



WIBC history lesson

Did you know that a women's league was organized as early as 1903? Indeed, the Daughters of Columbia league in Chicago had six teams. (Less information is known about a league also formed in 1903 in New York.)

Bowling was considered a special event for the ladies, and those events were always held at different "alleys." The first special event was held in 1901 and was referred to at the "United States Championships." Elizabeth Jeschke was the individual champion and received a silver cup (valued at \$100) for a five-game total of 701.

In 1909, after ABC relaxed its policy that lanes were for men only, Ellen Kelly of St. Louis began nurturing the idea that women needed an organization. Kelly founded the St. Louis Women's Bowling Association and served as its secretary in 1915. Because of the success of that organization, she began to think about a wider scope for women in bowling.

Kelly wrote to bowling proprietors nationwide, asking for the name and address of a top local woman bowler. Once she received the names, she sent a letter and a copy of the rules that helped the St. Louis WBA organize and suggested that the letter recipient organize a similar association in her city.

On October 27, 1916, The St. Louis Bowling Tournament Company, a male organization, held a meeting and voted unanimously to hold a "ladies only" tournament for the world championship in four events on November 27-28, 1916. (This was the first WIBC National Tournament.) The total prized fund was \$225.

On November 28, 1916, 40 ladies met at Washington Alleys in St. Louis to organize the Women's National Bowling Association. Then, on October 25, 1917, a constitution and bylaws were drafted and 25-cent dues were established.

In December of the same year, secretary Kelly learned that approval has been granted to hold a second national

tournament following the 1918 ABC Tournament in the Cincinnati Armory.

Every year since (with the exception of 1943-1945 because of World War II), a national tournament has been held. Today, the WIBC Tournament is the largest women's sports event.

And, although membership has steadily declined for the past several years, WIBC remains the largest women's sport organization.

Did you know....

- *Woman Bowler*, published by John Hemmer of Chicago, was circulated at the 1936 WIBC Convention in Omaha, Neb.

- The first sanctioned 300 game was bowled by Jennie Hoverson (Kelleher) in Madison, Wis., at Plaza Alleys, February 12, 1930.

- The first sanctioned 298 games was bowled by Mary Sanger of Omaha, Neb., during the 1932-33 season.

- The first sanctioned 297 game was bowled by Harriette Summers in St. Louis during the 1926-27 season.

- The first sanctioned 700 series was bowled by Goldie Greenwald in 1918 in Cleveland, Ohio.

- The first sanctioned 800 series (267-264-287/818) was bowled by Beverly Ortner of Galva, Iowa, on October 19, 1968 at Harmony Lanes, South Sioux City, Neb.

- The first 300 game in the WIBC Tournament was bowled in 1979 at Cactus Bowl in Tucson, Ariz.

- To date, there has not been an 800 series bowled in the WIBC Tournament.

To learn more about the history of WIBC, you can obtain a copy of *WIBC: The First 75 Years* by sending \$14 (\$100 for a special copy autographed by WIBC president Gladys Banker, with \$75 going to the National Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum) to WIBC, Public Relations Department, 5301 S. 76th St., Greendale, WI 53129-1191.

Nora King is a director of the Washington, D.C. Area Women's Bowling Association.