowling this is what separates the good bowlers from the best bowlers. Learning to see and understand oil pattern changes and other lane differences is the first major step towards becoming a professional bowler. Chapter V provides an in-depth discussion on lane certification and how oil patterns are applied to bowling lanes and how bowlers can learn to ‘read the lanes’ and make adjustments to their game.²³

In 1922, eighty-five teams (five players per team) competed at the Woman’s National Bowling Association’s Championship Tournament in Toledo, Ohio. In 1925 under the presidency of Zoe Quinn of Chicago, the WNBA re-organized in order to change its name from the Woman’s National Bowling Association to the Woman’s International Bowling Congress (WIBC). In 1927, the WIBC adopted the “delegate system,” a system where individuals were chosen to represent the bowlers from local associations by voting on the motions they democratically agreed upon. That same year

the Woman's International Bowling Congress revised its constitution and bylaws, and again changed the organization's name to the Women's International Bowling Congress with headquarters in Springfield, Illinois.²⁴

The Great Depression, however, played havoc with most clubs and organizations in the United States but only affected the Woman's International Bowling Congress in the reduction of entries in the fifteenth WIBC National Championship Tournament. In the 1930s, entries fell to 242 but unpredictably membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress grew to a record 9,400. Like women's earlier social reform movements and the political activism gaining momentum across the country, a similar feeling of "sisterhood" was quite visible within the boundaries of individual single-sex organizations such as the Women's International Bowling Congress. Yet women bowlers, interviewed during this period of economic struggle, wanted to boost the morale of women worldwide, maintain the "sisterhood" of women within the WIBC organization, and provide an outlet for the frustrations that the depression ignited across the country. To encourage a united home front among women bowlers, in 1932, the WIBC council voted to sanction summer leagues creating an additional avenue for women to compete. During this stressful period of US history, the Women's International Bowling Congress felt an unexpected economic pinch when an injunction was granted to the Chicago Women's Bowling Association (CWBA) when it objected to paying dues to a state association as well as to local and national associations and in 1933 national tournament entries dropped to 177. To be sure, bowling has never been considered an expensive form of leisure, but the cost can increase when a bowler becomes serious about her game and starts seeking better bowling equipment, team

uniforms, and out-of-town tournaments and competition. For the vast majority of bowlers the sport was within their economic means.²⁵ Thus by 1934, increasing membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress precipitated the need for a third vice-president and WIBC leaders amended the constitution to provide for a five-member Executive Board instead of two. Indeed, it was during this era of economic depression that league memberships increased while new bowling records surged fourth starting with Marie Clemensen of Chicago, Illinois who bowled the first sanctioned 700 series by a woman, a record she maintained for forty-two years.²⁶

In 1935 the Women's International Bowling Congress's yearly convention, held in different states each year during the national tournament, began new traditions that would become the highlight of every convention from this year forward. Delegates, from the state chosen to host the Nationals, entertained WIBC members and guests with skits, stunts, and songs, and provided souvenirs to team members that represented that year of competition. Mazie Shue, Oklahoma City WBA president, started the Gold Ball Ceremony when she presented a gold-painted bowling ball to Harriet Darling, president of the Syracuse, New York WBA in honor of the Syracuse WBA hosting the Women's International Bowling Congress's national tournament in 1939. During the WIBC's convention of the same year, Alberta E. Crowe from Liverpool, New York was elected to the board of directors and one who would develop a deep commitment to the growth of women's bowling and would initiate many important changes during her long years with the Women's International Bowling Congress.²⁷

It was also during the depression of the 1930s, the first bowling magazine/trade journal was published for female consumers. John Hemmer of Chicago, published the

Woman Bowler, and it became available free to association secretaries in 1936 at the WIBC's convention held in Omaha, Nebraska. Hemmer said, "It is the first and only publication of its kind – devoted entirely to the interests of women bowlers." The journal was distributed not only free to league secretaries, but bowling centers, and for a minimal fee to individual subscribers. While the journal was issued free to each league secretary, she was expected to share the copy with the other members of her league. The Women's International Bowling Congress purchased the *Woman Bowler*, the official trade journal for women bowlers, from Blakely Printing Company of Chicago in 1945 for \$7,400. Publication began immediately at WIBC headquarters. The *Woman Bowler* became the voice of WIBC's national officials that kept league officials informed. For example, there were articles disclosing new legislation passed that year requiring that only women bowlers of sanctioned leagues be able to participate in the national tournaments, and allowed for sanctioning of three, four, and five-player teams, while another amendment to the constitution allowed women bowlers to join mixed leagues when accepted by the men's league officials with both men and women competing with and against each other.²⁸ This new legislation allowing women bowlers to bowl in men's leagues did not become popular until the 1950s and 1960s because many members of the men's American Bowling Congress stubbornly refused to accept or allow women to compete in their leagues. Women did bowl in industrial leagues before the 1950s, (but only with other women bowlers) replacing men bowlers sent to fight during the two world wars. This was crucial because it placed them in a better bargaining position with ABC legislature. However, as soon as the soldiers returned home they took back their leagues and team memberships placing women bowlers in a position to seek new avenues for

league and tournament competition.²⁹ In 1993, threatened with litigation for banned women members, the men's American Bowling Congress would officially and legally allow women to become members and compete with men in mixed leagues (see chapter V of this study for the discussion covering mixed league bowling).³⁰

Those who were involved the Women's International Bowling Congress learned quickly about the power of promotion. During the 1930s and 1940s, as officers of the largest women's club in America, much of the leaders time was spent creating new ways to promote the sport of bowling. These women used their advocate Dennis Sweeney, co-founder of the WIBC, bowling proprietor and bowling writer, to help them find women who bowled or wanted to bowl. Early on, Sweeney worked to get press coverage for the "fledgling group" and women responded with great enthusiasm. WIBC officers traveled the country for the next two decades meeting and working with women from all walks of life to build a specific image of women who bowled. Their efforts to organize and promote bowling in the United States inspired the changes that took the sport of bowling from the backrooms of saloons and barroom basements to "the respectability of a family sport that women and children could openly enjoy."³¹

Striving for the success of women on the lanes, it was the 1930s and 1940s under women's leadership, that the Women's International Bowling Congress expanded its reach and cultivated its image through song and symbols. Jeannette Knepprath of Milwaukee, Wisconsin was elected third president of the Women's International Bowling Congress in 1924 (Knepprath would go on to serve as president for thirty-six years). It was during Knepprath's presidency that the Women's International Bowling Congress extended its physical boundaries by welcoming the Canadian city of Vancouver, British

Colombia as the first non-United States city to organize a WIBC local association in 1938, admitting one league with seventy-five members. WIBC dues were increased that year from twenty-five cents to fifty-cents with an even division of monies going to local and national associations. In 1940, the WIBC flag was designed and hand-sewn by Philena Bhlen of Los Angeles and presented to the Women's International Bowling Congress as a gift from the California WBA. As of 1992, the flag has flown at the WIBC Headquarters and at all of the WIBC events including the Annual Meetings, the Championship Tournaments, and all of the WIBC Queens Tournaments. The flags were custom made by worldwide distributors, the Eder Corporation, and were available to local and state associations. Each three foot by five foot nylon flag displayed red, blue, yellow, and purple stripes with a WIBC shield on both sides. Local and state associations could purchase a flag for \$250 in 1986.³² Also, the Pioneer Club was established in 1941 to honor twenty year members.³³ Edna Jungers of Grafton, Wisconsin composed the music for the "WIBC March" and it was played for the first time in 1942 at the Silver Jubilee held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.³⁴

World War II also seemed to be a catalyst for a female bowling association to extend their collective identity through patriotic wartime efforts. While board members selected a building committee in early February 1943 to establish the Women's International Bowling Congress's national headquarters another committee was chosen to outline a war service program first named "Wings of Mercy." WIBC members collected over \$100,000 and purchased a bomber that was presented by the war service committee to the United States Air Force and a mobile field ambulance that cost \$1,543 to the United States Army in Syracuse, New York. Weary from world war efforts, the United

States government requested the Women's International Bowling Congress, among thousands of other organizations, cancel events planned for the its yearly convention and national tournament scheduled to be held in Kansas City, Kansas in 1943. A "war conference" convened during the summer of 1943 attended by the Executive Board and 291 state and city delegates.³⁵

Even though travel restrictions due to gas rationing kept members grounded, a National Bowling Council (NBC) organized in October 1943 in order to establish a uniform and fair set of rules that would embrace national, state, and locally sanctioned leagues. Alberta E. Crowe was elected to represent the Women's International Bowling Congress at the NBC. Also, a new program named the Bowlers Victory Legion (BVL) previously called the "Wings of Mercy" was approved as a national charity becoming the most popular charity event in women's bowling history. In May 1945, WIBC delegates voted by mail to, once again, change its name from "Women's International Bowling Congress" back to "Woman's International Bowling Congress."³⁶ The Women's International Bowling Congress adopted a mission statement that reflected their responsibilities to the association members that always included the push for more visibility.

To provide, adopt and enforce uniform rules and regulations governing the play of American tenpins; to provide and enforce uniform qualifications for tournaments and their participants; to hold a national tournament, and to encourage good feeling and create interest in the bowling game.³⁷

Women elected to run the Women's International Bowling Congress were absolutely devoted to the sport and commonly made their positions with the WIBC their life-long careers. Jeannette Knepprath, elected in 1924, held her position as president of the WIBC for thirty-six years and Emma Phaler of Columbus, Ohio, elected to office in

1927, served as secretary for thirty-eight years. Beginning in 1928 the WIBC constitution provided a salary of one hundred dollars for the association's president. It was in this same year that the WIBC's constitutional amendments provided for the elections for Life and Honorary Membership awards presented to women for superior sportsmanship or meritorious service. Delegates to the Women's International Bowling Congress chose Buffalo, New York to host the national WIBC tournament in 1929, the first city and state in the Midwest to do so with team entries surpassing three-hundred. On the 12th of February 1930, Jennie Hoverson Kelleher of Madison, Wisconsin rolled the first perfect game to be recorded in WIBC history, a score of 300, and twenty days later Emma Fahning of Buffalo, New York rolled the second. In April of the same year in Louisville, Kentucky, the Women's International Bowling Congress initiated the "breakfast" tradition that opened the Annual Meeting of the WIBC, a tradition that lasted until 1948.³⁸ This was a sport that was not at the margins but at the center of women bowlers' lives and this was reflected in the family-like atmosphere that the Women's International Bowling Congress held dear throughout their eighty-eight years of operation.

In addition to the hard work of the WIBC, free advertising and support for women's bowling came from unusual and powerful sources. The first bowling lanes were installed in the basement of the White House given to President Truman for his sixty-first birthday and in 1953 President Eisenhower moved them to the Executive Office Building to clear up room for more office space in the White House.³⁹ According to John Dalzell of the Bowling Hall of Fame, Mary Todd Lincoln mentioned in personal letters written before she married that she bowled on occasion as did Lady Bird Johnson

in her book, *White House Diary*. Mrs. Johnson stated that “I went bowling with Lyndon and the Grahams (Billy was an excellent bowler), the Watsons (Marvin rolled a good, straight ball and a reliably high score, just like the man himself), and John Chancellor (who is practically the champion in this group, except for Lyndon.”⁴⁰ President Johnson and his wife were said to have bowled together quite often on the lanes in the executive office basement and also on the lanes at Camp David, the Presidential retreat in the Catoctin Mountains in Maryland. Mrs. Johnson said she “found bowling to be fun, convenient exercise and a good way to relieve the tensions of being first lady.”⁴¹ Other members of the White House staff bowled in sanctioned leagues on the two lanes in the lower level of the Executive Office Building.⁴² It was reported by the *National Geographic* that President Richard Nixon installed his own personal single-lane in the basement of the White House in 1969.⁴³ Pat Nixon and her two daughters received a gold-plated lifetime membership card from the WIBC from then president Alberta Crowe. Pat Nixon said, “We all three bowl as often as possible” and she referred to bowling as a “sport for family togetherness.” In 1971 President Richard Nixon focused national attention on the sport of bowling by recognizing, in the oval office, Ed Luther from Racine, Wisconsin and Aida Lydia Gonzales from San Juan, Puerto Rico, who were the 1971 amateur champions of the international FIQ Championship Tournament. Nixon gave his personal endorsement of bowling when he said, “The beauty of bowling is that it takes very little time, it’s very good exercise, and it doesn’t cost much. People of modest means can afford it.”⁴⁴ The President also claimed to have bowled as often as he could. “I try to bowl at least once a week. Usually I bowl around 10 p.m. after my work is done and I try to get in seven to twelve games.”⁴⁵ Professional bowlers who practice usually

average ten to twenty games per hour when bowling alone on two lanes. Whether or not Nixon bowled as much he insisted, he seemed to understand that “It’s tremendous exercise. It strengthens the muscles and eases tensions,” something the WIBC was happy to report. In 1971, President Nixon boasted a bowling average of around 162 per game with his high game being a score of 232.⁴⁶ Other presidents and their wives would continue to reach out to the masses in a similar fashion. In the 2008 presidential election then democratic hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama competed in a good-hearted attempt to bowl their way into the hearts and minds of American voters and where it was made clear that Hillary Clinton had the home-court advantage plus she owns her own bowling ball, bowling shoes, and bowling ball bag.⁴⁷

The Women’s International Bowling Congress welcomed such famous endorsements, but the organization was more interested in women, not famous through their husbands’ careers, but who earned their reputations through daily practice, mental diligence, and hard work. In 1949 at the age of twenty-two and a softball shortstop in Grand Rapids Michigan, Marion Ladewig, probably the best woman bowler of all time, started out with a 135 to 140 average her first year of bowling. Inspired by her love for the sport, Ladewig sought out some of the top bowling coaches in the United States. She got so good at bowling, averaging over 190 the length of her career, a score considered to be an extremely high average for men or women league bowlers. Thus she was soon recognized as a professional by both the top women bowlers as well as the top men bowlers in the world. Marion Ladewig caught the eye of a Brunswick Corporation official who offered her a job that would pay her to do what she loved best and she soon became the most famous member of the Brunswick Advisory Staff.⁴⁸

Marion Ladewig believed it was crucial to encourage women to see bowling as more than a pastime but a game of skill and athleticism. She traveled extensively clocking in over 100,000 miles every year giving bowling exhibitions and bowling instruction. Ladewig is thought to have personally taught between 300,000 and 500,000 youth and women bowlers how to play the game of tenpins. As a champion bowler, Ladewig was the first woman to receive the WIBC award for superior performance. She was chosen as Bowler of the Year nine times from 1949 through 1963 by the nation's bowling writers. Ladewig won the BPAA All Star Tournament eight times, won the World's Invitational title four times along with two National Team Championships, shared two national women's doubles crowns, won two all events, one double, and one WIBC National Championship since 1950 and in 1963 won the World's International and the National All Stars.⁴⁹ Ladewig was the only woman to win city, state, and national all-events titles in 1950. She was named Michigan's "Woman Athlete of All Time," and is a member of Michigan's Athlete Hall of Fame, the only bowler and only woman bowler up to 1964 to be honored. The *Woman Bowler* featured Ladewig in every issue from 1964 through 1974 as the leading woman bowling coach and sport representative not only in the United States but across the globe.⁵⁰ She was the first woman bowler to be inducted into the Women's Sports Foundation's (SWF) Hall of Fame in September 1984 along with several other women athletes; Martina Navratilova (tennis champion), Kathy Whitworth (golf champion), and Patricia McCormick (diving champion).⁵¹

As female bowlers gained fame they were not only role models because of their athleticism but for their critiques of gender discrimination. Judy Cook Soutar of Kansas City, Missouri bowled in her first Women's International Bowling Congress

Championship Tournament at the age of eleven in 1955 and led her team with an average of 164. At the age of fifteen, Judy Soutar bowled in the BPAA All-Star Tournament in Cleveland, Ohio. She started out with the lowest average on the team and had to sit out the first three games. When she finally got to bowl Soutar led her team to third place with a 190 average. As a seventeen-year-old high school senior, Soutar finished ninth with a series of 692 in the BPAA All-Stars in Miami Beach, Florida and was the youngest woman to ever bowl in the tournament.⁵² In 1963 Judy Soutar won a place on the *Bowlers Journal* All American first team and won the Madison Square Garden Ruppert-Brunswick Tournament of Champions, and she received the Alberta Crowe Star of Tomorrow Award. In 1972 Soutar won the Brunswick European Cup Championship and finished second that year in the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament singles division. She was named the 1973 "Bowler of the Year" and in 1975 Soutar won the Marion Ladewig "Lady of the Lanes" award, and also in 1975 Soutar won the WIBC Queens Tournament with a 234 pin difference between her and her closest opponent. In 1974 her winnings increased to over \$13,000. If her winnings had equaled the men's in monetary value, Judy would have collected over \$50,000. Judy Soutar said, "Because women bowlers have not attracted the sponsors, television, or the press, as the men have, they have been forced to accept this inequitable situation." She also insisted that a woman could beat a man in a ten-frame game because "most of it is brains."⁵³

Marion Ladewig and Judy Soutar are the two most famous women bowlers of the twentieth century thanks to their bowling skills and dedication to making the sport and women's contribution's more visible. Both women served as members of the Brunswick

Advisory Committee, Ladewig during the first half of the century and Soutar during the last. Other women such as Wendy Macpherson, Carolyn Dorin-Ballard, Leanne Barrette, and more recently Linda Barnes and Kelly Kulick follow in the footsteps of Marion Ladewig, Judy Soutar, and thousands of other women who braved the sport of bowling when the lanes were unforgiving and women's athletic reputations were "hand-made" in what once was a sport for "white men only."⁵⁴

With growing female interest in the sport of bowling throughout the nation, Texan Polly McQueen, like thousands of other women started bowling in the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournaments and it immediately became one of the most anticipated events of the entire year in women's sports. Polly would go on to compete in every national tournament from 1968 through 2010 except for two years and she bowled in nearly every state in the union during her bowling career. Polly, as captain and coordinator of her two teams competed twice in Arizona and once in Baltimore, California, Colorado, and Connecticut. She also competed three times in Florida, one time in Georgia, twice in Iowa and Indiana, and once in Illinois. Polly competed in Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, and twice in Missouri.⁵⁵ She, like many other small town bowlers, enjoyed tournaments and also cities with an active night life that includes activities such as gambling casinos, professional entertainers, and places of interest to children as well as the most up-to-date bowling facilities. Every three years WIBC held its championship tournament in Reno, the most popular city for tournament bowling in the United States, which always received the most tournament entries because nearly every member wanted to attend. Polly and her teams made the trip five times and also bowled twice in Las Vegas. Other states visited by Polly and her teams include two

trips to New York and Oklahoma, one to North Carolina and Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. Of course, Polly also bowled in the WIBC nationals three times in her home state of Texas, once in El Paso, and once in Houston, and once in San Antonio. According to Polly McQueen,

The sport of bowling is wonderful and I treasure the lasting friendships I have made through bowling. It is good exercise and has kept me active so far. I love the traveling and I have been in many places I wouldn't have gone had there not been a national tournament in that city. The association has always been fascinating and seems to bring me in closer contact with the bowlers.⁵⁶

Thanks to women's skills on and off the lanes, bowling became big business. The National Bowling Stadium was built in 1995 with a price tag of 47.5 million dollars funded by a tax lobbied by the city of Reno based mainly on the commitments of the Women's International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress. WIBC delegates choose states, cities, and bowling centers for three years of tournaments in advance. These yearly tournaments consist of three series of games including three games for team events and three games each for doubles and singles events. Series are bowled over a period of two days. Cities selected to host nationals are chosen three years in advance so that state associations receive plenty of time to inform local associations exactly when and where each national tournament was to be held. Every third year, nationals were held in Reno, Nevada at the National Bowling Stadium.⁵⁷ The building is 363,000 square feet with an eight-foot aluminum geodesic dome that resembles a large bowling ball and has also been used by film companies that depict bowling scenes in their movies. The construction of the stadium allowed for eighty lanes but building architects forgot to provide a center aisle for the competing bowlers to march out of, therefore, the center two lanes were converted into a walkway leaving seventy-eight lanes

for bowling. The national bowling stadium is equipped with “the latest in computerized scoring, offices, meeting rooms, exhibit areas, food service facilities and concessions.”

The national stadium would also host the American Bowling Congress Championship and Masters events every three years including WIBC and ABC events like the National Mixed Championships and the National Seniors Championship along with other international events. The initial proposal submitted allowed a \$500,000 site fee to be paid to the Women’s International Bowling Congress for each year the tournaments were held in Reno. These funds went a long way to increase WIBC’s non-dues revenue and expand services provided free to the members of the Women’s International Bowling Congress. When the WIBC’s Championship Tournament was held in Reno the economic impact on the city averaged an increase of \$70 to 80 million dollars.⁵⁸

Of course, preparing for nationals is a full time job. Polly and her teammates prepare for nationals over a twelve-month period beginning at the end of the previous tournament. Depending on where the tournament will be held the following year, airline and hotel reservations along with specific bowling dates need to be confirmed as soon as possible to ensure teams preferences. As Polly McQueen’s friendship circle grew, so did the number of women bowlers requesting a position on one of her national competition teams. For about twenty-five years, to accommodate the more serious and reliable bowlers, she organized two five-man teams that traveled together.⁵⁹ Making arrangements for ten women, who range in age from forty to eighty, takes time and diligence. Finding satisfactory or convenient dates to bowl requires Polly to adjust and re-adjust the list of bowlers so that the two teams travel and bowl at the same time. Nearly every year a bowler calls at the last minute to cancel due to conflicting dates or

because of an unexpected emergency. Keeping a list of potential substitutes to take the place of those who cancel also requires time and energy and many hours on the telephone.⁶⁰

Coming from a small West Texas town, meant that Polly usually delegated one of the other bowlers to check out local attractions in the city where the tournament was to take place. Reservations for “additional” activities such as cruises and tours, and bowling side tournaments, relied on confirmation from the entire team members which added an additional month or two to the preparations process. Also, two designated drivers, chosen by Polly and another team captain, made reservations and purchased insurance for two rental vehicles. A month before the tournament, Polly studied maps of the hosting city’s streets and highways and constructed easily followed directions from the airport to the hotel and to each of the bowling houses where the actual tournament would be held. Her vigilance did not end when the teams arrived at their designation. Roommates were chosen, team meetings and bowling times had to be coordinated, and disagreements handled and hopefully settled. Careful records of the finances were kept by one member of each of the teams who will tallied costs such as room rates, gas money, banquet tickets, along with any other extras that might come up. When the finances were totaled the amount was divided so that each bowler payed the same amount. These economics worked great for large groups and spread the cost of travel evenly across the board. Any money won by a bowler was hers alone along with any personal expenses such as food, clothes, or keepsakes.⁶¹

The Women’s International Bowling Congress’s own surveys suggest that Polly’s background and attitude were not unique. Championship tournament data from the 1983

competition suggested the average women bowler competing was forty-eight years old, had two children, owned her own home, had graduated from high school, had completed some university courses, and she worked at a white collar job. Seventy-four percent of the women surveyed planned to attend the next WIBC championship tournament. The survey found “an opportunity for travel” to be the number one reason for attending the tournament, “a vacation without hubby and kids” came in second, “meeting new people” was third, “fun and enjoyment” was fourth, and “the challenge of competition” placing last. Eighty-one percent chose “objectivity and fairness of bowling house officials” as the most important consideration in tournament competition, seventy-four percent chose “availability and cost of hotel rooms” as the second most important consideration, thirty-eight percent picked “availability of other activities such as side tournaments for cash prizes and nighttime entertainment such as gambling and bingo games as third most important for attendance, and twenty-nine percent looked at “facility attractiveness, modernity, and cleanliness.” Six out of ten women bowlers competing in the yearly championship tournaments used their own cars to get to the tournament while three out every five women bowlers flew. The average round trip distance covered in the 1984 Women’s National Bowling Congress’s Championship Tournament for team captains was 1,480 miles.⁶² Forty percent of the 1983 tournament competitors stayed 3.5 nights with four or more women to a room and ninety-three percent dined in restaurants. Sixty-four percent did some sight-seeing with fifty percent visiting a museum, art gallery, or a historical site while one third attended a show, club, or lounge. The average team captain bowls in 2.2 leagues a week and two thirds of all team captains have never bowled a practice game. Younger women bowlers between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four are

more likely to bowl in the summer and also more likely to practice before league play. Of those bowlers who bowl in the WIBC Championship tournament, two out of ten enter at least six additional tournaments per year.⁶³

In 1983, the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament was hosted by Las Vegas, Nevada where it broke through the million-dollar prize fund mark for the first time. A total of over one million dollars was paid out breaking the previous record set one year earlier at the 1982 competition in St. Louis, Missouri where the prize fund reached \$776,988. The Greater Reno WBA and Carson City, Nevada hosted the largest WIBC Championship Tournament for all time in 1988. The tournament drew more than 77,000 women bowlers and lasted a record 96 days. These competition statistics also won a place in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the world's largest participatory sporting event.⁶⁴

The statistics mentioned above, provided information to the leaders and officials of the Women's International Bowling Congress that helped them to find supporters and sponsors for the national championship tournament, which was the largest of all women's competitions in the world. The characteristics of the bowling members are constantly changing and surveys are the most accurate way to determine the demography of its members. By the latter 1980s, surveys found that forty percent of all women tournament bowlers had attended college, and that ninety percent were married with 3 children, and were employed either full or part time, and that ten percent of all women bowlers had household incomes in excess of \$60,000.⁶⁵

As the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament increased yearly as well as WIBC membership, it became apparent that a special place

was needed to honor the women and men who dedicated their lives to the growth of bowling as well as for those who had achieved superior performance in bowling. The American Bowling Congress and the Women's International Bowling Congress agreed to jointly build, fund, and share a new headquarters for both congress's and a bowling museum and hall of fame.

The International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame collects, preserves and researches bowling's history, provides a suitable home for bowling's major halls of fame, and makes the museum's information and collection available to interested parties globally for education, promotion and entertainment.⁶⁶

Mission Statement, International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame

The Women's International Bowling Congress Hall of Fame and Museum (NBHF/M) was established in 1953 to honor women for their bowling achievements and was originally housed in Columbus, Ohio with new construction plans for St. Louis. The WIBC and the ABC pledged to jointly fund over two million dollars each by November 1978 for the construction of the new bowling headquarters (and the new museum) which would house both the Women's International Bowling Congress and the men's American Bowling Congress, to be located in Greendale, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁶⁷ In order to reach their part of the pledge, WIBC's leaders initiated several programs to raise the needed money to build these new projects. Souvenir jewelry was designed with the National Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum logo in the form of necklaces with charms, money clips, and pins. These items were first sold to individual local association leaders who would then sale them to individual leagues, teams, and members. Along with the money contributed to the fund, the campaign drives created interest in the collection of artifacts that the NBHF/M would display in the new facility which consisted of one-of-a-kind bowling newsletters, bowling uniforms, early bowling

pins and bowling balls, trophies, games, sculpture and art, and films featuring interviews with famous bowlers, thousands of photographs, and what many believe to be the first private bowling lane on which “President Grant is said to have rolled a ball in 1870.”⁶⁸

The all-time WIBC Championship Tournament records show that Dorothy Miller of Chicago, Illinois won the title ten times between 1928 and 1948, Emma Jaeger of Toledo, Ohio won nine times between the years of 1919 and 1929, and Fritzie Rahn, also of Chicago, won the championship tournament eight times between 1927 and 1940. The titles were not necessarily won in consecutive years and the dates only include the actual dates of the first and last titles won with others being won between those years. There were seven perfect games rolled during tournament play from 1979 to 2003 and four 299 games rolled from 1982 to 1997. The three oldest women bowlers ever to compete in the championship tournament were ninety-nine year old Ethel Brunnick of Santa Monica, California in 1987, ninety-seven year old Lois Larsen of Placentia, California in 2001, and ninety-five year old Clara Wise of Las Vegas, Nevada in 1983. Women bowlers participating in championship tournaments the most years included Mary Covell of Chicago who competed sixty-one years, Nancy Hampton of Carol Stream, Illinois with sixty years, and Ethel Ann Constantine of Westland, Michigan fifty-nine years. The youngest participants to compete were five year old Mary Ann Keiper and 2 six year olds, Jane Steger and Kathy Justi all three from St. Louis, Missouri in 1952. The highest individual series rolled during any WIBC Championship Tournament was 812 by Kendra Cameron Gaines of Sebring, Florida in 2000 followed by two 780s rolled by Karen Collura of Hamilton, Ontario in 2003 and Debbie Kuhn from Baltimore in 1991. The WIBC Championship Tournament’s individual largest prize funds included

\$1,627,815 in Las Vegas, Nevada in 1983, \$2,209,748 in 1997 and \$2,700,000 in 2003 and both in Reno, Nevada.⁶⁹

Nominations considered for induction into the Hall of Fame were selected in two categories; meritorious service or superior performance in the game of tenpins along with the stars of yesteryear. Anyone could submit a nomination in either category, for regular or pioneer consideration and selections could even be made posthumously. The nominee in the category of meritorious service had to be fifty years of age or older with outstanding service to WIBC over a period of years. Nominations for superior performance must have bowled in fifteen WIBC Championship Tournaments distinguishing herself through national recognition for her bowling abilities.⁷⁰

The first Star of Yesteryear elected in 1953 was Emma Jaeger from Toledo, Ohio. The first to be inducted into the WIBC Hall of Fame for meritorious service was Jeannette Knepprath from Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1963. WIBC's first inductee Hall of Famer for Superior Performance was Marion Ladewig in 1964 from Grand Rapids, Michigan. Now almost all local and state associations have organized Halls of Fame to honor bowlers with superior performances and meritorious service in the sport of bowling. As of 1980, the Women's International Bowling Congress Hall of Fame had approved and inducted seventy-three members, twenty-two for Meritorious Service, twenty for Superior Performance, and the original thirty-one Star of Yesteryear inductions. The WIBC Hall of Fame and Museum remained in St. Louis, Missouri until it was moved and reopened 1 January 2010 in the new United States Bowling Congress headquarters in Arlington, Texas.⁷¹

It is also important to note that off the lanes women also found success as sports writers. Even though the Women's International Bowling Congress remained a non-profit corporation throughout its long history, an abundance of monetary opportunities for women could be found within the perimeters of the bowling industry. WIBC used its trade journal to seek qualified paid employees, elect popular trustworthy leadership, recruit women bowlers, and provide encouragement to women bowlers across the world.⁷² National Women Bowling Writers association (NWBW) also offered women the opportunity to write bowling news which was considered by many to be "the cheering section for the bowling game." The idea of such a group originated with Lola Yoakem of Los Angeles, California in 1947 in a letter she sent to Alberta Crowe, Public Relations Director for WIBC. Then President Jeannette Knepprath said, "Personally, I feel it would be an asset to the bowling game and I feel sure WIBC would do much to help such a venture."⁷³ Yoakem wrote, "The primary purpose will be the promotion and circulation of material to aid writers in their work and to help increase interest in the bowling game among women throughout the nation."⁷⁴

Lola Yoakem's original plan was to limit membership to professional women writers who made a living or received some form of monetary payment by reporting specifically on bowling through the public media such as newspapers, the radio, or through television. However, Crowe and Knepprath envisioned a broader sphere that included non-professional writers as well. The organizational meeting took place in Dallas, Texas on 10 April 1948 at the Baker Hotel where Lola Yoakem was elected president and in 1951, she was chosen by her peers to be the first Life Member of the organization to be inducted into the National Women Bowling Writers association.⁷⁵ The

first annual meeting was held in Columbus, Ohio in 1949 with a membership of forty non-professional writers and four professional writers. Available memberships included charter members, professional writers, non-professional writers, allied and associate members, life members and member emeriti. Allied membership and associate membership allowed men and professional journalists to join the National Women Bowling Writers association in 1949 but was eliminated in 1952, re-instated in 1975, and finally permanently eliminated in 1981. By 1961, there were 239 members that included both professional members who wrote for a salary and those who wrote as a hobby. Professional writers' dues were five dollars a year and novice writers' membership dues were only three dollars in 1962. Each year during the Women's International Bowling Congress convention, held during national competition, the National Women Bowling Writers Association met to name award winners for the best articles in city and in state publications, for distinguished service awards, and to name a "Star of Tomorrow" in women's bowling.⁷⁶

The National Women Bowling Writers Association's awards program, particularly in writing, publication, and photography has grow significantly since its induction. In 1949 members were urged to adapt their publicity around the policies of the Women's International Bowling Congress. An Exchange Mart was created in 1954 and is still in place to encourage the sharing of various publicity and promotional ideas and techniques. Sponsors have been a vital ingredient to the success of the awards programs. In 1962 an audio-visual category was introduced, a WNBW flag was designed in 1969, the Writer of the Year Award was created in 1979, the Dudley Peebles Photo Contest, beginning in 1981, promoted photography skills, and in 1998 the first Local Publicity

Chairman of the Year award acknowledged the efforts in promoting and publicizing bowling on a local level. The awards program included four categories of recognition: distinguished service to the game of bowling, distinguished service in the field of communications, promotion of local bowling, and promotion of service to junior bowlers. By 1997, the National Women Bowlers Writers association had become a great supporter of the WIBC Museum and Hall of Fame where historical volumes are made available to visitors who want to learn more about what the NWBW is all about.⁷⁷

Thus as the WIBC grew within the first half of its existence, it exceeded everyone's expectations by becoming the largest women's sporting association in the world. Throughout the twentieth-century it expanded women's opportunities for new friendships, athletic competition, recognition, and even employment. The programs instituted by presiding presidents and the Women's International Bowling Congress board of directors opened doors for women bowlers across the nation and abroad.

