

Sour Grapes

Airing USBC's dirty laundry isn't an act of revenge



Bill Vint
Editor

I changed the name of my column to "Sour Grapes" a few months back in anticipation of this issue. When people finish reading the 20th anniversary issue of *Windy City Bowling News*, I'm assuming some are going to assume I wrote the "The USBC Story" because I'm a disgruntled, angry ex-employee getting my revenge on the company that wronged me.

Not true. I am a USBC fan. I had a nearly 20-year relationship with ABC, YABA and USBC as an employee or contractor, and I was always treated fairly. In my final year with USBC, I made arrangements with Kevin Dornberger and Pete Tredwell that allowed me to continue working until my intended retirement on April 1, 2009. In return - at a time when they could have terminated me because I wasn't moving to Texas - I agreed to continue as a "contractor" until Oct. 1, supervising association communications and serving as USBC's Hall of Fame Committee liaison.

It was a good arrangement for both sides, and I provided services and "mentoring" to USBC that no one else at the time had the experience to provide.

I was also ready to leave.

Two-plus years earlier, USBC President Mike Carroll, incoming president Jeff Boje and Kevin Dornberger had called an emergency staff meeting to announce Roger Dalkin had just "retired."

I started thinking about this story that day. If Dalkin had "retired," there was more to it than we were told. If you knew Roger, "retirement" made no sense.

In the many months that followed, I documented actions taken by USBC, talked with industry leaders, proprietors, state and local association volunteers and fellow employees, watched and listened. It didn't take long to realize others knew USBC was changing directions, but where it was going, no one was sure.

You know the old saying: if you smell a skunk, you don't need to see it to know one's around. Well, the odor of skunk kept getting stronger.

Why did I feel compelled to do something about it? What made me such an expert? Maybe I'm not.

I came to ABC in 1991 with a diverse background. I have a degree in journalism. I started my career as a newspaper reporter and magazine editor. My next adventure was in association management (as executive director of the World Snowmobile Racing Federation), followed by 10 years in marketing and media relations with the Ladies Pro Bowlers Tour, where Lisa and I met, fell in love, got married... *Windy City Bowling News* and a "real job" as editor of ABC's *Bowling Magazine* followed.

During my years with ABC/USBC, I was allowed to continue my work with *Windy City*. I respected my employers. I never publicly opposed ABC/USBC policies or programs, whether I agreed with them or not. As an employee, it was my obligation to speak my mind and to try to implement change from within the system. Whether or not ABC/USBC leaders agreed with me, they gave me the courtesy of listening to my views.

The day I smelled skunk, I decided to scrape the rust off my old training and act like a real journalist.

I had spent a lot of years as a PR flack, spinning stories to reflect only the side your bosses want you to see: "The great news this year is that bowling only lost 2.5 percent of its members..." Crap like that.

I know how it works. You paint pretty pictures with words by simple omission of key facts, shifting emphasis and hoping your audience doesn't know enough to ask any tough questions.

That's the kind of picture the world has seen about USBC's move to Arlington, Texas. Behind the fluffy words are omission of key facts, emphasis on wishful thinking rather than reality, and a hope that you will believe everything you're told.

The insights in this issue may not change a thing. But maybe airing our dirty laundry will encourage our leaders to be a bit more forthcoming in the future.

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Taylor Swift: Celebrity HOFer

It's official: country music superstar Taylor Swift is the newest person elected to the Celebrity Bowling Hall of Fame, based upon her close victory over teen star Justin Bieber. Swift and Bieber were among nine celebrities selected by the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America based upon their "public support of bowling."

The voting was conducted online by OK! Magazine which reported 1.3 million votes were cast.

Swift received 613,324 votes compared to Bieber's 608,015. Actor Bill Murray, who starred in the movie "Kingpin," was a distant third with only 21,451 votes.

Swift earned her celebrity bowling stardom because she has been frequently photographed bowling with her friends. Bieber featured bowling in his music video, "Baby" and he hosted a bowling-themed party.

