

Blue Valley Bowl gave years of entertainment to its customers

Written by hebronjournal

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The architects couldn't believe how well Harold Struve had designed Blue Valley Bowl — they had never seen a dome tower or a 50-foot wide ceiling unsupported by beams.

"It is the most gorgeous half barrel," David Klaumann said about the roof. "We had two engineers and both of them said they had never seen a roof like that."

David was working an open bowling session alone the weekend before Blue Valley Bowl closed its doors Jan. 17.

"We had a nine-inch wet snowfall. Four or five lanes were open and I was cooking food. One of the machines acted up, and as I am walking back, I saw ceiling tiles hanging down. I fixed the machine and called mom and dad," he said.

The architects were called in, and the Klaumanns were given two methods of repair, but neither was economically feasible. The walls are bowing out, along with the ceiling threatening to collapse.

"We looked at every aspect," Janice Klaumann said. "This was the last thing we wanted to do. The shock we went through is now hitting everyone else."

The bowling alley that was open seven days and nights for 33 weeks during the year, was abruptly shut down, and David went to work on an explanation, which he posted on Facebook. He included his dad, Dale's return of bladder cancer.

"I went in for my six-month checkup and they found cancer," Dale said. He was scheduled for surgery this week and feeling positive.

"It's in God's hands and the doctor's hands," Dale said.

Dale met with Hebron Mayor, Doug Huber and city administrator, Chris Fangmeier over the closing.

Huber and Fangmeier wanted to know if the bowling alley had potential for repairs.

"We visited for a long time," Dale said.

A survey was sent to Blue Valley bowlers and an informational meeting is scheduled for April 11 at 7 p.m., in the Hebron Activity Center, to discuss the future of the bowling alley.

At first, David didn't want to drive by the bowling alley. And the explanation he posted was the toughest piece he's ever written.

"I didn't want to come in and see this," he said. "It's like a death in the family."

The Klaumanns stepped in to run the bowling alley after Janice's parents, Florence and Henry, and her brother, Bruce had operated it.

The year was 1985 and between then and now, the Klaumanns packed activities in for their bowlers, plus scholarships and local notoriety.

"I've bowled here since I was one," David said.

The junior league program was a signature move for Blue Valley Bowl.

"Saturday morning leagues is how my kids learned to bowl," Rita Luongo said. "Kids earned patches and were recognized in the paper from those leagues. I mean, what kid in Hebron doesn't have a bowling pin that was given to them at their birthday party?"

Dale always gave children a commemorative pin at their birthday parties held at the bowling alley.

"We had a great junior league program," Dale said. He said the bowling alley was lucky enough to send several parent/child teams to the national competition.

One of those junior bowlers was recent Titan alumni, Connor Mumm. He and his mom, Kelly Mumm, were scheduled to compete in Arlington, Texas.

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Dale and Janice decided they wanted to watch the competition and traveled down to Texas. Mumm's family didn't know.

Dale said Connor and Kelly placed second and the trophy was taller than Connor, who also won scholarship money.

In other bowl memories, Gene Reinke has a photo of the winning team he was on in 1983. Gene bowled for the Ortinos, the lowest scoring team with the highest handicap in the joint. "We defeated the No. 1 team for the championship that year," he said about the Kass Ford team. "We had them so upset and flustered. They called us sand-baggers."

Gene is like the Klaumanns were in January — in disbelief.

"Janice, David and I really hate it for the community," Klaumann said as he stood inside the building with its equipment being dismantled for Superior Bowl.

David said it's like a piece of Blue Valley Bowl will live on in Superior.

"I'm so glad it's going to a home," Janice said.

Superior Bowl is receiving an upgrade by purchasing the equipment, and will no longer have to keep score by hand.

"A lot of our bowlers will not quit. A part of us is going with them," David said. "It is bittersweet."

He said Janice and Dale have said they would probably go to Superior and bowl.

It's something they haven't had for years — evenings and weekends off.

Janice said she would go to work at Blue Valley Nursing Home in the laundry department and when she was done for the day, she would go home, cook supper, and go to the bowling alley.

"I was here every night after work," she said. "We never said we hated to go to work. Not one day."

Although Blue Valley Bowl was closed for a few months each year, the Klaumanns were usually there for the upkeep, such as giving the lanes a re-coat or periodically sanding the lanes. Then, they would welcome their customers back. The Blue Valley Bowl base had people coming from up to 50 miles away.

"From every direction," David said.

"This season, we had three men's leagues, two women's, one mixed couple, a junior league and the bumper league on Saturday mornings," Dale said.

When Janice's parents ran the alley, candy bars were a nickel and bottled soda pop, a dime.

Some bowlers snuck their own spirits in to drink with their sodas, and Janice remembered a visit from the Internal Revenue Service.

"It was a Wednesday afternoon, and mom and dad put him in the men's restroom with a card table," she said about the IRS agent.

He was there because the mileage claim made by Henry seemed a little high.

But Henry and Dale were driving everywhere to recruit bowlers.

"I went with Hank and we started in Hubbell, then Chester, then Byron," Dale said.

Henry would make teams of bowlers using people from all over the county. He was interested in talking to people in person.

One summer, they hit parade after parade with the BVB truck that had bowling pins on it.

Countless 300 scores later, Dale Klaumann is planning to catch up around their home after he recovers from surgery. Janice will continue to work in the laundry at the nursing home and David has a job at Hebron Country Club.

He and his dad like to golf.

Golfing is a big part of David's life, as he attended a golf academy in Arizona and has served as a golf pro and assistant pro.

He will possibly work in Chandler, Ariz., during the cold season.

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