The following chapter examines the growth of the athletic fashion industry and its importance in the performance of women athletes. This chapter argues that the athletic sportswear industry impacted the United States' economy in significant ways and also points out how team uniforms added a professional mentality to the games women play.

NOTES

CHAPTER III

¹“Through the years,” *Woman Bowler*, Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, pp 5-7.

² “A memorable glance back at the ‘Good Old Days,’” *Woman Bowler*, November 1964, v 28, no. 10, pp 16, 18.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Oral interviews covered a period of five years and included both men and women.

⁶“WIBC’s wonderful world of services,” *Woman Bowler*, November 1969, v 33, no. 10, pp 32-33. Also see “Letter from the President,” *Woman Bowler*, July/August 1978, v 42, no. 7, p 11 and see Roberta Jansa, “WIBC membership services: We do it all for you,” *Woman Bowler*, February 1984, pp 18-19, 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-93.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

¹⁰ See the *Chicago Recreation Survey*, Chicago Recreation Commission, 1937-1940. Also see Floyd R. Eastwood, *Industrial Recreation: Its Development and Present Status, 1940* and see Wilma J. Pesavento, “Sport and recreation in the Pullman Experiment, 1880-1900,” *Journal of Sport History*, Summer 1982, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp 38-62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 109-116. Also see Gerald Gems, “The Emergence and Development of a Woman’s Sporting Culture: Chicago, 1880-1940.” (The North American Society for Sport History Conference: Banff, Canada, 1990), 13.

¹² “Bowling is the working girls delight,” *Woman Bowler*, January 1972, v 36, no. 2, pp 28-29, 35

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Karcher, 112.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Women Bowler*, November 1964, v 28, no. 10, p 45.

²⁰ See interviews with Polly McQueen, Lucille Harrington, and Dottie McNutt located in the author’s files.

²¹ *Woman Bowler*, November 1964, v 28, no. 10, pp 16, 18, 37.

²² See Emily Verfurth oral history in author’s vertical files. “I returned to bowling in 2000 and entered my first national tournament that same year. Even with a high bowling average, the lanes were always different and usually difficult for out-of-towners and had to be adjusted to. Many women bowlers learned to adjust their game fairly quickly while the majority just enjoyed the bowling and the fellowship.”

²³ See Dottie McNut Interview located in the author’s files.

²⁴ Karcher, 112.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ “Gold ball innovator dead at 97,” *Woman Bowler*, February 1986, v 50, no. 2, pp 22-23.

²⁸ “Thanks for the memories - - receive recognition, too,” *Woman Bowler*, March 1966, v 30, no. 4, p 46.

²⁹ Gideon Bosker and Bianca Lencek-Bosker, *Bowled Over: a Roll Down Memory Lane*, (Chronicle Books: San Francisco, 200,) 88, 93.

³⁰ Terry Organ, “ABC opens doors to women, reaction mixed,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 8 November 1993, p 4. Within many areas of the United States, up until the 1970s and 1980s men, continued to fight the inclusion of women into their bowling clubs. Many of their attitudes conveyed the feeling that “men bowled with women only as practice during the day and they bowled “real games” in the evenings with other men.

³¹ *Frames & Lanes: Special Commemorative Final Issue*, Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, pp 4-5.

³² “WIBC Flag,” *Woman Bowler*, 1992, v. 56, no. 1, p 8.

³³ “Dedicated pioneers meet again,” *Woman Bowler*, 1986, v 50, no. 6, p 15.

³⁴ The “March,” which is music that tournament bowlers marched onto the lanes to, contains words which have not been found but there are references that indicate a cassette recording exist within the WIBC records but on multiply attempts this author was told USBC staff have been unable to locate it.

³⁵ “BVL never fails hospitalized and blinded veterans,” *Woman Bowler*, November 1964, v 28, no. 10, pp 26-27.

³⁶ Ibid. The WIBC changed its name back to the original Woman’s International Bowling Congress reportedly to provide proper grammar in the title but this would not be the last time the name was changed.

³⁷ bowl.com

³⁸ Karcher, 1916-1991.

³⁹ Richard M. Nixon “ . . . I can duck out and bowl,” *Woman Bowler*, October 1970, v 34, no. 9, p 10.

⁴⁰ “Famous women who bowl,” *Woman Bowler*, Fall 1993, p 15. “Lady Bird’s diary boosts bowling,” *Woman Bowler* May/June 1971, v.35, no. 6, pp 44-45.

⁴¹ See the White House Diary kept by Lady Bird Johnson. Also see “Lady Bird’s Diary Boosts Bowling,” *Woman Bowler*, May/June 1971, v 35, no. 6, pp 44-45.

⁴² “Age means nothing to 74-year-old Irene Fleming,” *Woman Bowler*, November 1969, v 35, no. 6, pp 44-45.

⁴³ *National Geographic*, January 2009, p 142.

⁴⁴ “Bowlers in the White House,” *Woman Bowler*, November 1971, v 35, no. 10, pp 24-25.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Katherine Q. Seelye, “Clinton bowls over media,” *Caucus*, 2 April 2008, (The New York Times Company: NYTimes.com.)

⁴⁸ The Brunswick Corporation, originally named the J.M. Brunswick Manufacturing Company, is one of the oldest conglomerates in the United States founded 15 September 1845 with global headquarters now located in Chicago, Illinois with branches across the globe. The Brunswick Corporation, a revolutionary leader in sports equipment of many kinds, popularized bowling balls of manufactured materials, such as vulcanized rubber. Bowling balls originally were made of solid wood. In the 1970s the Brunswick Corporation introduced the automatic scorer to bowling centers everywhere and by the twentieth-first century the Brunswick Corporation still manufactures sporting and fitness equipment and is probably the number one manufacturer and distributor of bowling equipment. The Brunswick Corporation, using their American made equipment, installed twenty-four lanes in the Soviet Union’s first bowling center in July 1972.

⁴⁹ The National Women Bowling Writers (NWBW) organized 18 April 1948, and merged 1 January 2007 with the Bowling Writers of America Association (BWAA) which was founded in 1934. BWAA’s Mission Statement is to “create a new and continuing generation of bowling journalist dedicated to disseminating bowling history, news, features and editorials” and “To offer opportunities for achievement, recognition and growth,” and to “provide programs honoring bowler performance, meritorious contributions and scholastic excellence.”

⁵⁰ “Marion Ladewig,” *Woman Bowler*, May/June 1964, v 28, no. 6, pp 16, 43.

⁵¹ “WSF inducts Ladewig,” *Woman Bowler*, November 1984, v 49, no. 10, p 36.

⁵² PBAA All-Star Competition (from 1942 through 1970) is now known as the U.S. Open.

⁵³ Helen Hull Jacobs, *Famous Modern American Women Athletes*, (Dodd, Mead & Company: New York, 1975), 11-35.

⁵⁴ Go to <http://www.ncaba.org/gowlmag/wibcnews.htm>

⁵⁵ See Polly McQueen Interview.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See National Bowling Stadium, @bowl.com. See also the *Woman Bowler*, March/April 1992, v 56, no. 3, pp 38-39.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See Polly McQueen Interview.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Aye, aye-captains look like this,” *Woman Bowler*, February 1985, v 49, no. 2, p 12.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "A century of dedicated service," *Woman Bowler*, February 1973, v 37, no. 3, pp 22-23. Also see "Hall of Fame nominations due October 1," *Woman Bowler*, July/August 1980, v 44, no. 7, p 11.

⁶⁶ bowl.com.

⁶⁷ "New home for bowlers," *Woman Bowler*, October 1972, v 36, no. 9, pp 21-23.

⁶⁸ "WIBC, ABC to contribute \$100,000 each to NBH/M," *Woman Bowler*, December 1987, v 43, no. 1, p 36.

⁶⁹ See *Records: 2004 WIBC Championship Tournament*, p 46.

⁷⁰ "Poineers to be considered in 1979 Hall of fame balloting," *Woman Bowler*, July/August 1978, v 42, no. 7, p 12.

⁷¹ Karcher, 31.

⁷² Jill Van Dierendonck, "These women run the house," *Woman Bowler*, April 1986, v 50, no. 4, pp 35-37.

⁷³ For quote see "History of the NWBW," <http://bowlingwriters.com/AboutBWAA/NWBHHistory.aspx>, p1.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Mark Miller, 22-23.

⁷⁶ "The writers note," *Woman Bowler*, November 1962, v 26, no.10, p 45.

⁷⁷ The United States Bowling Congress and the International Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum is now located in Arlington, Texas since 2010.

CHAPTER IV

“PUTTIN ON THE GLITZ:” THE FASHIONABLE GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRY

Team captain Polly McQueen recalled, “We were thrilled to finally get to wear pants to nationals.” Her championship teams took their bowling apparel seriously. Polly, captain of several national bowling teams, like many other team captains, continues to believe that what a bowler is wearing matters much, not only in appearance but in terms of athleticism. The first two Women’s International Bowling Congress national competitions Polly and her two teams competed in, 1968 and 1969, required women to wear skirts or dresses that fell just below the knee. According to Polly there were a lot of women who argued against the restriction on shorts and slacks. In 1968, one of the most memorable responses to the restrictive dress code came from the Zodiacs—a flamboyant group of bowlers from New Orleans who mocked the tournament dress codes and opted for audacious “full-length formals.” Indeed, the team is still known for “puttin on the glitz.”¹ Women bowlers in general had often protested formally and informally about restrictive dress codes something that was partially removed in 1972.² Most women now wear slacks and uniform team shirts that identify an individual team by name or team sponsor along with the bowler’s name, yet dress codes remain in place. Shorts shorter than finger-tip length and denim-jeans, for example, are still banned from women’s USBC national and international competition.³ This chapter examines not only official changes in dress codes but the larger history of bowling fashion to understand why it mattered to the growth of the sport and women’s enjoyment and athleticism. Fashion reveals not just the ebb and flow of style, then, but the link between what women wore on

the lanes and the popularization of the sport, something that this chapter argues pushed at the gendered boundaries of the entire bowling industry.

Historians have long viewed fashion and style as important characteristics that reveal the attitude of early twentieth-century women whether they were athletes, laborers, or housewives. Indeed, women's sense of style shaped their identities both in private and in public. Kathy Piess's study of working-class immigrant women's leisure between the years of 1880 and 1920 illuminated women's excitement about clothing and its effect on their lives. Piess argues, "It was in leisure that women played with identity trying on new images and roles appropriating the cultural forms around them – clothing, music, language – to push at the boundaries of immigrant working class life."⁴ Piess notes one of the first things a newly-arrived immigrant woman did was to change her style of dressing. The young women would work all week for about \$4 and spend savings of \$25 for a new hat. She said that ". . . women did not mutate *haute couture* directly, but adapted and transformed such fashion in creating their style." According to Piess, "Promenading the streets and going places with the crowd, young working-class women 'put on style.'"⁵ Similarly, the history of "putting on the glitz," reflects women bowlers' identities as athletes.

At the same time, what has seemed at times to have been the benign neglect of the needs of women's athletes also went hand in hand with a constant effort to make women appear more feminine on the playing field as well as off. Team coaches, for example, encouraged women players to dress modestly and inconspicuously at all times presenting themselves as ladies so that the "mystique" of the American woman would not be tarnished.⁶ Historian Mary Jo Festle suggested that female athletes were "considered at

best genderless and at worse masculine while in the game” and women felt they “must prove their femininity outside the sports arena” by paying careful attention to language, behavior, and clothing while they were out of the game.⁷ Concerns over women’s fashion in the public realm have a rich history, the turn of the twentieth-century was an era in time when clothing was a particularly “problematic issue for female athletics, whether it was for the oddness of bloomers . . . or the unsightly mannish attire” women wore out on the sports field. Most sports demanded “quick aggressive movements which requires nonrestrictive clothing” and as in most other sports, bowling attire for women that was nonrestrictive came into conflict with society’s cultural mores. As athletes, many women were also made to feel that they had to compensate for their athletic abilities by appearing feminine, modest, and demure in their language, in their physical appearance, and through their behavior when not in the sports arena.⁸ Festle believes that centuries of male prejudice and oppression of American women ingrained in American men was what forced women athletes into this apologetic behavior where they fought to prove that women could be an athlete and at the same time remain feminine.⁹ Many women, during the first half of the twentieth century, chose not to participate in sports activities away from home for several reasons; women had considerably less time than men to play, usually women made less money than men, there are fewer programs for women, and of course there is the notion that women who played vigorous sports were less than feminine. Festle argues “it’s not surprising that so many women did not compete but that so many women did.”¹⁰

Similarly, Lynne Emery’s study of women’s industrial leagues, “From Lowell Mills to the Halls of Fame: Industrial League Sport for Women,” mentioned in the

previous chapters also looks at the radical change in women's sports apparel and the public's reaction to that change during the first half of the twentieth century. While it was in the 1920s that clothing manufactures found sports apparel to be a big boost to its profits as companies recognized the demand for athletic clothing included women, even as late as the 1960s, high school women's athletic uniforms or "gym suits" as many students called them were still adapted from the men's uniforms and many times women wore men's uniforms for lack of anything else to compete in. Throughout the twentieth century more and more women were questioning the social standards that required girls and women to remain behind the scenes regulated to being spectators instead of athletes, but changes in clothing moved in fits and starts. As women's confidence in their physical abilities developed, opportunities emerged on many levels. And with the start of women's sports leagues, a new industry developed to meet the material needs of high school athletes, collegiate athletes, and amateur and professional women athletes throughout the United States.¹¹

From the beginning of the twentieth-century, the excitement over women's sports, women's bodies, and women's clothing raised eyebrows and drew the attention of the media, the public, and the American manufacturing industry. By 1926 "basketball uniform designers removed knee high stockings, knickers, and bloomers and bravely left legs bare to the ankle." Men and women spectators, shocked by the modern apparel, criticized the new lengths of sports uniforms calling them "garish and immodest." Some men saw the new women's athletic apparel as "mannish and rough."¹² However, "When the Dallas Cyclones wore their new short shorts out onto the court in the late 1920s, the controversy over the uniforms raised by local newspapers increased attendance from 150

to 5,000 people per game.” The curiosity of both men and women concerning the short lengths and sexy look of women’s athletic apparel brought thousands more observers into the sporting arenas and helped create a tremendous boost in the marketing industry for American designers as well as American industrial manufacturers.¹³

Bowling attire may have evolved much slower than basketball uniforms, however, female bowlers were anxious to overcome the hindrances of contemporary clothing. Clothing designers and manufacturers did not ignore the needs of their potential consumers, but instead sought the input of women who bowled day in and day out. Many designers attended sports games carefully watching the athletes’ movements. Giving a nod to the legacy of scientific management, some of them even went so far as to bowl themselves so they could better create designs that would be comfortable as well as serviceable for the sport of bowling.¹⁴ Over the twentieth-century, bowling uniforms gradually became lighter and less cumbersome. Early twentieth-century designers experimented with bloomers, a version of knickers that ballooned at the knee, and completed their outfits with man-tailored blouses and neckties. Of course the styles approved for advertisement touted respectability and athletic comfort. For example, at the turn of the twentieth century “a shirtwaist or blouse” was designed for women that revealed very little skin even as it promoted “giving ease at the neck and armholes is essential and freedom of movement is required for the whole body if physical benefit is to be derived from the game.”¹⁵ Many took advantage of the popular waist-less shifts that were worn during the middle 1920s. In the 1930s bowling apparel remained much the same except for a return to longer skirts. Women learned quickly that longer skirts

and dresses were not suitable for bowling and by the 1940s, designers ushered in a new look with shorter lengths.¹⁶

In particular, industrial sponsorship of women's sports leagues played a crucial role in the development of bowling fashions, accessories, and equipment. Industrial companies became significant supporters of women's sports leagues during the early decades of the twentieth century and especially during the depression and war years when women took over the operation of men's work and at the same time replacing them in bowling leagues, on baseball teams, and as leaders in community affairs. With the increase in women's participation in sporting activities, new industries flooded the country in attempts to broaden their economic niche. They began producing a rich array of new styles of sports apparel for women athletes, as well as modern equipment for a wide variety of sporting activities. At the same time the growth of the manufacture and sale of bowling fashion and equipment encouraged the formation and founding of new jobs for women that as the next chapter details often turned into lifelong careers in industry, business, sports, and journalism—all areas once intended for the elite society of white men only.¹⁷

Of course, Polly McQueen, along with thousands of other women bowlers turned not to their employer but rather to issues of the WIBC's official journal, the *Woman Bowler*, for the latest fashion trends. As the previous chapter discussed, John G. Hemmer and Earle Ward started publishing the *Women Bowler* in 1936. Individual subscription rates ran from \$2 annually in 1945 to \$5 in 1986. Readership reached as high at 3.4 million in 1986 but only 150,000 issues were published every month during any given year.¹⁸ While the *Woman Bowler* provided the latest information on local, state, regional,

national, and international tournaments, fashion played such a crucial role that staff and contributors to the *Woman Bowler* joked that fashion and bowling merchandise were so central to the WIBC that they suggested the acronym actually stood for “Women In Bowling Costumes” instead of Women’s International Bowling Congress. But much like Nan Enstad, who found that radical early twentieth-century working-girls mixed serious politics with silly hats and romance novels, women bowlers also mixed fashion with bowling news, athleticism and a clear understanding of the success of women in sports such as bowling was inextricably bound to the current politics of style.¹⁹ Indeed, the *Woman Bowler* often equated the right fashion with success on the lanes regardless of the decade. In the 1960s, the trade journal insisted that you could “change your dress as easily as you could change your game. Any woman who feels that the purchase of a new hat brightens her day will find that new bowling togs will improve her attitude toward her game. We all feel better when we are well dressed.” Most telling was the last point made. “The men may make fun and say it’s all in the mind, but who cares as long as it pays off.”²⁰

The tribute to dress trumping skill in part reflected just how far women’s bowling fashion had come. A couple of decades earlier bowling dresses offered few options for female bowlers. A new “bowling dress” was initiated in the 1940s; a complicated grey gabardine with pleats in the skirt, in the back, and in the sleeves to provide for easy extended motion for a cost of about five dollars. To be sure, lots of pleats were much appreciated for women looking to bowl unencumbered and indeed pleats are still used on sleeves and backs of shirts in the bowling uniforms for feminine flexibility and form.²¹ While the 1940s bowling dress offered “utility, comfort, and function,” aspects not found

in nineteenth century apparel, many of these new dress designs lacked style. The baggy slacks and mannish looking blouses of the 1940s offered more options but still few choices for fashionable women bowlers who increasingly demanded more than just utility and comfort.²²

Elaine Tyler May's study of American families in the cold war era shows how the nation's leaders stressed the importance of women maintaining the image of a traditional happy family with distinct traits that included characteristics that emphasized, and which were directly tied to, the femininity of the American housewife. Because American women were astutely aware of the stigma facing working wives it was sometimes easier to give up their new-found freedom and accept and embrace the role of the "happy little homemaker." During the 1950s, women who were self-supporting or who had not "embraced the homemaker role as significant, important, and fulfilling," were seen by many as "un-American."²³ May's study also points to attempts at "sexual containment" of the American woman by diplomatic leaders who feared that the "female bombshell" as well as the nuclear bomb would destroy the home as well as the country. May believes women's fashions during this period in American history such as "girdles that pinched waists and padded brassieres that made women appear to have large breasts" reflected this image of sexual containment. While women protected their bodies with a "fortress of undergarments" they still promised "erotic excitement in the marital bed."²⁴

Women who dressed in men's bowling shirts during the immediate years following World War II were especially aware that they threatened the image of the feminine female athlete. Women sports managers, during the 1950s, were under tremendous pressure from the media and sports spectators, to maintain women

athletics as clear and different from men's sports. Susan K. Cahn, in her study *Coming On Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sports*, found "Efforts to create a separate distinct women's brand of sport effectively defined 'feminine' sport as a lesser version of male sport: less competitive, less demanding, and less skillful." Cahn noted that sport managers and coaches went to great lengths to present their athletes as "feminine" on and off the playing field. Women athletes' hair had to be worn long and their "off-the-field" dress (no pants or men's clothing could be worn) had to appear soft and well cut to show off womanly curves, and they appeared in public with skillfully applied makeup and matching nail polish. Some promoters held beauty contests within a team to choose the most beautiful athlete while the rest were her "court." It was in actions like these that "promoters implied that by itself athleticism remained a manly trait, one that must be compensated for by proof of femininity."²⁵

By the 1950s, manufacturers expanded their line of sports apparel but the WIBC repeatedly strived to remind its members of the importance of modest and tasteful apparel to suite a wholesome but shapely female figure. The post World War II decades ushered in the heyday of bowling fashion that remains iconic. During the 1950s, women bowlers began to see a difference in bowling apparel when designers began to offer a variety of colors and materials in addition to the creation of new styles. The grey and brown gabardine skirts were replaced with brightly colored hues with contrasting piping and contrasting trims. Slacks in high-waists and masculine-tailored styles that set off eye catching satin blouses began to make an appearance in women's leagues. By the 1950s, manufacturers began to expand their line of sports apparel along with their bowling equipment and accessories.²⁶ The most popular bowling shirt of all time was designed

during the 1950s where contrasting colors were used on opposite sides of the shirt both in the front and in the back. The shirts were always collared usually in a different color than the body of the shirt and ended in points in the front without the stiffness found in more formal-ware. The shirttails were squared, reached just below the waist and had a one to two inch slit on both sides. Monograms or large patches depicting team sponsors nearly always were located on the back with the bowlers name sewn above the left side pocket in the front. Both men and women wore these bowling shirts, but the latter were more form fitting. Many of the most popular bowling shirts designed in the 1950s are considered iconic and have been reproduced and can be bought from stores on-line. While contemporary shirts are almost identical in design and can be purchased for around \$45 dollars, the original 1950s bowling shirts can be purchased in resale shops, vintage stores, and from on-line auction houses such as eBay for a cost of around \$100.²⁷

By the 1960s the sport had come into its own along with women's bowling attire. Issues of the *Woman Bowler* were filled with articles on fashion plus there was page after page of advertisements featuring the most popular and latest styles in bowling apparel with great emphasis on the different types of fabric used and how they helped to perform specific movements when bowling.²⁸ Now it seemed women's sports fashions changed not by the decade but from season to season giving new looks to bowling apparel including culottes, dresses, skirts, (later slacks), team shirts, and eventually designer bowling balls, bowling shoes, and bowling bags all of which were designed to make women feel up-to-date.²⁹ Even ads for feminine hygiene products which along with fashion fill the pages of the *Woman Bowler* were designed to make the female athlete fill confident but of all else modern.³⁰

The 1960s was a time of transition in the bowling fashion industry. Hot wools and silks were permanently replaced with lightweight cottons and knits. The American Machine and Foundry introduced their AMF Bowling Products Group in 1964 with emphasis on “double-life” for fashions so that women could wear them inside the bowling center as well as outside on the streets.³¹ Ester Woods, a designer for American Machine and Foundry (AMF) during the 1960s, explained the importance of bowling blouse design. “The game can be much more enjoyable if your clothing is comfortable and permits the necessary freedom of motion. The women’s blouse should have a capped short-sleeve with plenty of room in the back to allow for natural arm swing.” The most popular bowling blouse for women had pleated sleeves and a centered pleated back yoke to provide an un-encumbered follow-through when the arm swung the bowling ball down, back, and then forward before the final release.³²

While youth culture, the “London look,” even spy thrillers, all influenced the styles on the lanes, it was in the mid 1960s when membership in the Women’s International Bowling Congress doubled and tripled, and American manufacturers ushered in the “double-knit” revolution which provided bowlers with much more comfort, mobility, practicality, and panache. It became the most popular fabric of sports apparel designers during the twentieth century.³³ The double-knit ensembles were also easy to pack and left the suitcase without wrinkles or a need for an iron. The bulky hot sweater and skirt sets of the late 1950s and early to mid 1960s were finally “out” and the stylish synthetic knit bowling blouses were “in.” These new double-knit blouses came in an array of colors and patterns that coordinated with sporty skirts and wide-legged pants

in checkered or a multi-patterned look. These new knits would provide enough stretch to allow bowlers freedom of movement without the “pleated” construction.³⁴

By the 1960s designers and manufacturers also featured fashion shows specifically for the female bowler. To demonstrate their bowling products and attract women bowlers, the AMF sponsored a luncheon/fashion show annually at the Four Seasons in New York City beginning in July 1964. The purpose of the fashion shows was to introduce and display AMF’s bowling apparel and line of accessories to women bowlers.³⁵ In 1964, American Machine and Foundry flew five fashion editors from Great Britain to New York City who contributed an array of their own British fashions to the fashion show. That year, AMF introduced a new fun dance called “the Ten Pin Spin,” a dance done with designer bowling bags made especially for the younger bowlers. Matching sets of bowling accessories included bowling balls, bowling bags, and bowling shoes, all priced as a set for around fifty dollars. AMF, one of the few apparel design companies, also introduced a special new line of bowling apparel for preteens designed by McGregor-Doniger that included “stretch fabrics in youthful styling and versatility with particular emphasis on ease of movement and multiple uses.” AMF also sold small accessories like hand towels, shoe scrappers, ball cleaners, wrist braces, fancy shoelaces, skin repair kits, ball finger hole repair tape, and coin keepers.³⁶

It also became popular during the 1960s to create a total ensemble where families and teams dressed alike from shirt to shoes. Bowling dresses and blouse and skirt combo sets along with ‘layering’ became popular during the 1960s replacing the baggy slacks, popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Matching jackets and weskits or vests added to the multi-layered look and could be worn on the streets or the layers removed as needed for

better mobility in the bowling center. Manufactured bowling designs were evolving into very simple concepts similar to most of the others found on the market even today, however, individual designers added small items to their creations that set them apart from each other such as manufacturers logo, embroidered bowling balls, scattered bowling pins, or bowling angels might be found on the point of a collar or sewed to the back of the shirt. Some shirts buttoned while others snapped, some were longer than others and could be tucked into the pants or skirts while others fell right below the waistline. Many shirts had built in vents or net-like material near the armpit or in the back to allow better air circulation.³⁷

During the 1960s women bowlers considered shoes, socks, and purses to be important accessories and enjoyed matching their nail color to their bowling apparel and to their bowling balls, bags, and shoes. Some went so far as to dye their hair to match their bowling apparel or even to match the hair of team members. The 1960s designers also created new fabric colors for their athletic apparel including names such as spring green, banana gold, old salt, bamboo brown, peacock black, and foam white.³⁸ The Brunswick Company offered women bowlers a variety of new colors during the 1960s that could be purchased and matched to bowling balls and bags, as well as socks and shoes. In 1962, Brunswick experimented with a secret material first used for space rockets and created the world's first bowling balls with Miracle Tracking Action also in new colors that included black pearl, ruby red, and sapphire blue. Brunswick also offered a more economical bowling ball that came in two new colors priced at \$29.95 strictly for women bowlers. The "Lady Brunswick" came in two new colors, the Charcoal/Explosive Pink and the Cornflower Blue or White. They also sold the Fireball

and the Starfire for \$27.95. Their popular Black Beauty was the world's greatest selling bowling ball at a cost of \$24.95. In 1960, the Brunswick Company developed a new nine pound ball for young bowlers and named it the Bantam.³⁹ Brunswick also manufactured new bowling shoes in trendy designs for men in 1962 that included the Stag in soft glove leather for \$11.95, the Count Imperial for \$14.95, and their lowest-quality bowling shoe, the Lancer for only \$7.95. For lady bowlers, Brunswick created a new suede bowling shoe called the Sprite that cost \$8.95, introduced the hand-laced Navajo for \$13.95 and offered the Pixie in blue, camel, charcoal or red for \$7.95. Brunswick also created the first sneaker bowling shoe called the Nassau and it sold for \$4.95.⁴⁰ Brunswick bowling bags, balls, and shoes for women were delightfully displayed on a two-page color layout in the 1964 September issue of the *Woman Bowler*. Brunswick Company designers had women bowlers in mind when they came up with tapestry bowling tote bag that had separate compartments for balls and shoes. Selections included the Marquesa tapestry tote bag that sold for \$16.95, the Catalina tote bag for \$14.95, the Seville tapestry for only \$8.95, a black or white Caravell with a parchment linen finish at a cost of \$13.95. One of Brunswick's most popular 1960s bowling bags was the Chevron, a plastic or leather bag found in navy, denim, or plaid.⁴¹

Perhaps as innovative as the style was the new fashion lingo. Beguiling names for the sixties bowling shirts included catchy terms such as Do-a-Lots and the Swinger, or the Play Girl Overblouse, and the Empress and the Lady Penquin for the women while Munsingwear boasted of men's bowling shirts with names such as the Bob White Shirt or the King, Sir, Lord, or Emperor Penguin.⁴² For slacks and skirts there was the Bowl-a-Slak and the Bowl-a-Skirt.⁴³ Also, *Harpers Bazaar*, a popular fashion magazine, featured

casual comfortable clothes for bowlers and other athletes including the then famous line of American Machine and Foundry (AMF) called the “Magic Triangle.”⁴⁴

Such an extravagant range of styles created a new dilemma. Agreeing on matching team uniforms could quickly become a chore for team captains. Polly remembered the endless discussions on the question of “what to wear to nationals.” “It was impossible to buy ready-made identical dresses for ten different sized women. The closest we ever came was to agree on a style and the fabric. All of the women on my two teams sewed. Some had more time than others and they were the ones who ended up doing the majority of the sewing.” Looking back through Polly’s collection of team uniforms and other paraphernalia jolted memories of tournaments past. “We usually ended up wearing matching colors and similar styles of skirts. We even made wrap-around skirts one year. The blouses were much easier to buy off the racks in department stores, usually Penney’s or Sears.” Everything associated with the team uniform had to be agreed upon. Polly said that the difficulties in providing matching team uniforms for ten women of various sizes sometimes created heated arguments, member withdrawal, and sometimes member removal when a bowler would not agree to wear the majority’s choice. Polly remembered some of the preparations for tournaments that actually made one member cry. “We had one lady in our monthly travel league that had never been to nationals. Dottie was just 4’8” tall, had advanced scoliosis, and looked like a butterball. She refused to wear a dress anywhere and she wouldn’t go to nationals with us.” Polly understood the reasoning behind the uniform rule. The preceding years before the official legislation passed in 1965, bowlers wore what they wanted to wear. There was no conformity and was probably not important during this period in American history.⁴⁵

However, the Women's International Bowling Congress wanted the championship tournament to project women in a positive way and how they dressed during nationals contributed to that image.⁴⁶ Bowling apparel design grew with the sport. When women started to take the game more seriously bowling uniforms also became more important. "During the 1964 tournament there were violations of 'properly proportioned slacks' in the opinion of tournament officials," stated the *Woman Bowler*. To avoid "heated debates" the WIBC board unilaterally chose, without delegate discussion, to change and then pass Rule 18 of the WIBC constitution.⁴⁷ "While it must seem like a minor detail to many, it was very important to my teams' moral to be dressed alike and to look professional. Looking professional made my bowlers feel like they were professionals and it always showed in their bowling."⁴⁸ On Polly McQueen's bowling teams team shirts were kept from year to year. "Our team uniforms were used continually and not only in national and state tournaments but in city competitions as well. Three of our team members bowled together weekly in Carlsbad, New Mexico and four bowled together once a month in a ladies' travel league in and around West Texas, and two bowled together weekly in Las Vegas, Nevada." With ten matching shirts in an assortment of sizes and styles, if a substitute was needed to replace a team member, team shirts could be changed quickly so that each bowler wore the same shirt.⁴⁹

Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction one of the most important responsibilities for team captains was matching team uniforms for five to ten women. Polly's bowling teams vary their team shirts from year to year. They would keep all "last-years shirts" and wear them in local or state tournaments. Team shirts like trophies were reminders of both athletic accomplishments and good times. Polly's collection of

team uniforms includes all of the shirts worn since she started bowling in WIBC tournaments in 1968. Two rooms in her home display the many uniforms, trophies, awards, state pins, and photographs that represent local, state, and national competitions. Spectacular photo albums exhibit the pictures of the legion of women who bowled on Polly's teams throughout the last fifty years of which several have passed away in recent years including her closest and oldest friend, Midge Berry of Carlsbad, New Mexico. Midge and Polly bowled together in over thirty-five consecutive WIBC Championship tournaments and in over half of these tournaments they walked away with a trophy and/or prize money.⁵⁰

Bowling teams headed for the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournaments and the WIBC yearly convention meetings spent months preparing matching team uniforms. "Attractiveness, good taste, and comfort are no doubt highest on teams' lists when uniforms are being selected. But there's more to it than that. Ask the women who've been there and they'll agree that the apparel trend is toward more striking uniforms—in more ways than one."⁵¹ Spectators observing the WIBC Championship Tournaments viewed the competition as a "veritable bowling fashion show."⁵² Many bowlers hand sewed emblems, fancy trims, team names, and individual bowler names onto their blouses; some decorated big floppy hats with bowling pin awards; while "over-the-top" teams showed up in formal dresses and high heeled shoes. The purpose of these eye-catching outfits was to gain the attention of the other bowlers and even too purposely distract them from their bowling in a good-natured way.⁵³

Of course changes in fashions also reflected changes in rules. The WIBC, in an effort to project a feminine, as well as, a more professional image of women bowlers,

declared that “Participants in the 1966 WIBC Championship Tournament must wear dresses, blouses and skirts, or blouses and culottes. NO SLACKS WILL BE PERMITTED.”⁵⁴ In the Women’s International Bowling Congress Championship Tournaments in 1968 and 1969, Polly’s teams wore plain dresses that fell just below the knee or culottes and wrap-around skirts with hems with attractive wash-and-wear blouses or cotton dresses with bright floral prints. In the 1970s, WIBC leaders thought that the national tournament “should present the best possible image for women’s bowling. The very fact that emphasis is given to attire makes entrants more appearance-conscious and results in more attractively-attired teams.”⁵⁵ In the early 1970s, the rules changed and almost everyone started wearing slacks and uniform team shirts that actually looked like bowling outfits. It was during this time period that the WIBC board passed legislation allowing slacks to be worn during national competitions, however, with reservations to appropriate fit and style, specific lengths, and with a ban on shorts, blue jeans or any type of jean material. At first blouses or shirts had to be tucked in at the waist with no skin showing between the shirt bottom and the pant waistline.⁵⁶

