

The Interesting Life of Mr. Pinspotter

by Dave Williams



Mr. Pinspotter brochure cover provided by the Raymond R. "Woody" Woodruff collection at the Smithsonian Museum

"I had never heard that before," mentioned Tony Franklin, owner, editor and publisher of thebowlingnews.net, along with his lovely wife Genie. They have been at the helm of the Texas-based publication since purchasing the newspaper from longtime publisher and founder Joe Gennaro.

What Tony was referring to was my mention of the different terms for the automated bowling machines... pinsetter for Brunswick, and pinspotter for AMF. It was something that was really hammered home while I was working for the folks at AMF in both New York and later in Richmond, Virginia.

I'm not sure why the difference is there, other than to say that I'm sure the brilliant minds at the AMF marketing department in New York had to be involved; to differentiate between the two ma-



Shot of Woody Woodruff inspecting the operation of a pinspotter provided by USBC Hall of Fame

chines that accomplish basically the same thing, repositioning the fallen pins, but by entirely different methods. The end result was a new word, pinspotter, that is not even recognizable by spell check on my computer.

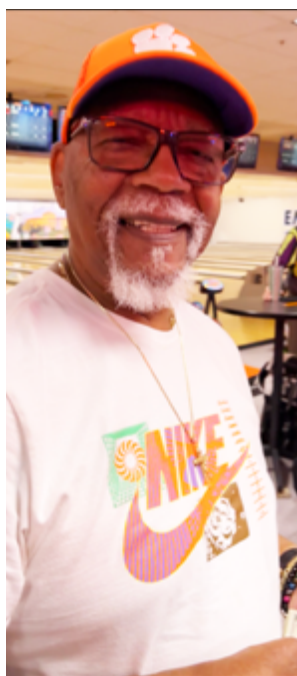
I decided to make the pinspotter nomenclature the topic of this week's article, and try to find out more about the name and the introduction of the automated pinspotter at the 1946 USBC tournament in Buffalo, New York. Woody Woodruff,

a long time mainstay of AMF, and one of those brilliant minds from the marketing department, was involved in the special installation across the street from the War Memorial Stadium in Buffalo.

continued on page 5

P.J. Buckner - Tops Golden Agers League

by Frank Weiler



REDLANDS – P.J. Buckner has been bowling at a high level for decades. He is a successful tournament competitor with titles to his credit and is a member of the USBC Citrus Belt Hall of Fame.

Buckner is a multitasking, multifaceted bowler. His Bowling game has more facets to it than the Hope Diamond. He can play the lanes from a variety of angles with a variety of weapons. His bowling tool bag is full of options and his ability to exploit those tools to his advantage is amazing. He is one of my favorite

bowlers to watch and learn from.

With such talent and variety of tools at his disposal it is no wonder that P.J. Buckner has been a successful bowler for so many decades.

This past week P.J. rolled another 600 scratch series and 230 scratch game in the Golden Agers League. That series allowed him to move from second to first on the league Leader Board.

The League wishes to give a "SHOUTOUT" to Jim Sheppard for rolling last weeks league high scratch game of 236

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1. P.J. Buckner 202
 2. Jim Sheppard 201
 3. Tom Collins 199
 4. Gary Nakano 196
 5. Bob Pedersen 191
 6. Frank Weiler 190
 7. Tracie Lucky 189
 8. Tom Smith 187
 9. Bob Corrigan 186
 10. Jerry Kelly 184
- Claude Heffington 184

and league high scratch series of 614.

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What Do Dick Clark, American Bandstand and Shelby, Ohio All Have In Common?

by Dave Williams

"The Golden Age of Bowling in the United States took place in the 1950's and 60's, and the epicenter of all that fun was Shelby, Ohio," writes Timothy Brian McKee at richlandcountyhistory.com. "That was where AMF had its Bowling Division factory, and it was their job to produce every sort of innovative new aspect of the sport that eventually came to be the standard bowling experience across the nation."

