



BOWL • • PINION

by Jim Goodwin

The editorial opinions expressed here are offered to provoke thought on important and sometimes controversial or provocative issues.

Agree or disagree, we'd like to hear from you:

starsandstrikes@sbcglobal.net

Bowling Writer Groups Should Hear All Sides Before Considering Merger

Some who read the following may ask, 'Why should I care what a group of bowling writers do with their organizations?'

Everyone in the bowling industry and those who play the game on all levels should be interested because the direction of the BWAA and NWBW will determine HOW bowling is perceived in the future.

Those of us opposed to dissolving BWAA and NWBW and creating a new group under the control of USBC believe strongly that journalists must remain independent to have objectivity; otherwise we are merely publicists.

We believe standards must be high. Amateur writers shouldn't be allowed on the same level as professionals without first earning their credentials. Amateur bowlers can't simply join the PBA. They must work, and improve, and earn their stripes. It should be the same for writers. -JG

Recently, following in the footsteps of ABC and WIBC, Bowling Writers Association of America President Bill Vint and National Women's Bowling Writers President Nancy Chapman sent their respective memberships a proposal to dissolve BWAA and NWBW and start a new consolidated bowling writers organization effective January 1, 2007.

The proposal was presented as if it is some sort of 'mission accomplished' and anyone not involved in the discussions about this controversial proposal since its inception might be misled into believing that there is little or no opposition to it.

In fact, there were strong objections to this entire concept by many BWAA board members and past presidents, which is not mentioned in the document. Many of the veteran writers of BWAA are in favor of keeping the BWAA and NWBW separate and independent organizations to continue the good work they have done since 1934 and 1948 respectively.

Here are some of the **facts** that did not appear in the mailing from Bill Vint and Nancy Chapman:

- No one present at the BWAA meetings in Baton Rouge, Louisi-

siana in March 2005 asked or even implied that BWAA should be dissolved and "merged" with NWBW, including those task force members now trying to make this happen. In fact, the word "merger" does not appear anywhere in the official minutes of that meeting.

- BWAA took legislative action at that meeting making it possible for NWBW members and others to join BWAA. The mandate given to President Vint and his committee was to meet with NWBW and make them aware of the change and invite them to consider 'consolidating' NWBW into BWAA, and if that was not feasible or desirable, to let NWBW members know that they are now eligible to join BWAA.

- This proposal is obviously an attempt to create a writing organization that is dependent on and controlled by the United States Bowling Congress. Those words sound strong, but are proven by Article 1 of the proposed by-laws, and by the stated desire of President Vint to hold BWAA meetings in conjunction with the USBC Convention. Article I, Section 2 states:

- *The address of the initial principal office of this corporation is 5301 South 76th Street, Greendale, Wisconsin.*

- *The name of the registered agent of this corporation is: Kevin Dornberger, 5454 South 76th Street, Greendale, Wisconsin. (Dornberger is a USBC employee)*

- *The principal place of business of this corporation is 5301 S. 76th Street, Greendale, Wisconsin.*

Greendale, Wisconsin is USBC's headquarters. What happens down the road when BWAA's president and executive director are not USBC employees living next door to USBC headquarters, as they are now?

- Since 1934, BWAA has in fact been an independent organization with many professional journalists that chose to have its meetings in conjunction with the ABC annual meetings; and in 2005, a 3:1 majority voted to hold the next BWAA meeting during Bowl Expo 2006 in Las Vegas.

- Many NWBW members are already members of BWAA, and several have even served as President of BWAA since membership was opened to women in the 1970's.

Now, all NWBW writers, both professional and non-professional, are eligible to join BWAA.

Apparently, sometime during the meeting in Tulsa between the BWAA Task Force and NWBW leaders, the simple task of saying "lets work together" evolved into 'merger fever', and this small group decided they needed to follow in the footsteps of ABC and WIBC by throwing away seven decades of history to start over.

It is inappropriate and perhaps arrogant to draft by-laws for an organization that has not even been discussed face-to-face by BWAA's Board of Directors or members, or approved conceptually. This whole process should begin with discussions at the 2006 BWAA meetings, and then if the concept is approved, by-laws can be submitted for approval at the 2007 BWAA and NWBW meetings.