The Zodiacs, the team from New Orleans mentioned in the introduction and well known for their eccentric ensembles, started their own tradition in keeping within the rules while mocking the guidelines of the WIBC dress codes. Linda Prattini, captain of the Zodiacs recalled, beginning in 1968, “The Zodiacs have been strikingly stylish ever since, and over the years they’ve spent thousands of dollars on costumes that are part Vanna White and part Madonna.” When the Zodiacs showed up to one of Liberace’s famous Las Vegas concerts, they made him an honorary member of their team when “he invited them backstage after the concert to see his sparkling tailored costumes.”⁵⁷ The

Zodiacs' costumes sometimes took up to a year to finish. The first formals they wore in 1968 had over 75,000 sequins sewn on each gown. When they could manage it, the Zodiacs created their outfits following a specific theme. When the Women's International Bowling Congress set the Championship Tournament in Niagara Falls, their bowling costumes depicted a "maid in the mist" boat at the hemline and a barrel going over the falls. To celebrate the WIBC Bi-Centennial Championship Tournament, the Zodiacs wore blue jumpsuits with tailcoats "a la Uncle Sam." In 1972 in Las Vegas, the team wore hot pants with long overdresses that laced up the front. "The appearance from the back was very demur, but when we walked back (after throwing the ball) the front of the dress was open-laced." Team designer and team captain Prattini said. "We like to take a bit of the Mardi Gras every place we go."⁵⁸

Such attitudes were not confined to the Zodiacs. The early eighties saw a marathon of bowling designer boutiques open shop for women bowlers with money to spend such as Maison Mendessolle Ltd in New York City along with Fiorucci, the Plaza Hotel, King Louie, Mier and Frank Merchandise Company, and the ever popular Bloomingdales. Plus there were accessories. The leading manufacturers of bowling equipment such as bowling balls, bowling bags, and bowling shoes remained the American Machine and Foundry, Brunswick Company, Columbia, and the Ebonite Company who offered the first bowling ball bag with a removable ball rack. More modern bowling equipment includes bowling bags with wheels that hold up to six or eight balls.⁵⁹ According to the *Woman Bowler*, the 1980s brought in the era of the "active woman" who designers insisted looked first toward comfort and flexibility in bowling apparel having the widest range of styles to ever hit the lanes. For many women,

one of the greatest advancements for the modern women bowler was having the knowledge and the freedom to choose and wear apparel with an “anything goes” attitude.⁶⁰

The 1980s ushered in not only the women’s power suit for those trying to raise the glass ceiling, but a renewed sense that style went hand in hand with a woman’s success in the sporting arena. “Dressing for Success on the Lanes” was the brainchild of sports-wear designer Lauren K. Retsetich. She understood the importance of fashion to becoming a better bowler. In her apparel designs, she sought comfort, flattering styles, and easy care fabrics and recognized these characteristics as the most important attributes of bowling apparel that made good individual bowlers into great team bowlers. Like Retsetich, many manufacturers started carrying bowling sportswear as a major apparel group on display in window storefronts and clothing catalogs. The “classic” bowling shirt was loose fitting, came in different styles, and was designed to allow maximum comfort while performing the various body movements involved when bowling. “When extending an arm in a pendulum swing and the follow through, a buttoned cuff or regimented collar can restrict a proper reach. After all, the reach is very important in bowling fundamentals.”⁶¹

Yet gendered stereotypes continued to shape many of the attitudes of male designers. Mixed bowling leagues, in which men and women bowl on the same team meant that designers sought ways to increase production of sportswear with a standard pattern for women and men in look-a-like shirts for team uniforms. One of the oldest American sportswear manufacturing companies was American Machine and Foundry and was internationally known for its support of men’s sports even before the turn of the

twentieth century. Jim Mailander, product manager for American Machine and Foundry (AMF), explained in 1987 the difficulty in designing, “. . . . for you must arrive at a happy mid-point to appeal to both men and women because of the onset of mixed leagues and thus matching shirts. Some designers offer livelier colors but we don’t want to harm the attention of the male bowlers.” Jim Mailander’s message was loud and clear that women should not wear clothing that would distract men (the real bowlers) from their game.⁶²

Unafraid of offending or distracting her male cohorts, Diane Brast of Sport Street USA, offered a line of matching men’s and women’s sports apparel geared towards numerous levels of leisure activities. The casual polo shirt made of polyester and cotton fabric became one of the most popular sport shirts during the latter part of the 1980s. Sport Street USA introduced their new design, Sport Sweats, in 1987 that could be worn on or off the bowling lanes. Brash remarked, “Sport Sweats is fun type apparel that an everyday bowler is looking for.” She added, “This is something that a bowler can not only wear on the lanes but also to the supermarket to say . . . hey, I love bowling . . . I am a bowler.” Sport Street fashions were purchased by direct mail from their store or through any local pro shop.⁶³ Also in the late 1980s, La Mode of Los Angeles, California catered mainly to the Ladies Professional Bowlers Tour (LPBT). Allan Geeler claimed its bowling outfitters were more fashionable. “We are the first fashion house to go into bowling. Everything we make is coordinated from the slacks, skirts, culottes, jackets, and shirts all the way down to the peds.” La Mode had fourteen distributors with thirty percent of its stock in women’s bowling apparel.⁶⁴

The unisex bowling shirt, originally designed in the 1950s, regained popularity by the mid 1990s. King Louie International Inc. of Kansas City, Missouri, began selling bowling apparel as a sideline in 1937 and by 1953 their customer base rose to two million and by 1964 it had increased to over seven and half million. Alice Evans, bowling manager for King Louie said, “Women like them (the unisex shirts) because they button down the front. You can put them on without messing up your hair and they don’t have to be tucked in.”⁶⁵ Mike Robinson, also employed by King Louie stated, “We are the longest supporter of the bowling industry. Our shirts are made with the bowler in mind. The shirts are generously cut and bowlers are given a choice of fabrics and colors.” King Louie celebrated its fiftieth year in production in 1987 with a limited edition commemorative shirt that stated “Fifties Forever” and was styled after the popular 1950s bowling shirts mentioned earlier in this chapter, that were made with the pleated back and full buttoned front constructed from a rayon and gabardine fabric. The shirt came in peacock blue and gold or red and white. King Louie is still in business, serving over seven thousand retail dealers, manufacturing some of the most popular in sport apparel which includes outerwear, active wear, and ladies’ wear and can also be purchased at bowling pro shops, sporting goods stores, t-shirt shops, screen printers, and bowling supply houses.⁶⁶

Women bowlers endlessly searched the catalogs, dress shops, pattern departments, and sporting good stores for attractive and serviceable team clothing. Several farsighted entrepreneurs recognized the potential for bowling apparel and started manufacturing unisex sportswear, selling mainly through catalogs or pro shops. One of these was the Classic Shirt Company that offered bowling shirts and blouses with two

different fabric combinations, seventy-five percent polyester with twenty-five percent cotton, or fifty percent polyester with fifty percent cotton. Bob Gudorf explained, “Classic is an unusual beast in the bowling business in that it not only carries the Classic line, but other manufacturers’ lines as well. On top of that we do computerized embroidery, hand embroidery, and silk screening. We are a distributor and a manufacturer.” While the cost of bowling shirts ran from \$4.99 to \$7.99 in the 1980s, the extras that were added to distinguish one team from another such as embroidered letters and symbols cost around one dollar per letter making the lettering more expensive than the shirt.⁶⁷

The Hilton Athletic Apparel Company of Chicago in the mid 1980s offered bowling shirts in three types of fabrics; fifty percent polyester and fifty percent cotton knits, sixty-five percent woven knits, and one-hundred percent polyester knits. The styles consisted of pullovers, full button-up fronts, raglan sleeves, and inset sleeves. Frank Liebow of Hilton remarked, “Newcomers (in the manufacturing business) think people want their bowling shirts more fitted but Hilton recognizes that people are bowling, so cut is made different . . . it is a comfortable fit.” Liebow added “Our styles run the gamut from basic to fancy sports shirts to traditional bowling shirts. Hilton offers much broader selections than other manufacturers. We have a complete sizing chart ranging in sizes thirty to forty-eight in ladies, offering a better fit as opposed to small, medium, and large sizing.” Hilton made shirttails long to wear in or out with vented sides carrying three elaborately named styles for women; the Regal, the Sierra, and the Legend. Hilton Athletic Apparel Company sold mainly through catalogs found in bowling pro shops, sporting goods outlets, and bowling supply mail order companies.⁶⁸

Nike, one of the most recognized names in sportswear, entered the bowling industry in 1985 offering a variety of styles in footwear, bowling apparel, and bowling bags. Nike played close attention to performance quality as well as style. Women's Nike bowling blouses mimicked the ones designed for men. The bowling shirts and blouses were uniquely constructed seamless with a one piece back, front, and sleeve. Nike bowling shirts were designed with no seams in the back specifically to increase arm mobility. Also, each shirt was treated with Scotch Guard to prevent oil and dirt stains that was a naturally occurring setback with bowling. Nike brands offered through pro shops or sporting good stores, was chosen as the official clothing outfitter for the 1986 Team USA bowling competition.⁶⁹

With unwavering attention to details and an eagerness to reach members, the leaders of the Women's International Bowling Congress started a branding merchandise program in 1987 that included the WIBC logo on bowling apparel and other bowling paraphernalia. The WIBC logo could be found on a variety of women's fashions. Bowlers could buy polo shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, satin jackets, and windbreakers in various colors with each displaying the WIBC logo. "The best part about the WIBC branded merchandise is that the items may be ordered individually or in quantity. And the more you buy . . . the less the cost per item." WIBC members could also purchase coffee mugs, pens, portfolios, or sports bags while everything could be paid for with the WIBC Visa card, which was specifically designed by the public relations department for women bowlers.⁷⁰

Team uniforms worn during tournament competition differed from the team shirts worn during league play. Women's International Bowling Council officials encouraged

individual team members to wear matching bowling outfits that included shirts, slacks, or dressy long shorts, and matching socks during national competition and many state associations honored matching team members by awarding “Looking Good” keepsake pins to individual teams which is now being offered by the United States Bowling Congress in 2010.⁷¹

Style, however, should not necessarily imply spending a great deal of money. Mary Mohasci, a forty-year bowling veteran in the Detroit area and WIBC Hall of Famer, commented about bowling fashions in the nineties, “We’re interested in being dressed to go from the bowling center to the shopping center.”⁷² Mary Mohasci, who owns three pro shops and sponsors ten bowling teams in Detroit, sees less emphasis placed on coordinated team uniforms than in earlier years. Mohasci said, “The Detroit area has gone to a small, discreet logo on the left shirt front.” Also, John Dalzell, curator of the Bowling Hall of Fame, believes “Women are wearing their favorite ready-to-wear sportswear at the lanes. From slacks to shorts to skirts, to T-shirts to sport shirts, the theme song is ‘Anything Goes.’”⁷³ Charlie Krebs, director of programs of USA Bowling in Greendale, Wisconsin, noticed “many leagues are doing their own thing as far as fashion. If a team decides to dress alike, they often buy T-shirts and imprint their own designs on them. These shirts are inexpensive and can be custom printed for less than the cost of a woven shirt.”⁷⁴ The National Sporting Goods Association conducted a survey in 1990 that revealed that “it does not take a bundle of money to be fashionably dressed for bowling competition.” According to their report, sports clothing expenditures for women who bowl spent on the average of only \$12.50 a year. Women who skied spent the most on women’s sports apparel, an average of \$114.26. This survey exposed a common

stereotype “that women outspend men when it comes to sports wardrobes.” Also the National Sporting Goods survey reported men outspent women in twenty-one of the twenty-five sports the survey covered with men having spent an average of \$13.82 on bowling apparel in 1990.⁷⁵

With a wider range of options major controversies over tournament uniforms focused on bowlers wearing clothing considered too tight or too revealing. In 1995, the Ladies Pro Bowlers Tour members started wearing knee-length shorts while the WIBC still banned them from tournament competition. In the 1990s women bowlers argued for change but shorts of any length were ruled unacceptable. When the *Woman Bowler* interviewed Mary Mohacsi she commented, “When you develop your skills and are concentrating on technique, any tightness (in clothing) makes it harder to bowl well.”⁷⁶ Jeri Edwards of Akron, Ohio and coach for Team USA, believes that fashion will continue to focus on comfort, “Not only are we paying more attention to fitness, health, and training, but we’re realizing image can give you an edge.”⁷⁷ In many leagues, such as the ladies travel leagues and women’s early morning leagues, individual bowlers mainly wore and continue to wear comfortable clothes that provide freedom of movement in all areas. City league rules did not require teams to be identified by what their members wore. However, the Women’s International Bowling Congress, as well as the men’s American Bowling Congress continued to regulate the type of fabrics and styles worn during state and national competitions. Blue jeans, shorts, and any type of halter-tops that might show skin were not allowed and shirts had to be tucked into the pants. Sometimes bowlers that broke these rules found themselves in awkward positions. Some

were not allowed to bowl, while others were able to transform their bowling apparel in time to compete.⁷⁸

In some cases concerning local league members, inappropriate bowling apparel has created friction among the different teams of individual leagues and offending bowlers were asked to retain more modest clothing while bowling in leagues or local tournaments. If the offending bowler made no attempt to wear more appropriate clothing, league members could call for a meeting to decide the fate of the offending bowler. In 1998, bowler Linda Wilson from Texas commented, “One young lady wore very short shorts on the lanes. When she made her reach to release the bowling ball the shorts rode up exposing flesh. One could not help but be distracted if bowling on lanes near her. No one wanted to bowl against her team. Finally, an older bowler filed a complaint with the league officials and the war was on.” This is a problem that arose quite frequently in women’s leagues without age limits. In many instances an entire team would be asked to withdraw from the league. “However,” commented Wilson, “If even a small percentage of complaints resulted in a member or a team’s removal, our ladies leagues would have to shut down due to lack of bowlers.”⁷⁹

If the problem was not resolved by the league officials, then the complaint moved up to the city association and from there to state or national levels. “The WIBC legal committee, the group which has the ultimate responsibility to rule on suspensions and reinstatement, makes an annual report to the WIBC convention delegates on the subject.” A bowler could lose WIBC sanctioned bowling privileges including competing in local, state, and national tournaments. Complaints included inappropriate clothing, intoxication, discourteous smoking, and loud distracting chatter from nearby lanes.

Bowlers unwilling to adhere to league rules which also included non-payment of lane fees or association dues resulted in censorship of that bowler made public through the Women's International Bowling Congress's monthly journal, the *Woman Bowler*. The list of suspensions included the duration of restriction, the conditions of the restriction, and the reasons for the actions. Censorship always resulted in some type of disciplinary action such as temporary restriction from league and tournament competition, fines added to the offending members account for non-payment and the most common reason for suspensions while many offending bowlers were restricted from holding office either temporarily or permanently restricted depending on the level of complaint made against her.⁸⁰

Crucial to women's enjoyment of sport and participation has long been an ability to express their sense of identity and style but within the changing frameworks of respectability and femininity. Needless to say, fashion has been crucial to women's sense of athleticism and style as well as the overall popularity of sport. Three decades in particular, the 1950s the 1960s, and the 1970s, were not just the turning point in bowling fashion but was also an extended period of phenomenal growth for the Women's International Bowling Congress, women's bowling, and indeed an era that many refer to as the "hay-day of bowling."⁸¹ Thus the following chapter will look more closely at the dramatic social, cultural, and economic ramifications of this unprecedented era in women's bowling history to uncover why bowling became the most popular participant sport in the mid to late twentieth century.

NOTES

CHAPTER IV

¹Marie DeLanoit, "Making your own fashion statement: Puttin on the Glitz," *Woman Bowler*, Spring 1995, v 59, no. 1, p 26.

² See Polly McQueen Interview.

³ "Slacks will not be permitted in 1965 National Tournament," *Women Bowler*, May/June 1964, v 28, no. 6, p 40.

⁴ Kathy Piess, "Putting on Style," *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1986), 62.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶ Mary Jo Festle, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sports*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 1996), 45. The term "apologetic behavior" comes from Mary Jo Festle's study of women in sports.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Festle, 11.

¹⁰ Festle, 45. For "apologetic behavior" see also Todd W. Cosset, "The Corporate Definition of Gender," *Outsiders in the Clubhouse: the World of Women's Professional Golf, 1995*. Not only were women athletes encouraged to present a feminine appearance at all times, they were not supposed to defeat male athletes. See Gai Ingham Berlage, *Women in Basketball: the Forgotten History*, 1994, whose study of women's basketball discloses the price women athletes paid when they bested their male counterparts. Jackie Mitchell signed a contract to pitch in the minor leagues in 1939. In an exhibition match, Mitchell struck out both Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig and within the next month the Baseball Commission banned women from competing in men's baseball.

¹¹ Lynne Emery, "From Lowell Mills to the Halls of Fame: Industrial League Sport for Women," *Women and Sport; Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. D. Margaret Costa, PhD and Sharon R. Guthrie, PhD., (Human Kinetics: Illinois, 1994), 107-118.

¹² Lynne Emery, "From Lowell Mills to the Halls of Fame: Industrial League Sport for Women," *Women and Sport; Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. D. Margaret Costa, PhD and Sharon R. Guthrie, PhD., (Human Kinetics: Illinois, 1994), 107-118.

¹³ *Ibid.* Also see Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackelford, "High School Girls Spur the Sport," *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball*, (the New Press: New York, 2005), 45.

¹⁴ "What to wear is woman bowler's annual problem," *Woman Bowler*, September 1964, v 28, no. 8, p 6, 8-11.

¹⁵ "Fashions: Oh how they've changed," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, pp 38-39. Also see *The Delineator*, July 1902.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ These are the author's conclusions bases on extensive study of women's athletic apparel.

¹⁸ "A look at our readership," *Woman Bowler*, May 1986, v 50, no. 5, pp 32-33.

¹⁹ Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Century*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999

²⁰ "Change your dress and your game," *Woman Bowler*, January 1963, v 27, no. 2, p 22.

²¹ See all advertising in the *Woman Bowler*, 1960-1969. Also see September 1987, v 51, no. 8, pp 33-39.

²² "Dressing for success on the lanes," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no 8, p 38.

²³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (Basic Books: Minneapolis, 1999), 98-99.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sports*, (Harvard University Press: Massachusetts, 1994), 5.

²⁶ Lauren K. Resetich, "Dressing for Success on the Lanes," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, pp 34-47.

²⁷ Ibid., 36. Also go to eBay.com for auction listings for vintage bowling shirts.

²⁸ "The *Woman Bowler* magazine: read label before opening," *Woman Bowler*, May 1986, v 50, no. 5, pp 34-35. See also Gideon Bosher and Bianca Lenck-Bosker, *Bowled Over: a Roll Down Memory Lane*, (Chronicle Books: San Francisco, 2002), 57, 59.

²⁹ To be sure, the interest in fashion was only one area of interest to journal readers. For example, The *Woman Bowler* also reported the frequent changes and improvements in bowling equipment, especially bowling balls, which can be traced back to the early 1930s when bowling ball manufacturers improved ball performance by changing the internal workings or the core of rubber and later (1960) plastic bowling balls. This journal also tells the stories of women who pioneered the industry of bowling, many times from their first experience with the sport until their deaths with many of these women bowling until the very end of their lives. The *Woman Bowler* is a virtual archive of information for anyone interested in women's bowling. The evolution of women's fashions from the early 1900s throughout the twentieth century from sports apparel to everyday clothing is represented in the journal.

³⁰ Lara Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period, Menstruation in the Twentieth Century*, (John Hopkins University Press, 2009).

³¹ "What to wear," *Woman Bowler*, September 1964, v 28, no. 5, p 8.

³² "Fashions: Oh how they've changed," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, p 38.

³³ "Take a cue--be fashionable," *Woman Bowler*, September 1966, v 30, no 8, p 18.

³⁴ Ibid., 24.

³⁵ "AMF July Fashion Show," *Woman Bowler*, September 1964, v 28, no. 8, pp 8-9.

³⁶ "What to wear," *Woman Bowler*, September 1964, v 28, no. 8, pp 6, 8-9.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "This isn't half of what's new for bowlers from Brunswick," *Woman Bowler*, September 1962, v 26, no, 8, p 35.

⁴⁰ "Darn these small pages," *Woman Bowler*, September 1962, v 26, no. 8, pp 35-34.

⁴¹ See advertising in the *Woman Bowler*, September 1964, v 28, no. 8, p 7.

⁴² "Bowl the perfect game in Munsingwear," *Woman Bowler*, April 1964, v 28, no. 5, pp 13-18.

⁴³ *Woman Bowler*, 1962.

⁴⁴ "Change your dress and your game," *Woman Bowler*, January 1963, v 27, no. 2, p 22. Other fashions featured during the 1960s were created by designers from several international *couturiereux* such as Chanel, Fabiani, Sybil Connelly, Charles Creed, and Katja Nieborg.

⁴⁵ See Polly McQueen Interview, 12 April 2011.

⁴⁶ "NO SLACKS WILL BE PERMITTED," *Woman Bowler*, March 1966, v 9, no. 4, pp 16, 20.

⁴⁷ "Slacks will not be permitted in 1965 National Tournament," *Woman Bowler*, May-June 1965, v 28, no. 6, p 40.

⁴⁸ See Polly McQueen Interview.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Fashionable Event: That's WIBC Championship Tournament," *Woman Bowler*, February 1970, v 34, no. 3, p 14.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Marie DeLanoit, "Puttin on the Glitz," *Woman Bowler*, September, 1995, v 59, no. 1, p 26.

⁵⁴ "Striking fashions," *Woman Bowler*, March 1966, v 30, no 4, pp 16, 20.

⁵⁵ "Fashionable event," *Woman Bowler*, February 1970, v 34, no. 3, p 14.

⁵⁶ See Polly McQueen Interview, 2005.

⁵⁷ See Marie DeLanoit's article "Making your own fashion statement," *Woman Bowler*, Spring 1995, v 59, no. 1, p 26.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Bowling fashion forecast: don't get designer blues," *Woman Bowler*, July/August 1980, v 44, no. 7, pp 34-35.

⁶⁰ Lauren K. Resetich, "Dressing for success on the lanes," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, p 8-9, 34.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 34-35.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Fashions," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, pp 34-47.

⁶⁵ Marie DeLanoit, "Making your own fashion statement," *Woman Bowler*, v 59, no. 1, p 27.

⁶⁶ Helen Latham, "What to wear is woman bowler's annual problem," *Woman Bowler*, September 1964, v 28, no. 8, pp 6-11. Lauren K. Resetich, "Dressing for success on the lanes," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, p 9.

⁶⁷ Resetich, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, p 34.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 8-9, 34-37.

⁷⁰ "WIBC fashions are here," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, pp 39. Also see "WIBC Signature Collection," *Woman Bowler*, July 1993, v 47, no. 5, pp 32-33.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 26-27.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "Bowling wardrobe affordable," *Woman Bowler*, October 1991, v 55, no. 7, p 70.

⁷⁶ "The shorts controversy," *Woman Bowler*, Spring 1995, v 59, no. 1, p 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See Polly McQueen Interview. See also *Playing Rules: ABC – WIBC, 1996-1997*.

⁷⁹ Linda Wilson Interview, Lubbock Texas, 2005.

⁸⁰ "You can lose your membership," *Woman Bowler*, October 1978, v 42, no. 9, pp 16-18. Also see "Why are WIBC members suspended?" *Woman Bowler*, November 1980, v 44, p 35, and "What have they done?" *Woman Bowler*, October 1974, v 38, no. 9, pp 20-21.

⁸¹ Bosher, 57.

CHAPTER V

THE “AGE OF GLEAM:” THE GLORY DAYS OF BOWLING

During 1952 in a small west Texas community, Mary Landers met Charley Henderson. Both belonged to different church youth groups and bowled on competing teams. Mary and Charley Henderson married three years later and for the past fifty-three years they have bowled on the same team. When their daughter Lindy turned three years old, the Henderson’s enrolled her in the Bantam division of the American Junior Bowling Congress (AJBC). Lindy bowled weekly, entering state and national tournaments from her elementary school years and on through high school. She met Robert Bayers in her senior year, whose parents bowled in a league with Lindy’s. Lindy and Robert married right out of high school, immediately joining two mixed leagues that bowled at night. After three years of marriage, they divorced. One year later, Robert married Jeanie Banks, a woman he met on the lanes the previous year. Lindy also remarried. She met Greg Hines, a new comer to the local bowling alley, who soon developed a love for the game. Eventually, Robert and Jeanie’s two boys and Greg and Lindy’s two girls shared the lanes in a Saturday morning youth bowling league.¹

Both the Bayers and the Hines families, along with their parents, started bowling as young children like so many others during the early 1950s. However, there were thousands of adult women joining bowling leagues who had never bowled before. Also, young adult men and women along with married military personnel started bowling during this decade in mixed leagues and in open play in available US military bases as well as in local bowling centers. As the popularity of bowling rapidly increased across

the nation, thousands of American women who belonged to the Women's International Bowling Congress were attending clinics to learn rules, regulations, and bowling techniques to help their children and others learn how to bowl and to encourage them to join bowling leagues. In the middle of the 1950s, women found themselves owning and running bowling centers, many of who had never even picked up a bowling ball. Senior leagues, leagues for physically impaired bowlers, youth bowling programs, newly integrated leagues, mixed leagues for men and women, and an increase in military base bowling centers were a few of the expansions in the bowling industry. By the end of the decade, leaders in the WIBC had inaugurated and accepted these and many other projects and programs that would aid them in the growth and expansion of the Women's International Bowling Congress during and following the Cold War years.²

These new forms of bowling experiences increased sporting opportunities for men, women, and children. National advertising campaigns, broadcast first through radio transmissions and eventually television stations across the United States, depicted bowling as a family oriented sport which invoked an image of what many viewed as wholesomeness and red-blooded Americanism, important issues for American leaders during the cold war years. These advertising campaigns, at first nationally broadcast in the United States and later internationally, most specifically represented the white working class as well as a new American middle-class and grew into one of the major influences that made bowling the number one pastime in the United States during the 1950s. At the turn of the twentieth-first century, when asked, many senior bowlers recalled the 1950s nostalgically as the "heyday" of American bowling.³ By the beginning of the 1960s, known by many as the "Golden Years" of bowling, thousands of

sixty year olds accounted for a large portion of bowlers in the United States. One out of seven bowlers was over fifty-five years of age and one out of eleven bowlers was sixty or older and by the end of the 1960s seventeen million bowlers were sixty-five or over. Bowling was indeed a sport suited for the older athlete because it was something she could do for as long as she wanted. In the 1970s, the growing women's national bowling club was exceptional for several reasons but most importantly it was during this decade that membership would double and then triple as the Women's International Bowling Congress initiated one new program after another.⁴

Several things occurred simultaneously in the United States that moved the sport of bowling into the limelight during the early 1950s creating major changes in the lives of the American people and especially for American women. As women made progress towards equality in work and education, better wages and organized labor provided many opportunities for leisure and sport. This chapter will argue that during the 1950s through the 1970s, the Women's International Bowling Congress sought cooperation with the men's National Bowling Congress to boost the level of integrity, participation, and associations of bowling on local and state levels as a national sport while maintaining their own individuality as separate entities. Indeed, women bowlers took the lead in making the sport more accessible for children, military families, the elderly and individuals with physical and/or mental imperatives. As technology afforded more economically priced bowling equipment for the bowling proprietors as well as the bowlers, a powerful synergism drove the bowling industry into new territories producing the first major American sport that anyone could participate in at any age, and thus, generating the most popular participant sport in the United States. However, above all

else, it was due to the outstanding leadership of the Women's International Bowling Congress, that women's bowling expanded and grew into the largest women's association in the world, making bowling one of the most popular individual and team participated sports anywhere.⁵

The 1950s through the 1970s was an incredible thirty years for women in the area of sports and these were indeed, the glory years of women's bowling. It was during the 1950s that "Americans fell in love with big flashy cars, became hooked on television, and flocked to bowling alleys by the busload."⁶ It was during these three decades when members of the Women's International Bowling Congress broke all bowling records set before 1950 and continued to double and finally to triple in membership before it peaked in the 1979-1980 season with over four million members, breaking a streak of continuous growth that began in the late 1940s. But the most popular decade of all time for bowling was the 1950s. This was the "age of gleam" when bowling alleys, over night, emerged into "new family bowling centers" that reflected both inside and outside the "razzmatazz" of neon signs, flashy sports apparel, and designer bowling balls, all of which displayed the popularity of the 1950s bowling alley.⁷

However, not all Americans were allowed to enjoy the sport. As the popularity of bowling spread across the country, thousands of black American bowlers faced the humiliation of discrimination when they attempted to enter "white bowling centers."⁸ The "white only" establishments were usually more modern than black bowling centers and offered many extras such as childcare, cafes, and a wider variety of competition. In February 1950, the *Hartford Courant*, a journal that had routinely reported and supported the American Bowling Congress's New York state tournaments held once a year,

announced its withdrawal of support of the state tournament due to racial discrimination in both men's and women's national bowling associations. The tournament was cancelled statewide in an effort to focus attention on the problem. People of color were still being excluded from bowling in white-only bowling alleys which also excluded black bowlers from participation in local, state, and national tournaments. Consequently, they missed out on the larger money prizes offered in tournaments, competitive play, and the use of modern bowling facilities. Under great pressure from both labor unions and civil rights groups who were discontent over controversial race issues, the Women's International Bowling Congress took measures, following the American Bowling Congress's example two weeks earlier, by withdrawing the clause "for white women only" from its legislature and took steps to accept membership of all women regardless of race.⁹ Even with the inclusion of black bowlers in both the American Bowling Congress and the Women's International Bowling Congress, many bowling proprietors tried to keep their centers segregated by ignoring the racial issues. Most of these centers could be found in many smaller cities where they were usually the only bowling center in town. In the late 1960s, students picketed local bowling alleys across the country in a nationwide attempt to integrate the bowling industry on all levels. White and Black students engaged in activities such as sit-ins staged to prevent white bowlers from entering white-only bowling centers. After five days of rioting, numerous acts of violence by both students and police with several hundred students being wounded, the Justice Department issued orders that mandated all bowling alleys open to the public must be integrated or they would be closed down.¹⁰

Regardless of race tensions surrounding the white bowling establishments in the early 1950s, another important factor in the sudden popularity of the sport of bowling in the United States was the steady increase in new bowling establishments and the modernization of equipment. The 1950s was a busy decade for bowling proprietors all over the country as new machinery such as the automated pinsetters (discussed in an earlier chapter) and electronic scorer-keepers debuted, and as more modern materials were created that improved bowling balls and bowling shoes, and with the overall expansion or refurbished centers opened up bowling in heavily populated suburbs. The *Spokane Daily Chronicle* called the sport a “Billion Bucks Business.” By 1957 the bowling industry averaged 2,500 new bowling centers being built yearly that might cost anywhere from \$90,000 to 1.5 million dollars to build with an annual return of \$350,000,000.¹¹ By August of 1958, the Brunswick Company, who sold their machines to proprietors, was backlogged over 8,000 pinsetters at the cost of \$8,100 each. American Machine and Foundry, who only leased their equipment charging according to the number of games bowled, installed over 40,000 of their own pin-spotters, averaging 4,000 new installations a year at the price tag of \$10,000 to \$20,000 each. There were over 20,000,000 Americans that spent \$250,000,000 on the sport of bowling during a global recession.¹²

Women’s bowling leagues started to occupy the lanes from early morning to late afternoon replacing thousands of men bowlers who were out of work. To accommodate a growing interest in youth bowling and women’s leagues, bowling centers increased working hours, established brand new centers located in the suburbs with bright modern carpeting and convenient fast food eating establishments, with plenty of air conditioning

in the summer months and free structured childcare, the first time childcare was made available in the United States during league play with more opportunities for new family leagues by staying open twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. Prize monies more than doubled across the United States in this ten-year period. It was during the 1950s that proprietors and promoters urged bowlers, especially youth bowlers, to view bowling as a year-round sport.¹³

Before the 1950s it was rare to see children in bowling centers because of the “pinboy legacy” mentioned in an earlier chapter, and the nation’s preoccupation with juvenile delinquency. It was not until the middle of the 1950s that the idea took hold that bowling might “serve as a weapon in the war against juvenile delinquency.” In Detroit, Michigan and St. Louis, Missouri police officers, along with Milton Raymer, one of the major founders of the junior bowling association, began organizing bowling leagues for wayward youth to help keep them off the streets and to give them choices that might lead to better citizenship and more responsible families in the future. Milton Raymer solicited the support of J. Edgar Hoover on the grounds that a national youth bowling program would aid the agency’s anti-delinquency efforts. During 1952 Raymer registered 31,607 students into the AJBC and by 1955 17,000 more joined junior leagues. By 1956 AJBC membership reached 93,767 and in 1959 membership had more than tripled to 400,000.¹⁴

Bowling proprietors began making family friendly changes in their bowling establishments as early as 1950, aggressively trying to provide an atmosphere for healthy fun for children as well as adults. In addition to bright new colors inside and outside the bowling centers, child care facilities could be found nationwide during the 1950s. By the early 1960s, many bowling center proprietors set aside particular time slots for youth

bowlers, bussed them in from schools, refused to sell alcoholic beverages while junior bowlers were in session, turned off the pinball machines, displayed “no smoking signs,” required potential junior bowlers to sign a “pledge to be good,” and sponsored special family tournaments encouraging family members to bowl together. A survey initiated by the American Machine and Foundry in 1960 indicated that twenty percent of all teenagers who bowl were introduced to the sport of bowling through structured league play. “Most industry experts agreed that the large gains made in the area of unstructured open bowling was due to the increased patronage of young adults.” A study conducted by the Brunswick Company in 1961 roughly estimated that one third of all bowlers were under the age of nineteen.¹⁵

