

# Chelmsford bowlers surprised by early closing of Alpine Lanes

By Pat Snyder

Although everyone knew the sale of the Alpine Lanes to the owner of the Heritage Quality Inn meant it would eventually close its doors to bowlers, virtually all the bowlers and remaining employees expected it to stay open through the summer. Summer leagues at the Chelmsford facility were already in progress and a Bowler-of-the-Year tournament was scheduled and entry fees accepted for Tuesday, June 18.

However, the curtain fell on Alpine Lanes on Monday, June 17, with the passing of papers between the former owner, George Page, and the new landlord, Emil Dumont. The door was immediately locked and a CLOSED sign put up.

Bowlers who arrived on Monday and Tuesday for their leagues and tournament discovered the locked door, along with a note telling them where their respective leagues were being held (either at Stadium Lanes in Lawrence or the Brunswick Lanes in Lowell). The Bowler-of-the-Year event was cancelled outright and money refunded to the registered participants.

Dumont reported that he never intended to continue operating the bowling lanes after the final sale was consummated. The original purchase and sale agreement had indicated a July 1 closing date but this was moved up a few weeks at the mutual consent of both parties when Page indicated he planned on being away on vacation. The earlier closing was agreed upon about a month ago in mid May, according to Dumont.

George Hedrick, 67, who has been the bowling alley manager since it opened 25 years ago, responded that, "You really should be talking to the new owner," when asked why patrons received no advance notification of the closing and in fact were expecting to bowl in the leagues and tournaments that week.

But Dumont, in turn, passed the buck in the opposite direction, saying that what went on prior to the closing was entirely up to Page and his manager.

Both parties, it should be noted, are quite happy with the sale and purchase. Most full-time employees had already left to find other jobs and the remaining part-timers were expecting to have reduced hours during the summer. The only people upset by the sudden closing without notice were the bowlers.

"I got a phone call Monday afternoon," said part-time employee Mary Blanchard, "and told it had closed at noon."

Blanchard had bowled at Alpine for 18 years and all five of her children had enjoyed the junior bowling program. Blanchard's Monday night bowling league, which involves 32 women, has disbanded because there was no room for them at Lowell on Mondays and "we didn't want to travel all the way to Lawrence."

Daryla Young of Westford reported that the Westford Women's Bowling League, with members from Littleton, Pepperell, Acton, Lowell and Billerica in

addition to Westford, has transferred to the Lowell Brunswick Lanes. The Westford Couple League, however, which meets on Friday nights, was not successful in finding an alternate site.

"There are a lot of people who are just going to give up bowling," Young lamented.

Dumont reported that he "is working in several directions," with regard to the sale or disposal of the bowling equipment. "It may be sold to a single owner or it may be sold at auction," he explained his options.

"We're looking at a single sale and the possibility of reconstructing it (the lanes) elsewhere," Dumont said, cautioning, however, that at the present time this is only a "small possibility... But maybe in the next few weeks something will develop along those lines."

The building itself is in poor condition, Dumont said, which is why Page was eager to sell it.

"It's just one of these economic things that have to happen," Dumont went on. "The building was falling down on everybody's ears... There are only so many buckets to catch the water coming through the roof."

The expansion of the Heritage Inn complex is, in Dumont's words, "a higher and better use for the land."

# Chelmsford bowling legend Alice Dryden

By Erica Jorgensen

Alice Dryden, an energetic 77-year-old Chelmsford native, has been a bowling coach for 16 years at Alpine Lanes.

Although the 25-year-old bowling alley closed its doors for good on June 17 at noon, Alice plans to continue bowling with and coaching her leagues at Brunswick Lanes in Lowell and Stadium Lanes in Lawrence.

Alpine's senior and adult leagues are moving to Brunswick Lanes in Lowell and the children's leagues will go to Stadium Lanes in Lawrence. The leagues had to be split up and moved to different alleys, according to Dryden, because there aren't enough lanes in one alley to accommodate all the bowlers. Alpine was the largest ten pin facility Middlesex County.

Dryden stated that, "There have been a lot of hard feelings" about Alpine Lanes being closed down. The bowlers and coaches had known for a while that the Quality Inn had purchased the bowling alley, but they thought the lanes would be open through October.

The senior bowler sadly said, concerning her personal feelings about Alpine's closing. "I'm sorry. I'm going to miss it terribly. But I am very disappointed in what it has done to the children because we have a tremendous group of young people in this town - and some of them (the bowlers) come from Westford, some come from Lowell or Tewksbury - that are as nice children as there are in the United States. And I don't think there is any Junior Bowling League that has any nicer children anywhere in the United State than we do. And most of the kids are devastated about it (Alpine's closing), they really are devastated."

Mrs. Dryden said that she is "pretty sure there will be an auction at Alpine soon."

Dryden, the widow of the late Edward Dryden, who passed away four years ago, didn't always want to be a bowling instructor. During her teenage years at Chelmsford High School she played basketball and has always enjoyed sports of all kinds.