The following are a few comments from several BWAA leaders concerning this proposal:

"I have no problem with the by-laws, but I think some of the concerns now that I am hearing is with the time frame. The fact that we will not have a face-to-face Board of Directors meeting before it is presented to the general membership is a concern to me." - BWAA Board Member Joan Feinblum

"He [Bill Vint] is trying to make a bowling writers association for USBC, and free publicity for them and their agenda." - BWAA Past President Walt Steinsiek

"Vint is an agent of the USBC and is obviously trying to ramrod this merger. He is overstepping his authority and guys like Evans, Pezzano, Wyckoff, Archibald, Cosgrove, Johnson, Dressel and others who are proud of the BWAA must stop his dictatorial attempts to stuff this down our throat. I have no fear that he will succeed. I'm just irritated and upset at his method of operation. Fortunately, he cannot make it happen without the membership vote."

- BWAA Past President John Jowdy

"I believe that these issues and others like the scholarship fund, needs to be tabled until our 2006 BWAA meeting in Las Vegas. Then it can be discussed as we did the original issues in Baton Rouge. Too

much too fast!" - BWAA Board Member Dan McDonough

"This would be an absurd way to close an organization with a 71-year history. I'm not sure I need the BWAA any more, but I think the members need a chance to think it over before voting on dissolution." - BWAA Past President John Archibald

"As a member of the task force that met to discuss a potential BWAA/NWBW merger you would be correct in concluding that I endorse the prospect of forming a new writers organization. Ideally bowling could have a trade association of professional writers who join to create a sizable independent journalistic entity. But since bowling is rarely covered through the mainstream press, any bowling writers association that expects to survive in this era has to soften its requirements for membership.

Yes, that opens the door to a large contingent of "non-professionals", creating what more accurately could be called a quasi-writers association. We have to accept that consequence. But I don't believe a credible writers association, quasi or otherwise, can yield its need to be independent. I'm adamant about the need for a bowling writers group to be independent. I wouldn't support creating a new organization if it didn't meet that requirement." - BWAA Past President Lyle Zikes

"I will not abandon my BWAA membership to join a USBC satellite group. If the BWAA votes to dissolve itself, my affiliation ceases. The BWAA has a nucleus of the best writers and journalists in the world. We are totally committed to BWAA membership and loyal to the organization. We will not affiliate ourselves with anything else, whatever it's called.

I like the idea of inviting new membership into our prestigious, historic organization, allowing it to grow. I am not as versed on the membership requirements of the NWBW as the two debate principles, but I know what it takes to be a BWAA member. I would think that ANYONE who considers him/herself a bowling writer of any degree would find it quite an honor to belong to this

organization, not replace it.” - **BWAA Board Member Frenchy Letourneau**

“I don’t have all the facts, but if what Chuck [Pezzano] said in a conversation is accurate, then I think somebody is trying to put BWAA on a fast track while we should be feeling our way carefully.

I don’t remember anybody telling anyone to proceed with a plan to combine with the NWBW. I just thought we were exploring the possibility and they were to report back to us in Las Vegas and we would send out any convention decision to the entire membership.

We are a professional organization; why would we want to regress and become predominantly an amateur group? When all this started I thought it was going to be a merger like the one the National Football League and the newer American Football League did about 40 years ago. The NFL took in the best AFL teams and formed a national conference and American conference. There was no way the NFL was going to forfeit its good name for the sake of any merger. The same happened when the NBA and ABA merged. The stronger NBA took the best ABA teams under its wings but retained its highly respected name.

This is no merger of four bowling membership organizations like they did in order to form the USBC, which automatically reduced their budget big time plus gained acceptance of the USOC as the governing body of bowling. That move made common sense from all standpoints. This proposed BWAA-NWBW merger does not . . . especially if you happen to be a BWAA member. People like Bill Vint and Hazel [McLeary] may have good intentions for the future of a by far larger but weaker bowling writer organization, but I will openly oppose any attempt to bury BWAA under such a pathetic merger tombstone.

*I am against hooking up with either USBC or BPAA as long as we can financially afford to be independent. I am for opening our membership rolls to NWBW members who are interested and not rushing into any binding decision before the BWAA has held a minimum of one national convention at BPAA’s Bowl Expo and at the USBC’s national convention.” - **BWAA Past President Dick Evans***

*“I do not feel we should tie our annual meeting to the USBC annual meeting. I don’t see any reasoning for a second general meeting each year – what are we going to do at that meeting? Although both organizations have long histories, and I have been a member of NWBW longer than I have of the BWAA, it is a fact that BWAA carries more weight in the bowling world than the NWBW. No doubt the number of professional writers in the BWAA over the years and their coverage of major events is one of the reasons for this.” - **BWAA Board Member Agnes Duffy***

“Just what convention did our BWAA task force members attend last March? From the corporate address to the location of the annual meeting, etc., it seems clear that there is an attempt to forget all that happened in Baton Rouge. For our task force to automatically assume that we would want to permanently affiliate with USBC - and do so without even experiencing BPAA as a host - is indeed most presumptuous.