Interest and participation in youth bowling grew slowly at first and the WIBC mirrored its growth during the first half of its existence. The first thirty years of the Women’s International Bowling Congress (1916-1946) resulted in slow but steady growth in membership. In 1947, the WIBC had only 301,063 registered members. However, by 1951 that number increased to 542,723 and by 1958, membership in the WIBC stood at a little over 1,000,000. Just four years later, in 1962, the Women’s International Bowling Congress sanctioned 2,212,339 members continuing a tradition of continuous growth that covered more than twenty-five consecutive years. The Women’s International Bowling Congress also recorded an increase of 64,087 in the number of sanctioned leagues between 1961 and 1962. New York led with 222,984 state members followed by Ohio with 213,510. Chicago had the largest association and led with 66,073 members followed by Detroit with 64,087. California had the largest growth for state

associations in 1962 with 30,000 new members but remained in third place with 198,493 total members.¹⁶

According to statistical data collected by the *Woman Bowler* in 1962, the “average woman bowler” was between the ages of 26 and 45, had been bowling less than five years, averaged 130, bowled in one or two leagues a week, and bowled on the average of nine practice games each month. The “average woman league bowler” owned her own bowling ball, bowling bag, and bowling shoes and bought a new bowling shirt once every season. She was married to an average league bowler, together they had two children who were or would soon be bowling in the American Junior Bowling Congress, and the entire family watched bowling on television every week. “Mrs. Average Bowler” usually bowled in all city tournaments where she was a member, frequently bowled in state events, and had competed at least once in the Women’s International Bowling Congress’s Championship Tournament.¹⁷

The Women’s International Bowling Congress encouraged its members to bowl in all available tournaments on local, state, and national levels. In 1962, with 2,600 local associations, 500,000 women bowlers competed in city tournaments and one out of ten members competed in their individual state tournaments. The average city tournament had forty-three teams, fifty-six doubles, and one hundred and five singles competing for prize funds of over \$1,500,000. The largest individual prize fund was \$14,332 and the smallest was \$8.00. Surprisingly, the smaller associations had greater percentages of competitors. 120,000 women bowlers entered state sponsored tournaments in 1962 with prize funds totaling \$800,000 with an average state prize fund of \$19,000 and the largest individual state prize fund being \$83,553. Each state averaged seven hundred and five

bowling teams, and New York lead with 2,508 teams in competition. More than 600 WIBC members averaged bowling scores of 180 or above during the 1961-1962 season including California women bowlers that lead with ninety-two and Los Angeles with fifty. Sixty-three percent of women bowlers averaged between 115 and 144, while eighteen percent averaged between 145 and 180, also eighteen percent averaged less than 115, while only one percent averaged 180 and over and only four percent averaged less than 100.¹⁸

Much of the growth in the Women's International Bowling Congress can be attributed to its presidential leaders but specifically to one lady, Alberta E. Crowe, a white middle-aged American woman who loved to bowl and one who had the leisure time to volunteer her services. Mrs. Crowe, from Syracuse New York, was elected fourth president of the Women's International Bowling Congress in 1960 and served in that capacity until 1981. Before being elected president, Mrs. Crowe served on the executive board beginning in 1940 and was appointed Public Relations Director for the Women's International Bowling Congress. She initiated the "Pinks" news service, which broadcast WIBC news to more than 10,000 news sources across the country. Not only did Crowe serve on the national board, she was also an active member in the local and state associations in New York. She served from 1958 to 1961 as president of the New York State WBA, which was, at the time, the largest state association in the United States. Crowe also served as president of the New York Bowling Council and the National Woman Bowling Writer's Association (NWBW) as well as serving as secretary of the Syracuse WBA.¹⁹

Mrs. Crowe, the first woman to do so, also served as president of the National Bowling Council (the NBC is the group that coordinates all phases of the bowling industry including bowling center proprietors, organized sanctioned leagues, and bowling equipment manufacturers) for three terms.²⁰ Her numerous contributions, continuous dedication to women's bowling, and board membership on the Women's International Bowling Congress are legendary. She instituted the field service and membership departments of the Women's International Bowling Congress which led to field service personnel whose jobs were to make personal visits to local bowling associations across the country. The field representatives were the eyes, ears, and voices of the WIBC on state and local levels. Their job was to provide education and counseling aimed towards a better interpretation and understanding of rules, services, and procedures along with providing promotional aids to local leaders. It was also the responsibility of field representatives to help solve local problems involving league officers or bowling center proprietors. Crowe advocated a closer relationship with the American Bowling Congress in order to achieve several milestone advancements in the sport of bowling which included becoming equal partners in the financial and administrative responsibilities for the American Junior Bowling Congress and combining administrative expenses by sharing staff members and a national headquarters.²¹

As fourth president, Alberta E. Crowe witnessed the growth in membership of the WIBC from 1,500,000 to over 4,000,000. And when the Women's International Bowling Congress outgrew its space in Columbus, Ohio, Crowe again, encouraged the women's bowling association to join forces with the men's American Bowling Congress. It was during this time that the WIBC and the ABC co-signed a fundraiser to pay for a

new National Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum that was to be built in St. Louis, Illinois and where it remained until it was moved to Arlington, Texas in 2010.²²

With membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress increasing rapidly from year to year, President Alberta Crowe worried about the WIBC's abilities to provide and maintain quality services to over four million women in a non-profit organization and she also believed that future recruitment of young bowlers depended on her generation's ability to entice young people into the sport. Crowe realized that the future of bowling depended on the growth of the American Junior Bowling Congress. She said, "These juniors need us. We need them. We will need them even more in the years to come when they will be taking my place and your place leading association affairs on city, state, and national levels." She commented that "our part in the American Junior Bowling Congress is the key to our future." Membership in the AJBC in 1963 climbed to 451,200 and increased to 489,543 during the 1968-1969 bowling season and by 1971 had increased to 515,675 members bowling on 135,583 teams with boys and girls ranging in age from high school down to elementary and even pre-school.²³

Throughout the years, religious groups, schools, civic organizations, and fraternal and recreational leaders sponsored the American Junior Bowling Congress. The AJBC was fashioned after the Women's International Bowling Congress and the men's American Bowling Congress and was also a "membership service organization" providing sanctioned league bowling and state and national competition for youth bowlers in several tournaments held throughout each year. In 1963, the seventeenth Annual Christmas Tournament drew 191,000 competitors who rolled 600,000 games. Also the National Mail-o-Graphic Tournament had more than 75,000 junior bowlers that

competed annually. The Explorer National Bowling Tournament that started in 1960 under the direction of the AJBC was one of the largest single activities of the Explorer movement of the Boy Scouts of America. Beginning in the 1950s, the AJBC also took part in many in-school bowling programs that remain active today in various states throughout the union. AJBC staff customarily consisted of 218 certified supervisors who were all volunteers that organized junior leagues and also many who taught young bowlers bowling fundamentals.²⁴

In addition to recruiting new youth members, in 1963 the official publication for the AJBC was the *Prep Pin Patter*, a monthly issued journal provided free to each league, each bowling coach, all team captains, and many bowling proprietors. The primary function of the American Junior Bowling Congress was to teach youth proper bowling techniques, which was a major issue of the *Prep Pin Patter*, so they could receive the maximum enjoyment from the sport. AJBC leaders believed in stressing the importance of bowling as “character building through team play and good sportsmanship,” that also contributed to the respectability of bowling.²⁵ Alberta E. Crowe said, “The Women’s International Bowling Congress has over 2,700 city associations and the American Bowling Congress has over 2,900. If all of us get behind this movement, combine forces, put our shoulders to the wheel, go out and give more assistance in forming junior leagues in everyone of our city associations, it will not only perpetuate the AJBC, but it will mean the continuing and perpetuation of our own adult organizations; the WIBC and the ABC.”²⁶

The tremendous increase in the American Junior Bowling Congress was also reflected in the WIBC. The Women’s International Bowling Congress in 1963 decided to

change formats in its national tournament to accommodate its rapidly increasing membership creating two separate divisions of competition (division I for the higher rolling bowlers and division II for the average bowlers) so that each bowler could bowl against others with similar abilities. Also, the WIBC added doubles and singles to the tournament competition in addition to the team event. These changes came just in time for the 1963 championship tournament held in Memphis, Tennessee which was the fourth largest to date with 3,358 five-woman teams, 6,578 doubles, and 13,152 singles. It was during this championship tournament that computers were used for the first time to process tournament scores, results and prize checks. Bowlers from forty-six states and Canada competed. During the WIBC Championship Tournament competition, the second Coed Intercollegiate Bowling Tournament was held with twenty women from college unions from ten regions throughout the country and sponsored by the Association of College Unions. Additionally, the annual WIBC Queens Championship Tournament was held with 403 top US women bowlers competing for a total prize fund of \$17,127.50.²⁷

Planning the national championship events occupied a large portion of the WIBC staff and volunteer workers. However, when not managing a tournament or answering questions about legislative rules, the Women's International Bowling Congress staff and field representatives provided direct contact with bowling league members in both city and state associations. By 1963, WIBC maintained fifty fulltime staff members and two to fifteen part-time employees hired to help out during peak work periods usually from August through January. The Office Manager directed all mail, supply and warehousing, and printing functions and also supervised the major departments of the Membership

Services. Also the mail, supplies, and warehouse departments were the busiest departments all year long. The Reproduction Department took care of pamphlets, form letters, and news releases. Incoming mail at the rate of 2,000 to 3,000 pieces per day during the busiest season kept twelve employees occupied. Eventually each incoming piece of mail became an outgoing piece of mail totaling more than 8,000,000 pieces of mail yearly. Other departments included the National Tournament, Special Tournaments, and the Rules Department.²⁸

Tournaments always generated new bowlers and the Women's International Bowling Congress took advantage of this by sanctioning "special tournaments" in two forms; as individual tournaments and as blanket tournaments. There were two types of blanket tournaments; nonprofit, and commercial. Nonprofit organizations could have tournaments sanctioned when the tournaments were held in several bowling centers. WIBC required a list of the participating centers and a sanction fee of \$10. Commercial or for profit tournaments could also be sanctioned by providing a list of participating bowling centers. "Special Tournaments" were divided into three categories; regular, moral, and family supported. Regular tournaments were ones that allowed WIBC members to compete sponsored by a tournament company or one or more individuals. Moral tournaments were events sponsored by religious or fraternal groups for their members only or by an industrial firm for its employees. Family supported tournaments were tournaments that allowed both adults and junior bowlers to bowl together but forbid awarding prizes such as money or merchandise to youth bowlers.²⁹

The Rules Department directed by Helen Burton in 1963, not only prepared for sanctioned tournaments, prepared files on all complaints and appeals cases for the WIBC

legal committee, but also interpreted and explained rules, and answered questions that were mainly concerned with averages and handicaps, substitutes in league play, intercity bowling, postponements and split schedules. The Rules Department usually handled about three hundred letters or telephone calls each month.³⁰

Due to continuous increases in membership, the WIBC purchased its own printing press rather than “farming out written materials to other companies.” Also, new technology in the 1960s included new computer programs, postal machines, electric forklifts, and loading docks. WIBC Executive Secretary, Emma Phaler explained, “We’re large enough now that no department can operate alone. All departments benefit from a knowledge and coordination with other departments.”³¹ The Women’s International Bowling Congress staff included a personnel manager that was responsible for the initial interview of all prospective WIBC employees and she did most of the hiring.³² The Women’s International Bowling Congress’s offices of secretary and treasurer were combined and became appointive, rather than elective, and the number of directors was increased to eighteen and a sixth and a seventh vice-president was added to the board and became effective as of 1 August, 1965.³³

Many extensions of the bowling industry included organizations formed before the 1950s. The National Bowling Council (NBC), created in 1943, promoted all phases of bowling including the American Junior Bowling Congress. It was during the late 1950s and early 1960s that the NBC really dug in its heels and directed all phases of the bowling industry. Initially their main goal was to recruit and increase members in all three groups, the AJBC, the WIBC, and the ABC. However, the National Bowling Congress’s primary purpose was to analyze all ideas and spot potential problems and

resolve them in the best interest of the game. In 1963 the NBC produced a film, “Young America Bowls,” to promote youth bowling in America. The film was designed to aid and train teachers and recreational instructors in the mechanics of youth bowling. The 1963 production of “Young America Bowls” followed the 1951 production of “America Bowls” which was still used in colleges, schools, city recreation departments and television stations. The National Bowling Council also compiled a “Maintenance Manual” in 1963 which was designed to assist bowling center proprietors in the maintenance and care of their bowling lanes and to provide a standardization of bowling lane conditions.³⁴

As the National Bowling Council accepted unlimited responsibilities, it found its salvation in the bowling industry at large. For example, the Brunswick Corporation, discussed in an earlier chapter, was also part of the drive to recruit young people into the sport of bowling. In 1960, the company produced the film “The Golden Years of Bowling” to dispel the 1950s myths and images of a “beer and blue collar” world. The Women’s International Bowling Congress pitched in by officially removing the linking of the words “bowling and alley” from newsletters and bowling journals in an attempt to recreate the atmosphere of bowling by turning bowling alleys into bowling centers. Bowling proprietors helped by censoring each other by charging a fine to centers that used the term “alley” in any form or fashion. By the 1960s bowling centers had moved into newly built shopping strip-malls in the suburbs and attracted the attention of the middle-class by designing in-house daycare centers, turning pub-space into cafes and restaurants, and by actively recruiting grocery chain stores such as Safeway, MSystem, and Skaggs-Albertsons to locate nearby.³⁵ The American bowling alley of the “fabulous

fifties and the age of gleam” “with spit-shined floors, neon signs, and the shine of molded plastic” acquired a “stunning new elegance and had bloomed into an all-purpose pleasure place” by the 1960s “offering variety in entertainment and luxury. Its facades had the glitter of a Hollywood neighborhood with its deep carpeted lobbies lined with restaurants, cocktail lounges, and billiard and beauty parlors.”³⁶

Working towards the greater good and future growth of the bowling industry, audio-visual kits were offered by the Women’s International Bowling Congress to all bowling proprietors in the country after “surveys revealed only 60 women out of each 100 attending bowling clinics and schools became league bowlers.” While these kits did not offer instructions on how to bowl they explained all the advantages of becoming a WIBC member and a sanctioned league bowler.³⁷ In conjunction, the Brunswick Company produced a bowling instructional kit that introduced the actual sport to students, parents, and physical education coaches.³⁸ With the help of commercial companies such the American Machine and Foundry (AMF), the Brunswick Company, and the local bowling proprietors associations after school bowling programs sprang up across the country and the interest and participation in bowling doubled and then tripled as bowling centers filled their league capacities.³⁹

Promoting the American Junior Bowling Congress on local levels to ensure a steady growth in adult bowling in later years became a national goal for bowling leaders across the nation. In 1968, bowling employees of the Department of Parks and Recreation organized an annual girls’ junior bowling clinic in Buffalo, New York. Over six-hundred girls registered with their physical education teachers from the local schools. Eight local bowling centers provided free bowling, bowling shoes, and instructors for the

clinic that lasted over a period of three weeks. The public school district advertised the bowling clinic through the media as the “Girls Come First” campaign. Carol Shevlin, bowler and recreation leader, started the pilot program and the Brunswick Company took to the field to initiate similar projects throughout North America. Shevlin stated, “The recreation department believes that bowling is a very beneficial sport that can be played by people of all ages in all walks of life and is a source of enjoyment that can be enjoyed individually as well as with a group.” The clinic was such a popular event that the following year, Shevlin and other organizers invited the boys to join.⁴⁰

Under the American Bowling Congress and the Women’s International Bowling Congress guidance, junior bowlers along with adult bowlers trained for American Junior Bowling Congress leadership as coaches and instructors for younger bowlers. In 1979, when the Junior Leader of the Year awards were handed out, nineteen year old Stuart Moss of Lafayette, Louisiana, won hands down for his contributions as a coordinator for the State Junior Leader Singles Tournament. He served as President of public relations director and worked weekly with twelve handicapped children. He earned four scholarships to the University of South Western Louisiana.⁴¹

Additionally, the American Junior Bowling Congress (AJBC) and later named the Young American Bowling Association (YABA) acted as a gateway for young adult bowlers to prepare for future careers. Many young women and men dreamed of bowling professionally encouraged by their own abilities to bowl consistently high scores. Many of the bowlers started bowling at a very young age. For example, Joy Samuels, as a young girl living in San Angelo, Texas, joined the American Junior Bowling Congress and started bowling in 1974 at the age of five. Her parents both bowled on a mixed night

league during the week. She continued to league bowl through junior high school but the rigors of high school kept Joy too busy and too tired to bowl on Saturday mornings. However, Joy could be found in the local bowling alley most every Friday and Saturday night with a date or out with a group of friends. Samuels commented, “It was just too hard to work bowling into my schedule when I was in high school. I played the violin in the string orchestra and we were always on the move. We even played at the White House one year.” However, Joy loved bowling against her dates. “I beat every one of them. There were not too many second bowling dates (she laughed).” Samuels joined a mixed league after high school graduation with four other women her age. “We had a ball. Three of us had averages over 200. One of the girls, Dolores Harwood, had several perfect games already. Her father owned a bowling alley in San Antonio, Texas and she had been bowling since she had learned to walk.” Joy’s “all women’s team” always bowled competitively, against each other as well as the opposing teams. But they also had loads of fun flirting with the men bowlers who were never happy about bowling against them because the women beat the best of them nearly every game. Together these young women made some money and built well-known reputations in local and state tournaments. They were the number one women’s team in their hometown for over ten years and the group received many invitations to bowl free in the larger state tournaments.⁴²

For several years I bowled in a league with my sister and her two daughters who are my age. It was a blast. I have always bowled in mixed leagues, that is, coed with both boys and girls, or men and women later. When I was twenty-eight, I decided I was going to try the professional women’s bowling circuit. For three years I competed in professional competition in Texas, always with my coach following me to each match. It was fun but hard work. I married my bowling coach in 1995 and now neither one of us can find the time to bowl. But my husband’s parents still bowl and they are in their early eighties. Our oldest son bowled with four of his cousins in a Saturday morning YABA league

when he was five. We still take our two boys bowling frequently (lots of birthday bowling parties). Someday we will get back to it. Bowling . . . you know . . . it gets in your blood.⁴³

Even the youngest bowlers set and reach goals in their bowling leagues. Michael Ciesleriski, an eight year old with an average of 109, rolled a 720 series in the 1969 State Junior Championship Bowling Tournament.⁴⁴ Two year old, Mike Landy of Ventura, California rolled the lowest triplicate ever (33, 33, 33) in 1971.⁴⁵ Rick Celotti of San Mateo California at the age of sixteen rolled four perfect games in junior competition. Dana Stewart, a seventeen year old from Palo Alto, California set a new girls' record in 1973 with her 737 series in the San Carlos Junior Bowling League.⁴⁶ And in the following years, seven year old Emily Beck, a young bowler in the San Angelo, Texas YABA association, won the Bowler of the Year award in 2002 after competing for only one year.⁴⁷

To insure the perpetuation of adult membership, the Women's International Bowling Congress offered over six million dollars in scholarship opportunities yearly for youth bowlers such as the Zeb Scholarship, the Gift for Life Scholarships, the USBC Chuck Hall Star of Tomorrow, the USBC Alberta E. Crowe Star of Tomorrow, the USBC Earl Anthony Memorial Scholarships, and the Who's Who Sports Edition All-Academic Bowling Team Award. All of these scholarships and award programs looked at bowling achievements but most concentrated on academic performance as the number one criteria for receiving honors and many emphasize community leadership.⁴⁸ By the early 1980s, over twenty-five hundred colleges and universities included intercollegiate bowling teams in their athletic scholarship programs with more institutions of higher learning adding them in rapidly increasing numbers.⁴⁹

Universities with competing intercollegiate teams include schools such as Arizona State University, Indiana State University, Penn State University, the Erie Community College in Buffalo, California State University, Wichita State University, and West Texas State University in Canyon, Texas as well as Texas Tech University in Lubbock.⁵⁰

Intercollegiate bowling is extremely competitive. Coach Ron Holmes at Central Missouri State University recently said in an interview with NCAA news, “This is not recreational or league bowling or open bowling, where you go and socialize and have a good time. This is competitive bowling in every sense of what other sports do.” He emphasized, “Bowling student-athletes receive the same levels of benefit and they work under the same expectations and obligations that any other student athlete in any sport within an athletics department do, including upholding academic standards, attending practices, and earning scholarships.”⁵¹

The WIBC’s own scholarships include the Alberta E. Crowe Star of Tomorrow award that was first initiated by the Ebonite Company in 1961. In 1962 the sponsorship was taken over by the Woman’s International Bowling Congress and the title of the award was changed to the Alberta E. Crowe Star of Tomorrow Award to honor the current president at that time, Alberta E. Crowe. A committee of WIBC and Young American Bowling Alliance staff members presented an award each year to a female youth or collegiate bowler to provide financial assistance for higher education to outstanding women who bowl. Nominees considered had to be twenty-two years of age or younger, must have competed and excelled in sanctioned league bowling, and must have superior potential and have a record of good sportswoman-like conduct. The selection was based on bowling performance on local, state, and national levels along

with academic achievement and involvement in extracurricular activities. The award was given to one young woman each year and at first, had a monetary value of \$1,000 but grew in value through the years to \$1,500.⁵²

The first bowler to receive Alberta E. Crowe Star of Tomorrow award and \$1,000 was Betty Kuczynski of Cicero, Illinois in 1961. Kuczynski took 7th place in the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament Open Division all-events in 1961 and 4th place in singles event in 1963. She also won a major title in the WIBC Championship Queen's Tournament and was a championship team member of the Gossard Girls of Chicago. Kuczynski won six top ten WIBC Championships and two top three WIBC Queens championships. As a professional on the women's pro tour, she won four 2nd place titles, seven 3rd place titles, six 4th place titles, and four 5th place titles in an eleven year career.⁵³

Bowling, whether interscholastic or church sponsored, provided equal opportunities for both boys and girls to excel. Many of the young men and women who started bowling in the 1950s, continued to bowl throughout their lives. Many older senior male bowlers believe that those with strength and power make the best bowlers. However, most current bowling manuals equate skill and control to be the most important aspects of rolling a high score. "Bowling, like tennis or golf, relies on technique, leverage and timing, not overall strength and power." But even low scoring bowlers may compete and enjoy the sport because it offers them fun, physical fitness, and lifelong friendships. Bowling, probably the first to do so, helped create co-ed sports where both boys and girls bowled on the same teams with and against each other. By the time Title

IX passed in 1972, boys and girls had been sharing the lanes and bowling on the same teams since the early 1950s.⁵⁴

By the end of the Cold War years, thousands of women and girls sought athletic definition and equality in sports through amateur, collegiate, and professional sports. Equality in most sports, a characteristic of modern sports noted by Allen Guttman, never actually existed and probably never will for several important reasons. First physical strength, size, and internal fortitude separated and distinguished both male and female youths by either hindering or aiding in participation in a particular sport.⁵⁵ Secondly, the economic position of families determined how youth spent their out-of-school hours. Gender also determined sports participation because girls and young women were expected to adhere to a strict social policy of proper or lady-like behavior. Factors also included the financial capabilities of local independent school treasuries, and regional or ethnic qualifications. American female athletes inclusion into interscholastic sports developed much slower than American male athletes and only in the second half of the twentieth-century were girls and young women encouraged to play, in what most deemed to be strictly male sports. However, the passage of Title IX of the Education Act of 1972 made “discrimination on the basis of gender illegal in all institutions receiving federal support.”⁵⁶ This act, reflecting advances in women’s rights, after twelve years of delays achieved some impressive but limited results noted in the many legal cases that confronted the American legal system in the recent past. Consideration for the physical differences between men and women, and whether these physical differences were crucial to performance, played an important part in allowing women to compete in specific interscholastic activities while some unofficial or unsanctioned sports and

originally commercialized sports such as bowling offered a leveling playing field where skill and mental attitude instead of brute strength determined who wins. Title IX helped attract the attention of the public, of parents, and of the intermediate, high school, and university coaches to the deficiencies of opportunity for girls and young women to become athletes, however, Title IX did not mandate coed teams and nearly all school and university sports continued as single-gender activities.⁵⁷

The late 1960s and 1970s saw an increase in support groups for female athletes and many sprang up around the country, many founded by women athletes that wanted to fill the need that men's sports organizations never attempted to embrace. Also, national legislation for women's rights introduced a new world to sporting young women. One of the most important organizations to women's and girls' sports appeared as the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), organized in 1974 by Billie Jean King, champion tennis player, in response to a growing need for a collective national voice to promote opportunities for women's athletics on all levels. This organization eventually grew into one of the most influential advocates for the equality of women's sports. The WSF advanced the idea that gender balanced teams or coed sports would be the equalizer of all competitive sport play but also believed that once girls reached puberty, single sex teams provided a stronger supportive role in the physical and mental growth of young women.⁵⁸

Neither Title IX nor the Women's Sports Foundation addressed the issue of coed sports. Surprisingly, the encouragement for coed sports came in the form of bowling leagues, programs created for after-school activities which opened the doors to many intermediate and high school students across the United States in the late 1950s, 1960s, and the early 1970s. In Lake Forrest, Illinois in 1963 Gus Lombardi worked with

hundreds of schools and college physical education teachers in school gymnasiums using softballs as bowling balls and light plastic pins to show them how much fun bowling would be for students. After practicing and learning the four-step delivery technique of bowling, they tried out bowling in local bowling centers. Most teachers enjoyed the lessons so much they immediately started plans to add bowling to the school physical education programs in Illinois.⁵⁹ State school officials in Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin followed Illinois' example and introduced after-school bowling programs for junior high and high school students. In 1964 Dania, Florida bused 3,978 students to Ray Glasco's Imperial Bowl—a fifty-four lane bowling center where both boys and girls bowled on coed teams.⁶⁰

To promote youth bowling throughout the country, commercial advertising through the media such as newspapers, magazine publications, and public television reached the nation's youth as individual local bowling centers promised "Bowling is the Fun Sport which emphasizes participation by everyone." Journals such as the *Junior Bowler's Digest* offered bowling instructions and score keeping, advertised bowling awards, and related individual and team accomplishments throughout the year. These journals also announced state, national, and international competition along with information on how and where to register for tournaments.⁶¹ Also, individual bowling centers displayed advertisements to encourage local participation. Youth bowlers with outstanding bowling achievements, higher academic standards, and community leadership were often featured in media advertisements. They promote sport equipment such as bowling balls, bowling shoes, and bowling fashions while encouraging other youth bowlers to set and to reach higher goals.⁶²

From the 1950s through the 1970s, young adults were frequently portrayed in bowling advertising as examples of healthy American athletes. For example, in 1970 the National Bowling Council sponsored the Miss America of 1969 to travel around the country promoting youth and family bowling in a program called “Bowl-a-Shape.” The program stressed the physical benefits of regular bowling and introduced several at-home exercises that used bowling balls to strengthen and tone up the body.⁶³ The “Bowl-A-Shape” campaign, sponsored in part by the WIBC, sent the 1969 Miss America, Julie Ford, to talk to children about bowling. She started bowling at the age of nine with some neighborhood friends because one of the children’s fathers owned a bowling alley. Also, her mother, who bowled for many years in a local league, influenced her decision to take up the game at an early age. Ford bowled for six years and carried a 156 average. She said, “Bowling helped me develop coordination for trampoline exercises. It’s also an excellent family activity, perhaps the best sport for the entire family.”⁶⁴ Other celebrities endorsing bowling included Mary Lou Retton, gold medal gymnast who was hired by the National Bowling Council to promote bowling through the media when she starred in a fifteen minute commercial filmed at Wilson Road Bowl in Humble, Texas.⁶⁵

School sponsored bowling leagues provided advertising for the bowling industry all across America. Also, some of the most popular promotions for bowling, sponsored by the National Bowling Council (NBC), were television productions and presentations. “Celebrity Bowling” introduced in 1971 provided twenty-six half-hour bowling competition segments that were filmed in just three days at the Metromedia Studios in Hollywood. Celebrity bowlers included motion picture stars and television personalities such as Sid Ceasar, Dick Martin, Peter Lawford, Bob Newhart, and Ernest Borgnine.

Famous actresses included Kathy Garver star of “Family Affair,” Marjorie Lord, Elizabeth Allen, and Jo Ann Pflug. “Celebrity Bowling” welcomed a total of thirty-six celebrity bowlers in a “best ball” type of tournament where two bowlers each rolled a ball but only the best of the two counted. The Brunswick Corporation along with American Machine and Foundry laid a pair of lanes for the celebrity promotional in the Metromedia studio. The television series was broadcast by more than 125 stations across the country and was part of a nationwide million dollar promotional campaign sponsored by the Women’s International Bowling Congress, the men’s American Bowling Congress, and the American Bowling Council. “Celebrity Bowling” became popular throughout the United States and the series continued for several years.⁶⁶

As national publicity provided positive models for youth bowlers by promising good physical health, many creative teachers used the sport of bowling in the classroom as a good foundation for learning. An innovative elementary school teacher, as early as the 1920s, used the bowling scoring system to interest her students in improving their grammar skills. They were given grammar drills or tests, one each day for ten days and they made a strike if they answered correctly. The scores were totaled at the end of the two-week period. The game interested the students from the beginning and encouraged them to study more in hope of getting a strike.⁶⁷ Another teacher, Annette Berson, working with learning disabled children, used plastic bowling pins and a large Nerf ball to teach math skills. After the children rolled the ball, he/she counted the pins knocked over. The teacher and the students discussed concepts though out the bowling game such as more, less, higher, lower, how many, and less than. Berson said, “The mathematics curriculum in an early childhood setting can be extended into many areas of

teaching. Spatial language concepts such as behind, below, next to and numerical relationship such as more, less, or some and even number representations are just plain fun and can be included in a highly structured bowling program.”⁶⁸

In addition to being an aid for elementary teachers, bowling also became a useful tool for the advertising industry but this changed to fit the image of current social mores and definitions of wholesome family fun. Bowling centers provided advertisers with glamorous and enticing backgrounds for their products. The most popular during the 1950s and 1960s showed bowlers smoking, drinking beer, and laughing in bowling centers. Products ranged from cigarettes, alcoholic drinks, and chewing gum to clothing, food, and sodas. Bowling trade journals included the latest designs in bowling equipment, the changing fashion trends in sports apparel, a wide variety of leisure activities and vacations, European cruises, and how-to-bowl instruction booklets. The faces of youth bowlers and young adults reflected the example of the “all-American boy and girl” that provided role models for the millions of children in America while they advertised the growing field of products available to the American consumer. Famous actors and actresses, presidents and their first ladies, and popular musicians also promoted the sport of bowling to help present a unified home front for the United States as well as demonstrate the bond between American families and their government.⁶⁹ And when science linked lung cancer to tobacco products, the National Cancer Society used bowling advertisements with the images of famous bowlers to encourage Americans to stop smoking. Bowling proprietors gladly allowed their bowling centers to represent new products while promoting the sport of bowling as a “family affair.”⁷⁰

As the popularity of bowling increased tenfold, the attention of the Women's International Bowling Congress leaders turned to programs designed to include the disadvantaged and disabled. Wheelchair games were started in New York in 1957 as an annual competition for physically handicapped athletes to compete in archery, discus, shot put, swimming, and bowling and have become international in scope. Bowling centers across the country began using lane bumpers to keep the bowling ball out of the gutter and placed special handrails to guide the blind bowler in her approach. Many blind bowlers developed amazing proficiency in rolling spares when told which pins were left standing. Several of the women representing the different associations for the physically handicapped also joined sport groups. Lola Reppenhagen of New York started bowling in 1969 when she lost her sight to retinitis pigmentosa. She joined a bowling league, the Buffalo League of Sightless Bowlers, and accepted the position as league secretary in 1969 and as vice-president in 1972 and she also served on committees for the American Blind Bowling Association in that same year. Lola carried a 95 average on her team, the Tally Ho's. Reppenhagen and her team appeared several times on the then popular television bowling program *Spikes, Spares, and Misses*. Her participation in bowling brought many changes into her life and lots of enjoyment. It also gave her the self-confidence to reach out to others in similar conditions. Not only did she assist in founding the self-help group, the Blind Leading the Blind, she went on to lecture five times a week to nursery through college-age people on coping with blindness. In 1973 the Tally Ho's took first place at the national tournament in Toronto, Canada. Reppenhagen also won high singles and doubles in the 1981 Buffalo Upstate Tournament.⁷¹ Special ramps were designed for bowlers like Lola Reppenhagen who

relied on crutches, or braces, and even wheelchairs. Baltimore, Maryland has one team made up of victims of multiple sclerosis and over two hundred handicapped bowlers entered a tournament at the United Cerebral Palsy Center in Denver, Colorado. In 1964 Louisville, Kentucky hosted a National Wheelchair Bowling Tournament where six hundred handicapped bowlers from the United States and Canada met for the American Blind Bowling Association National Tournament.⁷²

The American Blind Bowlers Association (ABBA) was organized in 1950 and by 1975 had a total of 2,563 blind bowlers who competed in 403 leagues throughout the United States. The ABBA was first organized to “promote an interest in bowling activities among legally blind men and women” but today includes blind youth bowlers. A national tournament and yearly convention are held every year by the ABBA, which provides publications in Braille as well as in standard print. Also, the King Pin Blind Bowlers League in Syracuse, New York introduced a new device, the Telepins, which was provided by the New York Telephone Pioneers. These devices were installed next to the ball returns and are “read” by bowlers with impaired vision through pegs that pop up to indicate remaining pins after the first ball is rolled.⁷³

The American Wheelchair Bowlers Association (AWBA) was founded for men only in 1961 and administrated by bowlers who used wheelchairs. Due to the efforts of Alma Ladwig of Milwaukee, Wisconsin who is also a wheelchair bowler was invited to bowl in the men’s wheelchair tournament in 1976 because of her efforts to raise money for their yearly tournament. Ladwig was the first woman to bowl in the American Wheelchair Bowling Association tournament and was instrumental in changing AWBA rules that allowed women to join beginning in 1977.⁷⁴

Bowling is popular with mentally impaired athletes as well as those with physical handicaps. Seventy-five percent of all the mental hospitals in California have bowling programs and in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the Crippled Children's Hospital and school has its own bowling lanes. A unique Long Island electronics manufacturing firm that hires severely handicapped employees has supported bowling as a company sport since 1952. There are multiple sclerosis chapters, cerebral palsy groups, and Easter seal societies that sponsor bowling activities for the handicapped and physically impaired bowler. The most prominent group and only official charity is the Bowlers Victory Legion formed by the Women's International Bowling Congress formerly called the "Wings of Mercy" which is discussed in an earlier chapter of this study.⁷⁵

Linked to bowling leagues for the physically and mentally impaired are programs designed for underprivileged and disadvantaged children. Women bowling leaders created a new program in Omaha, Nebraska in 1964 called the Angels for Underprivileged Children. This program allowed more than one hundred sixty underprivileged children between the ages of 11 and 13 to enjoy bowling in AJBC leagues at no cost. The program was sponsored by men's and women's city bowling associations, Settlement House personnel, teenagers, the South Omaha Eagles, and the proprietors of Leisure Lanes. The main goal of the Angels for Underprivileged Children was to allow children to learn that competition is fun. The sponsors called it an "outstanding success" and helped other associations set up similar programs across the United States.⁷⁶

Like most sports, bowling reflects its origins, and has always been a more prominent sport in the larger eastern states and the number of women bowling in those

state's cities changed from year to year. The total number of women bowlers reflected several things; the state's economy, the generational age of women who bowl and by the prevailing popular culture of the city during a specific time period. More women bowled in WIBC sanctioned leagues in New York than any other state with 264,442 competing in 1963. Detroit had the second largest number of competitors with 73,250, and Chicago was third with 71, 502.⁷⁷ In 1964 eighty-seven percent of all women league bowlers had children with seventy-four percent having three or fewer junior league bowlers living in the home and three out of four families had at least one child that bowled. Forty-six percent of WIBC bowlers purchased new bowling shirts in 1965, forty-two percent bought new bowling shoes that year, and thirty-nine percent of all WIBC members bought new bowling balls. Sixty-six percent bowled in special tournaments, fifty-nine percent bowled in city association tournaments, and seventy-five percent regularly watched bowling on television.

