

Appreciation

Ted Gruskowski Jr.

By Bob Cosgrove

"I can't believe 'Crazy Ted' is gone."

I've said and thought those words many times since learning of the July 27 death of NCAUSBCA Director and Hall of Famer Theodore "Ted" Gruskowski Jr. of Woodbridge at age 71.

The longtime bowling columnist for the *Potomac News* and *Manassas Journal Messenger*, Ted was a friend and fellow member of the Bowling Writers Association of America and the Southern Bowling Writers Association who deeply cared about bowling and especially NCAUSBCA and its members, for whom he served as a director for nearly 20 years.

It was in the Summer 1990 issue of *BOWL Magazine* that "Shop Talk" columnist Jerry Francomano in his third annual "Wish List" wanted to see more league presidents be like "Crazy Ted," who set up all kinds of activities in his league, including charity food drives that helped the less fortunate in the Dale City/Woodbridge area, to create interest and fun for his bowlers. I had no idea who this "Crazy Ted" was, but he certainly piqued my interest, and it wasn't too much later that I first met Ted when he joined the association's board of directors.

Ted truly wanted to serve the bowlers

in this area, and he always did so tirelessly. He worked nearly all the association-sponsored tournaments, normally with ways and means, always making that extra effort to sell additional bowling ball raffle tickets or an extra shirt or cap.

He always generated among the highest totals in annual BVL contributions among his fellow officers and directors, and Ted made numerous behind-the-scenes financial contributions to youth bowling programs and bowling-related activities, including the NCAUSBCA Hall of Fame.

Ted's gung-ho and cut-no-corners ways of doing things was not always appreciated by some folks in the bowling industry, but upon reflecting, it appeared that those who viewed Ted with exasperation were people whose most active days in bowling had passed. And Ted always bristled when he saw his fellow directors and officers or bowling center officials shirking their responsibilities and not giving their best effort for the bowler.

Now that's not to say Ted didn't occasionally get on the nerves of his friends. I'll admit there were times when I thought he earned that "Crazy Ted" nickname because he did things that drove me crazy.



At the 2007 NCAUSBCA Hall of Fame Induction Dinner, Ted Gruskowski Jr. appears with his daughters Christine Gruskowski-Vasquez (left) and Crystal Souza.

Life outside bowling

Ted Gruskowski Jr. served in the U.S. Army from January 1955 to March 1975 in Germany, Vietnam, and at Fort Belvoir. He earned various honors, including the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal, three awards of the Army Commendation, and the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm. Ted retired with the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3.

Ted is survived by his wife, Bernice, of 47 years; daughters Christine Gruskowski-Vasquez, of Lake Ridge, Va., and Crystal Souza, of Stafford; his son, Robert Gruskowski, of San Diego, Calif.; five grandchildren, Ryan Vasquez, Andrew Vasquez, April Gruskowski, Samantha Gruskowski, and Stephen Souza; his brothers, Richard Gruskowski and Michael Gruskowski, of Wisconsin; a sister, Louise DeNicola, of Phoenix, Ariz.; and several nieces and nephews.

The burial will take place at Arlington National Cemetery on Oct. 16 at 3 p.m.

Ted's family asks that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Youth Scholarship Fund, c/o Tom Dale, 10 Hulvey Drive, Stafford, VA 22556-3816.

Ted, whose life in the military dealt with overseeing details, would so often be just too ... *detailed* for my taste. For example, he often would mention in a phone call some information about which I would express interest, and he then would offer to fax the information to me and ask how he should address the cover page. No matter how many times I would say, "Just put 'Bob' on it," the fax would arrive 10 minutes later with *every single line* of the cover page completed—my fax number, his fax number, my phone number, his phone number, notes about each page of the fax, our full titles....

And then there were the phone calls. I often tried to tell Ted that he didn't always have to call unless there was *major* news, such as the death of an association official or Hall of Famer or something along those lines. But with Ted, news

was news, and he always seemed to have a problem using his E-mail, so not only were there the late-night calls, which as a night owl I normally didn't mind, but there were also those 7 a.m. calls—one of which, I distinctly remember, arrived with the earth-shattering news that AMF Dale City had a new assistant manager.

“Just wanting to keep my ‘partner in crime’ informed,” he always would say in closing—words that would forever remind me that the two of us in publicizing bowling and bringing news to its participants were doing something that only a very few did in and about the Nation's Capital Area.

Ted spoke highly of “our *BOWL Magazine*,” and he often expressed appreciation of my efforts, always offering encouragement, always with a good word. You don't forget that—you *just don't forget that*. (And maybe that's why those early morning calls never drove me totally over the edge.)

In June, I was told Ted, who in recent years had constant physical ailments, was very ill, and when he called shortly thereafter and said in a weak voice that he had just filed his first newspaper column in more than a month, I knew something was very wrong because completing that weekly column was as normal as breathing to Ted. His spirit and good humor was still present, but I'll admit, I had my doubts for the first time if he would be able to produce any more columns.

On the morning of July 28, as I waited in my car for the traffic light to change on Harry S Truman Drive in Largo, I briefly thought of Ted, wondering how he was doing—only to be told moments later by Ray Brothers as I entered my office that he had departed us the day before.

Upon learning of Ted's death, Bowling Headquarters contacted me about obtaining additional biographical information and a photo that ultimately appeared on *bowling.com* and *bowlingwriters.com*, and I received several calls and E-mails from colleagues across the country expressing their shock and sadness while saying how much they really liked and admired Ted, who, in his own unique way, certainly touched a lot of people.

Well, partner, to borrow another one of your sayings, *you done good*, and I'm sure I'm not the only one often thinking, *I can't believe “Crazy Ted” is gone*.