



The Record George Astrella, beloved owner of bowling lanes

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By JAY LEVIN, STAFF WRITER

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Fairleigh Dickinson University's women bowlers — the 2006 NCAA champions — considered George Astrella one of the girls.

The convivial Mr. Astrella, longtime proprietor of Parkway Lanes in Elmwood Park, opened up the bowling center to the Knights, keeping lanes available and steeply discounting rates for team practices.

"George was a sweetheart," said coach Mike LoPresti.

"To the ladies, he was a father figure, always at our practices. He felt he was a member of the team, and we felt likewise."

Mr. Astrella, a member of the Bergen County Bowling Association Hall of Fame, died Friday. The Hasbrouck Heights resident was 86.

Except for a period in the 1990s, Mr. Astrella had operated Parkway Lanes since 1969. The 36-lane bowling center on Route 46 closed last month. A notice on its Web site said the lease was discontinued.

"George was very close to his customers," said Chuck Pezzano, The Record's bowling columnist.

"He just enjoyed sitting there and watching the bowlers. He loved to talk, and everyone called him a friend."

A native of West New York, Mr. Astrella served in the Army during World War II. He worked at various jobs, including ice delivery, before landing at Parkway Lanes, said his wife Kathleen, known as Kat, whom Mr. Astrella hired as a waitress in 1982. They were married in 1989, two years after the death of Mr. Astrella's first wife, Josephine.

Kat Astrella said her husband usually showed up at the lanes at 3 p.m. and stayed till closing, and especially enjoyed the schmoozing aspect of the job.

"George had a lot of charisma," she said. "There wasn't anyone he didn't like."

FDU's championship run was a heady time for Mr. Astrella, himself a decent bowler in his prime.

A few days after the Knights defeated Alabama A&M University for the NCAA title, the team visited Parkway Lanes to thank the Astrellas and their staff.

"They stopped the leagues to announce that the national champions were here," LoPresti said. "Everybody lined up to shake our hands and talk to the girls and touch the trophy. And George was standing in the back, like a proud father."

"George was overwhelmed," Kat Astrella said. "The girls were like his family."

In addition to his wife, Mr. Astrella is survived by stepsons Paul Ille of Hasbrouck Heights and Brian Ille of Clifton; Brian's wife, Liz; a brother, Danny Astrella of Cherry Hill, and a sister, Ann Tanella of Hasbrouck Heights.

The funeral is 10 a.m. today at Corpus Christi R.C. Church in Hasbrouck Heights, with entombment in Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum in North Arlington. Costa Memorial Home, Hasbrouck Heights, is in charge of arrangements.

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