In 1965 only nine percent of Women's International Bowling Congress members were twenty-five years old and under, with thirty-six percent being 26 to 35 years of age, thirty-three percent were between thirty-six to forty-five, sixteen percent were forty-six to fifty-five, and only six percent were fifty-six years old or older. Seventy-two percent bowled for social reasons, sixty-four percent bowled for relaxation, sixty-three percent bowled for the competition, thirty-nine percent bowled to improve their health, and forty-three percent bowled to find companionship (the percentages can be and are overlapping as the women bowlers who were surveyed could answer 'yes' to more than one question as to why she bowled and do not necessarily add up to 100%). Also, seventy two-percent of WIBC members served at one time or another as a league officer, twenty-four

percent served as a city association officer and only four percent served as state association officers. Forty-three percent of all women bowling as members of the Women's International Bowling Congress wanted more news about local events and twenty-one percent wanted tips on bowling.⁷⁸

Most WIBC bowlers during this period were married women with forty-two percent employed. Those with unusual or one-of a-kind jobs included a black belt Judo expert, a doctor, a chemist, one mail carrier, one cemetery sexton, and a worm farmer. Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed said that bowling was their favorite sport, with twenty-five percent listing sewing or knitting, and twenty-two percent liked most sports the same. Two-thirds of those surveyed had bowled for ten years, thirty-eight percent had been bowling for five years or less, and only ten percent had bowled for twenty-one years or more. Sixty-nine percent surveyed bowled in one or two leagues each week, with forty percent competing in two, and only three percent bowling in five or more leagues. Four out of five women league bowlers also open bowled with forty-eight percent bowling ten or fewer games a month and only six percent bowling forty or more practice games every month. Seventy-seven percent of all women bowlers' husbands bowled and eighty-seven percent had children that bowled.⁷⁹

As the popularity of bowling swept the nation the United States government helped advertise and promote the sport. In 1971 the United States Postal Service issued over sixty million embossed commemorative bowling stamps to promote and salute the game of bowling. The stamped envelopes were available at all local post offices across the country for ten cents each. Due to the rising popularity of the sport, the initial printing of thirty-five million sold out on the first day. The embossed envelope featured a

bowling ball and a bowling pin. The sale of the commemorative envelopes coincided with the opening of the 7th World Bowling Championships of the *Federation Internationale des Quilleurs* (QIF) held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in August of 1971.⁸⁰

The *Federation Internationale des Quilleurs* was founded in Hamburg, Germany in 1952 with the purpose of fostering world-wide interest in amateur bowling and international friendship around the world. The FIQ encouraged bowling competition between different countries and has been recognized by the International Olympic Committee since 1979 as the world governing body for the sport of bowling. The *Federation Internationale des Quilleurs* organized and founded to encourage the development of bowling, promoted the Olympic movement, contributed to the achievement of the goals set forth in the Olympic Charter, established rules for the uniform practice of bowling throughout the world, and insured that official bowling activities meet the requirements of the Olympic Charter.⁸¹

The *Federation Internationale des Quilleurs* has member federations located in all five Olympic zones, has more than one hundred million participants, ten million competitors, and 250,000 bowling lanes and is considered to be one of the largest and best organized sports in the world. The FIQ regulates both nine-pin bowling which is concentrated on the European continent and worldwide ten-pin bowling that includes Asia, America, and Europe. The *Federation Nationale des Quilleurs* conducts bowling competitions both regionally and worldwide for men, women, and youth bowlers. There are ninety countries worldwide, with over 95 million people that enjoy the sport of bowling, all under the support of the *Federation Nationale des Quilleurs* with the top

bowlers across the globe regularly competing in Olympic Zone and worldwide competitions.⁸²

Due to worldwide interest in the sport of bowling, women on local levels envisioned greater opportunities and career advancements linked to the sport. Career opportunities within the bowling industry included changes within the bowling centers as well as bowling club leaders. Even though they have always been in the minority, women bowling center proprietors made major contributions to the communities where they were located. The first woman to build, open, and run her own bowling establishment in the United States was Hazel Daniel in West Palm Beach, Florida in 1959. Daniel found it difficult at first to get women to bowl in her center and the men flat out told her she would never make it in the business because she was a woman. It took a couple of years of hard work and frequent promotional ideas for Daniel to feel respected as a bowling proprietor. She said, “Maybe we feel we have to work harder to prove ourselves . . . and I have learned that you can’t compete on the men’s level. You have to be a woman and compete as a woman. Don’t try to be a man.”⁸³

Another woman bowling proprietor, Ethel Hippe of Independence, Oregon opened her bowling center in 1961 and remained open over twenty-five years. Also, Marilyn Miller built her first bowling center in 1962 and nine years later owned three more in Kansas City, Kansas.⁸⁴ The Proprietors Bowling Association of America (PBAA) is a membership organization that represents over 4,000 proprietors across the country with only a small percentage being women and only a few of these were actually bowlers when they opened their bowling centers. Betty Freese owns and manages the Alvin Bowling Center in Alvin, Texas and another bowling establishment in Galveston,

Texas. Freese did not have any bowling experience when she entered into her new enterprise but she learned quickly that she had more to overcome than just knowing how to bowl. To be a successful entrepreneur, women bowling proprietors' major obstacle was "realizing their potential in a competitive and challenging industry dominated by men."⁸⁵

The late 1970s brought an unprecedented number of women bowling proprietors into the sport especially in Wichita, Kansas. Mark Miller, sport writer said, "Females play a major role in the business of bowling in the Wichita area."⁸⁶ Nadine Oppliger remarked that "So many centers have a corporate feel. I think being here and dealing with the customer is important." Oppliger started out as the manager in Crestview Bowl in Wichita, Kansas and when it closed she took over the management of the Thunderbird Lanes in 1974. She bought the center just a few years later to keep it from bankruptcy. Many believed that she would not make it. "There were wagers being made that I wouldn't last a year. Now we have an awfully good staff. We have twenty-four employees, many of whom have been here a long time." Oppliger, previously to becoming a bowling center owner, bowled in three leagues where she carried averages above 200.⁸⁷

Barbara Jensen and her husband own the twenty-four lane Rose Bowl West in Wichita, Kansas. Barbara has worked in the bowling business for over fifty years, first helping her father who owned a center in Sioux City, Iowa by checking hats and coats at the age of eleven. Connie Taylor, manager at Countryside West Lanes in Wichita believes that "women are a little more open. They are out there to get to know people. Women cover both sides of the business. You have to have the business side and the bowler side.

I think the men bowlers respect women more than male managers.” Cathy DeSocio also worked for her father who, at one time, owned sixty-three centers. Her father worked for his father, Barbara’s grandfather, who opened Boulevard Bowl in 1960 and Barbara went on to own seven bowling centers herself.⁸⁸

Proprietors and others involved with the bowling industry feared a decline was inevitable because of a “slump” in interest in the middle of the 1970s. R.R. (Woody) Woodruff, then president of the National Bowling Council commented, “Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite general economics suffered in the mid 1970s, the sport of bowling experienced a continuing increase in industrial league bowling. Bowling has enjoyed a steady growth of about five percent per year since 1967, putting it far ahead of all other sports played on dry land.”⁸⁹

As were the 1950s and the 1960s before them, the 1970s promised to be a dazzling decade for women’s Bowling. Leaders associated with the bowling industry predicted that the 1970s would be a decade of continuous growth and indeed it was. Tom Mead, then vice-president of the bowling division of American Machine and Foundry (AMF) commented that “Facing the 1970s, bowling has a firm foundation for future growth in America. We anticipate a small growth in new commercial centers in the near future and an increasing number in the mid 1970s as population in the bowling age and demand increase.”⁹⁰ Also Milt Rudo, then president of the bowling division within the Brunswick Corporation noted that “Bowling on the international scene is being enthusiastically received not only by bowlers but by proprietors and the financial community as well.”⁹¹

As the popularity of bowling snowballed ahead, new ideas circulated throughout the bowling nation. The next big move for the sport of bowling included mixed leagues with teams made up of women and men. This move proved to be more difficult for the men than it was for women bowlers. Andrew Hurley described the integration of the sexes on the bowling lanes as “fraught with tension.” Men were encouraged to “upgrade their manners” and were reminded that they could not always “talk it up with the boys.” These new mixed leagues required adjustments and marked a new style of play, “one that emphasized sociability over competition.” By 1958 mixed leagues made up 26 percent of all senior bowling leagues and the number of women bowlers equaled that of the men. However, three-fourths of all bowlers continued to bowl with members of their own sex. Hurley, like most men of his generation, believes that for most women who bowl, “the sport was first and foremost a vehicle for developing broader social contacts with other women.”⁹²

While women bowlers enjoyed the social aspects of their sport, many developed a desire to increase their bowling skills as well as increase their friendships. And not all leagues progressed from men only to mixed bowling. The 1972-1973 bowling season was a significant year for women bowlers as they ventured into untried territories. For instance, two top female bowlers, Pat Foudree and Cheryl Myers of Ottumwa, Iowa tried to start a scratch league (a league without a handicap) for women bowlers but were rebuffed by most all other league members. However, three other women liked the idea and together the five women bowlers requested membership in Ottumwa’s most formidable men’s scratch league, the City Classic League. Many of the men on the league resisted the idea of allowing women into their league but the women finally

convinced them to give it a go. Unknowingly, the City Classic Leagues entered a new era in bowling, that of “mixed league” bowling. Jack Chedister, league secretary for the City Classic League said, “The men kind of choked up trying too hard at the beginning but now I think the men look forward to it since they’ve gotten use to the idea. They really want to beat them (the women).” One drawback Chedister said was, “We have to go by women’s rules, too, according to the WIBC but there really isn’t much difference.” The women’s team, sponsored by the *Ottumwa Courier*, held first place that first year up until the last night of seasonal competition when two of the men’s teams moved ahead placing the women in third place, not bad for an eleven team league.⁹³

By 1976 half of all WIBC’s leagues involved mixed bowling. The *Woman Bowler* conducted one of their surveys and found that out of 153,085 leagues in 1975-1976 season 53 percent were mixed leagues. They also found that mixed leagues were the fastest growing leagues with 51 percent in the 1973-1974 season and 52percent in 1974-1975. The majority of the leagues surveyed, 118,720 competed during the winter while 34,365 surveyed competed during the summer. In 1976 an average league consisted of five to eight teams per league which was 37.75 percent of all leagues, with 9 to 12 team leagues which was 36.68 percent. Less than one percent of all WIBC leagues had 24 or more teams. However, these few larger leagues showed a positive increase over the season before. During the 1975-1976 bowling season, 53.52 percent of all women’s winter leagues bowled during the day with 46.48 percent bowling in the evening. Also the number of women’s daytime leagues was greater during the summer, at 56.02 percent, while the trend is reversed for mixed leagues with 91.80 percent of all mixed winter leagues and 96.03 percent of all summer mixed leagues bowl in the

evening. WIBC senior leagues, fifty-five years and over, recorded an increase of 17.28 percent over the previous season of 1974-1975. It was reported that there were 966 mixed leagues in the same season and only 79 were all-women leagues.⁹⁴

Another program that increased the number of bowlers in both the Women's International Bowling Congress and the men's American Bowling Congress that complimented the mixed leagues was the development of senior bowling leagues in 1963. There were 243 senior leagues created in the 1964-1965 season with 207 of those leagues were "mixed leagues" and 36 being women's league. More than 2,100 women joined the Women's International Bowling Congress through senior leagues in 143 cities, 36 states, Canada, and Puerto Rico with Florida leading with 44 leagues and California in second place with 39 leagues. "Besides the usual physical exercise and companionship features of bowling, senior leagues provide the special advantage of bringing together persons of similar ages and interests in sports which can be enjoyed no matter what the strength, size, or age of the participant."⁹⁵ Many of these new members were first time bowlers, (seasoned bowlers labeled them "late bloomers") started bowling in large numbers during the 1970s and these numbers continued to increase up to the end of the twentieth century. Because doctors often recommended bowling as a light exercise for seniors, bowling became an attractive activity for many who wanted to stay mobile in the latter years of their lives. Bowling offered seniors a year-round activity and exercise and also offered them a field of play that provided them with a highly competitive sport and a chance for companionship with others that shared mutual interests. Apparently age and strength played a very small part in senior bowling because records show that many thousands of senior bowlers, men and women, scored perfect games and carried higher averages

during the latter part of their lives. This author's own experiences reflect the same conclusions that strength and power are much less important as control and mental attitude. Surveys show senior men were more likely to regard women bowlers as "women at play" while they viewed their own bowling performance as "competitive and important."⁹⁶

Beginning in the 1950s and up to the last quarter of the twentieth century, seniors everywhere were bowling and at the same time finding companionship, travel, romance, and better health. While many of these seniors were seasoned bowlers with years of experience behind them, senior leagues showed a growing number of novice or "late bloomer" bowlers taking up the sport after the age of fifty-five. For instance Sue Lesandrini of Crystal Fall, Michigan started bowling at the age of sixty-three, Fran Frost, fifty-nine years old from Maine, started bowling after she subbed once for a friend, and Mae Procter of Grantsville, Georgia took up bowling at the age of sixty-nine to ward off loneliness after her husband died. While all the of the women mentioned above started bowling for different reasons, their reasons for continuing bowling were quite similar; simply put, they loved the game.⁹⁷

Records indicate that senior women bowlers whether seasoned or a late bloomer, bowl aggressively and took their game seriously. Senior woman bowler Evelyn Colbert set a new age record with her perfect score of 300 at the age of sixty-six during doubles competition in the Minnesota State Women's Bowling Association tournament at Echo Lanes in Austin, Minnesota in April 1993. Colbert, who carries a 159 average, said, "Don't ask me how it happened. I just threw my ball straight like I always do. It was working just perfectly – literally. To top it off, I started my next game with a strike and I

thought to myself ‘Here we go again!’” Colbert’s perfect game broke a ten-year-old record set by WIBC Hall of Famer, Helen Duval of Berkley, California at the age of sixty-five on June 3, 1982.⁹⁸

Theresa Wittenberg of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, at the age of ninety years completed fifty years of bowling. Wittenberg’s love for bowling was known throughout Cedar Rapids where she managed to bowl in six night leagues. It all started for her when fellow factory workers asked her to join their team in an industrial league in 1942. At the age of 90 she carried a 168 average, used a sixteen pound bowling ball, and bowled in many city and state tournaments, and in twelve WIBC championship tournaments.⁹⁹ Ann Hornyak beat Theresa Wittenberg’s record by bowling in sixty-nine consecutive years in the same league before retiring in 2004 when she turned 89.¹⁰⁰ One of WIBC’s oldest bowlers, Mollie Marler of North Kansas City, Missouri, started bowling at the age of 93 when a friend kept asking her to join her league. Marler was 101 in 1986 but she continued to bowl in two senior leagues.¹⁰¹

Tournaments became the major attraction for senior women bowlers. It was not unusual for groups of women from local and state associations to chip in to cover the cost of hiring a bus to carry them all to out of town and even to out of state tournaments. “My first tournament was as a senior. A bunch of us older women hired a bus to take us to Reedsburg, Wisconsin. It was a lot of fun but it was really just the frosting on the cake when I cashed and took home \$20.” Ethel Brunnick, born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1887 competed in 10 straight WIBC Championship Tournaments. Brunnick started bowling in 1965 at the age of 78. “I went to my first state seniors’ tournament as a sub,” said sixty-two year old Betty Fugna of Wilmar, Arkansas who started bowling in 1988.

Sixty-six year old Rosemary Piotrowski of Amherst, Wisconsin said she returned to bowling after staying away for twenty years, she commented “I forgot how much I love to travel to the tournaments.”¹⁰²

As more and more women joined the family of the Women’s International Bowling Congress, membership soon reached an all-time high. Jamie Bartlome, from Boise, Idaho, became WIBC’s four millionth member, which indicated a healthy growth in membership during the 1977-1978 bowling season, the thirty-second year of continuous membership increase. The ten largest state associations specifically showed strong increases with New York continuing as the state with the largest membership with a significant increase of 5,310 that equates to 370,080 members. Ohio came in second with 366,690 members and California in third place with 360,483. The Michigan state association, in fourth place, saw a monumental increase of 17,107 new women bowlers for the 1977-1978 season bringing its numbers to 349,054 while Texas moved up to eighth place with 145,350 members. Locally sanctioned leagues also showed a strong continuing increase for state membership with California leading with 19,456 leagues, New York coming in with 13,276 leagues, and Ohio taking third place with 12,685 leagues. The number of nationwide leagues also reached a new high of 165,589, which showed a three percent increase over the season before. Within the WIBC, 46 members rolled 48 perfect games beating the 1976-1977 record of thirty-seven 300s.¹⁰³

During the decade of the 1970s, local associations showed significant increases in sanctioned leagues. In 1977 there were 2,800 local associations and nearly two thirds had 500 or fewer members and 12.5 percent of all local league associations had from 501 to 1,000 members. And out of all associations, 1.2 percent or 34 associations had more

than 20,000 members.¹⁰⁴ Detroit, Michigan was the largest local association with 127,495 members up 450 from the 1976-1977 bowling season, and in first place in leagues that included 3,812 leagues with 200 more than the season before. Surveys showed Chicago, Illinois in second place with 87,743 members and 2,911 leagues. Cleveland, Ohio took third place for number of members with 47,488 Milwaukee, Wisconsin took fourth place with 50,877 members, St. Louis (the birthplace of the WIBC) won fifth place with 46,117 members, and Minneapolis, Minnesota a close sixth place with 46,117. The American Junior Bowling Congress (AJBC), now co-sponsored by the ABC and the WIBC, also showed fourteen consecutive seasons of growth since 1964 in a membership of 853,650. The 1976-1977 bowling season also recorded a record number of local association delegates that attended the yearly convention (3,272) and the WIBC Championship Tournament claimed 9,688 teams, 47,440 bowlers, and a prize fund of \$688,462, the fourth largest in WIBC history.¹⁰⁵ At the end of the 1978 season WIBC membership awards reached an impressive number when 165,720 women bowlers received awards for most improved average (MIP), high league games (275-300) and high series (700 or higher). That year there were 23,291 all spare games awards, 1,277 Dutch 200 awards, 25,329 pins awarded for members bowling 100 pins above their averages, and included 4,162 awards for the big four conversion (two pins in each back corner), and 1,377 seven/ten split conversions.¹⁰⁶

With the anticipated growth expected in the Women's International Bowling Congress during the 1970s, national leaders looked to volunteers on local levels to promote bowling and provide services to new bowlers. WIBC officials spread out across the country during the Saturdays of the summer months in order to recruit new volunteers

and to teach veteran volunteers the bowling physics through hands-on programs such as the Leadership Training Seminar (LTS II). The LTS II was held in thirteen cities, twelve states, and in Canada. With 2,251 volunteer leaders from 418 local women's bowling associations attending the seminars, instructors set out to teach volunteers how to perform leadership duties more efficiently. The program was designed to inform old and new volunteers about rules procedures and techniques, how to conduct meetings, what the responsibilities association officers would be expected to provide each association and to teach leadership techniques, financial controls, budgeting, human relations, promotion ideas, and association services. Forty-nine seminars were held from 1974 through 1978 that included 7,000 volunteers from 1,500 local associations.¹⁰⁷

The Women's International Bowling Congress worked tirelessly to include all segments of society by designing leagues that could include youth, seniors, and special leagues for the physically and mentally impaired. For instance, the first smokeless league formed at Fairlanes Deer Valley Bowling Center in Phoenix, Arizona in 1978. Susan Jordan organized the league in response to a request for cleaner air while competing. The league roster listed thirty-two five-member teams and filled the bowling center from the first to the last lane. Jordan said she had a waiting list for league member placement that would almost outfit another league. Most of the bowlers who joined the no-smoking league and the ones on the waiting list were mostly young women in their twenties and thirties.¹⁰⁸ The idea of a "smokeless bowling league" was novel and new and would become the "last holdout" in the quest to turn bowling alleys into bowling centers. Smoking was already forbidden during championship competition but legislation that required dress codes for tournament competition took years to change as would

legislation against smoking in bowling centers. However, bowling centers were slow to rule against smoking because so many bowlers smoked but eventually local and state government took the problem out of the hands of the Women's International Bowling Congress and only recently in the twenty-first century nearly 98 percent of America's bowling centers are now smoke-free.¹⁰⁹

“America fell in love with bowling after World War II,” declared Andrew Hurley in his study of America society during the Cold War years and its new middleclass. In 1946 there were ten to fifteen million bowlers, a higher figure, stated Hurly, than any other sport. He believes that number more than doubled to forty million by the early 1960s. “What had once been a man's activity was now pursued equally by women and men including large numbers of young bowlers. And what had once been a sport dominated by a working class people of modest means had attained significant popularity across occupational categories and income levels. Bowling developed a reputation as a sport of the masses,” stated Hurley.¹¹⁰ Bowling was marketed during the 1950s as a family sport and it brought families together in a new-found recreation that American society had yet to experience. However, records indicate that most families did not bowl together on the same leagues. Men and women both continued to bowl in adult only leagues, some in mixed leagues, others in men or women only leagues. They mainly bowled in the evenings after work while their children bowled in youth leagues usually on Saturday mornings and Sunday afternoons. However, the re-creation of the local bowling alleys into bowling centers made the sport respectable and acceptable enough for fathers and mothers to bring their children into the establishments where they either played or watched television in controlled childcare areas with older children sitting in

the bowling arena where they watched their parents bowl. The re-creation of the bowling alley into bowling centers allowed hundreds of thousands of young Americans, like Mary and Charley mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, to build relationships, join bowling teams and to develop bowling skills, and to start a family tradition in thousands of families just like the Hendersons, the Hines, and the Bayers.¹¹¹

The following chapter discusses the peak in membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress, which began with the first year in the decade of the 1980s and continued to recede through the rest of the twentieth century. This chapter argues that no one thing led to the decline in women's bowling and was due in part to an increase in sporting options and also to an economic degeneration that started the demise of working-class institutions. As more women entered the work place, less time was available for leisure. Ultimately, it seems that a large segment of American society during this period increasingly viewed bowling as a pastime and not a *real* sport thus leading to a decrease in sanctioned league bowling.

NOTES

CHAPTER V

¹ Mary Henderson Interview, San Angelo, Texas 23 September 2005, found in author's files.

² Ibid.

³ "Women's bowling will be televised," *Milwaukee Journal*, 7 December 1958, part 3, p 5.

⁴ Ray Sanchez, "U.S. bowling boom over but E.P. houses doing well," *El Paso Herald Post*, 3 April 1968, p 22.

⁵ See Interviews by author and see also "Seniors just saying yes – to an evening at alley," *Hutchinson News*, 9 October 1988, p 130.

⁶ Gideon Bosker and Bianca Lenck-Bosker, "Alley Fashions: Dressing for the Game," *Bowled Over: a Roll Down Memory Lane*, (Chronicle Books: San Francisco, 2002), 66.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Hartford Courante*, February 21, 1950, p 13.

⁹ For canceled ABC tournament in New York, see the *Hartford Courante*, February 21, 1950, p 13, see also the *Christian Science Monitor*, February 21, 1950, p 15. See the *Milwaukee Journal*, May 23, 1950, or The *Afro American*, June 17, 1950, no. 45, pp 1-2.

¹⁰ *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1968 and see also the *New York Times* February 10, 1968 or the *Desert News*, 8 February 1968, p A3.

¹¹ Sam Dawson, "Having fun boon to US business," *Miami News*, 5 July 1957, p 7B.

¹² The *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 28 August 1958.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Andrew Hurley, "Heading off trouble: Getting teens off the streets and into the bowling alley," *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture*, (Basic Books: New York, 2001), pp 179-182. Also see, Victoria Getis's, "Experts and juvenile delinquency, 1900-1935, *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*, pp 21-35 and see Milton Raymer, "Teen-Age Keglers," *National Bowlers Journal and Billiard Revue*, v 34, August 1947, pp 22-23.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Voice of WIBC," *Woman Bowler*, October 1962, v 26, no. 9, p 2.

¹⁷ "You've met Mrs. Typical, now meet Mr. Typical," *Woman Bowler*, September, 1964, v 28, no. 5, p 31.

¹⁸ "How average are you," *Woman Bowler*, October 1962, v 26, no. 9, p 21.

¹⁹ "Under the WIBC roof," *Woman Bowler*, October 1962, v 26, no. 9, p 4, 43.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "WIBC, you take the cake," *Woman Bowler*, November 1982, no v or o., pp 26-27.

²² Ibid.

²³ "AJBC did it," *Woman Bowler*, September 1969, v 33, no. 8, p 41.

²⁴ AJBC vital to WIBC," *Woman Bowler*, May/June 1963, v 27, no. 6, pp 3, 54-55.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Interview with President Alberta E. Crowe and the *Woman Bowler*, May/June 1963, v 27, no. 6, pp 3, 54-55.

²⁷ "Reorganization, added personnel improve efficiency," *Woman Bowler*, January 1963, v 27, no. 2, pp 8, 47.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Sanctioning of special tournaments big job," *Woman Bowler*, April 1963, v 27, no. 5, pp 20, 41.

³⁰ "Rules department answers questions," *Woman Bowler*, March 1963, v 27, no. 4, p 14.

³¹ Interview with Emma Phaler and the *Woman Bowler* in January 1963, v 27, no. 2, pp 8, 47.

³² "Reorganization, added personnel improve efficiency," *Woman Bowler*, January 1963, v 27, no. 2, pp 8, 47.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "NBC Coordinates bowling groups," *Woman Bowler*, January 1963, v 27, no. 2, pp 13.

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- ³⁵ Gideon and Bosker, 70-71.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Interscholastic bowling leagues are still popular in many high schools and universities across the country. These youth leagues are discussed in depth in chapter III of this study.
- ³⁹ "Girls come first," *Woman Bowler*, January 1970, v 34, no. 2, pp 26-27.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ "Moss named junior leader," *Woman Bowler*, April 1982, v 46, no. 4, p 39.
- ⁴² See Joy Samuels Interview, San Angelo, Texas 1 November 2003, located in the authors files.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ "Junior Jots," *Woman Bowler*, February 1970, v 35, no. 3, p 40.
- ⁴⁵ "Junior Jots," *Woman Bowler*, January 1971, v 35, no.2, p 44.
- ⁴⁶ "Junior Jots," *Woman Bowler*, December 1970, v 35, no. 1, p 37.
- ⁴⁷ Emily Beck Interview, 20 October 2005, San Angelo, Texas, located in the author's files.
- ⁴⁸ SMART Program & Scholarships, <http://www.bowl.com/scholarships/main.aspx>. Also see the College Athletic Scholarship Guide for Women.
- ⁴⁹ Randy Kilgore, "Collegiate scene," *Woman Bowler*, April 1982, v 46, no. 4, p 35.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ron Holmes, interview, NCAA News Online, March 2005.
- ⁵² Betty Kuczynski was named first Star of Tomorrow," *Woman Bowler*, July 1993, v 57, no. 5, p 12.
- ⁵³ Ibid. This award later provided \$1,500 to each recipient.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Reiss, 3.
- ⁵⁶ "Cheering on women and girls in sports: Using Title IX to fight gender role oppression." No author indicated. *Harvard Law Review*, May 1997, v 110, no. 7, pp 1627-1644.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ "The Women's Sports Foundation."
- ⁵⁹ "B' is for bowling at some schools," *Woman Bowler*, Feb. 1963, v 27, no. 3, pp. 26-27.
- ⁶⁰ Flo Randels, "Planning, co-operation key to school program," *Woman Bowler*, April 1964, v 28, no. 5, p 40.
- ⁶¹ "Junior Jots," *Woman Bowler*, March 1970, v 34, no. 3, p 45.
- ⁶² "Two juniors reach stardom," *Woman Bowler*, April 1982, v 46, no. 4, p 39.
- ⁶³ "Former Miss America travels for tenpins as NBC promotion," *Woman Bowler*, October 1970, v 34, no. 9, pp 20-21.
- ⁶⁴ "Beauty and Mr. Bowling: Bowl-a-Shape," *Woman Bowler*, September 1971, v 35, no. 8, pp 20-22. See also "Look who's bowling now" and "What's my line," *Woman's World*, August 1971.
- ⁶⁵ "Retton appears in new bowling commercial," *Woman Bowler*, Jun3 1986, v 50, no. 6, p 27.
- ⁶⁶ "NBC's 'Celebrity Bowling' has Hollywood buzzing," *Woman Bowler*, February 1971, v 35, no. 3, pp 16-17.
- ⁶⁷ L.J. Mills, "Bowling with grammar," *The English Journal*, April 1920, v 9, no. 4, pp 227-229.
- ⁶⁸ Annette Berson, "Classroom bowling," *Learning Disability Quarterly*, Spring 1983, v 6, no. 2, pp 241-242.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ See Consumer magazines such as the *American Girl*, the *American Observer*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Life*, *Look*, *National Geographic*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Time Magazine*.
- ⁷¹ "Blind bowler is inspiration to herself," *Woman Bowler*, February 1982, v 42, no. 2, pp 18-19.
- ⁷² "Wheelchair bowling program makes progress in Johnstown," *Woman Bowler*, March 1964, v 28, no. 4, p 28.
- ⁷³ "Its more than a game for handicapped players," December 1976, v 41, no. 1, pp 24-26.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 26.
- ⁷⁵ "Bowling provides opportunity for physically handicapped," *Woman Bowler*, May/June 1964, v 28, no. 6, pp 27, 33.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ "Large membership: New York, Detroit lead," *Woman Bowler*, November 1964, v 28, p 34.

