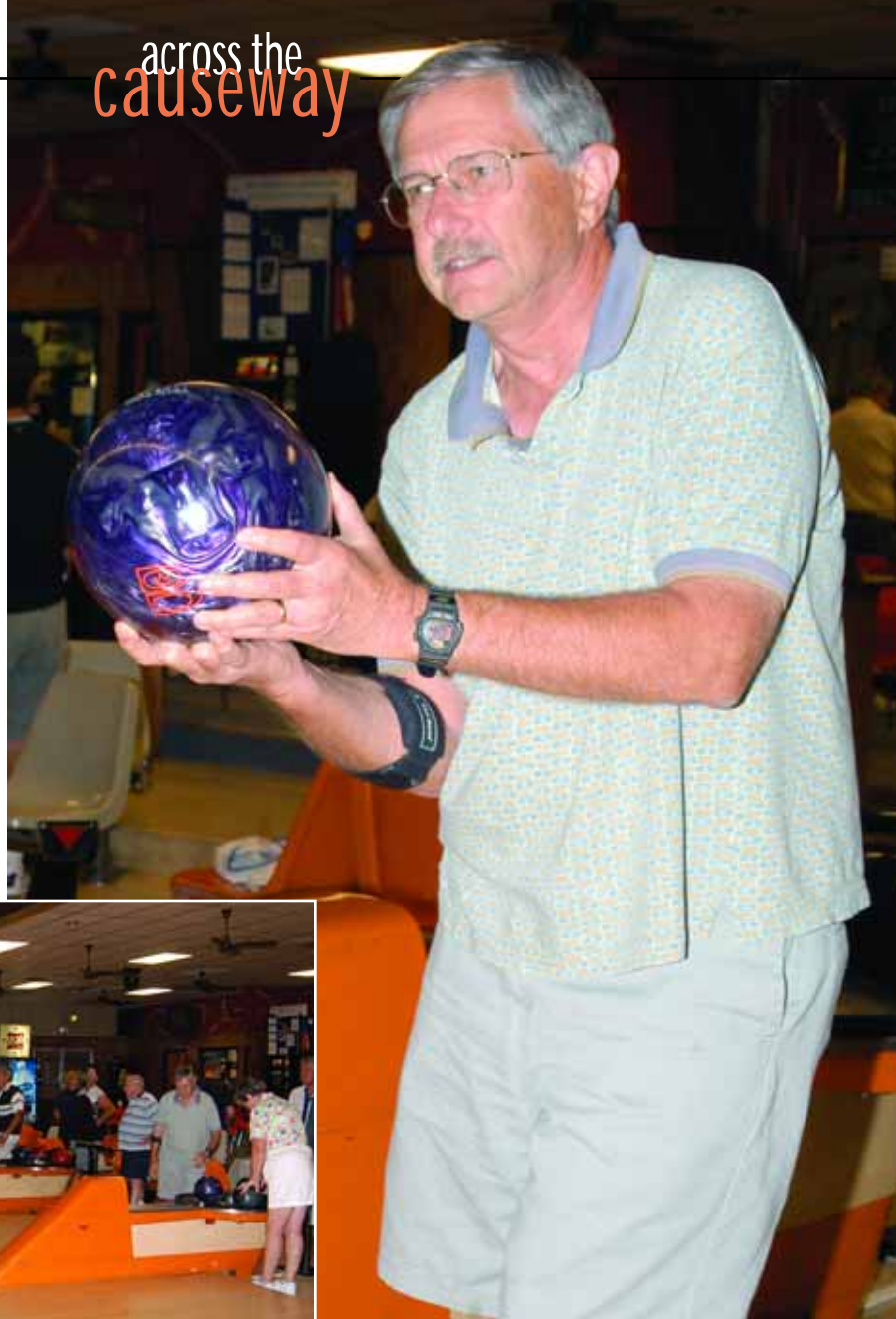


across the
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Let the Good Times Roll

Beach Bowl offers fun for all ages



George Papaionnau (above) joins other local bowling enthusiasts on the lanes at Ft. Myers's Beach Bowl.

PHOTOS BY RHONDA MANDEL



by Libby Boren McMillan

Had enough sun for a day? You might be bowled over by how much fun people have been having since 1963 at Beach Bowl. Located just a few miles from Sanibel Island and Ft. Myers Beach, this family-oriented bowling alley is a tradition for legions of locals and visitors, everyone from seniors to young couples. It's the perfect place to kill a few hours and have a blast doing it; all you need to bring are socks and a smile.

Beach Bowl's twelve lanes all have automated scoring, so if it's been a few years since you last bowled or if you're a novice, keeping score is a no-brainer. The

display even features funny graphics that celebrate (or lament) certain rolls. Little ones can opt for a lane with bumpers in the gutters, so every turn produces a score.

