

Bowling's Funniest Man: Walt Steinsiek

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the April issue of Stars & Strikes, America's Bowling Newsmagazine, publisher Jim Goodwin used his column to write about a friend to many in the bowling industry, NCAUSBCA Hall of Famer Walt Steinsiek, whose cartoons have appeared in numerous bowling publications around the world, including BOWL Magazine for close to 40 years. Here's a chance for those who have enjoyed his side-splitting humor to learn more about the man.

This will only be a humble column, but we could write a book about our dear friend, Walter Steinsiek. He is perhaps the kindest, most unique, and funniest person we have ever known. He is also, without question, "The World's Greatest Bowling Cartoonist," as he likes to bill himself tongue-in-cheek to the thou-

sands who have seen his bowling cartoons and cartoon books.

Walt is also one of the most interesting people on the planet—or at least you get that impression when listening to his life stories. A proud member of the "greatest generation," Walt served as a Merchant Marine in World War II, and it was during those years he began to "dabble" in cartooning to pass the time on the tankers and liberty ships where he was assigned.

After the war, he lived in New York City and became an active member of the Artist and Writers Club of the Seamen's Church, which led to a scholarship to the NYU School of Art in 1946. Walt eventually settled in Laurel, Md., but he never lost his affection and ties to his birthplace of Passaic, New Jersey. It

was there that he discovered his lifelong love for the game of bowling. He became a pinboy at age 12, and hanging out in those sometimes unsavory places made him a tough guy, and his other sports love became boxing.

Today, if you visited his home and studio in Micco, Florida, you would never suspect that this jovial gentleman was once a rough-and-tumble fighter who joined the service not only to serve his country but to stay out of trouble in his rough New Jersey neighborhood. And he served proudly.

In addition to a sister who lives in New Jersey, he had an older brother who was killed in the war and is buried in the Netherlands. Walt has long vowed to visit the grave, and in late May, he is scheduled to leave this country to do just that. At the gravesite, he plans to read aloud the last overseas letter his mother wrote that arrived too late.

Today, Walt shares his days with his wife, Jane. Married for more than 50 years, they have a daughter, Denise. When Walt is not busy writing his bowling column for four Florida newspapers or cartooning, he is very active in his church, where he recently became a Stephens minister.

When he resided in Laurel, Walt became a successful sign painter in the days when it took real artistic talent to produce signs and banners, and he started a bowling paper like the one you are reading now. His *Baltimore-Washington Bowling News* thrived for a dozen years before he sold it and retired to Florida.

In 1973, Walt produced his first bowling cartoon book. In those days, there was a popular cliché to describe people with moxie. It simply went, "He has balls!" And Walt certainly did, so he named his first book, *Balls!*, with the subtitle, *Bowling ... of course!* It was not only outrageous, it was outrageously funny.

Now 83, Walt has never stopped entertaining us with his stories and making us laugh out loud with his jokes and cartoons. To say he is a "prolific writer and cartoonist" is like saying there is a lot of sand on all the beaches in the world. Today, we have a whole library of Steinsiek cartoon books, including the series of "Approach" tomes entitled *Funny*, *Funnier*, and *Funniest Approach*, not to mention the various cartoon pamphlets and published cartoons in dozens of bowling newspapers and magazines.



At the 2006 International Bowl Expo in Las Vegas, Walt Steinsiek was the surprise recipient of the Sam Levine Flowers for the Living Award.

The legendary cartoonist occasionally is asked to prepare the cover for an awards program. Walt appears with a man he has caricatured several times, PBA and USBC Hall of Famer Mike Aulby.



A former president of the Bowling Writers Association of America and charter lifetime member of the Southern Bowling Writers Association, Walt has won numerous awards and is enshrined in three Halls of Fame, but two honors set him apart from the ordinary.

The first is that he is a recipient of the Sam Levine Flowers for the Living Award, which is sponsored by the Bowling Foundation, which is a part of the new International Bowling Campus.

