

# INTERNATIONAL **BOWLING INDUSTRY**

Vol. 23 | February 2015

**BEYOND  
BOWLING  
WINTER 2015**

THE WORLD'S ONLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE BUSINESS OF BOWLING

## DELIVERING THE FUTURE

High-tech giants' cutting-edge technology is changing the way we engage customers.



**THE AMERICAN DREAM  
AT RANCHO BOWL**

**GORDON VADAKIN:  
MORE THAN A COACH**

**ROLLING LIKE  
THUNDER AT  
OCC CHOPPER ALLEY**

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# CONTENTS

**6**  
**ISSUE AT HAND**  
**Of Boulders and Bowling Balls**  
By Scott Frager



**8**  
**SHORTS**  
• Salute to Rex Golobic  
• World Bowling moves to Switzerland  
• Juan Cabezas takes helm at QubicaAMF  
• Popularity of bowling lane weddings on the rise  
By Patty Heath



**14**  
**FEATURE**  
**The American Dream Realized at Rancho Bowl**  
As Viki Murray renovates the beloved center in Santa Maria, California, the legacy of her father and family lives on.  
By Anna M. Littles

**20**  
**COVER STORY**  
**Delivering the Future**  
High-tech giants' cutting-edge technology is changing the way we engage customers.  
By Robert Sax



# VOL 23.2

**18**  
**PROFILE**  
**More Than a Coach**  
Wichita's Gordon Vadakin succeeds on and off the lanes.  
By Mark Miller

**25**  
**BEYOND BOWLING**  
• Amusement Expo Preview  
• 'No Problem,' Big Problem  
• Rolling Like Thunder at OCC Chopper Alley  
• Let's do it the Funway  
• "Beyond Bowling" Showcase  
• Viewpoint

**50**  
**CONVENTION**  
2015 Bowling Summit Highlights  
By David Garber

**52**  
**BPAA NEWS**  
First of the prestigious BPAA awards announced for 2015.  
By David Garber

**62**  
**REMEMBER WHEN**  
**Archie Andrews**  
By Patty Heath

**56 Classifieds**  
**61 Datebook**



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POSTMASTER: Please send new as well as old address to *International Bowling Industry*, 12655 Ventura Boulevard, Studio City, CA 91604 USA. If possible, please furnish address mailing label.

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# AN AMERICAN STORY

**The Acquistaspace family legacy, Rancho Bowl, lives on and gets an upgrade.**

■ By Anna M. Littles

**W**hen I interviewed Victoria Murray about her father, Mili Acquistaspace, I had to ask, "What does such an exquisite name mean?" Victoria proudly answered, "'Acquistaspace' is Italian for 'peacemaker'." And proud she should be. She stands on the shoulders of a family legacy that encapsulates the classic American story. Victoria's family origins run deep in Northern Italy's Lake Cuomo district, a picturesque region 13 miles from the Swiss border and near the Italian Alps. Today, her family roots run even deeper in Santa Maria, CA.



Breaking ground for Rancho Bowl, 1959.

It all started when her father's father, Regillio, arrived at New York's Ellis Island in 1902. Regillio continued west and settled in Santa Maria. He worked very hard, saved and purchased property. That property included a small hotel, with enough land to farm and grow a business.

Over the years, Regillio's son and Victoria's dad, Mili, looked over that same land and decided to establish a place where families would gather and have fun. So in 1959, Mili broke ground in the middle of the family farm and Rancho Bowl was built.

Rancho Bowl is the size of a city block, situated in an area known for a strong agrarian culture, including vineyards and farms along with oil wells. When Rancho Bowl opened its doors it quickly became the center of family entertainment in Santa Barbara County. In 1959, Santa Maria had a population of 15,000 with many satellite cities around it. Today, the population has grown to over 100,000 within the city limits, and 250,000 in the surrounding area.

The foundation of Rancho Bowl's business is families and leagues. The first league to make Rancho Bowl its home was the Ladies Playmore League, which kept an average membership of 96 and took up all 24 lanes of Rancho Bowl. Even today they are still going strong although their numbers have declined a bit.

