

Morning: ABC 300 ring flushed; evening: ABC 300 ring earned

July 27, 2004: Rick Brooks's day of agony and ecstasy

By Bob Cosgrove

It started with a flush and ended with a flush hit in the 1-3 pocket.

That basically describes July 27, 2004 for Rick Brooks, manager of Bowl America Shirley, whose day began as usual at his Springfield home with a trip to the bathroom, after which he would hop into the shower.

But that morning, the shower had to wait: Immediately after taking care of business, Brooks pulled his American Bowling Congress 300 game ring off of his finger, but instead of landing on the sink's countertop, it somehow slipped directly into the toilet bowl ... as the flush was still in progress.

He could only watch in horror as his valued possession disappeared before his eyes.

"The ring went *all the way down* because I heard it go tinkle, tinkle, tinkle," said Brooks, a collector of rings, apparently unaware he used a word that in many homes best summed up both ends of the unfortunate part of this day.

As bad as it seemed, however, Brooks, a bowler for 43 of his 51 years who has managed Shirley for about 14 months,

realized that this was not a total loss because the lost item was his *second* 300 ring—one received for a perfecto tossed February 22, 2002 in the Late Sparetimers league at Bowl America Falls Church. He still had his first 300 ring earned January 6, 1999 during an 805 series in the Falls Church Commercial league.

But that was his immediate thought. It *was* a disaster in some ways because the flushed ring not only was an upgraded gold ABC model with a value of about \$350, it had been a gift from his girlfriend, Lizz Dixon.

"I told her about it that day," said Brooks. "She was *not* happy, and she wasn't going to buy me another gold ring—I knew that!

"I was real proud of this ring. I wore it every day. I wore it to work because

it makes me think like the bowlers think that I'm better than maybe I am."

That evening, as Brooks opened with games of 181 and 212 in the Tuesday Summer Mixed league at Falls Church, he mentioned the loss of his ring to Terry Harrison, a teammate.

Harrison, who performs maintenance work at an apartment complex, was intrigued with what he heard and suggested that perhaps he could come to Brooks's home and pull up the toilet in hopes of finding the ring.

Meanwhile, as Brooks began his third game with five and then seven strikes, he turned to Harrison, who looked over and both simultaneously expressed how ironic it would be if a perfect game were to occur.



Rick Brooks at Bowl America Shirley, wearing the ABC 300 ring he earned for his first perfect game rolled in 1999.



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Indeed, Brooks, who booked two 208 averages at Falls Church last season, closed with five solid strikes, and as he succinctly reflected in amazement: “I shoot a 300 game the *very* day I flushed my 300 ring down the toilet!”

Brooks’s teammate Harrison soon traveled some distance from his Maryland residence to Brooks’s home, took the toilet off the floor, and put it into the bathtub. He flushed it out, turned it upside down, and finally, according to Brooks, “he stuck his arm down in the hole on the floor, but still, he never did find my 300 ring.”

In spite of the loss, Brooks already owns a ring that’s gold, so for his latest 300 game, he ordered the regular Siladium model from ABC. But he didn’t rule out an upgrade.

“If you order the gold ring first, you can only get *one* ring for the game.” he said.

Special thanks to Miriam Witherspoon for the “heads up” on the fateful flush.