Although I only visited the Shelby factory a couple of times, as well as the nearby Westerville plant, I became forever attached to some of the workers when they asked me to join their team and compete in the annual USBC tournament. As I've said before, AMF paid for everything, so how could I say no? We bowled on six different occasions during the 1980's in Louisville, Memphis, Niagara Falls (chicken wings!), Reno, Tulsa and Las Vegas.

"The number of bowling alleys in the USA went from 6,000 in 1955 to 11,000 by 1963, and during this same period the number of league members rose from just under 3 million to over 7 million," continues McKee. "Without question, this explosion of popularity can be attributed to one single factor: the automatic pinsetter."

Before we go any further, I must make mention of some basic terminology. While working at AMF for many years, I became profoundly aware that Brunswick built *pinsetters*, while AMF built *pinspotters*. I'm not completely sure if Brunswick had a patent on the word pinsetter, or if AMF was just making a marketing difference by calling them pinspotters, but it was a difference that was pounded into the nomenclature of every AMF employee.

Prior to the AMF pinspotter introduction across the street from the annual USBC tournament at Buffalo in 1946, every bowling center required a staff of pin boys to manually reset the pins that were knocked down. It was a tremendous problem trying to fill those pin boy positions, so the pinspotter became the impetus for the rapid expansion in bowling centers and league bowlers.

A couple of instances that I can remember during my days at AMF involving the recruiting of pin boys were best exemplified by Strike 'n Spare Lanes in Illinois and State Fair Recreation in Michigan. Both had unique ways of recruiting pin boys to keep the lanes in operation. At Strike 'n Spare the owners built a room below the lanes complete with showers and individual bed spaces, like a barracks. State Fair Recreation in the suburbs of Detroit went a step further, offering a snack shop with complementary meals for the pin boys during their shift.

State Fair had a unique layout, as described to me by longtime friend and co-worker Ted Rebain, who's father was the manager of the 70 lane center. Instead of having the concourse in the middle of the split house (with lanes on either side), the machines were in the middle, with a concourse on either side. Rebain often told me how this provided efficiency in terms of having the pin boys bounce back and forth between the two sides. It also provided an area for the pin boys own snack bar and rest area between the lanes.

It took awhile for the automatic pinspotter to catch on. "By 1953 the Shelby factory opened with a staff of 200 employees, turning out 200 machines per month. Within a year there were 500 employees, and by the time Shelby had established itself as the most important bowling hub of the nation, there were 950 employed," writes McKee.

But what does any of this have to do with Dick Clark and American Bandstand, you might be asking? In 1959, the marketing geniuses at AMF hired television star Dick Clark to put a popular face on



bowling by becoming their spokesman. I'm sure that John Mazey, Al Spanjer and Jack Graziano must have been a part of the free booklet called "Bowling Fun with Dick Clark." It was a giveaway at all bowling centers that installed the automatic pinspotter. Clark also advertised AMF products during his American Bandstand program on ABC-TV.


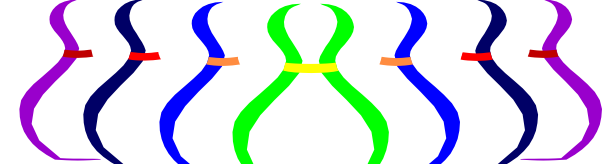
I remember those days while growing up in California. Local station KPIX in San Francisco (a CBS affiliate) had their own version of American Bandstand called "Dance Party." The show aired after school on weekdays and featured local teenagers from a different high school everyday. Although I was only about ten at the time, I still recall my older sister Diane be-

ing a participant with her boyfriend at the time, Ken Norton. (No, not the boxer!)

The Dick Clark connection with AMF must have had a lot to do with the popularity of bowling in those years. Again, I can recall my sister going to the bowling lanes almost every Friday night with her date, or with friends. In a town with only 2,695 residents, it was about the only thing to do that was parent approved!

- Dick Clark photo provided by International Bowling Museum
- Sadly, Diane Williams-Crosby passed away this year at the age of 77

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Mr. Pinspotter continued from page 1

It was the first time that the event had been held since 1942, due to a World War II moratorium from 1943-1945. It's also interesting to note that the USBC annual tournament, which travels all over the United States, from north to south, and coast to coast, has never missed another year of competition since 1901, when the inaugural event was held in Chicago, Illinois.

