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When Bowling Was King: Livingston Lanes

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When Bowling Was King: Livingston Lanes

Submitted by Westessex1 on Wed, 08/12/2015 - 7:40am



by Jeff Friedman [Note: This article is featured in our August 13, 2015 "Celebrate Livingston's History" special section.] Bowling saw the top of its popularity in the northeast and other regions of the country into the 1960s. The U.S. added 2,000 bowling alleys between the end of World War II and 1958. During bowling's heyday as a popular sport during the '50s and '60s, its presence was an important part of Livingston's DNA, particularly for the kids. They were delivered to Livingston Lanes by their parents on a regular basis, mostly on Friday nights, Saturday mornings and Sunday afternoons. There was open bowling, leagues, a fun restaurant called Johnnie's Palomino Dinette, billiards, a few pinball machines and a generally festive vibe. Let's not forget mom and dad. On weeknights, Livingston's adults, most of whom were parents, arrived for league bowling with colorful, embroidered team bowling shirts, all sponsored by local businesses like Seymour's Luncheonette, Stewart's Root Beer and others. Each week on Thursday, league scores and team standings were published in the West Essex Tribune, written, at that time, by former editor and publisher Kit Cone. The bowling score report was one of Cone's first jobs in his early years with the Tribune, and he wrote the pieces under the pen name "Moe M. Down." Livingston Lanes was the go-to venue for a good time, or perhaps for a harmless escape from the rigors of the workplace and parenthood. Harmless in those days, by the way, included cigarettes and beer. Livingston Lanes was located in the building at 615 South Livingston Avenue, just across the street from Livingston's venerable eatery, Nero's Grille. It later housed Livingston Roller Rink (America On Wheels). Through a short, but productive conversation with a former owner's family member, it was learned that Livingston Lanes was first opened and operated by a gentleman named Bernie Kruth, along with partners. It was soon purchased by Ernie Teed and his partner, Mr. Wooten. Mr. Wooten's first name was not available at press time. Ascertaining key dates was elusive until Renee Resky of the township clerk's office entered with a listing of township permits issued, beginning in 1954. Gleaned from a handwritten document, a building permit was issued to Livingston Land Corp in 1954 for the "Bowling Alleys." The next permit issued was in 1955 to Livingston Lanes for a Neon sign. In 1957 there was an addition ...

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A screenshot of a Facebook post from the West Essex Tribune. The post header shows the page name 'West Essex Tribune' with a 'Follow Page' button and '4.2K followers'. The post content includes the West Essex Tribune logo, the text 'West Essex Tribune on Thursday', and a message: 'Don't miss today's issue of the Tribune, containing our twice-yearly "Celebrate Livingston's History" special section!'. Below the text are two thumbnail images of newspaper pages. At the bottom of the post are interaction buttons for '6' likes, 'Comment', and 'Share'. Below the post is a colorful graphic with a red banner that says 'BACK TO SCHOOL' and illustrations of two children carrying a large yellow pencil.

West Essex Tribune

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