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- ⁷⁸ “Bowling survey reveals some interesting facts,” *Woman Bowler*, March 1965, v 29, no. 4, pp 16-17, 32.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ⁸⁰ “Second printing of bowling stamp envelope pushes total to 60 million,” *Woman Bowler*, December 1971, v 36, no.1, pp 14-15.
- ⁸¹ Charles Westlake, “U.S. impressive in Guatemala,” *Woman Bowler*, March 1966, v 30, no. 4, pp 4-6.
- ⁸² International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame now located in Arlington, Texas.
- ⁸³ See Interview with Hazel Daniel and the *Woman Bowler*, April 1986, v 50, no. 4, pp 35-37.
- ⁸⁴ See Interview with Marilyn Miller and the *Woman Bowler*, April 1986, v 50, no. 4, pp 35-37.
- ⁸⁵ See Interview with Betty Freese and the *Woman Bowler*, April 1986, v 50, no. 4, pp 35-37.
- ⁸⁶ Mark Miller, “It’s a woman’s thing . . . Females play major role in the business of bowling in Wichita area,” *2004 Championship Tournament*, 22-23.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ See interview, R.R. Woodruff and the *Woman Bowler*.
- ⁹⁰ Tom Meade, interview with the *Woman Bowler*, January 1971, v 35, no. 2, pp 24-45.
- ⁹¹ Milt Rudo, interview with the *Woman Bowler*, January 1971, v 5, no 2, pp 24-25.
- ⁹² Andrew Hurley, 177.
- ⁹³ Terry Hersom, “Not women libbers,” *Woman Bowler*, July/August 1973, v 37, no. 7, p 59. Many men’s league began allowing women in their leagues and in 1993 they made it official through legislation that women could join men’s leagues, however, men cannot compete in women’s leagues nor can they compete in women’s state or national tournaments. See also Ed Reddy’s article “Gender won’t matter soon,” *Syracuse Post Standard*, 1 December 1993, p 37.
- ⁹⁴ “Mixed league growth continues,” *Woman Bowler*, January 1977, v 41, no. 3, p 18.
- ⁹⁵ “Senior Leagues,” *Woman Bowler*, September 1966, v 30, no. 8, p 60.
- ⁹⁶ See Oral Histories found in the author’s vertical files.
- ⁹⁷ “Late bloomers: Senior bowlers,” *Woman Bowler*, v 57, no. 5, pp 42-45.
- ⁹⁸ “Senior Scene,” *Woman Bowler*, July 1993, v 57, no. 5, pp 46-47.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ “Strength in numbers,” *Frames and Lanes: Special Commemorative Final Issue*, Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, p 23.
- ¹⁰¹ “Older and oldest bowlers,” *Woman Bowler*, March 1986, v 50, no. 3, p 46.
- ¹⁰² “Late bloomers: Senior bowlers,” *Woman Bowler*, July 1993, v 57, no. 5, pp 42-45.
- ¹⁰³ “Membership 1977-1978,” *Woman Bowler*, September 1978, v 42, no. 8, pp 27, 36-37.
- ¹⁰⁴ “Leagues: Survey,” *Woman Bowler*, March 1978, v 42, no. 4, p 46.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁷ Helen Latham, “The other game of bowling—leadership,” *Woman Bowler*, October 1978, v 42, no. 9, pp 24-25, 26-27.
- ¹⁰⁸ “This league is smokeless,” *Woman Bowler*, September 1978, v 42, no. 8, p 10.
- ¹⁰⁹ See Carrie Beck Interview. Underage smokers used bowling center cigarette dispensers to purchase their smokes because they were too young to purchase them legally.
- ¹¹⁰ Hurley, 108-111.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., 193.

CHAPTER VI

NOT YOUR MOTHER'S BOWLING ALLEY: THE DECLINE OF LEAGUE BOWLING AND THE MAKING OF A PASTIME

Dottie McNutt, who serves as a bowling tournament director, a youth instructor, a league secretary, and a certified lane inspector at Stadium Lanes Bowling Center in San Angelo, Texas, believes the main reason bowling membership started declining in the early 1980s, was due to the increase in sporting options for youth, young adults, and especially for girls. Many parents encouraged their children to take on as many sports and other activities that could be squeezed into their out-of-school hours in order to ward off idleness and socially negative behavior.¹ Consequently, parents and their children did not have the time to become overly interested or passionate about sports such as bowling. This lack of passion for bowling and a growing disinterest in the sport by adults, consequently, decreased the number of youth in leagues, McNutt concluded.² But the question remained, why was bowling losing its appeal to women when other sports were not? Even with the help of advertisers, bowling center proprietors, and major companies with financial interest in the bowling industry, bowling had ceased to be the leader it had once been in the lineup of American participant sports. According to annual surveys mentioned throughout this study and particularly in this chapter, bowling industry leaders were baffled because they were unable to spot any specific areas for concern that would explain why bowling was no longer a leader in the sporting arena.

Of course there is no single reason that could explain the decline. Patterns and trends over time and in retrospect suggest that several major problems existed within the bowling industry that range from economic decline to the demise of working-class

institutions that seemed to make bowling like blue collar America, a thing of the past. While several thousand U.S. bowling centers did not survive the 1980s and 1990s, others were transformed into something that resembled video arcades rather than familiar spaces where an earlier generation of women had come of age, fine-tuned their skills, and created a distinct women's sporting culture. At the same time, the working-class character of bowling seemed to disappear. In other words, this was not your mother's bowling alley and the integrity of the sport also seemed to be in jeopardy.³

Dottie McNutt, and many others in leadership roles agree, that today much of the country's youth increasingly view bowling as a pastime and not a *real*, school-associated sport.⁴ Thus this chapter also questions what defines a real sport? To be sure, it is about athleticism and skill, but do so-called *real* sports demand an uneven playing field? That is to say, does the sporting world assume that in *real* competition, men always have an advantage over their female counterparts due to physical difference? Yet the concept that men have some natural advantage is something women bowlers, as well as other women athletes, have constantly challenged. Women bowlers insist it is skill and not physicality that determines bowling averages. Additionally, when men and women bowl on the same lanes they often complain about each other and question the notion that the other gender is legitimate competition. This chapter argues the concept that bowling is a *real* sport and looks at the prevailing circumstances that undermined both the competitive leagues system for men and women bowlers and damaged a younger generation's understanding of bowling as a sport rather than just a pastime. This chapter will argue that as membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress faltered during the last decade of the twentieth century membership also waned in the men's American

Bowling Congress and in the Young American Bowling Association (YABA) suggesting strong links to the American economy, loss of playtime, and the tremendous inflation of availability of other school-associated sports.⁵

In the early 1970s, bowling thrived across the country. According to the National Bowling Council's survey in March of 1972, over fifty-two million Americans bowled at least once in 1971, 8.7 million bowled regularly with one billion games being bowled across the country. Young men made up fifty-five percent of the youth bowlers and the most popular age of bowlers for both boys and girls was fourteen to seventeen. Forty-five percent of all of young American women (19 years old or less) and forty-four percent of all young American men of the same age bowled at least once in 1971. Also forty-five percent of young American adults (19-29 years of age) participated in bowling during this year. Thirty-eight percent of all American families with a yearly income between \$5,000 and \$9,999 bowled at least once a year. For families with yearly incomes over \$10,000, twenty percent or approximately 8.7 million bowled regularly (at least once a week). While this 1972 survey indicated increasing bowling participation in American youth and rising family incomes, the popularity of league bowling would quickly change, peak, and soon pass.⁶

The decline of league bowling—a working-class institution must be set against the backdrop of the American economy. With the increasing trials and tribulations of America's blue-collar livelihood in the 1970s and 1980s bowling seemed to struggle. The WIBC conducted a survey in March 1986 of both the Women's International Bowling Congress bowlers and the American Bowling Congress. Sixty-five percent of the men and one third of the women bowlers who bowled in sanctioned leagues for more

than twenty years suggest that younger generations were choosing other sports to occupy their out-of-school hours such as baseball, basketball, football, and soccer. Many believed that declining participation and difficulty in recruiting young bowlers was due mainly to the increasing numbers of two-career families and the decrease in leisure hours. After juggling wage work and domestic responsibilities, many families lost the available time needed for a commitment required to maintain a bowling team in league play. This seemed to be one of the most important issues the WIBC confronted during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Women bowlers, who were also mothers and grandmothers, encountered the obstacle of “not having enough time in the day” to bowl or participate in any other activities more often than men. Mike Rapas-Reed, executive director of the Madison Bowling Association says “there are too many things to do but there are still only 24 hours in a day.”⁷

Bowling center owners and industry insiders also credited the decline in bowling to “a shift in American lifestyles.”⁸ In blue-collar Wisconsin, the modern-day bowling center still resembles the bowling alleys of yesteryear but much has changed. “The singular cushy clatter of toppling pins still caroms up every lane, its chaotic rhythm the cadence of a full house.”⁹ Yet people are bowling less often and the average number of days that people bowl declined 21.4 percent since 1980 and those who bowl fifty or more games a year declined by 20.5 percent by 2000, the year this study was administrated. Couples work longer hours than they did in the 1970s, computers siphon off leisure time and families face more choices of extra-curricular activities for children.”¹⁰

The problems families, especially mothers, faced included longer working days but also less income. By the early 1980s de-industrialization had taken its toll. American

poverty levels reached a twenty-year high with over 35 million people, or 15 percent of the entire US population, living below the poverty line. Significant numbers of women entered the paid labor market some in fields such as “law, medicine, animal husbandry and other traditionally male-dominated fields” but no matter what field of labor these women entered, the vast majority of women entered the work force to make ends meet. A very large portion of this 15 percent represented American women and children.¹¹

This was a time when younger women realized that even having a two-income household would not be enough to sustain the lifestyle they experienced as children growing up during the 1950s and 1960s. The 1980s was a decade of “Reaganomics” and Ruth Sidel, author of *Keeping Women and Children Last*, argues that “trickle-down economics” in turn “made the rich richer and widened the gap between rich and poor.” Many believed President Reagan’s administration was driving America’s poor into perpetual poverty.¹²

By the mid 1980s, social programs had been cut severely including Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), day care funds, and many training and employment programs. Other programs like the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) were completely eliminated and by 1993 an additional four million people were living in poverty in the United States.¹³ These programs that would have helped the poorest of American families, of which were mainly single-parent families, were believed by many to be the cause of most major problems suffered by the American people “from school failure to crime, and from teenage pregnancy to drug addiction.”¹⁴ These were trends that would continue well beyond President Reagan. During the Clinton administration, the War on Drugs, managed to double the prison population and a bipartisan 1996 agreement to end “welfare as we know it” further undermined the safety

net that contributed to the feminization of poverty. Regardless of leadership, blue-collar America had become a former shadow of itself.¹⁵

The lives of working-class women cannot be overlooked in understanding the decline of women's league bowling. In 1980, the Women's International Bowling Congress president concluded from statistical reports, that "There is no doubt the economy of the country has definitely had an impact on our membership rolls. Inflation has increased the percentage of women who have sought jobs to supplement family incomes." She urged the delegates to cope with the problem of league dropouts and to work with local proprietors in solving the membership problem. "The bowling scene is changing drastically as our members adjust their lives to cope with the ever-changing economy and still retain their interest in bowling."¹⁶

With increasing numbers of Americans who bowled at least on occasion, most were not committed to leagues. A study completed in 1995 revealed that seventy-two million Americans were going bowling yearly, a thirteen percent increase from 1977 with forty percent of that increase occurring in recent years. In 1980 alone, bowlers rolled 1,600,000,000 games on 154,412 lanes in 8,600 bowling centers, but this same study showed sanctioned league bowlers rolling 423 fewer games per lane in 1980 than in 1977 with the average local bowling centers losing six thousand games per year on each lane. Unlike most other single participant sports, bowling is a highly organized sport, which runs thirty-five weeks a season. In 1997, Sandy Hansel, a leading consultant and broker for the bowling industry, argued that indeed lifestyle changes make it difficult for people to make a thirty-two week commitment to be somewhere specific. Ironically, he said, "The number of people participating in leagues began to shrink and the industry began to

widen its thrust to attract more bowlers to those who want to use bowling as purely a social or recreational pastime.”¹⁷

Financially and fatally wounded, many bowling centers across the United States started closing their doors after the initial drop in membership in 1980. “We have been losing on average about three to four a year and another drop is projected when the final 1991-1992 figures come in,” says Mark Miller, of American Bowling Congress public relations. Robert Putman also noted in a 2000 study, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, leagues began to collapse in the 1980s and this collapse, along with many thousands of American clubs and social involvement, happened almost overnight. Putman argues that this collapse “is a disturbing nationwide trend away from social connectedness.”¹⁸ Bowling centers were being shut down and replaced by roller rinks, theaters, and arcades. With declining membership, changing demographics and lifestyles, Bowling Proprietors American Association (BPAA) worried about future consequences to the bowling industry. When Burr Oaks Bowl closed its door on May 31, 1992 in Madison, Wisconsin, Roy Shelton had been bowling there since it opened in 1960. Shelton said, “I’ll miss it, but I won’t quit (bowling). I imagine that quite a few of them will quit. They don’t have a place to go where they can keep bowling first shift (6:30 P.M.) like my Thursday night league. We already gave up as far as the league staying together.”¹⁹

As bowling centers disappeared across the country companies looked abroad for financial growth. The Brunswick Company reported their international sales division in gross sales to range from \$8,000,000 to \$170,000,000 with markets in China, Ireland, Turkey, South Korea, Mexico, and Italy. In 1994, fifty-four percent of Brunswick’s

business consisted of sales outside the United States and Canada including 54 percent from Southeast Asia, 40 percent from Japan, 5 percent from Europe, and 1 percent from Latin America. Brunswick helped install 1,000 bowling centers in China and four new bowling centers in Brazil.²⁰

Of course entrepreneurs in the U.S. did not simply give up on the industry. In the 1980s bowling proprietors began to once again update their bowling centers hoping to entice local patrons, especially women, back to the sport of bowling. The American Machine and Foundry Corporation (AMF) and the Brunswick Company, concluded in their own survey, that the majority of participants at the peak of bowling were women ranging from eighteen to forty-nine years of age. The decline in women's bowling caused grave concern. Ken Hurley, American Bowling Congress executive secretary declared that "We must develop an emergency program. We must make it more exciting and more acceptable. Making it a more acceptable or exciting recreational pastime would mean men (boys) and women (girls) competing (against each other) but more for entertainment and socialization rather than in the name of athleticism."²¹ It was during this time that bowling became more of a pastime than a sport with a major shift from sanctioned leagues to open bowling. Indeed, strong evidence suggests that more and more men and women were participating in open bowling.

Busier lives seem to reflect a change in attitude as well. Seventy-five percent of the women surveyed in the spring of 1995 admitted they mainly bowled in leagues "just for the fun of it" while only three percent take the game very seriously and play mainly to win. As much as women love to bowl, the majority of women bowlers would rather have a "romantic evening" with their spouse but bowling came in 2nd place for the most

popular night of free time and entertainment. Fifty percent of all women bowlers surveyed participated in a range of other sports that includes softball, tennis, walking, weight lifting, stock car racing, running, swimming, golf, and chasing grandchildren.²²

By 1995, the working-class faced harder times and bowling now seemed to be marketed to those that had money. Perhaps most telling was the way the industry increasingly made comparisons between bowling and other sports that had long been identified with the leisure class and more exclusive country club set. To be sure, bowling was a better deal. Bowlers spent \$722.7 million on bowling equipment nationwide with each bowler spending \$18 each on bowling equipment, bowling shoes, and bowling apparel. The price of a bowling ball was \$65.79. In comparison, twenty-three million golfers spent \$2.6 billion on golf equipment, which included golf clubs, golf bags, golf shoes and clothing. Each golfer on the average spent \$113 each with a set of golf clubs costing \$294 per set. Also tennis participants spent \$1.5 billion on tennis equipment such as tennis rackets, shoes, and clothing that averaged about \$81 per participant with tennis rackets averaging \$66.33.²³

Comparing bowling to tennis or golf suggested a new class of bowlers and a comparison that may not have been simply wishful thinking for entrepreneurs and bowling associations desperate for dollars. Within ten years the characteristics of the “average” WIBC bowler had changed dramatically. She was certainly getting older. A 1987 survey showed the average woman bowler’s age had increased by a decade of years from 32-41 to 41-49. She was married with one-to-three children and had graduated from high school. Fifty-five percent of women bowlers surveyed worked full time while forty-five percent were homemakers or retired. The annual household income for the mid

1980s bowler ranged from \$30,000 to \$44,999 with ten percent in excess of \$60,000. More women bowlers were now employed in professional jobs than in previous years. The average typical woman bowler was now represented in public education as teachers, councilors, principals, and school nurses. Also this period saw a great increase of WIBC representation in public health care such as registered nurses, x-ray techs, nurse practitioners, and medical doctors and religious leaders.²⁴

Similarly, the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), the largest US sporting goods trade association, also revealed bowling to be among the nation's most popular participation sports as it gave the sport a class makeover. According to NSGA research, bowling is the strongest participation sport among three participant sports that includes golf and tennis. In fact, bowling draws more one-time bowlers or more participants than both golf and tennis combined with golf at twenty-three million and tennis at eighteen million. However, golf showed the largest increase over a five year period, 1985-1990, with an increase of 21.8 percent. Tennis decreased during this same period from nineteen million participants to eighteen and one half million which shows a 2.9 percent decrease. NSGA research indicates bowling increased by 12.3 percent in the same five-year period from 35.7 million to 40.1 million. However, sanctioned league bowlers decreased by twenty-three percent while the American Sports Data Incorporated survey reported an increase in open bowling (non-league bowling). Bowling participation increased from 49.5 million in 1988 to 53.5 million in 1990, an eight percent increase.²⁵

Comparing bowling to tennis and golf may also have been a conscious effort to change the image of the sport. Americans are most familiar with the typical portrayal of

American bowlers in television as part of working-class culture. Situation comedies ranging from the 1970s through the 1990s with hits such as *All in the Family*, *Laverne and Shirley*, *Married With Children*, and *Roseanne* all reaffirming bowling as blue collar and white. Many of these working-class characters were associated not only with bowling but lacking in smarts and sophistication. One of the longest lasting situation comedies, *The Simpsons*, reduces bowling to an activity that requires little intelligence. Television writers admit that they write bowling into the scripts for characters to reaffirm and mock their working and /or lower middle-class backwardness. For instance, Homer Simpson is a blue-collar worker, a so-so father, and above all else a dimwit. Several episodes include the theme of bowling because the writers felt it was something Homer and his wife could and would do.²⁶ Publicity director, Antonio Coffmen insisted that bowling is a typical activity for a middle-class family living in Springfield USA, a fictitious city where the fictitious Simpsons live. Coffman also said “bowling is an absolutely big part of America. Everyone has done it or will do it once in their life.”²⁷

Similar themes can also be found in Hollywood films such as *Racing With The Wind* (1984), *Kingpin* (1996), and *The Big Lebowski* (1998). These three full length movies, also mentioned in an earlier chapter, used bowling as quintessential to blue-collar America. The first film, *Racing With the Wind*, stars Sean Penn who plays a “small-town teen-aged hotshot, six weeks away from being shipped out to fight the war in Europe.” This film is more about young love than bowling but it provided a realistic depiction of the physical aspects of the sport and how it fit into the lives of ordinary Americans. *Kingpin*, a slapstick comedy aired over a decade later. When Roy Munson, a character played by Woody Harrelson, wins an amateur state bowling competition, he decides to

become a professional bowler. While on tour, Munson and an established bowling professional, Ernie McCracken (played by Bill Murry) attempt to hustle some local bowlers and ends up with Munson getting his hand cut off for trying to hoodwink the wrong person. Munson, now nicknamed the Rubber Man, eventually enters a big tournament with a payout of \$1,000,000 but he has to bowl with a prosthetic hand that is made out of rubber. This film depicts bowling as a fundamental characteristic of the story in a rough working class life. *The Big Lebowski* aired a few years later and featured Jeff Bridges as Jeff Lebowski—"an unemployed Los Angeles slacker and avid bowler" with the nickname "The Dude." Bowling mixes with violence in this film including severed body-parts; a big toe, which is delivered to the story's hero and later in the story, a hooligan loses an ear when The Dude's main sidekick, Walter, bites it off. Walter also throws his bowling ball at another thug breaking several of his ribs. The film uses "mistaken identity plots" as story devices creating havoc for The Dude and his bowling buddy. Eventually, one of the Dude's bowling team members dies of a heart attack and his ashes are accidentally thrown all over The Dude. His friend Walter can think only of one thing to do, "Fuck it, Dude. Let's go Bowling!"²⁸

The National Bowling Council (NBC) was alarmed and in 1990 claimed that many of these bowling-themed shows painted an inaccurate picture of bowling and of bowlers and found commercials a much more wholesome image that they endorsed. The NBC had little concern with radio and television use of bowling themes to advertise products such as Cheer detergent, Hersey's Kisses, A & W Root Beer, tobacco, and Little Caesar's pizza, arguing advertising programs usually render a more realistic and

flattering image of bowling. To be sure, commercials are less likely to poke fun at viewers they consider to be a target audience.²⁹

To assert a much more respectable image of the American bowler, the National Bowling Council conducted a study in 1991 that happily indicated that the average US household income of bowlers was \$7,314 more than the average household income and that 52.7 percent of all bowlers attended college with 93 percent having graduated from high school. Out of the general American population only 75.7 percent graduated from high school during this period with only 36.7 percent having attended college. These figures suggest, at the expense of the “beer and blue collar” label, that not only are bowlers better educated than the average American, they are actually wealthier.³⁰

As the working class seemed to disappear, bowling allies became bowling centers and moved to newer commercial areas. Since 1988, the Brunswick Company has closed 150 centers in the lower economic regions in the United States that were non-profitable and they opened twenty-eight new ones in areas with rising economies. When Arnold Fogel, president of Brunswick Recreation Centers, a major bowling corporation that owned 126 bowling centers in the U.S. and in Europe during the 1990s, was asked about the health of the industry he noted that bowling was not what it had been in “the boom of the late ‘50s and early ‘60s,” and blamed over-building in economically depressed areas which produced a lot of centers that were “undercapitalized, poorly managed, or badly located.” Fogel insisted that bowling centers could be quite profitable if run correctly because bowling is a cash business with minimal incoming or outgoing billing and very little inventory.³¹

Today blue-collar spaces still boast a bowling legacy but there have been real shifts in locating centers in specific neighborhoods. In 2006, Milwaukee, Wisconsin laid claim to having twenty-six bowling centers, the most of any city in the United States. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania came in second with twenty-two and Houston, Texas placed third with twenty bowling centers. Buffalo, New York fell to fourth place with fourteen bowling centers and San Antonio, Texas maintained thirteen. In states, New York leads with 410 bowling centers, Michigan is second with 393, Wisconsin runs third with 356, Pennsylvania has 340, Minnesota has 241, and Texas has 215 bowling centers. On the lowest end, the state of Vermont has 23 bowling centers, Nevada has 21, Alaska has 20, Delaware and Rhode Island both have 15, Hawaii has 13, and Washington D.C. has none (unless you count the one in the White House which is not for public use). In cities with gambling casinos and Native American reservation bingo halls, bowling centers are few and far between.³² The largest bowling center in the United States with 106 lanes and for a time the largest bowling center in the world was located in the Castaways Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. With only twenty-one bowling centers in the entire state of Nevada, the Castaways Hotel along with the bowling center was imploded 11 January 2006.³³

The quest to keep up with middle-class aesthetics also meant that bowling centers were revamped, designed especially to compete for the attention of a younger generation looking for a night of fun. Thus “attractive new bowling centers” replaced the older bowling alleys across the nation. To survive, U.S. bowling centers were no longer just for bowling. During the 1990s, bowling proprietors saw a strong move towards family recreation. Older bowling centers became modern entertainment centers and new constructions during this decade went up all across the nation. With the introduction of

younger customers, focus in most of the older bowling centers shifted from the bar scene where most of their income originated in the Cold War years to family oriented recreation that included open bowling which cut down on sanctioned league contracts. Pat Brosco, executive director of Lincolnwood-based Illinois Bowling Proprietors Association, said “Thanks to a renewed emphasis on family activities and wholesome recreation, casual bowling has grown in popularity.”³⁴ Brosco commented that “Youths and the 18-35 year old crowd, who are bowling in increasing numbers, see it as a recreational activity and don’t want the commitment of a league.”³⁵ Mike Schmidt, Vice-President of Streamwood Lanes in Chicago, mentioned that five years ago (1990) about 80 percent of Streamwood Lanes’ business was league bowlers. Now the split is more like 50-50 between league bowling and casual bowling. “Bowling is more for fun now; the leagues aren’t as big.” Schmidt also noted changes in the habits of league bowlers. “People are drinking less (beer and other alcoholic drinks). They don’t stay in the bar after playing.”³⁶ Roger Maki, manager of Thunderbird Lanes in Mount Prospect, added “It’s getting harder for people to spend anywhere from \$7 to \$17 a night on league bowling. People who used to bowl in two or three leagues are cutting back to one night a week.”³⁷

These new multi-level activities centers, Kevin Mills of Architectural Concepts in Denver, Colorado called Super Centers offered billiards, bars, restaurants, child care, arcade games of all kinds, bumper cars, playgrounds, free bowling instruction, and bowling pro-shops, and sometimes miniature golf courses.³⁸ As clientele changed, owners looked for ways to keep the old customers and welcome the new. Even though bowling remains the primary business concern in all bowling centers, proprietors are adding various entertainment capabilities. Many bowling centers are offering space as

“chapels” for weddings and also have space to rent for receptions, retirement, and birthday parties.³⁹ Modern bowling centers offer computerized scoring, compact ball returns that take up less space, many provide more space in the settee area for bowlers’ equipment, and hire knowledgeable younger and friendly staff, and offer clean restrooms and well lit parking lots.⁴⁰ In an interview with the bowling center designer at Dynamic Designs, Jeff Greenberg described the new age bowling center as where “The emphasis of the future is not so much on bowling design and bowling alone but also on activities that families and various groups can participate in to have a fun and entertaining experience.”⁴¹ Many bowling center designers and proprietors believed the 1990s to be the “age of the supercenter” and the “mom and pop centers are going by the wayside.”⁴²

This was also a global trend. In Japan, for example “Bowling was very strong in the 50s and 60s. And after the same recession we went through in the states, it’s now coming back,” said Jim Otterstrom, vice president of marketing in the Brunswick Bowling and Billiards Corporation. But now “Men and women use lighter balls and marketing emphasis is to the younger population.” He also added that “The sports entertainment value is accentuated and many centers are built to resemble discotheques. Loud music, colorful strobe lights and video screens on which you can watch yourself bowl are part of the bowling experience in Japan.” Many participant sports, and especially bowling, were quickly being accentuated by animated computer games found on Wii, Xbox, and on Pogo.com, a favorite of many American youth as well as several other countries overseas and new bowling centers needed to try and compete.⁴³

Some business-based surveys look at bowling as something other than a competitive sport. However, independent surveys conducted in 1992 by the National

Sporting Goods Association and the American Sports Data Incorporated revealed bowling as a leader in national sporting activities. Their surveys concluded that in 1990 bowling was the third largest participant sport in the United States with 53,537,000 people having bowled at least once including children seven years and older. The NSGA survey tracked 15,000 households to identify national trends and patterns covering fifty-eight sports. “There are not many sports that have 53 million people participating,” boasted Harvey Lauer of American Sports Data Incorporated. “Bowling has been there for years. It’s an institution. If you are looking at new dynamic sports, they tend to skyrocket,” he added. “It (bowling) hasn’t skyrocketed or gyrated. But bowling is one of the few mature sports with a mass following that has grown in the last number of years.”⁴⁴

Significantly, bowling was typically not compared to soccer, softball, basketball or other popular female and male sports that dominate school campuses or media outlets. Instead the survey compared bowling to walking, fresh-water fishing, and camping, the only participant sports to outnumber bowling. The comparison to fishing and camping suggests that bowling was not considered a highly competitive sport but a pastime or leisure activity. A similar survey ranked bowling sixth as a participation sport. A survey of 10,000 households, representative of United States demographics, accounts for more than seventy-one million sport participants. Walking led with seventy million participants, followed by swimming with sixty-seven and a half million participants, with bicycling at fifty-five million, and fishing and camping came in fourth and fifth place. Even if more Americans bowl on occasion, activities such as walking, fishing, and

camping are a far cry from how top women bowlers and countless number of league enthusiasts defined the game.⁴⁵

The game also now seemed to demand less skill. By 1986 George Allen, from Tempe, Arizona and former college professor, completed two studies concerned with bowling industry trends. He argues the “Competitive Era” of bowling is over and the “Commercial Era” has replaced it. Allen declared that “bowling is on the verge of distinction done in by bouncy pins and urethane balls with built in hooking power, unscrupulous lane conditions and greedy commercial interests.” Allen believes that if the sport of bowling is dying it’s the business of bowling that is killing it. He believes that “we have eroded the integrity of the SPORT of bowling to create the RECREATION of bowling.” More specifically, Allen was making reference to the illegal practice of “fixing” the bowling lanes by controlling the oil patterns used to protect them from the repetition of the bowling balls striking the lanes.⁴⁶ Managers and bowling center owners were adjusting oil patterns to create a groove on the lane so that when the ball came into contact with it, it carried the ball into the “pocket” (the pocket is the space between the 1 and the 3 pin) scoring an illegal strike for the bowler. This illegal practice was called “lane blocking.” During this period between 1981 and 1991, men’s averages climbed higher and higher while women and youth bowlers averages dropped. WIBC and ABC lane inspectors also questioned the integrity of bowling house proprietors and managers as bowling “honor scores” (scores of 297, 298, and 299, and series of 800 plus) became common and even abundant in certain bowling centers. Industry leaders began to question the use of “short oil” applied to the lanes to help direct ball roll. Many perfect scores were discounted due to unequal lane conditions.⁴⁷

However, a call for repetitive lane inspections created mistrust between the proprietors, the bowlers, and the Women's International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress. By the early 1990s, the WIBC and the ABC contested every perfect game until the bowling center's lanes were inspected for misuse of oil, and the bowling pins checked for proper weight and height, and the bowler's bowling ball could be checked for any abnormalities. Consequently, lane certification created mistrust between the proprietors, the bowlers, and the WIBC and the ABC. Big increases in league bowlers' averages and an unusual high number of honor scores (honor scores range from 297 up to a perfect score of 300 and include high series of 800 plus) in an individual bowling center got the attention of the industry officials. Soaking plastic bowling balls to make them have better contact with the wooden lane also became a common practice. The ABC and the WIBC worked together to inform members that "soaking" bowling balls was illegal and anyone caught doing it would forfeit their membership.⁴⁸ Consequently, this period between the years of 1986 and 1991 appeared to diminish the integrity of the sport of bowling for both men and women.

Other areas of discord emerged thanks to mixed leagues. Gender tension plagued bowling leaders causing increasing numbers to drop out of the sport. One of the things women bowlers treasured most was bowling with and against other women. Increasingly, men and women found themselves in serious "mental" competition with each other, a conflict both sexes complain is ongoing. Men had long been seen as problematic both in their attitudes and in the way they played the game. But by the 1990s the majority of sanctioned bowling leagues were by this time mixed leagues.⁴⁹ To be sure, men and women often make up the same excuses for bowling a mediocre series,

such as the lanes are either too dry or too oily, referring to the amount of oil used to dress the lane or the lack of it.⁵⁰ Men and women both certainly bring a host of problems to the game that have nothing to do with gender distinctions, yet many of their complaints suggested just the opposite. Women claim, for example, that men lengthen a game taking too long to bowl. “They clean their bowling ball, adjust their stance, and wait until everyone else from two to three lanes over moves away from the approach so everyone nearby can see him. The men want to make sure everyone is watching them. If they roll a lousy frame the same men blame everybody and everything from the ball return to the bowlers on the next lane.”⁵¹ And they fight. One man, Lee Black a sixty-year veteran of bowling, was so angry he threw his bowling ball into the acoustical ceiling above his head and another long-time bowler, James Smith threw his ball into his bowling bag and left the building. Avid bowlers, especially women, are usually quick to point fingers at those with poor sportsmanship.⁵²

The attitudes of women can be similarly problematic for men. Eric Lester, a senior bowler living in San Angelo, Texas and who has bowled for over fifty years said, “Women hold up the game by visiting with their friends four or five lanes over, or by going to the bathroom and not coming right back. Just one woman can delay a game for fifteen or twenty minutes by not being ready to bowl when her turn comes around. If there are two women on your team, you’re in trouble.”⁵³ In general, since the 1990s, most senior men expect to bowl with women (whether they like it or not) especially during daytime senior leagues. Many men consider this to be practice for when they bowl “for real” in their nighttime leagues. Regardless of age, men seem more competitive around women.⁵⁴

Through the years, men have begrudgingly accepted the fact that women are going to bowl and that many of them are going to roll higher games than they do. A survey done with men ranging from age 41 to 59 revealed that 95 percent try to roll his best game when he is bowling against a team of women with high averages. Nighttime league teams more often include both men and women who are spouses and this is where much of the tension between them rests. Married men that bowl, whose wives do not, usually are teamed up with other married men whose wives are not bowlers. Four out of ten men (three out these four will be senior men) still believe that strength is the most important aspect to becoming a good bowler. But they also seem to think they have better skills. “The men want to give advice and try to correct the way women bowl and when this happens to me I feel insulted and nervous and then I bowl worse,” commented Lucille Harrington, a senior lady bowler who is seventy-nine years old and who has bowled most of her adult life. “I like to have a good time and get a little exercise but the men take the game too seriously.”⁵⁵ It seems almost inevitable that women will end up bowling with men. “In senior leagues we don’t always get to choose team members and the usual cut is two men and two women on a team to balance out the team’s handicap.”⁵⁶ Some women (all senior bowlers) and the majority of men (eight out of ten senior men) surveyed said that men are naturally better bowlers than women. Teams made up with men and women are supposed to be more balanced, but in reality they often are filled with disappointment and tension.⁵⁷ Of course, many women do prefer bowling with men. Professional women bowlers and amateur women bowlers with high averages often want to compete against men bowlers and have been doing so for decades.⁵⁸ Senior men, over 55 years of age bowl more often with women than men from the 40-54 age groups, as

team members and on senior leagues. In a survey of 3,593 senior leagues during the 1986-1987 bowling season that included 3,366 mixed leagues and 227 all-woman senior leagues, the average mixed league team had two women and two men.⁵⁹

The day-to-day experience of women and men on the lanes cannot be separated from the poor treatment women have received by the sporting media. Coverage for any women's sports seemed problematic. Anita L. DeFrantz, president of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles in the late 1980s and early 1990s, assigned a survey study to be conducted that would determine the equality and quantity of media coverage of women's sports. "Gender Stereotyping in Televised Sports," a study conducted by PhDs Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Michael A. Messner, Linda Williams, and research assistant Kerry Jensen and concerned with the lack of women's sports coverage, surveyed one of the top rated local news broadcast from July 2nd through 15 August 1989 with the intention of identifying the problems or the failure of broadcasters to provide equal coverage of women's sports. The findings of this survey reveal that "women's sports were underreported and underrepresented." Men's sports coverage received ninety-two percent of the airtime, with women's sports receiving only five percent, while gender-neutral topics received three percent. "The television sports news did focus regularly on women, but rarely on women athletes. More common were portrayals of women as comical targets of the newscasters' jokes and/or as sexual objects (e.g., women spectators in bikinis)."⁶⁰

There were significant differences between the representation for both men and women playing the same sport. Good examples are women's and men's basketball. This survey found that "significant differences in the quality of technical production tend to

trivialize the women's games, while framing men's games as dramatic spectacles of historic significance."⁶¹ They found that the quality of production to be superior when focusing on men's sports, with more instant replays, more informed statistics, and a marked difference in the introduction of men's sports over women's sports. Women were referred to as "girls" while men were never referred to as "boys," and women were commonly called by their first name but men athletes' last names were always used unless the male athlete happened to be a man of color. Researchers also found, as mentioned earlier in this study, "attributions of strength for men are often simultaneously attributions of weakness for women, while attributions of strength for women are often ambivalent." Researchers concluded that "televised sports news should provide more coverage of existing women's sports." This included an increase in visual as well as verbal coverage, a decrease in all sexist practices of focusing on female spectators as well as competitors, with more equal coverage in general of both men and women's sporting events.⁶²

The Amateur Athletic Foundation sponsored another study in January 1991 entitled "Coverage of Women's Sports in Four Daily Newspapers." The newspapers used for this study were among those that Associated Press Sports Editors named in 1990 as the top ten daily sports sections in the country. They included *USA Today*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Orange County Register*, and the *Dallas Morning News*. This study also found women's sports to be, to a very large degree, underreported. Methods used included the number of stories, the length of stories, the placement of stories, the number of photographs, and the number of stories accompanied by photographs. The study divided the stories and photographs into four categories; men-only, women-only, men

and women, and neutral (stories that did not focus on either men or women). They found the stories that focused on men's sports outnumbered women's stories by a 23 to 1 margin. With the elimination of football and baseball stories, men's stories still outnumbered women's coverage 8.7 to 1. Women's stories accounted for 3.5 percent of all stories and men's made up eighty percent of the total. Women's front-page stories were 3.2 percent compared to men's at 5.3 percent. Photographs of men's sports outnumbered women's 13 to 1 with 92.3 percent of all sports photographs printed were of men. "In each newspaper, fewer than 5 percent of all stories were devoted to women only. *USA Today*, however, provided a significantly higher number of women's stories and women's photographs than any of the other newspapers."⁶³

In general, bowlers felt that media coverage was either non-existent or unsatisfactory and this intensified the importance of the *Woman Bowler*, the only all women coverage of women's bowling but an industry journal with only one hundred thousand copies available per volume. Unfortunately very few of the bowlers surveyed agreed on what WIBC should do to encourage membership and enhance the sport of bowling. WIBC leaders believed that getting a positive image of bowling in front of the American public would help draw in new bowlers and serve as a reminder to retired bowlers that bowling was fun, cheap, and competitive. The first televised WIBC Championship Tournament was a live thirty minute special that "bumped Wheel of Fortune" in 1992 broadcasting the opening day of competitive bowling.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, television never moved forward (except for and only marginally of professional women bowlers) with "live" women's bowling and men continued to dominate the sport on television.