As she explains it, "I was 54 years old when I started bowling (in leagues)

"My husband and I used to go bowling...but with bringing up a family, we hadn't touched a bowling ball in 35 years..."

"But once we got into it, we loved it and I've bowled in many leagues ever since."

Dryden began bowling at Alpine Lanes, which opened in 1960, when the duckpin alley (which is now an office building located at 9 Acton Road) would not set aside lanes for her league to use. Her league moved to Alpine and has been there ever since.

To this day, Dryden still bowls with the South Chelmsford Village Improvement Association and Alpine Senior Leagues. In the SCVIA league, she has a 138 game average and in the latter league, her average is 143. The Proctor Road resident has served as the secretary of the SCVIA league for 22 years.

Dryden likes coaching because, as she puts it, "I love working with young people. It's just a joy for me to see their accomplishments. I enjoy trying to help young people. I just love working with children - it's great. It's fun. I love every minute of it."

Dryden says the best thing about coaching is the "Satisfaction - great satisfaction." She says the trick to coaching is, "...knowing what to tell them to do. I'm not that great a bowler myself - I wish I was - but I do know what it's all about. I can teach anybody to bowl if they want to bowl and listen to me."

Dryden continued, "I try to teach good sportsmanship. If you get beat, it's no one's fault but your own. You can't win all the time, but you get out of it what you put into it."

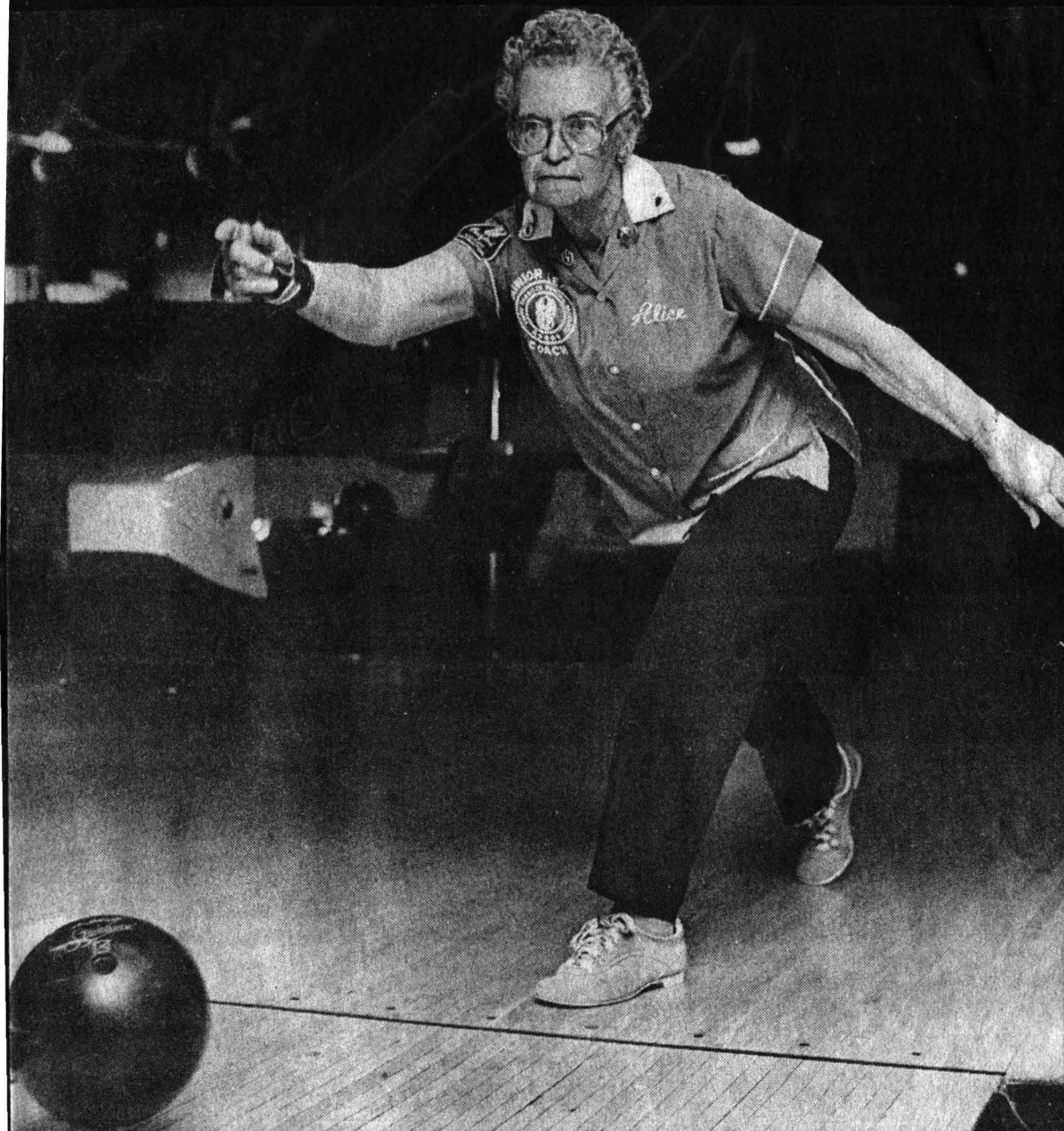
Mrs. Dryden has won approximately 35 trophies, along with scores of patches and medals plus several plaques. She was recently awarded a plaque for being named the 1984 Massachusetts State Young American Bowling Alliance Coach-Of-The-Year. She has gone to tournaments, either with the leagues she

bowls in or with the leagues she coaches, all over New England.