The other is perhaps the greatest tribute. The BWAA Cartoonist of the Year Award is now officially named the "Steinsiek Award" after the "world's greatest bowling cartoonist." It will be a fitting legacy to his wonderful work.

The late Joe Lyou, who also was a "Flowers" winner, was fond of billing himself as the "Greatest Korean Bowling Writer," and then he would finish the joke by saying he was the *only* Korean bowling writer. Well, Walt is not the only bowling cartoonist, but he is certainly at the top of the list, and deservedly so, based on the thousands of cartoons he has lovingly drawn in his lifetime.

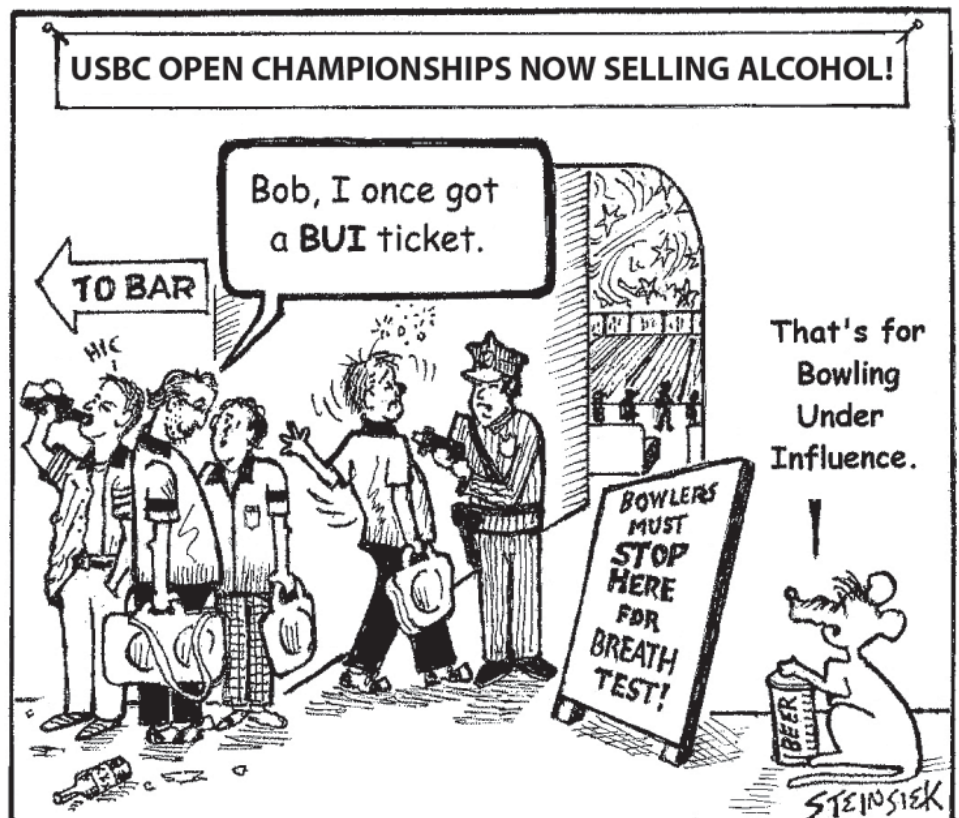
The Flowers Award started in 1960, and is given annually to people in the bowling industry who might go unnoticed for more traditional honors. It is special because only the panel of a dozen industry veterans can nominate the candidates and vote for the winner. There

is no campaigning, no politics, no prejudice involved. In fact, the candidates are not aware they are on the ballot until the time of the presentation.

The award consists of two plaques and a beautiful bouquet of flowers. On one plaque is the Flowers poem, penned

in 1960 by charter committee member Fritz Howell, and on the other a description of the award written by another of the founders, Sam Weinstein. It reads, *Not necessarily for any outstanding deed or spectacular accomplishment, but just for being a person in our world whom we*

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If you bowl in the Classified Division, you designate you are bowling left-handed, and the USBC should accept your 21-game average.

Just to be sure, I would write to USBC if you have time and make sure and keep the correspondence for your records. If you don't have time for the answer, clarify your question at the check-in desk in Reno before you bowl.