Why in the world do we need to change the name of our respected organization? (Hark, yet another politically correct USBC influenced decision?)

I’ve always viewed BWAA as the major league of bowling writers, and for us to go to a group that perhaps in total is no better than perhaps a Class AA farm club and say to its members that all of them may now join our club is ridiculous if one is intending to maintain the quality and prestige of our organization. If BWAA membership shrinks, it shrinks, but membership within that organization should remain the most prestigious.

*I’m now off to get some Mountain Dew and take a shower. I feel as if I’ve been force fed a huge chunk of Limburger cheese.” - **BWAA Past President Bob Cosgrove***

“I am very encouraged to hear some of the things that are in the works for BWAA from just one year of an affiliation with Bowl Expo. I had high hopes that staging the BWAA convention during Bowl Expo would be very beneficial to our group, and the open arms attitude of Messer’s Berglund and DeSocio augurs well for the 2006 conclave being our best ever.

Which brings me to the attempted merger of BWAA and NWBW. It was my understanding that BWAA was supposed to conduct a “feasibility” study of the possibility of such a merger. Granted, “feasibility” might mean one thing to you and I, but it seems to have an entirely new meaning to our President and some of his minions on one of the elite committees that he appointed. From some of the things I’ve heard, some of the [BWAA] funds have already been moved without a vote – and without the knowledge of all of our board members, much less the past presidents – and the group is well on its way towards a new constitution.

*Well, who in the hell gave them permission to do anything like that? Bill Vint was elected president, not some third world dictator . . . or did he misunderstand his mandate? OK, maybe that’s overstating it, but I have heard several levels of discomfort from some of the board members, past presidents and others that a “stealth” campaign is being conducted to move BWAA toward a merger and/or a closer affiliation with USBC, which is where some of the bank accounts have been moved. Please tell me I am misinformed.” - **BWAA Past President Jim Dressel***

*“I was surprised and annoyed when I learned that I was considered against the women bowling writers. I have been completely against changing the name of the BWAA. I also proudly recall that I was a pioneer, not only in inviting women to join the Metropolitan Bowling Writers Association, but also the BWAA, and happily, many of them have gone on to the top offices of both organizations. I probably have known more female writers than any BWAA member, and have helped and encouraged them all the way. But the debates and rush to merger make little sense. The men and women writers have much to offer each other if every opinion is heard, which hasn’t happened yet. It took the ABC and WIBC more than half a century after it was first mentioned for them to merge. Why are we trying to do something similar in mere days?” - **BWAA Past President Chuck Pezzano***

It is difficult to understand how this seemingly simple task got so far off track, but NWBW could do BWAA a huge favor by voting against it during their April meeting, which would end this ill-advised campaign.

Frankly, since the two organizations are so different, we don’t really understand why NWBW members would want to give up their way of covering bowling through association newsletters and such. Since 1948, they have been, and should continue to be, a tremendous asset to our game, especially in their coverage of local, women’s, and amateur events.

More so than BWAA, NWBW embraces the fraternal and social aspects of a writing organization, and without their willingness to cover bowling as well as they do on the local level, those stories could be lost. We also believe that NWBW members who have joined BWAA have enjoyed their association with its professional journalists, and have used it to improve their writing skills. We hope more will follow their path in the future.

While this proposed merger may seem attractive to NWBW members, we believe that once they consider its possible requirements and affects, they will understand the need for two separate and distinctively different bowling writers organizations.

If NWBW does vote for this proposal at their meeting in Orlando, then BWAA will have to spend many hours at its meeting in Las Vegas debating this proposal when the convention could be used for improving BWAA.

Without this on the agenda, for example, BWAA could join in discussion with BPAA, USBC and others to begin the process of contacting Sports Editors about bowling; a project that is far past due and one that should get a top priority.

The 2006 BWAA convention at Bowl Expo is truly historic in that it will be the first time BWAA has stood up as an independent organization that is ready to tackle the challenges of a new era of bowling. If that effort is undermined by those wanting to maintain the status quo, then this important progress will have to wait.