

By Dick Evans

ORLANDO – The Bowling Proprietors Association of America is a giant organization and its annual International BowlExpo is a giant trade show.

So you would think there would be little room and recognition for an individual who owns a 24-lane center in little known Fayetteville, N.C.

But the proprietors recognized Howard Baum Wednesday and inducted him into its Vic Lerner Hall of Fame.

A day later, Baum toured the trade center, a smile on his face that would spread from Orlando to Fayetteville despite the thunderstorms that have been hitting Orlando almost daily.

He took time out from his hand shaking and pats on the back to stop by the booth of the Bowling Writers Association of America and to give an interview.

Howard Baum never lacked for true grit and it still shows at age 74, the father of two daughters and five grandchildren “age six weeks to five years.”

“When they first told me I had won the Vic Lerner award I was in shock and here I am several months later still excited.”

Howard Baum realizes more than most that operating a 24-lane center is a family affair. “It is family run, mostly more of a hands on operation. If you are away from it very much you make not make it. “

“The game has changed but it is still all about the customers, that part hasn’t changed.” An amazing total of 1,100 league bowlers shows he thrives on personal contact with his customers.

Despite the demands of running B&B Lanes, he somehow found time to attend 35 BPAA Conventions/Bowl Expo.

And still he found time to serve on the all-important tournament and convention committees and was appointed chairman of both.

Under his convention reign, they ran the first BowlExpo in San Francisco back in 1995. “It was a costly learning experience,” Baum said. “Our contract wasn’t good with the hotel and they put our trade show in three different rooms.”

But Baum is a fast study in ways to improve things.

He learned that his daughter Nancy Schenk loves the bowling game and has put her in charge of running B&B Lanes. “She has only been in the business about three years and already she has been elected as an at-large member of the BPAA Board of Directors.”

Then he pulled out a copy of the April 16 edition of the nearby Raleigh News Observer, which featured a picture of him wearing a headset for radio broadcast of the N.C. State football and basketball games.

He is legendary at keeping statistics of the Wolfpack games and the headline on the story read: “Pack’s number cruncher strikes it big” with a subhead that read “Baum, longtime bowling entrepreneur, will be enshrined in bowling hall of fame.”

So when the trade show ends, Howard will take wife Lynda and his clan to Disney World.

What a fun way to end a memorable week.