Q. *I have had two right shoulder surgeries and have just dropped from a 15-pound ball to a 14-pounder. My average has dropped 15 pins from 214 to 199. I am not really getting more speed on the ball but just find that I am way too inconsistent with the 14-pound ball. Will I be better off going back to the 15-pounder or hang in there with the 14?*

A. I don't know why you are going down in average with the 14-pound ball. But dropping that many pins makes me think there is more going on than the weight of the ball, such as more missed spares or more splits. This might be a mechanical problem rather than a weight problem.

You also may still not be 100 percent physically. During your next few sessions, keep your score frame-by-frame, and after four or five series, look at your score sheets and see if there is a pattern.

How many missed spares and which ones? Splits and which ones? What leaves you are getting like the 2-4-5 and so on? See if it is truly inconsistency or something else.

Even the best-kept machines will sometimes put a nick or a scratch on your ball.

You should also consult a coach for another opinion. The 14-pound ball may not be the problem.

Q. *I just went up in weight from 14 to 16 pounds to stop my "chicken winging." Is this a correct concept? I'm also having a hard time with dry lanes. When I throw the ball out, many times it won't come back. When I*

try to move out a little, it goes high. Please help.

A. Going up in weight to straighten out your armswing will probably not be the answer. Chicken winging comes from turning the ball early.

When we turn the ball early, the hand comes over the top of the ball and the elbow flies out. This is where the term "chicken winging" comes from. If you are turning early, you will still do that no matter the weight.

Here is what you can work on to cure the dreaded chicken wing: Simply aim at your mark with your ring finger. Pushing your ring finger toward the mark will delay your turn and cure over-turning.

Now for the dry lanes. My best guess is that your problem with dry lanes comes from your chicken winging. When we over-turn the ball, several things happen.

First, it creates false hook. You try to throw the ball out, but you set it short, pull it just a bit, and over-turn it toward the pocket, and it feels like the lanes are really hooking.

Then you finally force the ball out, but you have over-turned it, and the result is no fingers. The ball slides out and you get no hook and miss the headpin or get a 7-10 ripper or some other light split.

Once you get the chicken winging under control, you can swing the ball out and get the ball back. Work on staying behind the ball longer, and I think many of your problems will go away.

Q. *I am a new bowler, and three weeks ago, I bought my first new ball. Yesterday, when I went bowling, I noticed it is all scratched up and even has some deep nicks and scratches. I complained to the desk person and was told this is normal. I love my new ball and want it to look good. Do I have any recourse with the bowling center?*

A. From the first time you throw that new ball down the lane, the ball surface

begins to deteriorate. In most centers, the lanes are cleaned and oiled each day. But no matter how diligent they are, grit still gets on the lanes.

When you roll the ball down the lane, it will roll in about the same place every time. In this area, the ball will show visible scratching. This is called the ball track, and it can be useful to an instructor. This ball track tells the instructor a story about how you throw the ball.

You also deal with a machine that picks up your ball and returns it to you after each shot. Even the best-kept machines will sometimes put a nick or a scratch on your ball.

The center staffer is correct; this is a normal process in the life of a ball. If the ball gets really ugly, you can have it re-surfaced at the pro shop. The folks there will sand it and polish it for a moderate fee. This will extend the life of the ball and make it look nearly new again.

The bottom line is this: Some wear and tear is normal. As with anything, eventually you will need to replace it.

To ask a question, write askbob@clearwire.net.



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love and admire for what you have done and stood for.

Walt Steinsiek is such a person, and this column is my personal "flowers" award to him for being such a great friend to me and so many others for so many years. He is a mentor, a hero, an incredible human being, and bowling is richer because of his contributions. I hope he keeps entertaining us for many more years.

Thanks for making us laugh, Walt.

Award-winning writer Jim Goodwin of Rockwall, Tex., is vice president of the Bowling Writers Association of America. Information about Stars & Strikes can be found at starsandstrikesbowling.com.