

"Meritorious Service"



Joseph Leonard Ciufu was born July 26, 1920, in Utica, New York. After World War II, he settled in Maryland and worked for the Veterans Administration. He attended the Anesthesia School at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland, and worked as an anesthetist at Perry Point Veterans Hospital until 1977.

It was while Joe worked for the Veterans administration at Perry Point that he, Bob Marshall and Tony Moscato purchased the bowling business called Ideal Lanes. So it was in July, 1963 that Joe Ciufu found himself to be part owner of Harford Lanes in Aberdeen, Maryland. His previous bowling experience consisted of setting pins as a youth while attending high school in Utica, bowling in the Perry Point and Swan Creek Leagues and some open bowling. By the way, open bowling for adults at that time was 50 cents per game!

The ten pin bowling climate for Cecil-Harford Counties in 1963 included two small military bowling centers, three commercial bowling establishments (Aberdeen, Bel Air and Elkton), limited league play and very limited tournament opportunities. Minorities did not have the opportunity to participate in bowling leagues and many people were intimidated by the image and atmosphere most bowling centers projected.

As one of the owners of Harford Lanes, Joe was influential in expanding league play to include evening early and late shifts, weekend leagues and day time leagues. He was also instrumental in encouraging minority bowlers to participate in league play. One of the major improvements made by the new ownership was to make Harford Lanes a family place where people could go to bowl together, have some light refreshment, and enjoy a night out at a reasonable expense. Not only could families bowl together, but they were treated as family. One example was the annual New Year's Eve party that went from 10:00 PM to about 5:00 AM, complete with bowling, music, dancing, food and home cooked breakfast. Joe promoted bowling on all levels.

In 1965, he was among a handful of people that took an ABC approved course on bowling instruction from AMF. He was helpful in instructing bowlers of all ages. Realizing the future of the game was in the youth, he supported the expansion of the junior bowling program and saw it grow from a few teams on Saturday mornings to a multi-league organization complete with in-house and Youth Bowling Association tournaments and competitions.

Always willing to help, Joe served two terms as the Cecil-Harford Counties Bowling Association Secretary Treasurer. It was during one of these terms that he served as tournament director for the Maryland State Bowling Association Tournament held at Bel Air Bowl.

Together with Tony and Bob, he promoted the sport of bowling by encouraging bowlers to improve their skills; he then provided opportunities for those bowlers to use their skill in competition. Some of the tournaments that became regular stops on the "Harford Lanes Tour" included: the Peterson Classic in Chicago, the Hoinkie Classic In Cincinnati, the John Vargo Classic in New Jersey and the Langrath's Memorial Classic in New York City. In addition, a squad of bowlers represented Harford Lanes in the ABC National Tournament each year. These are well known, national tournaments. Joe also encouraged bowlers to participate in local events by creating tournaments such as the Harford Lanes Summer Doubles Tournament that ran for eight years. During his tenure at Harford Lanes, qualifying rounds for the Maryland Match Game Championship were held for local bowlers.

Throughout all of this, Joe's skill as a bowler improved. Starting with a solid 165 average in 1963, he bowled on teams that won the State Association Tournament, Cecil-Harford Association Team titles and All Events title. He finished in 6th place in the singles event in the Madison, Wisconsin ABC National Tournament. He also bowled in two Professional Bowlers' Association regional tournaments in New Jersey and Connecticut and cashed in both of these.

Today Joe lives in Winter Haven Florida, with his wife Bobbi. When he moved to Florida, Joe could not sit still so he worked part time at, where else, Cypress Lanes. He purchased the bowling pro shop there in December, 1993, and ran it until he sold it in July of 1997. Even in retirement, he was involved in the service of others in the bowling industry. Now he bowls, golf's, works on his computer, and enjoys the warmth of the weather and friendships he has made along the way.