I looked up Woody's name on the internet and discovered a few things that I never knew about the legendary icon at AMF. Woody was a graduate of Harvard University, possibly with a degree in marketing, but more likely in electrical engineering. He was a 62-year member of the Masonic Lodge, that secretive organization that included most of the founding fathers of our great country. And, he was a lifelong member of the Grace United Methodist Church of New York and New Jersey.

Woody was like a father to me, as were so many of those great marketing executives that took me under their wing at the AMF headquarters in Westbury, New York. He always had a smile on his face and an endless number of stories to tell from his 38 year career with the bowling giant. I've told this story so many times, so those of you that have heard it before... here it is again!

When I first arrived at the world headquarters for AMF, I was still driving a Datsun 280-ZX from my days on the west coast, and in the midwest. It was essentially my home, and representatives from AMF would call me and say, "We need you at XYZ Bowl tomorrow." So I would pack my bags and toss my clothes in the back of the hatchback 280-ZX, and off I would go to my next destination, while listening to one of the hit songs of the day, like "Barracuda." That was some good traveling music on the Interstate highways!

So, here's the story as it relates to Mr. Woodruff: Almost every day Woody would come by my office and say, "There's something wrong with this company. I've been here 35 years and drive a Dodge Omni. You just got here and drive a 280-ZX!" I never get tired of telling that story, or the one about getting lost with Dick Weber in Michigan, and Woody asking me to step into his office upon my return, because he had Dick on his speaker phone. We'll save that story for another time...

As I continued looking for information about the history of the word pinspotter, I stumbled upon an interesting item from the Smithsonian Museum. It seems that five years prior to Woody's death, he arranged to have a number of file boxes sent to the museum. Included in those boxes were service manuals on the maintenance and repair of automatic pinspotters, photographs, newspaper clippings and articles on the introduction of the automatic pinspotter, along with almost 50 years of AMF company newsletters, and other items including a letter and resume from a young Raymond R. Woodruff.

What a fascinating find! Woody and fellow employee Frank J. Martin (who

made a subsequent donation to the Smithsonian in 2010) were the inventors of the automatic pinspotter that was introduced at the Buffalo USBC tournament. In all the years that I knew Woody, I don't think he ever mentioned his connection to the creation of the pinspotter. In addition to everything else, he was a humble man, with a lot of great stories.

Among the photographs and other items donated to the museum was a copy of Mr. Pinspotter, a brochure announcing "The Automatics are Here." I remember this robotic character from my earliest years in youth leagues. Mr. Pinspotter appeared everywhere, from the bowling center to local newspaper ads, and even on some of the outside signage at bowling centers that had installed the automatics. "The AMF Automatic Pinspotters are a development of American Machine and Foundry Company, creators and producers of electronic and mechanical products since 1900," states the headline on the cover. You are then invited to turn the cover and discover how the automatics work.

I wonder if Woody was known as "Mr. Pinspotter" in those early days, just as I was known as "Mr. 300," accumulating all those perfect games while traveling throughout the country and representing AMF? It's fascinating to me that Woody took the time to collect all of that information in file boxes that he later sent to the Smithsonian Museum. Do you suppose he also had a "Mini-Storage Warehouse Museum?"

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INVITATIONAL

Love Laundry Sits Atop The League With A Week To Go

by David Yamauchi

DOWNEY - The Brunswick Invitational took to the lanes for week 6 of 7 in the warmup round. Teams were battling for position to get into the "A" match next week and have a shot at being the first teams to stamp their ticket to the rollofs. Scoring was all over the map as many matches came down to the last frame to determine the winners.

In the "A" match, **Love Laundry** (Ramsey Basurto) was looking to keep it rolling after two strong weeks put them atop the league with **Don Julio Tequila** (Gabe Garza) sitting one game back and hoping to dethrone the leaders. In the first game, the two teams came down to the wire with a solid-9 for Love Laundry creating a 879-879 tie. From there the night was all Love Laundry as they stayed atop the league with a 4.5-.5 win over Don Julio Tequila. Ramsey Basurto led Love Laundry with a solid 727 set while Jason Carrillo struck to a 708 set to lead Don Julio Tequila.