Even without television coverage of women's bowling, there was some good news. The number of participants in the yearly national tournament increased as well as the amount of the prize funds. The 1982 Women's International Bowling Congress's Championship Tournament held in St. Louis, the birthplace of the WIBC beat the previous year's Tucson tournament by the number of competitors and offered a larger prize fund. Myrtle Schulte had the privilege of rolling out the first ball. At the age of 89, this was her fifty-fourth championship tournament and she was an icon of the long history of women who bowl in the yearly Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament. The St. Louis competition lasted seventy-nine days, included 8,038 five-woman teams, 40,190 individual bowlers, and provided a prize fund of \$765,721. In doubles, there were 19,438 teams of two and in singles there were 38,876 bowlers. St. Louis had 473 teams, the highest number of teams represented with a total of 703 from the state of Missouri. All fifty states were represented as well as Bermuda, Canada, Finland, and Japan.⁶⁵

The following year was even more impressive. A world record was set in Las Vegas in 1983 when 75,480 women competed with 14,430 five-women teams, 35,882 doubles competition, and 68,686 all events. This amazing turnout came close to doubling the number of competitors who went to St. Louis in 1982. The women who competed in the WIBC Championship Tournament in Las Vegas collected a record \$1,121,143 in prize funds. Also, the Avon Corporation, sponsored the 23rd annual double elimination competition, the Women's International Bowling Congress Queens championship, where 481 (this tournament is always limited to the same number of bowlers yearly) women with bowling averages of 170 or better, experienced an increase in prize funds with a

total prize fund of \$100,000 with first place getting \$25,000, up \$5,000 from the season before (1982-1983) while the WIBC Queens champion received \$25,700 along with money for match wins.⁶⁶

By the end of the 1970s the heyday of bowling had passed and membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress began a steady decline. By the end of the twentieth century membership had dropped from over 4,000,000 to just under 1,500,000. By 1986 nearly 60 percent of all sanctioned leagues were mixed leagues and by 1996 more than 90 percent of all leagues consisted almost equally of men and women.⁶⁷ When the WIBC leaders realized membership would not increase without intervention, they sought help through programs they had used during the years when membership surged. Many of the nation's bowling leaders believed bowling would become more appealing by becoming an official Olympic medal sport. When this did not happen, they turned to programs used in the past to introduce bowling to the masses. However, their confidence in these programs plunged as membership spiraled downward and they turned to new membership programs and a closer relationship with the American Bowling Congress to spread the word that bowling was still "in" and available to the American people.

Americans *were* bowling and in record numbers but they were bowling in open play and not in sanctioned leagues. When open bowling became popular in bowling centers across the country, it was a time when many bowlers chose not to commit their time or money to league play. While trying to keep their bowling centers open by any means, proprietors encouraged open bowling and offered their bowlers incentives to patronize their businesses. And while men and women did compete with one other on the lanes, they more than likely considered their real competition to be found in other

sporting endeavors. By the end of the century, revenue from sanctioned leagues contributed only fifty percent to bowling center proprietors' income with the rest coming from open bowling and other non-sanctioned activities available in their bowling centers. As a matter of course, conflict raged between bowling center proprietors and the leaders of the Women's International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress. Conflict also occurred regularly between league bowlers and open bowlers because of the close contact these two completely different types of bowlers encountered when bowling next to each other. The opportunity to convert these open bowlers into sanctioned league bowlers became an obsession with the Women's International Bowling Congress along with the American Bowling Congress who strongly encouraged their local leaders to recruit these open bowlers into both congresses by offering incentives such as special bowling pins and patches and frequent tournaments with bigger cash payouts.⁶⁸

The next chapter discusses old and new membership programs introduced during the last two decades of the twentieth century. This chapter will also argue that these programs were mainly designed with benefits for existing members with a direct objective of keeping bowlers who were already members in the national organization and did very little to encourage new membership. When these programs were not able to bring in new members or even do a good job of retaining existing members, the Women's International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress decided to work more closely together in an attempt to safeguard the sport of bowling for future generations.

NOTES

CHAPTER VI

¹ Peter N. Sterns, *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Childrearing in America*. (New York: New York University Press, 2003), pp 117-120.

² See Dottie McNutt Interview. Seventy-five year old McNutt spends 90 percent of her time in the bowling alley conducting leagues and tournaments, and at the time of this interview she served as secretary to four leagues a week, down from seven leagues in recent years.

³ David Lamb, "Modern bowling centers far cry from two-lane alleys," *European Stars and Stripes*, 4 April 2002, p 18.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Bowling more popular than ever," *Women Bowler*, March 1972, v 36, no. 4, p 22.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See interviews with Dottie McNutt, President Silvia Broyles, and Emily Verfurth.

⁹ Matt Mullins, "Bowling Haven," *Wisconsin State Journal*, 20 December 2000, p 29.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ruth Sidel, "The plight of poor women in affluent America," *Keeping Women and Children Last: America's War on the Poor*, (Penguin Group Penguin Putnam Inc., New York: New York, 1996) xi-xxi.

¹² Ibid., xii.

¹³ Ibid., xiii.

¹⁴ Ibid., xv.

¹⁵ Ibid. For industries and plant shutdowns and the working class, see Jefferson R. Cowie, *Beyond the Ruins: the Meanings of Deindustrialization*, (New York: ILR Press, 2003). And for economic conditions within the middle class in the United States, and politics and government under republican leadership, and social conditions in the United States, see Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: the American Family and the Fear of National Decline*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹⁶ "Meeting . . ." *Woman Bowler*, June 1980, v 44, no. 6, pp 30-31.

¹⁷ Jan Cienski, "Bowling has now become 'Center' of attention, the *Indiana Gazette*, 3 September 1997, p 20. Cienski reminded his readers that bowling was a very American sport or pastime based on the fact that the United States has one lane per 2,000 people which is one of the lowest ratios of all countries with bowling centers. China has one bowling lane per 30,000 people, Brazil as 450,000 people per lane, Poland has 2,000,000 people per lane, and India is the highest with one lane per 26,000,000.

¹⁸ Robert D. Putman, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (Simon & Schuster: New York), 2000. Putman argues the unity of community (community being such as a bowling center) is dependent on more than one participant. If only one community member attends a gathering, it cannot be called a "meeting" and if only one member decides to move forward for a cause, it can't be called a "committee." He believes this collapse began suddenly and spread throughout the nation.

¹⁹ Jeff Richgels, "Lanes die a classic death," *Madison Capital Times*, 23 May 1992, p 13.

²⁰ "Brunswick bowling scores big overseas," *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 27 February 1994, p 25.

²¹ Allison Kaplan, "Bowling centers make renovations to keep up with changing clientele," *Daily Herald*, 24 May 1995, p 204. See also, the *Woman Bowler*, October 1991, v 55, no. 7, pp 36-37 and Jan Cienski, "Bowling has become 'Center' of attention," *Indiana Gazette*, 3 September 1997, p 20.

²² "The survey says . . ." *WB*, Spring 1995, v 39, no. 1, p 10.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Here's your "average" WIBC Championship Tournament entrant," *Woman Bowler*, November 1987, v 51, no. 10, p 32.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ For *Laverne & Shirley*, a spinoff of *Happy Days*, debuted on ABC from 26 January 1976 and ran to 10 May 1983. For *All In the Family*, see *TV Guide's 50 Greatest TV Shows of All Time*, 2002-05-04. For *The Simpsons*, see Lindsay McIntosh's "There's Nobody Like Him," *London Sunday Times*, 2007, pp 07-08. "

... the greatest comic creation of (modern) time.” Also see *Married With Children* which aired on FOX TV from April 1987 to June 1997. And *Roseanne* aired on ABC in October of 1988 and ran through May of 1997.

²⁷ Karen Sytsma, “True Colors,” *Women Bowler*, November/December 1991, Vol. 55, No. 8, pp 66-69.

²⁸ Richard Benjamin, *Racing With the Moon*, Jaffe-Lansing Production, Paramount, 1984. Fanaro, Barry and Mort, *Kingpin*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1996. Coen, Ethan and Joel, *The Big Lebowski*, Faber and Faber Ltd, May 1998.

²⁹ Sytsma, 66-69.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ David Lamb, “Modern bowling centers far cry from two-lane alleys,” *European Stars and Stripes*, 2 April 1994, p 18.

³² “America’s Bowling Center Directory” at <http://www.bowlingcentersusa.com/>.

³³ See the interview with Frenchy Letourneaus found in the author’s files.

³⁴ Allison Kaplin, “Bowling centers make renovations to keep up with the changing clientele,” *Daily Herald*, 5 May 1995, p 204.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See Eleanor Goldberg’s interview with Stephanie Ackler of Wells Fargo Advisors, Medill News Service, 1995.

³⁹ Bowling centers also served as “chapels” for bowling enthusiasts in many states dating back to the 1950s era and even with low membership numbers weddings are still sometimes held in local bowling centers.

⁴⁰ Jeff Nowak, “Centers of Attention,” *Woman Bowler*, March/April 1992, v 56, no. 3, pp 24-27.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Bowling center owners changing with the times,” *Kokomo Times*, 10 December 2000, p 21. Also see Interview with the *Woman Bowler* and Jim Otterstrom, Vice-President of marketing for Brunswick Bowling and Billiards Corporation. “Bowling around the world,” *Woman Bowler*, Winter 1994, v 58, no. 4, pp 12-13.

⁴⁴ “Strength in numbers,” *Woman Bowler*, February 1992, v 56, no. 2, pp 20-23.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Notes from a speech Dr. George Allen delivered to the Bowling Proprietors Association of America in 1986.

⁴⁷ Bob DeZonia, “New conditions helping women increase scores,” *Madison Capital Times*, March 10, 1992, p 19.

⁴⁸ *European Stars and Stripes*, 9 June 1988, p 17.

⁴⁹ “Seventh woman to head WIBC,” *Woman Bowler*, July 1993, v 57, no. 5, pp 21-23.

⁵⁰ Bill Monce, “What lies beneath? Lane surfaces affect play,” *US Bowler*, Spring 2009, v 4, no. 3, p 15. See interviews in the author’s files. Lane dressing is a thin coating of oil that covers a large portion of the lane and serves three functions; to protect the lane surface, to reduce friction between the lane surface and the bowling ball, and to control the bowling ball roll. Oil is applied in a variety of patterns. More oil is applied to the center of the lane than the edges and it is applied from the foul line and down the lane about thirty feet. The back end near the pins is left dry so the ball has enough friction to hook. Also, bowling ball innovations such as ball soaking and internal additions of foreign substances can also create illegal strikes and give individual advantages over other bowlers. See Lyle Zikes’s “Bowling enters the laboratory of space-age designs,” *Daily Herald*, 6 November 1991, p 683.

⁵¹ Ken Skaggs Interview.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Eric Lestor Interview.

⁵⁵ Lucille Herrington Interview.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ A “balanced team” refers to a balance between averages and handicaps. Some men and women in senior leagues carry unusually higher averages than their peers. While most senior teams have two women and

two men, their handicaps can determine what team they are placed on. Handicaps discussed in earlier chapters are based on a bowler's average and the lower the average, the higher the handicap. Leagues vote on requirements that include team formations. For more information about leagues and rules go to bowl.com or look at a current USBC Handbook.

⁵⁸ Bowlers should understand the difference between skill, strength, and talent and what advantages can be deemed from this knowledge because each one can be of great importance to becoming a good or better bowler. Overall, women and men do seem to bowl higher scores when competing against each other than when they are competing against only men or only women.

⁵⁹ "WIBC league survey reveals trends," *Woman Bowler*, December 1987, v 51, n o. 11, p 42. Most senior leagues now include more women bowlers than men.

⁶⁰ Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Michael Messner, Linda Williams, and Kerry Jensen. Edited by Wayne Wilson. "Gender Stereotyping in Televised Sports," (Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, August 1990).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² To acquire a complete copy of this study go to <http://aafla.org/9arr/ResearchReports/researchy>.

⁶³ Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Michael Messner, Linda Williams, authors and editor Wayne Wilson. "Coverage of women's sports in four daily newspapers," (Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, 1991). See also online: <http://www.la84foundation.org/9arr/ResearchReports/ResearchReport>.

⁶⁴ Dick Hogan, "A year later, Michigan is pampering women bowlers," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 3 April 1992, p 11.

⁶⁵ "Prize fund breaks record," *Woman Bowler*, April 1983, no volume or number, p 18.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ For league statistics see author's vertical files.

⁶⁸ League members were strongly encouraged by league leaders to openly recruit women who entered the bowler centers to open bowl. See interviews by author. Many times open bowlers are unaware of the rules of conduct followed by league bowlers. There are no rule books for open bowlers. They are there to have fun and are usually loud, boisterous, and inconsiderate to the more serious bowlers that are bowling on nearby or connecting lanes.

CHAPTER VII

FROM SANCTIONED LEAGUES TO OPEN BOWLING: FROM MEMBERSHIP DRIVES TO AN OLYMPIC BID

In the 1980s and 1990s, all three major US bowling congresses, the Women's International Bowling Congress, the American Bowling Congress, and the Young American Bowling Association, continued to suffer severe losses in membership. More specifically, membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress began a steady decline that began during the 1979-1980 bowling season. As female bowling membership decreased the leaders of the WIBC understood that their organization and the integrity of bowling would soon be in jeopardy if its leaders could not promote renewed interest in the sport. Thus much of this chapter focuses on the WIBC's efforts to save their sport but more importantly to save their separate women's organization that had long been a source of support for women bowlers all over the world. Unfortunately, almost every decision entrepreneurs, associations leaders, and individuals made failed to attract a younger generation of committed league players. There were dozens of other attempts to save league play such as the Penny Pal program, Launch-a-League program, and the creation of the senior games. Such programs enhanced the WIBC's appeal to its bowlers within its own bowling family, but only marginally appealed to non-members. There was even a push for Olympic Game inclusion and creation of TEAM USA but to no avail. League bowling seemed increasingly anachronistic, lacking the pizzazz needed to engage and recruit "open" bowlers into its organization or to even retain the meager number of bowlers that remained following the decline that began in 1980.

While the bowling industry could boast that in 1980 there were over 58,000,000 people who bowled at least once during that year in the United States, association membership and league play started to wane and spiral downward.¹ Membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress hit the 4,000,000 mark for the sixth year in a row during the 1978 and 1979 season, but in the 1979 and 1980 season the WIBC experienced its first membership decline in 33 years with 4,187,053 members showing a decrease of 1.07 percent.² In June of 1981, mainly concerned with decreasing membership and the beginning of a dip in sanctioned league formation, the National Bowling Council (NBC) predicted changing trends in the future of American bowling and grave consequences that would cause a significant impact on the sport of bowling in the next decade. The most significant change was the increasing age of the average bowler. Senior bowlers age 55 and over, both men and women took to the lanes in record breaking numbers during the 1980s, and senior bowlers would soon become one of the largest categories of bowlers represented in the U.S.³ The American Bowling Congress reported a fifty percent increase in senior bowlers and the Women's International Bowling Congress saw an increase of twenty-five percent in senior women bowlers and in June of 1981, the National Bowling Council reported a decline in the 25-34 year old group which at that time represented the largest pool of casual bowlers who, in the recent past, would have eventually become league bowlers. The NBC also feared, predicted, and prepared for a future decrease in the 14-17 aged youth division—a bleak outlook for generational growth in the sport of bowling.⁴

The 1981-1982 bowling season recorded another slight decrease of 1.15 percent bringing membership numbers down to 4,064,861 and with a startling decrease of 1.36

percent in sanctioned leagues down to 163,639. These decreases in sanctioned leagues included all of the major states where bowling had once boasted significant numbers. California claimed 16,898 leagues, New York boasted of 12,564, followed by 11,992 in Ohio, and with 10,734 in Michigan. With decreasing sanctioned league formations, there were fewer opportunities for new bowlers to join the Women's International Bowling Congress or the men's American Bowling Congress.⁵ While the number of leagues decreased in the Women's International Bowling Congress during the early 1980s, from California to New Jersey, membership also started a downward trend in all of the major bowling states. Michigan remained in first place with a membership of 342,347, followed by New York with 336,291 members, with California in fourth place with 302,367 members, Texas dropped to eighth place with 145,972, and Florida fell into tenth place with 137,409 members.⁶

In the name of preserving a sport that women had come to dominate in skill and organization, the Women's International Bowling Congress officials encouraged local association leaders to contact women who open bowled and stressed upon them the greater benefits (these benefits are discussed in an earlier chapter) they would enjoy by becoming sanctioned league bowlers.⁷ WIBC leaders also encouraged associations to concentrate on building senior leagues and leagues for youth bowlers on the local and state levels. Changes in attitudes and an ominous decline in the number of women who bowled became a growing anxiety for WIBC leaders. While many association leaders cited the growing cost of bowling fees on all levels including city, state, and national, something much more significant was going on in women's bowling.⁸

An area of grave concern was the loss of youth bowlers, bowling associations, and state membership. National bowling association leaders thought if they could tap into the occasional youth who bowled for fun, they might be able to resurrect organizational youth membership. According to the National Bowling Council (NBC), their leaders were also looking specifically at American youth in a study researched in 1986 and found that 7.8 million youth or 2.4 percent of all US youth bowled three or more times in 1984. However, during the 1984-1985 bowling season the Young American Bowling Association (YABA) listed only 693,153 members. To raise their membership numbers, the Women's International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress officials chose a long-term program that would include in-school bowling programs for youth in pre-school through high school. The cost of these programs required a commitment from the WIBC, the ABC, and from YABA of 2.2 million dollars each over a period of seven years. Bowling leaders expected over three million students to join YABA. Unfortunately, by the end of 1987 only seven states had committed to the in-school program and the numbers decreased as more and more youth joined outdoor or "big brother and big sister" programs such as the YMCA, Little League Baseball, neighborhood basketball, football, and more specifically soccer.⁹

Still optimistic but seriously concerned about dwindling numbers, the Young American Bowling Alliance (YABA) introduced its "Penney Pal" program in 1986 to provide funds to support and educate potential youth bowlers with in-school training programs. Unlike in-school programs that no longer enticed large numbers of students to learn the sport, this program was a great financial success over the next twenty years. The program required each bowler to contribute a penny for each game they bowled

during the week. During the first twelve months, 8,109 leagues and 1,154 associations participated in the Penney Pal program. The largest contributions that first year came from New York with \$19,963.56, Michigan with \$16,795.93, with Ohio donating \$14,375.90, Florida with the amount of \$13,515.55, followed by Pennsylvania who donated \$12,059.45. States with the most participating associations included Vermont donating 10.59 percent of the total, Nevada was a close second with 10.29 percent and Wyoming contributed 9.78 percent, while Montana came up with 9.0 percent and Mississippi with 8.26 percent. New York had the most associations participating with seventy-five state-wide associations totaling 737 leagues, California had fifty-nine associations and 606 leagues, Michigan had sixty-four associations and 576 leagues, and Wisconsin had seventy associations with 562 leagues participating. Total donations collected that first year (1986-1987) from all participating states came to \$215,740.22 and by the end of the 1990-1991 bowling season bowlers raised more than \$741,000. While the Penny Pal program counted as a much needed financial boost, the program was never intended to promote or sponsor membership drives.¹⁰ And despite these additional funds, membership drives still continued to struggle as the numbers on all levels decreased.

Also, during this period, 1983 through 1989, Women's International Bowling Congress delegates approved a new bonus system, the Spotlight Awards, for all bowlers. This program originated in 1983 and covered short-term recruitment, as well as, long-term. The Spotlight Awards were essentially a "pat-on-the-back" for outstanding efforts. There were fifteen classifications with a panel of five member judges. Local associations were divided into five categories: 500 members and under, 501 to 1,500, 1,501 to 3,000, 3,001 to 10,000, and finally 10,001 and over. State associations could receive two

awards, one for 30,000 members and under, and for membership over 30,000. Judges used several criteria to determine award presentation that included service to WIBC, promotion of bowling through public relations and publicity, fulfillment of duties of officials, interaction with bowling family delegates to annual meetings, workshop attendance, new policies and procedures, association participation in civic affairs, and the use of billboards (billboards in local bowling alleys displayed bowler of the year, announced upcoming events and weekly scores, and presented monthly newsletters). Other criteria used in determining award distribution included financial support for the Bowlers' Veterans Link (BVL), National Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum (NBHF/M) and all local youth programs and through championship tournaments held on the local level.¹¹ There were 95,098 awards presented in 1983 by the WIBC which included 1,829 for all-spare games, 1,510 Dutch 200 games, 3,506 big four split converted, 35,681 triple scores (all three games equaling the same number of pins rolled), and 27,375 games with scores 100 pins over a bowler's average. Some local centers did achieve small levels of success with these programs but the overall consensus strongly suggests they were more of a "gimmick" with awards as prizes or bowling patches than an actual aide to improve membership levels and ended up being a waste of time and effort for association leaders. Many of the bowlers that should have received awards never did and more associations voted not to participate due to the volume of paperwork required.¹²

In the middle of the 1980s, the Women's International Bowling Congress continued to struggle in a losing battle for membership footing and one of their most noteworthy actions was to offer amnesty for past misbehavior that resulted in disciplinary action of WIBC members. By offering amnesty for past deviances, 2,200 women would

be able to get back into the game. Some of the disciplinary cases went back as far as thirty-five years. Many of these suspensions were imposed for rule violations that were no longer considered to be illegal such as improper attire in league or tournament competition, or actions such as filing late league reports, and many times league secretaries and league presidents were censured when they misunderstood or misrepresented league regulations and many for filing inaccurate or inflated bowling averages. The only exceptions to the amnesty were suspensions that were imposed for misuse of association and league funds and in these cases amnesty would not be applied until funds were repaid.¹³

Desperate to find ways to recruit new members into the Women's International Bowling Congress, leaders initiated the "Launch-a-League" program beginning in the 1986-1987 bowling season, a program that relied on advertising from the media and by word-of-mouth. This program, designed to be short-term in effect, allowed participating associations to earn points for every new member they recruited. As these points accumulated they could be redeemed for "valuable" prizes. However, only twenty associations joined up to earn points with this new program. The first associations to redeem points in 1987 included the Council Bluffs association in Iowa, the Remus association in Michigan, and the Narragansett Bay association in Wisconsin. These associations ordered new equipment under the new membership drive. Prizes and merchandise included an electric typewriter, a slide projector, an adding machine, a movie screen, and a copy machine.¹⁴

An additional push for bowling recognition occurred when forty US states decided to hold their own Olympic-type games in 1987. New York was actually the first

to initiate state games in 1978 followed by Florida in 1980 and Pennsylvania in 1982.

These state games are run similar to the Olympic Games and are supported by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). Ten states hosted WIBC sanctioned competition in bowling as part of their state games competition. Bowling soon became one of the most popular sports in the State Games. Qualifying competition began on the local level or house (bowling center) level and as bowlers won individual matches they moved up to the state level. The games included twelve divisions based on age in handicap or scratch with each division competing for medals. Yearly participation in the State Games is anticipated by thousands of amateur bowlers. In 1987 the Nebraska Cornhuskers Games enrolled over 10,000 competitors in the bowling division out of the 18 sports offered and out of a total of 30,000 entrants in Lexington, Kentucky, 14,500 entered the bowling competition.¹⁵

The 1990s was a busy decade for the leaders of the Women's International Bowling Congress. They stepped into high gear urging all local and state associations to try to stop the decline in membership. Detroit, Michigan, the bowling capital of the US, lost over one hundred thousand sanctioned league bowlers from 1979 to 1992. With 134 bowling centers, and eight within a three-mile radius, Detroit needed a profusion of new bowlers to keep their doors open.¹⁶ Some local associations such as in Tucson organized bowling information and sign-up booths at their county fairs. The Buckeye Bowling Boosters and Bowling Proprietors Association of Ohio joined forces to start the "United We Grow" campaign throughout Ohio to promote bowling by developing an idea to entice former members back and introduce new prospective members to the game. Association leaders vowed to each bring in one new bowler every week to a pre-

designated bowling center giving them celebrity status for the day with free refreshments and a couple of free games of bowling with an instructor.¹⁷ Other experiments in financial programs led the leaders of the Women's International Bowling Congress into creating an in-house travel agency, Worldtek Bowler's Travel, to the list of benefits provided for the convenience of its members. "The whole thrust is that we can provide bowlers with a unique travel service right on their headquarters premises with a reduced travel budget for both the organization and members by negotiation of special discounts; and it becomes a profit center for the bowlers and their organization." By 1992, ninety-five percent of Worldtek Bowler's Travel revenue came from national championship bowling teams.¹⁸

But like all the other programs the WIBC tried, nothing worked on the national level and they were severely handicapped by continuously decreasing funds. With much objection and discord over the subject, WIBC leaders in the early 1990s turned their attention to an increase in dues to boost a fading availability of money in their non-profit organization. For many years, the WIBC was unable to pass an amendment for an increase in dues through congress (a majority of delegates believed that more members would resign from the organization if dues were increased), dues remained modest in order to retain current members who threatened withdrawal. However, increasing dues was a major consideration that could not be put off any longer. In 1989 yearly dues for membership in the WIBC remained at a very low level of \$2.75 per member. By 1990, the WIBC had lost 1,372,573 members since 1979 when membership reached its highest of 4,232,143 and dues were only seventy-five cents a year. Dues climbed to \$1.25 in 1980 and increased again in 1989 to \$2.75. WIBC leaders insisted that in order to

continue to offer traditional services another increase in dues must transpire and did in 1993 when dues jumped from \$2.75 to \$6.00.¹⁹ This ostensibly radical increase more than doubled dues from the last increase and was hard won, carrying just a little over half of the delegate vote. However, as predicted and feared by association delegates, membership in the Women's International Bowling Congress plunged to 1,481,163 by the year 2000 and to remain functioning, the WIBC again raised dues up another \$2.00 to an all-time high of \$8.00.²⁰

The WIBC Board strongly believed the increase was needed for several reasons but primarily necessary to finance the WIBC's new "five year plan" that was designed to focus on membership development and membership service. An increase in funds would also allow the Women's International Bowling Congress's board to offer a new membership classification. The new classification, the International Affiliate Membership, offered membership for bowlers who were not serviced by certified associations. More importantly, funds created by this increase in dues would build a reserve fund that would remarkably increase revenue over time and also allow the WIBC to improve and enhance current membership benefits and develop new programs. New programs would include bowling instruction and a revamped awards program, and also help provide monies for an 800 number for local and state association officials that would increase and improve communication between all local and national leaders.²¹

WIBC Executive Director Sandra Shirk said the increase in dues was long overdue but many argued that it was too big of an increase (from \$2.75 to \$6.00) and predicted that even more members would drop out of the national bowling organization, already experiencing a consecutive fourteen-year decrease in membership. Shirk looked

at the challenge of the decreasing membership as “an opportunity to review our mission and create a new vision for WIBC’s future,” and that “declining membership has called us to action to become a more efficient and effective organization.”²² During the 1989-1990 bowling season, the Women’s International Bowling Congress operated on a budget of \$7,900,000, a figure that is 168 times smaller than the YMCA whose budget that season was 1.3 billion. WIBC’s budget was seven times smaller than the National Rifle Association’s annual budget of \$56,000,000 and with more generous award programs than any other national sports organization.²³

By 1990 bowling proprietors on the local level also felt the economic lost of WIBC membership and many who managed to keep their doors open often looked to means beyond the Women’s International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress’s sanctioned leagues. A modified format tournament became one of the staples for bowling proprietors to bring needed customers to their centers. These unsanctioned tournaments included the nine-pin no-tap, scotch doubles, and the 3-6-9 tournament. These tournaments are easily conducted and generated needed revenue for local proprietors. These and other unsanctioned alternative tournaments were considered necessary by bowling proprietors of local bowling centers to remain open and with less emphasis on high scores open bowlers were more likely to enter the competitions. However, discord developed between the local proprietors and the WIBC, the ABC, and the YABA associations mainly due to the drop in sanctioned league formation that many blamed on open bowling. League bowlers at this time were only providing 50 percent of the bowling centers’ income and an increasingly uneasy working relationship arose when

bowling center proprietors encouraged non-sanctioned bowlers to bowl in open play and enter local unsanctioned tournaments.²⁴

Because women bowlers seemed to enjoy these alternative tournaments, the Women's International Bowling Congress looked closely at them to find ways that these unsanctioned competitions could benefit the WIBC's long-term goals. Alternative tournaments included the *Baker Format* where the first bowler on a team bowls the first and sixth frame, the second bowler rolls the second and seventh frame, and the third bowler rolls the third and eighth frame, with the fourth bowler bowling the fourth and ninth frame and the fifth bowler rolling the fifth and last frame. The *Baker Format* is a common format used in collegiate bowling. Also, the *Best Ball Doubles* tournament featured the first two bowlers rolling their first balls on adjacent lanes. If neither bowler strikes with their first ball, the lane with the easiest possible spare is then selected and the remaining pins on the adjacent lanes removed. The bowler who did not roll the potential spare to be converted is then chosen to try to make the conversion and only one line of scoring is used for two bowlers. Another popular format is the *Eight-a-Thon* where each bowler rolls one ball on one lane and continues to advance in the contest as long as eight pins or more are knocked down. The bowlers rolling seven or less pins are eliminated from the game. The *No-Peek Doubles* was a novelty because the bowler is not allowed to see past the approach where the lane is blocked by a sheet. A spotter lets the bowler know what pins are left. *Scotch Doubles* mentioned earlier is one of the most popular modified tournaments. The first bowler rolls the first ball of a frame and the second bowler converts the spare. *Snake Bite* is played where all splits count as strikes and spares are converted and scored the regular way. The 3-6-9 game allows each bowler a

strike in the third, sixth, and ninth frames. Only in recent years the Women's International Bowling Congress endorsed the *Nine-Pin No Tap*, the *Scotch Doubles*, and the 3-6-9 game as *side games* (games not included in the official championship tournament format) offered by bowling centers located in the cities that sponsored the championship tournaments. Bowlers were encouraged to compete in these during off hours when not competing in the Championship Tournament.²⁵ While these popular unsanctioned tournaments (unsanctioned tournaments were not recognized by the Women's International Bowling Congress or the American Bowling Congress) were being conducted on local levels throughout the United States by independent bowling center proprietors and created needed revenue to remain open, most were not adaptable to the constructs of the WIBC tournaments or to the ABC tournaments.²⁶

In 1992, the Women's International Bowling Congress and the National Bowling Council constructed new programs such as the WIBC's Success Through Association Responsiveness (STAR) whose mission was to recognize outstanding state, provincial, and local women's bowling associations for their work and dedication towards the sport of bowling. Associations earned stars for each year of dedication to programs and ultimately received a four-star rating for their local association.²⁷ Also, the National Bowling Council (NBC) and the Bowling Proprietors Association of America (BPAA) in an effort to introduce family members to bowling organized "National Family Learn to Bowl Week" in 1992. Bowling leaders even organized a Baby Bumper Tournament that allowed children four and under to compete in California, Michigan, and New York.²⁸ And in 1993, the Women's International Bowling Congress constructed the "Five Year Plan," which was a comprehensive and long range plan structured to establish a volunteer

network that would focus on reversing WIBC membership decline. However well intended, these programs unquestionably did not increase membership in the women's bowling club. Delegate Chairman Elaine Hagin pointed out that "most of the past programs to recruit members were good individual programs but the problem was just that." Hagin believed they were individual programs that did not work together and might only provide small numbers of recruits on local levels. "Those early membership recruitment and retention programs lacked the support, attention, and continuity they needed to work."²⁹

Despite the lack of success with attempts to increase the dwindling numbers in membership, participation in the yearly Women's International Bowling Congress International Championship Tournament retained its popularity in the United States as well as overseas and recorded record-breaking numbers in all of its championship tournaments until the final competition in 2004. Much of the success occurring in the international championships was due in part to participation of overseas bowlers and to the fact that bowling was still the craze in most all Asian countries as well as most South American ones. Competitors who entered yearly championship tournaments came from over fifty different countries including Japan, China, Australia, Brazil, and Mexico.