There was no explanation of what election to the Celebrity Hall of Fame means, or if, when or where an induction might be held. Stay tuned...

- From BPAA Net News

Five-year-old makes youth tour history

Five-year-old Stacey Lamb of Mesa, Ariz., made JBT Touring Players Championship history recently when she topped 71 handicap division youth bowlers from nine states to win a \$2,000 scholarship at Strike Zone Bowling Center near Las Vegas.

Lamb, who throws a 10-pound ball with both hands, had never advanced as high as fifth place prior to her victory. But the 100-average youngster defeated 11-year-old KJ Martinez of Chandler, Ariz., in the title game, 214-191 (with handicap), to become the youngest champion in the youth tour's 38-year history.

- From Desert Bowler



104-year-old off to fast start

In Waterford, Mich., Rolla Zuck fired a 224 game during the "League Season Kickoff Tournament" at Century Bowl - one month prior to his 105th birthday.

Zuck, who believes "practice, practice, practice makes you better," carried a 152 average last season."

- From BPAA Net News

Fishing, hunting and bowling in Iowa

You've never seen a bowling center like this one: "Uncle Buck's Fish Bowl and Grill" is a 15,000-square-foot, 12-lane bowling center inside the massive Bass Pro Shop at the junction of I-80 and Hwy 65 Bypass in Des Moines, Iowa.

The bowling facility, which looks like the inside of an aquarium, features an 18-foot squid hanging from the ceiling and ball returns shaped like the heads of Great White sharks.

- From basspro.com

The USBC Story: 2007-10

By Bill Vint

On Aug. 1, 2007, Jeff Bojé of Tampa, Fla., became the first bowling center owner to head the United States Bowling Congress, the world's largest bowling membership organization.

Bojé was elected president of the three-year-old USBC by his fellow board members after serving three years as one of the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America two representatives on the USBC Board of Directors. He was BPAA president when he was first appointed to the USBC board.

Bojé won the leadership of an organization that had faced declining membership for more than three decades because he offered hope that he would provide a bridge between grassroots bowlers, volunteer association leaders and proprietors, bringing harmony to a relationship that had been hampered by lack of trust for years.

When Bojé came into office, the USBC was an organization of 2,298,235 adult and 301,093 youth members, staffed by just over 200 full-time employees at its headquarters in suburban Milwaukee. USBC was an organization with no debt and, according to former CEO Roger Dalkin, between \$15-20 million in liquid assets.

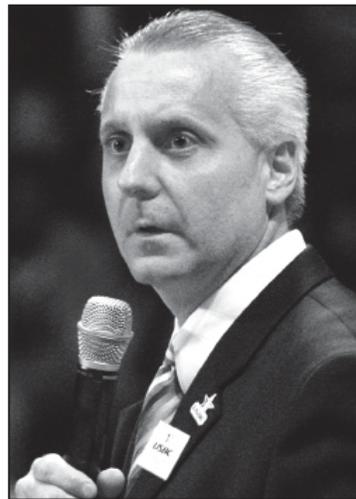
When Bojé's term expired on Aug. 1, 2010, new USBC president Darlene Baker and USBC executive director Stu Upson inherited an organization of 1,941,336 adult and 235,361 youth members, staffed by 145 employees headquartered in the new International Bowling Campus in Arlington, Texas, with virtually all of its liquid assets gone and its former headquarters building sitting unsold in Wisconsin.

Entering the 2010-11 bowling season, USBC has its lowest adult membership since the 1950-51 season and its lowest youth membership since 1958-59.

This story documents what happened to USBC over the past three years under Bojé's leadership.

It would be wrong and inaccurate to suggest Jeff Bojé has killed the USBC, or that there was anything malicious in his desires to change the face of bowling. If anything, Bojé has insisted throughout his reign at USBC's helm that his only interest is what's best for bowling. But the fact remains, bowling has not changed its course, and may be in its worst condition in more than 50 years because of a series of high-risk miscalculations, combined with a national economic collapse. But Bojé, who also is a certified public accountant, may not have noticed the sinking economic conditions.