In the "B" match, **Del Rio Lanes** (Michael Barnett) was looking to bounce back after dropping to third taking on **Family Ties** (Bobby Campagnale) who were back in the win column with four wins in week 5. Family Ties took the first two games, then held on for totals and a 4-1 win over Del Rio Lanes. Scott Smith (681) and Bobby Campagnale (680) were big for Family Ties while Michael Barnett again was huge for Del Rio Lanes with a 672 series.

Weaverbird (Eric Williams Jr.) was coming off a sweep in week 5 to take on **Taco Bell** (Kaven Massey) who was hoping to come back from a tough session last week. Taco Bell wrapped up the first and third game combo to take a 4-1 result over Weaverbird. Weaverbird did take game two in a thrilling finish 755-754. Kaven Massey paced Taco Bell with a 672 set while James Bael was high for Weaverbird with a 615 series.

US Foods (Gabe Martinez) clawed all the way up to 7th after a rough start, taking on **Threadworks** (Eric Snow) who swept their way up to 8th last Monday in a battle of the high 13-win teams. US Foods took the first two games including a 164-pin win in game two that was enough to fight off a 918 third game by Threadworks, and banked a 4-1 win. Mike Bogue (689) and Charlie Kinstler (685) struck big for US Foods while Eric Snow was tough again with a solid 681 set.

Touchstone Homes (Christian Eichelkraut) and **Junior Amateur Tour** (Kevin Valmonte) battled with both teams looking to avenge tough matchups in week five. Kevin Valmonte punched in the 10th of game one to give Junior Amateur Tour the 14-pin win, then they took game two by enough to lock up totals as Touchstone Homes' Christian Eichelkraut returned the favor by punching out game three to give Touchstone a one-pin win and end the match in a 4-1 result. Super-sub Andrew Svoren (687) and Michael Marmolejo (686) banked all the wood for J.A.T. while Terry Hatley rolled to a 621 set to lead Touchstone Homes.

DV8 (Tony Brunning) was the low of the 13 win teams, taking on **Bowlium** (Billy Myers Jr.) who needed to bank some wins after a rough start. Bowlium came out strong and took 4 from DV8 led by Arnold Cheesman's 679 series while Semaj Lewis was huge for DV8 posting a solid 681 series.

Forest Lanes (Jon Diso), **Pro Approach Cal Bowl** (Austin Wasielewski), **Pro Approach Oak Tree** (Leonard Ruiz Jr.) and **Pro Approach Del Rio** (Augie Labrado Jr.) rounded out Monday's action. Forest Lanes took 4 from Pro Approach Cal Bowl with a solid effort from Marshall Degnan to lead Forest Lanes with a 682 set. Austin Wasielewski led pro Approach Cal Bowl with a 664 set. Pro Approach Oak Tree swept their Del Rio

TOP 10 ROUND 1 WEEK 6

Love Laundry 23.5	US Foods 17
Family Ties 19	Junior Amateur Tour. 17
Don Julio Tequila . . 18.5	Weaverbird 15
Del Rio Lanes 18.5	Threadworks 14
Taco Bell 18	Touchstone Homes 14

TOP 10 THIS WEEK

727 Ramsey Basurto	687 Andrew Svoren
708 Jason Carrillo	686 Michael Marmalejo
703 John Struckman	685 Charlie Kinstler
689 Mike Bogue	682 Marshall Degnan
688 Marquan Rivers	681 Semaj Lewis

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counterparts 5-0 with a huge 703 effort from John Struckman. Augie Labrado Jr. led Pro Approach Del Rio with a 658 series.

Financial Advisors Pot went to John Struckman (261) for \$160 with 2nd to Mike Bogue (259) for \$70. Sidepots went to Ramsey Basurto (259) and Mike Bogue (259) for \$60 each with 2nd to Henry Lee (258) and Jason Carrillo (256) for \$30. SuperPot went to Paul Varela (267) and Semaj Lewis (267) for \$135 each.

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