Fifty-five years after it opened, Rancho Bowl has endured a lot of wear and tear. Last year, Mili's daughter Victoria looked over the aging facility and in 2014 a new, renovated, high-tech Rancho Bowl was



Ashlee and Luke Carranza with Viki Murray in newly renovated Rancho Bowl.





born and continues to be the center of family entertainment. Today Viki, as she is known, runs Rancho Bowl with the help of her daughter-in-law Ashlee. Soon to switch careers and take his place in the family business is Viki's son, and Ashlee's husband, Luke Carranza.

The renovation process is ongoing. Vicki explained that they broke down the project into phases. Phase one dealt with the building's ceiling, which was beginning to sag. They also boosted their 24 lanes to 32 while adding 120-inch projector screens over each lane.

In the second phase, they partnered with QubicaAMF for an updated approach to each lane. Ramps were added to make the facility accessible for those with disabilities. Phase two also included new house ball and shoe inventories. But the *crème de la crème* in this phase is their electrical and technical upgrades. With QuibicaAMF's scoring, Rancho Bowl now offers new tech and hospitality apps so people can order of the menu via the system and have the food served lane-side. According to Ashlee, "We have leaped 25 years in technology and we have our

hands full in getting used to such a huge jump."

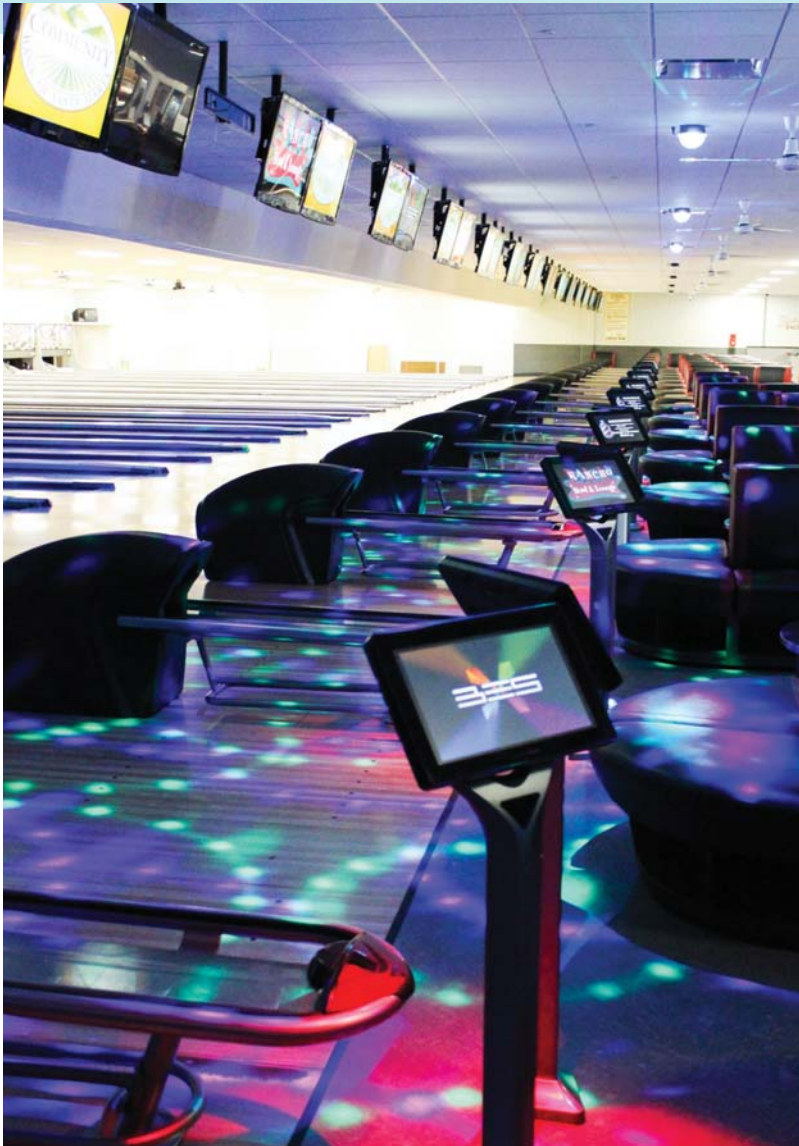
Other aspects of the renovation include an integrated system of cameras with LCD touchscreen terminals situated on each lane. The cameras takes pictures of the bowlers in action. The photos are then projected on the overhead screen. It's a fun program that incorporates animated characters that feature the guest's happy face after a strike, and a sad face for those infamous gutter balls.