Indeed, overseas participants contributed significantly to the success of the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournaments but it was not the only thing that kept the WIBC Championship Tournaments growing. Even with declining interest within the bowling industry, in 1995 a new National Bowling Stadium was completed in Reno, Nevada with 76 lanes, a thirty-four foot alcove at street level, with three levels of parking, 1,000 to 1,200 spectator's seating with an extra 700 box

seats located directly behind the lanes. The new bowling stadium offers valet service to and from local hotels, a bar and a food court, and an Omnimax Theatre on the premises to broadcast live competition. The National Bowling Stadium hosted WIBC and ABC championship tournaments every three years and continues to host all major United States Bowling Congress tournaments and many amateur and professional competitions. Because the construction was new, bowlers found the post-modern synthetic lanes to be more consistent than the older lanes found in many of the bowling centers that hosted the yearly tournaments and this factor went far in stabilizing bowlers' scores and maintaining their averages. The women who competed in the yearly championship tournaments were dedicated to the WIBC and most were serious about their sport and kept their membership current. Thousands of these women bowlers never missed a tournament nor did they fail to renew their membership yearly. It could be argued that the women that bowled in the yearly championship tournaments were the backbone of the Women's International Bowling Congress and it was these women that remained members until the end.³⁰

Aside from the success of the yearly championship tournaments, without enlisting new members the Women's International Bowling Congress would not even be able to maintain the competitions. Something far-reaching had to be done and soon. Many felt the image of bowling had regressed and relapsed into a "beer and blue collar" pastime, however, US Olympic Committee relations director Jeff Cravins insisted that the image of bowling could change with education and the Olympic Games could be the pathway to that education. "The Olympics is the most watched sporting event of any. It molds people's general overall impression of a particular sport." Sonny Frantz, president of the

Bowling Proprietors Association of America (BPAA), agreed and believed bowling in the Olympian Games would be a “boon to business.”³¹

In 1984 the United States Olympic Committee approved the Women’s International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress as joint national governing bodies for bowling and granted bowling a Group C membership allowing the sport to be included as an exhibition sport for the 1988 Olympic Games and maybe “opening the door to future medal status in the Olympics.”³² Roger Tessman, then president of *Federation Internationale des Quilleurs (FIQ)* said, “It will be the first time in more than 50 years that the sport will have been associated with the Olympic Games. In 1936 an international tournament was held in Berlin in conjunction with the Summer Olympic Games there.” Joe Norris, who was still bowling in 1986, competed in the 1936 Olympic Games (the only time bowling competed). “Fifty years ago, I had the pleasure of competing in Berlin against many fine athletes from France, Germany, Finland, and many other countries. They were so dedicated to the sport and practiced and trained all the time. They were truly great athletes.”³³

Preparing for this possibility, the selection of bowlers to represent the United States of America in the Olympic Games called for the creation of Team USA starting at the grassroots level, a unique characteristic of bowling where anyone could compete. In a press release, Tessman noted “We are gratified that bowling, one of the most popular sports in the world where more than 100 million participants in our seventy-one member countries, has received this recognition.” He said the major goal of the *FIQ* was to show the world that amateur bowlers are of “world class” status. Tessman added, “Bowling requires concentration, precision, and endurance; three traits that typify all Olympic

athletes. Our next objective, of course, is to have bowling recognized as an official medal Olympic sport in time for the 1992 Summer Games.”³⁴ Men, women, and youth bowlers could qualify through a sanctioned nine-game local event, held by the Women’s International Bowling Congress (WIBC), the American Bowling Congress (ABC), or the Young Americans Bowling Alliance (YABA). One in ten advanced to a regional competition where one in twenty would qualify for the state finals, the United States National Amateur Bowling Championship (USNAB), that competed in Detroit, Michigan. From there, qualifiers would compete on the national level in San Diego. The top bowlers would then compete against each other to determine who would represent the United States. After competing in forty-eight qualifying games, the field narrowed down to six women and six men.³⁵ The goal was the 1992 Olympics and the assumption was that if bowling were to become an official medal-sport, sixty-nine nations would showcase the very best of the world’s amateur bowlers. However, it was not to be during the lifespan of the Women’s International Bowling Congress or during the twentieth century.³⁶

When bowling failed to be included in the World Olympic Games in 1992, one bowling center proprietor, Dave Swagel of Golden Bowl in Green Bay, Wisconsin, challenged bowling centers across America and throughout the world to collect signed petitions insisting that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) could not refuse the bowling industries’ request for admission to the games as a medal competition.³⁷ Unfortunately, even with millions of bowlers and over ninety countries pressing for Olympic status, as of 2012 bowling failed to be included as a medal sport in the Olympic Games.³⁸ The Olympic Games are formatted around a specific set of rules

while only a specific number of sports can be included for several reasons that include time and interest. Only when a sport is withdrawn or dropped by the International Olympic Committee can a new sport be added. The International Olympic Committee dropped baseball and softball from the official games in 2006. Karate, squash, roller sports, and rugby sevens were considered with karate and squash getting the most IOC votes but neither sport received a majority of two-thirds to replace the dropped sports. First year competitions in the Summer Olympic Games 2012 included women's boxing, with 36 athletes competing in three different weight classes, and tennis mixed doubles which first qualified as an official Olympic sport in 1924.³⁹ It has been indicated by many non-bowlers and open bowlers that the rationale behind the exclusion of bowling resides inherently in the activity itself; that bowling is a pastime, a hobby, or a recreational activity that requires little skill, which many would argue is more perception than fact.⁴⁰

Bowling can be compared to other Olympic sports that require similar skills such as curling. Curling, a game where competitors slide granite stones across a sheet of ice with the objective of placing the stone in a specific target area is quite similar in several ways to bowling. As in bowling, curling requires skills learned through practice in order to choose a path in the ice sheeting that allows a competitor to slide his stone into an ideal placement inside a segmented area of four rings. Curling, like bowling, first became an exhibition or demonstration sport in 1924 for the Olympic Games but was officially welcomed into competition for the Winter Games in 1998.⁴¹ Following the 1992 Summer Olympics, demonstration games were eliminated but sport associations could conduct and run special tournaments that ran concurrent with the Olympics and the

Women's International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress tried this approach for world-class recognition but still failed to garner enough support to be included in the Olympic Games.⁴²

The Women's International Bowling Congress, a non-profit organization and the largest club for women in the world, continually sought ways to improve the bowling conditions for women and youth and provide news about upcoming events in the world of bowling. And even though the WIBC remained a non-profit corporation throughout its long history an abundance of monetary opportunities for women could be found within the perimeters of the bowling industry. The WIBC used its trade journal, the *Woman Bowler*, to seek qualified paid employees, elect popular trustworthy leadership, recruit women bowlers, and provide encouragement and enlightenment to women bowlers across the world.⁴³ WIBC leaders and volunteers implemented a multitude of programs and also utilized the *Woman Bowler* to raise sport awareness and membership but failed to find any one curriculum that made any significant changes in the face of declining league play. The greatest disappointment for the leaders of the Women's International Bowling Congress was not being included in the World Olympic Games and their inability to recover US women's interest in sanctioned league bowling. The final chapter of this study and epilogue looks at a merger between the men's and women's national bowling associations that came as quite a surprise to many of the members and one that brought this separate women's organization to a close.

NOTES

CHAPTER VII

¹ Helen Baker, "A letter from the president," *Woman Bowler*, July/August 1981, v 45, no. 7, p 10.

² See Bud Vander Veer's, "League enrollments down," *Syracuse Herald Journal*, September 24, 1985, p 37. With league formation in Ohio remaining in first place with 355,312 members, Michigan was a close second with 354,978, with New York on Michigan's heels with 352,998. In terms of leagues, California remained the leader with 18,824 sanctioned leagues, New York with 13,115 and Pennsylvania moving up to seventh place. City association membership also experienced little change with Detroit still leading with 3,752 leagues, Chicago in second place with 2,684 leagues, Milwaukee moved from fifth place up to fourth, with Washington D.C. taking fifth place.

³ "Seniors just saying yes to an evening at the alley," *Hutchinson News*, 10 October 1988, p 130.

⁴ "NBC studies future of bowling," *Woman Bowler*, June 1981, v 45, no. 6, p 37.

⁵ "Few changes in 1981-82 season membership," *Woman Bowler*, October 1982, no volume or number, p 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ The procedure of recruiting "open" bowlers was first used in membership drives during the very first endeavors to introduce women to the idea of a "women's only" bowling club in 1916. The success they achieved during the founding of the WIBC was phenomenal and resulted in the creation of the Women's International Bowling Congress. Also, several times during the existence of the WIBC, members and local leaders were asked to use this method of recruiting which resulted in only minimal success. Unfortunately, this promotional procedure did not succeed on any level in enlisting new members during this final crisis in membership during the last decade of the twentieth century.

⁸ Even with the cost of living being raised annually, bowling remains one of the least expensive forms of entertainment. The Bowling Proprietors Association of American found in a membership survey that bowlers paid an average of seventy-four cents in 1975 to bowl one game and that bowlers in 1992 paid \$1.71 per line of bowling, and according to women who bowled in 2000 one game of bowling cost about \$2.50, nearly a 231% increase over a twenty-five year period and yet still a modest amount to pay for an hour of entertainment. Assuredly, the cost of bowling will continue to rise throughout one's lifetime. However, bowling is still the cheapest sport for participating athletes to compete in. Also, excellent inexpensive bowling equipment, available now as well as in the past, is obtainable at reasonable prices and remains usable for decades if maintained properly.

⁹ "Penny Pal Program serves youth," *Woman Bowler*, September 1986, v 50, no. 8, pp 16-18.

¹⁰ 1986-87 contributors to Penny Pal Program," *Woman Bowler*, January 1988, v 52, no. 1, p 9. Also see "Be A Penny Pal," *Woman Bowler*, October 1991, v 55, no. 7, p 52.

¹¹ "Spotlight Awards," *Woman Bowler*, April 1985, v 49, no. 4, pp 20-22.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See "Amnesty for misbehavior," *Woman Bowler*, September 1984, v 49, no. 8, p 26. Also see earlier chapter for this discussion. Misuse of funds was the most common cause for membership rejection in the WIBC. More often than not, these funds were never recovered. WIBC leaders encouraged local league secretaries and presidents to bring legal charges against many offending members who misappropriated or pocketed club funds. However, this author found no instances where WIBC employees or volunteers in the national headquarters were charged with theft.

¹⁴ "Launch-A-League pays," *Woman Bowler*, September 1987, v 51, no. 8, p 27. The value of prizes depended on the centers providing them.

¹⁵ On State Games see Lauren K. Resetich, "On your mark; get set; bowl," *Woman Bowler*, November 1987, v 51, no. 10, pp 24-26.

¹⁶ "Detroit has the bowlers," *Woman Bowler*, July 1992, v 56, no. 5, pp 26-27, 30.

¹⁷ See the "Membership drive," *Woman Bowler*, October 1991, v 55, no. 7, p 29.

¹⁸ See interview with Nancy Dotson, Bowler's Travel manager and the *Woman Bowler*. See also the *Woman Bowler*, March/April 1992, v 56, no. 3, pp 51-52.

¹⁹ For membership 1990-1999 see "A review," *Frames and Lanes: a Special Commemorative Final Issue*, Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, p 21. Also see the same issue for membership in 2000, p 23.

²⁰ Interview with Sandra Shirk and the *Woman Bowler*, May/June 1993, v 54, no. 4, pp 18-19, 20-21. Also see "Strength in Numbers," found in *Frames & Lanes: a Special Commemorative Final Issue*, Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, p 23.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jeff Nowak, "Blue chip membership," *Woman Bowler*, November/December 1991, v 55, no. 8, pp 38-39.

²⁴ Joe Gluvna, "ABC board studies technical changes," *Chronicle Telegraph*, 26 November 1989.

²⁵ "Modified formats for tournaments," *Woman Bowler*, November/December 1991, v 55, no. 8, pp 40-42.

Also see "WIBC examines new formats, new membership levels," *Women Bowler*, February 1992, v 46, no. 2, p 30. Many of these modified tournaments are played weekly during league-free nights. A small fee is charged in addition to the lineage to offer a prize for the best games.

²⁶ Unsanctioned tournaments are very popular with local bowling centers and a bowler does not have to be a member of a national association such as the WIBC or the ABC to compete.

²⁷ "WIBC S.T.A.R Program," *Woman Bowler*, October 1992, v 56, no. 7, p 39.

²⁸ "Bowling family style," *Woman Bowler*, March/April 1992, v 52, no. 3, p 76.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "National Bowling Stadium," *Woman Bowler*, October 1992, v 56, no. 7, pp 28-32. See earlier chapters that discuss the WIBC's yearly international tournaments. After the construction of the national bowling stadium, Reno hosted the highest number of competitors for championship tournaments and continued to be the most popular hosting city for championship tournaments for both the WIBC and the ABC until the merger of the two congresses in 2005.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Helen Baker, "A presidential message," *Woman Bowler*, September 1984, v 49, no. 8, p 10.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Bill Buell, "Seoul Olympics to introduce bowling as exhibition sport," *Schenectady Gazette*, 3 Friday October 1986, p 30.

³⁵ Jeff Allsman, "Bowlers may roll for gold in 1996 Olympic Games," *Alton Telegraph*, 28 August 1992, p 17. "United States Tenpin Bowling Federation (USTBF)," *Woman Bowler*, October 1992, v 56, no. 7, p 8. Also see "Team USA," *Woman Bowler*, January 1991, v 54, no. 9, p 8.

³⁶ Joe Gluvna, "Olympic gold by 1992 for World's Bowlers?," *Chronicle Telegram*, April 16, 1984, p 16.

³⁷ "Teaming up benefits everyone," *Woman Bowler*, July 1993, v 57, no. 5, p 16.

³⁸ The Olympic Games are formatted around a specific set of rules. Only a limited number of sports can be included for several reasons such as time and interest. One of the greatest disappointments for the WIBC was not being included in the Olympic Games as a medal sport.

³⁹ "Baseball, softball bumped from Olympics," *US Today*, 17 August 2008.

⁴⁰ See interviews in the author's vertical files.

⁴¹ For the United States Curling Association, go to <http://www.curlingrocks.net>.

⁴² Becky Waller, "A World-Class Event," the *WB*, Fall 1995, v 59, no. 3, pp 13-14.

⁴³ Jill Van Dierendonck, "These women run the 'house,'" *Woman Bowler*, April 1986, v 50, no. 4, pp 35-37.

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE

THE END OF AN ICON: FROM THE WIBC TO THE UNITED STATES BOWLING CONGRESS

As membership decreased annually, the Women's International Bowling Congress sought a closer alliance with the men's American Bowling Congress with clear objectives that led to a merger between the WIBC and the ABC. Together, during the last decade of the twentieth-century, the ABC and the WIBC leaders worked assiduously but unsuccessfully to promote youth bowling with full knowledge that the women's and the men's national bowling congresses could not survive without them. The number of youth bowlers in the United States never reached an adequate number to replace the adult bowlers who dropped out or passed away. This final chapter will discuss the course of action that led to the demise of what had become one of the greatest institutions in U.S. women's sport history and the merger that created the United States Bowling Congress (USBC) in 2005. More specifically it looks at the effects this merger had on the American women bowlers who lived through it. Women's league bowling and the Women's International Bowling Congress was a refuge in the mainstream world of male-dominated sport and the 2005 merger with the men's American Bowling Congress shocked many women who long cherished competing with other women in a league of their own.

The American Bowling Congress as well as the Women's International Bowling Congress voted "no" to a merger between the three major organizations, the Young American Bowling Alliance, the ABC, and the WIBC in March 2003. The vote was 630

against with 628 “yes” votes. Two thirds of the vote was needed to pass the legislation. Roger Dalkin, ABC executive director, insisted “The vote was probably more emotional than based on fact. We couldn’t transition the loyalties our delegates have toward the ABC to an unknown new organization.” The aim of the merger was to eliminate the duplication of services by the separate member organizations and save an estimated \$13,000,000 over the next five years. Dalkin said, “This will be the real change necessary to take bowling to the next level. It’s a defining moment.”¹

That “defining moment” came, as the Women’s International Bowling Congress fought a losing battle with decreasing membership during the last two decades of the twentieth century, when, under pressure from WIBC leaders, its delegates cast a “yes” vote in May of 2004 to merge with the men’s American Bowling Congress (ABC). This merger included the Young Americans’ Bowling Alliance (YABA) along with Team USA. Together, the new-age organization is now the United States Bowling Congress, as of 1 January 2005. In hindsight, this new alliance between the men and women’s bowling clubs seems predestined. As fewer members renewed membership in both the WIBC and the ABC, and in the youth organization, YABA, never a stable association in membership even in the height of bowling popularity, suffered severe withdrawal.²

While an ongoing *battle of the sexes* has often meant that women and men have little desire to share the lanes so why did the world’s largest women’s organization (the Women’s International Bowling Congress) choose to unite with the American Bowling Congress after eighty-eight years of operation where they were autonomously and independently self-directed in the largest organization of its kind?³ Did the majority of WIBC women league bowlers really want to merge with the men’s organization? When

asked, most women (from fifty to eighty years of age) who were long-term members of the Women's International Bowling Congress do not mind bowling with men in mixed leagues but would rather keep their association separate from the men's. Members of the WIBC took great pride in their association and shared emotional ties with WIBC leaders and this became a major indication of why the merger between the men's and the women's bowling associations manifested into such a dramatic decline of WIBC membership. In 1980 the total membership of the Women's International Bowling Congress was 4,187,053. By 1990 membership was down to 2,859,570 and by 2000 there were only 1,481,163 members, and as of 2012 there are less than 1,200,000. The WIBC Board of Directors, as did the ABC, USA Bowling, and YABA were all convinced that the merger would be a good thing for bowling and many were afraid without the merger women's national association might no longer be able to remain a non-profit organization or worse, the WIBC would no longer exist.⁴ "From our standpoint, this will bring more focus on the athletes who represent our country," insisted USA Bowling Executive Director Jerry Koenig. "We view this merger as an opportunity for the first time, for athletes to be represented at the highest policy making levels of the sport."⁵ A feasibility study (the Single Membership Organization Task Force) of a single membership organization was completed in January 2000 with additional reports from groups who, in the past, successfully completed a non-profit merger and consolidation. Experts as well as professional committees that included bowling association members, convention delegates, association officials, and national board members created the two-hundred page report that proposed that the merger would save millions of dollars in the first five years and recoup transition costs within a two year period.⁶

Many women who love to bowl do not necessarily pay close attention to association politics and were surprised and disappointed when WIBC agreed to a merger that took effect on the 1st of January 2005. Part of the lack of interest and disbelief reflects the failed attempt of earlier mergers.⁷ When the proposed merger failed to pass both the men's and the women's congresses in 2003, many felt that the matter had been settled. The national associations and local proprietors returned to business and immediately began work on new and progressive membership campaigns.⁸ Due to inadequate communication and lack of attention to meetings and announcements made on local levels, many members of the Women's International Bowling Congress were shocked to learn that a merger would go into effect 1 January 2005.⁹ To be sure, it seemed like top-down decision making, but "Women bowlers," complained Dottie McNutt local league secretary in San Angelo, Texas, "throughout the years, have shown very little interest in the local meetings where discussions and debates were being held about the seriousness of the condition the sport of bowling was in."¹⁰ Pat Smith, past-secretary and long time national delegate for the San Angelo (Texas) Women's Bowling Association, agreed and added that the majority of sanctioned league women bowlers did not participate in the vote within their own local association, and delegates were honor bound to vote the way the majority of voters chose. Only the women who voted had a voice and they were a relatively small percentage of the women who bowl in the United States.¹¹ Thus what was seen as a devastating decision on the part of a small minority of members resulted in many women who bowl arguing to create a new national league of their own. Back in 1993, committee members, appointed to the task of finding solutions to stop decreasing membership which included the prospects of a merger between the

men and women's national associations approached the president of the WIBC. Joyce Deitch replied,

I think women can best represent women. It's interesting that we're closing out the year of the woman (1993). I think it isn't just women in bowling, but women in general. Women have come to realize they have a lot to offer their sport. To sit back and suddenly say, somebody else can do it just as well as we can, just isn't acceptable anymore.

I believe women bowl for different reasons than why men bowl. Women go to a national tournament for different reasons than men do. Women become involved in a board of directors or as a volunteer for different reasons than men. So it only makes sense that women are in the best position to deal with those needs and motivations.¹²

Indeed, hundreds of women, hurt and disappointed in the disavowal of their national headquarters, withdrew from the Women's International Bowling Congress. Rumors surfaced across the country, as women bowlers, angry and defiant, discussed re-creating a women's national association. Many women refused to join as members of the United States Bowling Congress and hundreds of women's leagues disbanded. Some argued that this group of disgruntled women bowlers is extremely small but statistics present a different picture. Consequently total membership of the Women's International Bowling Congress, the American Bowling Congress, Young American Bowling Alliance, and Team USA was under three million when the merger passed all congresses with the WIBC membership alone, falling under 1,157,308 in 2004.¹³

After the United States Bowling Congress convened in January 2005, getting down to business included changing the names of the national championship tournaments. The former men's American Bowling Congress Championships Tournament changed to the USBC Championships and the former Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament became known as the USBC Women's Championships along with the WIBC Queens to be named the USBC Queens. Other

name changes included the USBC Senior Queens, formally the WIBC Senior Queens and the USBC Senior Masters, formerly named the ABC Senior Masters. Changing the names of these premier events, including youth bowling tournaments, of all of the merging organizations was essentially important in order to be positively identified by USBC members and the media. Also, the United States Bowling Congress leadership understood the emotional adjustment that WIBC and ABC members would have to make and tried to preserve and maintain the history of each of these entities by “offering a nostalgic line of merchandise for each of the organizations and special historic sections that can be found on bowl.com.”¹⁴

The United States Bowling Congress (USBC) has been active since the first of January 2005. Not only did the national organizations of the Women’s International Bowling Congress, the American Bowling Congress, and the Young American Bowling Association agree to a merger, local and state bowling associations were theatrically given the option to merge local associations (the men’s, women’s, and youth) into one. If the local and state associations had not chosen to accept the USBC as the national governing body for bowling in the United States and become dues paying members, leagues and tournaments held in unsanctioned local bowling centers could not be recognized internationally or on any level accept locally. They would also lose the right to be considered for national or international competition in world associations such as the *Federation Internationale des Quilleurs*, the World Olympics, or the US Olympics. There was really no choice for local bowling associations to remain autonomous. They either merged their different associations under the governing body of the United States Bowling Congress or they became independent bowling associations without the benefits

of a national organization. Membership in the United States Bowling Congress, today (2012), remains under 2,000,000 with 3,000 local associations (this figure represents a decrease in sanctioned league bowlers of over 1,000,000 just since January 2005), an indication that “open” bowling is indeed the most popular form of bowling and this includes men and youth bowlers, as well as women.

The Professional Women’s Bowling Association (PWBA) has been on-again and off-again for many years since its creation in 1960. It was finally disbanded in 2003, due to, what many sport writers argue was a lack of national interest in professional women bowlers. Past professional women bowlers now bowl in amateur leagues and tournaments and many seek inclusion into the men’s professional tours and others seek professional competition in several countries overseas. The Professional Bowling Association (the men’s PBA) created a mini-tour series for women bowlers in 2007. These mini-tour series were sponsored by the United States Bowling Congress and were conducted concurrently with several of the stops on the men’s PBA tour.¹⁵ The US Women’s Open took form in 2007, which featured only four events in the 2007-2008 bowling season. By the 2008-2009 bowling season, it expanded into eight events but by 2010 the US Women’s Open also ceased to exist.¹⁶

The United States Bowling Congress establishes the official rules for all sanctioned USBC bowling leagues and offers counselors to help members and league secretaries understand them. The USBC is the only official entity that can certify sanctioned leagues and USBC tournaments. They also claim to provide coaches for youth bowlers as they regulate and promote high school and university bowling programs as well as managing Team USA competition in international tournaments. USBC

sanctioned tournaments include the USBC Junior Gold Championships and USBC Youth Open, the USBC Masters and USBC Senior Masters, the USBC Women's Championships, USBC Queens, and also the USBC Senior Queens. The United States Bowling Congress also conducts Team USA Trials, the USBC Intercollegiate Singles Championships, and the Pepsi USBC Youth Championships. The USBC provides recognition for all honor games rolled in sanctioned USBC leagues and tournaments which include a score of 298, 299, 300, and a series of 800 plus. The United States Bowling Congress manages the Scholarship Management and Accounting Report for Tenpins or more commonly known as SMART, the only youth scholarship fund now recognized by the USBC and one that is now being contested by US high schools across the country.¹⁷

While women do occupy positions within the USBC official organization, they are still under-represented by the media as athletes and leaders and by industry journals such as the *US Bowler: The Official Publication of the United States Bowling Congress*. The *US Bowler* replaced the *Woman Bowler* in 2005. In a random selection of six editions of the *US Bowler* covering a period from 2005 through 2010, coverage of men bowlers ran fifty percent higher than the coverage of women bowlers. Of these six journals, women were featured on the cover of two editions (one of these was a photograph of a young family including the woman bowler, her husband, and their two children) while men were featured alone on four covers. Each edition featuring men bowlers presented action shots or close-up photos of men bowlers. Articles and photographs of men bowlers were featured over 58 times in six issues while women bowlers were featured in less than 30 articles with only one half of those accompanied by

photographs. Many of the articles featuring men bowlers provided large full page photographic shots of them on the lanes with only four articles featuring women bowlers with full page photographs. Additionally, as the United States Bowling Congress restructured its leadership in 2005 based on the former formats of the American Bowling Congress and the Women's International Bowling Congress, the six leading officials included five men and one woman. By 2012, the USBC executive offices were held by three men and one woman while the Board of Directors consisted of 14 men and 11 women.¹⁸

The merger formed the United States Bowling Congress Hall of Fame in 2005 from the American Bowling Congress Hall of Fame established in 1941 and the Women's International Bowling Congress Hall of fame founded in 1953. There were 396 Hall of Famers by 2012 that included 262 for superior performance, 114 for meritorious service, and 20 pioneer bowlers that were founders of the ABC in 1895 and the WIBC in 1916.¹⁹

"We will have a United States Bowling Congress!" declared Sylvia Broyles on 5 May 2004, the last presiding president of the Women's International Bowling Congress. A two-thirds "yes" vote was needed from the Women's International Bowling Congress delegation or 1,640 out of 2,460 votes cast, and a two-thirds "yes" vote of 782 from the men's American Bowling Congress guaranteed the passage of the merger sought by the WIBC and the ABC leadership. On the 5th of May in 2004 the women's national bowling association cast 1,743 "yes" votes with 716 "no" votes while the men's national bowling association cast 898 "yes" votes and 274 "no" votes. Was it *democracy in action* that day in May when the hard-sought independence of American women bowlers ended after

eighty-eight years of autonomous government as their leaders urged cooperation and integration between the Women's International Bowling Congress and the men's American Bowling Congress? How did this momentous day in women's history affect the members of what had once been the largest women's sporting organizations in the world? Even though President Sylvia Broyles shed tears during her farewell address to over two thousand WIBC delegates, she admitted her tears were as much tears of sadness as they were tears of relief. In an interview conducted for the last edition of the women's bowling journal, *Frames & Lanes: Special Commemorative Final Issue*, President Sylvia Broyles expressed her feelings about what the Women's International Bowling Congress meant to her. Broyles's lifetime experiences in bowling and her love for the WIBC are typical of all American women bowlers interviewed for this study who were members of the WIBC. Her statement below speaks for thousands of women who shared the bonds created by being part of the Women's International Bowling Congress. President Broyles stated,

My first league was a church league called St. Michael's Bowling League at Broadway Lanes. My husband George and I were on different teams and we joined shortly after we got married. All I knew when I first joined was that I paid membership fees to belong to this national women's bowling association. It wasn't until after I became a league secretary my second year that I fully realized the value of membership. It was more than just bowling in my little league. It offered me countless opportunities. I still feel the same about WIBC and the many opportunities and services provided to its members that has proved most memorable. I also have the same passion I had when I first started bowling, but now the fellowship has become far more important than my bowling score. Nothing can replace the lifelong friends I have made over the years. I have met people from all walks of life. And with their support, I have had the opportunity to develop my leadership skills, to serve at the local, state, and national level, and to ultimately serve as WIBC president. None of this would have been possible if I had not been a member of WIBC. I have an extended family – bowling and all the friends I have made through WIBC. While there undoubtedly will be new and lasting friendships that will continue under USBC, I don't think they will be the same. WIBC has been like an extended bowling family, which will truly be missed despite the bright future I see for USBC.²⁰

NOTES

CHAPTER VIII

¹ *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Tuesday 18 March 2003, p 8C.

² "Strength in numbers," *Frames and Lanes: Special Commemorative Final Issue*, Spring/Summer 2005, pp 22-23. See also "New name, same game," *The 86th Annual Women's International Bowling Congress Championship Tournament*, 9 April 2005, p 29.

³ Men were never invited to bowl in the Women's International Bowling Congress or in their national, state, or local tournaments. However, women can and do bowl in almost all (about 95 percent) of the men's leagues and tournaments.

⁴ Herb Werner, "WIBC votes down merger plan," *Altoona Mirror*, 17 May 2003, p 22.

⁵ Monroe, "Bowling federations moving forward one organization," *Kokomo Tribune*, 10 November 2002, p 16.

⁶ *Ibid.* See also, M.F. Piraino, the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, 28 January 2003, p 29 and 12 November 2002, p 29.

⁷ Pat Smith Interview.

⁸ Herb Werner, "WIBC votes down merger plan," *Altoona Mirror*, 17 May 2003, p 22.

⁹ Pat Smith Interview.

¹⁰ Dottie McNutt Interview.

¹¹ Pat Smith Interview.

¹² "Seventh woman to head WIBC," *Woman Bowler*, July 1993, v 57, no. 5, pp 21-23.

¹³ See all author's interviews, 2005-2009.

¹⁴ "USBC tournaments get new identities," *Rio Rancho Observer*, 10 February 2005, p B-2.

¹⁵ When men started bowling under the American Bowling Congress's national association in 1895, their wives were only allowed to attend and watch. Eventually, see earlier chapters of this study, women were also allowed to bowl after the men's games ended. This continued until 1916 when women bowlers created the WIBC.

¹⁶ To see results of the professional women's tours in 2007-2010, go to www.bowl.com.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ "USBC re-structures leadership roles to focus on future," *US Bowler: the Official Publication of the United States Bowling Congress*, 2006 v 2, no. 2, p 6. In this same edition, one full page provided an article and a 1950s reproduction of a black and white photo of a middle-aged man seated with his hand on a bowling ball being held by an attractive young woman, sitting down at his feet with one shoe being cleaned by an attractive young woman with bare legs, while another young woman wearing short-shorts worked on his hair, and another equally attractive young woman pretended to put a bowling shoe in the man's bowling bag. The title of this page is "Jump Start Your Game."

¹⁹ The validity of the term "scholarship" for youths (scholarships are conducted and stored by SMART under the direction of the USBC) has been questioned recently by the Michigan High School Athletic Association and deemed US high school students as ineligible to receive bowling scholarships from USBC because youth members of the USBC cannot accept money in any form as prizes for tournaments or league accomplishments until they are 22 years of age. The Women's International Bowling Congress and the American Bowling Congress offered "scholarships" for exceptional youth bowlers that required high academic standards as well as superior bowling ability. USBC only requires tournament wins to qualify a youth for a "scholarship" when they enter college.

²⁰ For Sylvia Broyles's last interview see the final issue of the WIBC's women's bowling journal, *Frames & Lanes: Special Commemorative Final Issue*, Spring/Summer 2005, v 5, no. 3, p 31. A very large percentage of the women who bowled during the twentieth century felt a deep bond with the Women's International Bowling Congress leaders and members. It will not be forgotten.

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were mainly written by staff members of the WIBC and authors' names were not included until the late twentieth-century. Detailed endnotes provide (1) first four or five words of the article, (2) author's name when mentioned, (3) and month, year, volume, number, and page numbers. For this bibliography, the author has listed archived journals of the *Woman Bowler*, first by date followed by journal volume, journal number, and journal page.

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