On Easter Sunday this year she went to the Pat Boone Pro-Am Tournament in Connecticut. She has also gone to two Coca-Cola sponsored national tournaments, one in Minnesota, the other in Arlington, Virginia.

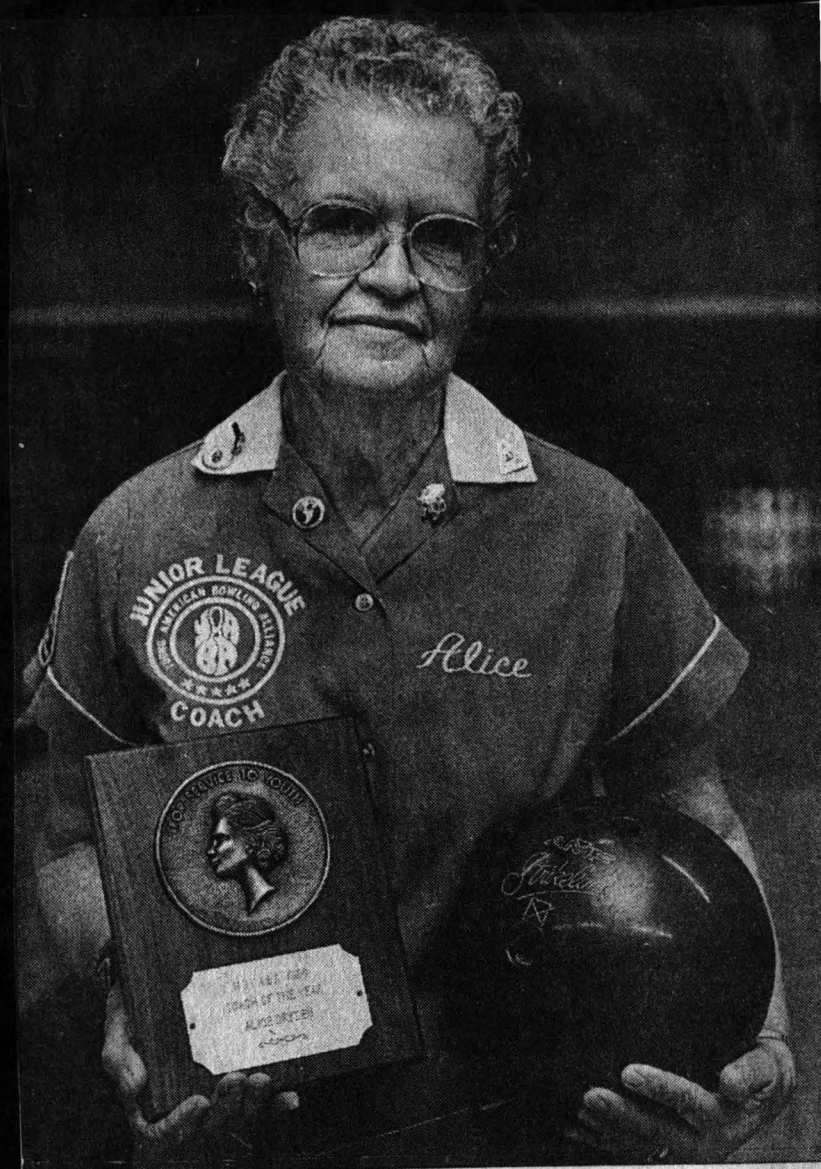
Dryden placed second at the Senior State Championships held in November, 1984, in Wilburham. First place in that tournament earned a seat in the national tournament in Tulsa, Oklahoma. On this particular occasion, the Massachusetts champion wasn't able to go, so Dryden was told she could make the trip. However, she turned down the opportunity for personal glory because the tournament date conflicted with a Junior League tournament.

Dryden plans to continue coaching and bowling even though it will be difficult for her and some of her students to get to the lanes in Lowell and Lawrence, especially when winter comes.



77-year-old Alice Dryden still looks in good form on the bowling alley, where she has enjoyed coaching and playing during Alpine Lanes' 25-year history.

(Photo by Garo Lachinian)



**COACH OF THE YEAR** — The artwork on Alice Dryden's Coach-of-the-Year plaque looks as if it were made with her as the model, and its logo, "for service to youth," sums up her 16 years of dedicated work with young bowlers at Alpine Lanes.

(Photo by Garo Lachinian)