QubicaAMF is also involved in the marketing of the new and improved Rancho Bowl. Ashlee works closely with QuibicaAMF's virtual marketing and support staff, which includes a weekly one-on-one conference call. This is a new way in which Rancho Bowl stays connected with its loyal customer base and reaches out to the entire county.

With a family business that has been going for over 55 years, it takes a great staff to keep things moving forward. Viki explains that its backbone is Rancho Bowl's two managers of 30 years, Larry and Karen Cobb. Larry handles all things mechanical, and Karen handles the office.



## CENTER STAGE



can facilitate more parties, group and corporate events. Currently Rancho Bowl has only one kids' party room, while Viki and Ashlee want to be able to host several parties at the same time.

Today, they're serving not only the community, they're also bringing in large tournaments that have bumped up tourism to the whole area. In fact, Rancho Bowl has won accolades for being the best location for area tourists to visit. After all, Santa Maria is wine country and was the backdrop for the 2004 Fox Searchlight comedy film *Sideways*.

In 1921, an Italian-born actor by the name of Rodolfo Alfonso Raffaello Pierre Filibert Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antonguolla befriended Mili and his father. The world knew this actor as the legendary Rudolf Valentino, who was in the area filming *The Sheik*. At that time, the family only owned the farm and the hotel. A friendship with Valentino blossomed over the fact that the hotel had an underground working bar. In 1921 that was a big deal since it was the height of Prohibition. Any establishment serving bootleg liquor was an oasis in the desert, or at least Valentino thought so.

From generation to generation, Rancho Bowl has stood the test of time. Today, being known in the region as the hub of fine dining and family entertainment, there's a lot to its credit. Mili, who lived up to his name as peacemaker, passed on a very special gift to his daughter and family: a rich Italian heritage and farmland located in beautiful Santa Maria along with a booming business. A classic American legacy. ❖

And there's a lot to handle in the office. This past December was Rancho Bowl's busiest month ever, booking one corporate party after another.

In addition to being the family entertainment center in the county, Rancho Bowl is known for Executive Chef Brenda Vasquez, along with its famous Santa Maria BBQ including baby back ribs. Born and raised in Santa Maria, Chef Brenda has already caused a stir in the area by turning down a coveted position at a high-end restaurant in favor of returning to her roots and taking over the restaurant, bar and grill at Rancho Bowl. Today, people come out just to enjoy Chef Brenda's cuisine, making Rancho Bowl the culinary hub of the region. Business-wise, the restaurant opens at 7 a.m., serving breakfast, lunch and dinner all the way to 2 a.m. in the bar area.

This ties into Rancho Bowl's next phase of renovation. In phase three, Viki will take on the bar and restaurant as well as grow and expand the arcade by adding redemption. According to Viki, "The restaurant business is growing in leaps and bounds. The challenge is that the bar and restaurant are now on top of each other." A re-design of the restaurant and bar, including both back and front areas, will open up more space.

Viki and Ashlee are also working closely with an architect to see how they



Anna M. Little, a screenplay and freelance writer and producer originally from the Bronx, NY, now resides in Santa Monica, CA. You can see her work on YouTube, IMDB, or on her website at [www.alittleLA.com](http://www.alittleLA.com).

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## Rating

- ★★★★★
- Groups & Events ★★★★★
- Kids & Birthdays ★★★★★
- Families ★★★★★
- Teens & Young Adults ★★★★★
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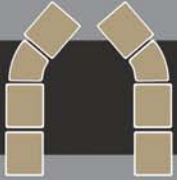
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