"The inflatable bumpers are great for kids," says Sanibel resident Toni Primeaux. "The kids don't get gutter balls anymore. It's really family friendly now. And you don't have to bring your own ball. They have nice, small, lightweight balls for the kids."

"We are family oriented," says Bill Maurer, who owns the alley along with his partner/sister Carlene. "We have a lot of birthday parties for kids." Parties are set up in the game room, which fea-

tures arcade games, pinball, a traditional dart board, two pool tables, foosball, a jukebox, and even a virtual bowling game if your skill level isn't up to public display. "Plus they have pizza for the parties," says Primeaux, "and the kids love that."

On a recent Saturday afternoon, Beach Bowl's lanes were full, and whoops of joy and peals of laughter rang through the air at the cozy spot. It was fun just buying a soda and watching the beginners try to keep their balls out of the gutter. Even more entertain-

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ing were the many seasoned bowlers who threw balls that whipped and curved at the last minute, right into the strike zone. Because this area has so many seasonal residents and visitors from snowy climes where bowling thrives, there's plenty of talent on the Beach Bowl lanes.

Betty Patten comes from Cape Coral to bowl here. Although she's been a patron of Beach Bowl for twenty-eight years, this Canadian-born lady didn't take up the game until moving south. When asked why she drives all the way from the Cape to bowl, she replies with a smile, "I'm still here because it's small and friendly."

When Patten turned fifty-five, she joined the alley's seniors group. These lively folks bowl twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, and their energy is contagious. The action is so fast that they don't even sit down between



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German, Italian, French and Spanish spoken here.

turns. "There's still room for more people to join!" Patten proclaims.

One member of the group has been bowling for half a century, and he didn't start hitting the lanes until his thirties. "I started bowling back in 1950, and I was pretty good at it," explains Harold Rager. "Now I turn ninety on July 9," he says, right before throwing a strike. Go, Harold, go!

Patten and her friends have seen many happy parents and children at Beach Bowl throughout the years. "This place is very good for families," she says. "And the hamburgers are good too."

In fact, it's probably wise to come hungry, since Beach Bowl serves good food at great prices. The menu includes finger foods like fried mushrooms, chicken wings, nachos, and chicken fingers. The kitchen also serves sandwiches, Philly cheese steaks, a shrimp basket...even fried bologna, all from 11 a.m. until closing.

Many area teens have discovered the lanes over the years, and parents can feel good about their kids hanging out in what can only be described as a wholesome environment. "Teens come alone, and they're never any trouble," says man-

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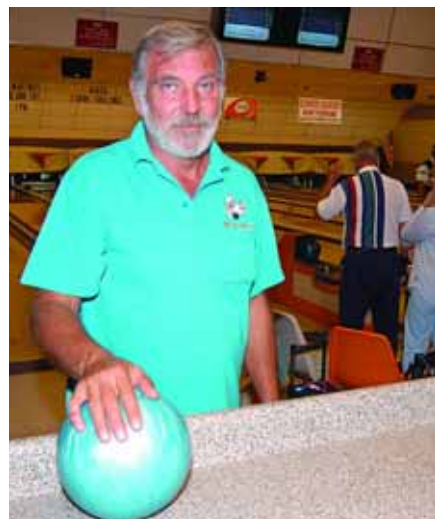
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PHOTOS BY RHONDA MANDEL

It's a family affair: Bill Maurer co-owns Beach Bowl with his sister Carlene.

ager Jo Ann Valentine.

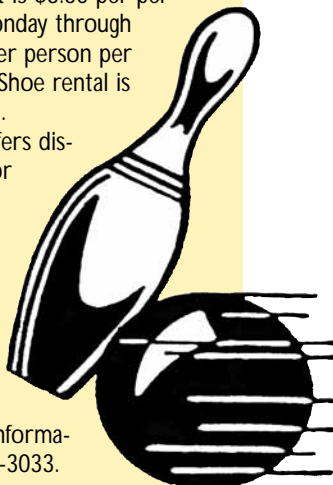
One probable lure: the Saturday night "glow bowling," which starts at 9 p.m. "The lanes glow in the dark under black lights," Maurer says. "It's fun music, a fun time. And we have prizes: Get a strike with a red pin, win a free game." 🎳

Libby Boren McMillan owns a custom-drilled bowling ball but has yet to bowl anywhere near her late grandmother's "perfect 300."

Want to Go?

Beach Bowl is located at 17651 San Carlos Blvd. in Ft. Myers. It is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 11 p.m. (If busy, the alley may stay open later than 11 p.m.) Up to five people can bowl per lane. The cost is \$3.50 per person per game Monday through Saturday, \$1.75 per person per game on Sunday. Shoe rental is \$2.25 per person.

Beach Bowl offers discounted prices for seniors Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., when lanes are open. Private lessons are available through the pro shop. For more information, call 239-466-3033.



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