In Bojé's own words in the August 2010 issue of *Bowlers Journal International*, "The move to Arlington was to change bowling's paradigm. Sure, we



Jeff Boje



Roger Dalkin

expect expenses to come down and, with the USBC living with BPAA, we hope that membership will increase. Yes, it might backfire and cause accelerated death. But if we did nothing, bowling would most definitely die..."

In fairness to Bojé and the USBC board that supported his agenda, the erosion of organized league bowling had been going on for more than 30 years with the membership groups and proprietors pointing fingers at each other, looking for someone to blame. The non-stop loss of league bowlers was the single most important factor leading to the decision by the American Bowling Congress, Women's International Bowling Congress and Young American Bowling Alliance to merge in 2004, creating the USBC.

The USBC merger wasn't easy or painless. It came about after nearly 10 years of hand-holding, negotiation and compromise. The large, cumbersome and slow-acting volunteer boards that individually controlled the three membership organizations became a smaller, more manageable, 20-plus member group that was designed to act much faster and much more efficiently.

During USBC's first three years under the new structure, former ABC director Mike Carroll served as USBC president and Roger Dalkin as USBC's first CEO. USBC devoted most of its attention to trying to get its local and state associations to adopt the merger model while establishing a new working relationship with the sport in general. USBC basically operated under the same management system it had in the past – with the Board of Directors establishing policies and USBC executive leadership and staff carrying out the board's wishes.

That business model changed dramatically when the USBC board elected Bojé as president.

Almost overnight, Bojé's board changed from a "governance" body – one that provides the vision for staff to follow – to an "operational" body, becoming much more involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization. That's when the USBC board began to push for actions to bring USBC and BPAA together in one location.

During his comments to the bowling industry during *International Bowl Expo* in June 2010, outgoing BPAA president Jimmy Sturm revealed the seeds of a plan to create the *International Bowling Campus* were planted during a late-night gathering at a restaurant-bar in 2005 near BPAA headquarters in Arlington, Texas. Involved in the discussion, Sturm said, were Bojé, Carroll, BPAA president Joe Schumacher and himself – who was about to succeed Schumacher as BPAA president. Sturm held up a napkin, which he said outlined the plan.

Asked later what the napkin contained, Sturm said, "They were just visions of what all felt the bowling industry would be like if we had our own perfect wish."

Whether or not Sturm's napkin included a master plan for getting USBC and BPAA together is a good question, but it revealed that at least a handful of key leaders had begun planning a move two years before it happened.

On July 26, 2007 – six days before Bojé took office – USBC employees were called together for a mandatory staff meeting in Greendale where Carroll announced Dalkin had decided to retire as USBC's CEO, effective immediately, ending his 30 years of service to the organization. Kevin Dornberger, a former ABC vice president and attorney who later became USBC's legal counsel and Vice President-National Governing Body, was named Interim Chief Operating Officer. Carroll announced that

Dornberger would serve until a national search could be conducted to find Dalkin's successor.

Interesting notes about that day:

- While Dalkin's performance was reviewed annually by the board, only a handful of directors knew Dalkin wasn't going to be offered a new three-year contract. No one on the USBC staff had any idea Dalkin was about to "retire." Because his contract didn't expire until November, it appeared he was offered "early retirement" in order to get him out of the way before Bojé's term of office began four days later. Dalkin declined comment on what happened, noting the terms of his "departure agreement" restrict what he can say about his "retirement" and other insider issues.

- Carroll, with the board's approval, named Dornberger to fill the top staff position, but he did not get Dalkin's title. His selection wasn't a shock; as ABC president-elect at the time of the merger, he ran against Dalkin for the CEO position three years earlier. It was well known that he wanted the job of running USBC. What seemed odd was the "interim Chief Operating Officer" title. A COO doesn't have CEO authority or responsibility; he had to answer to someone.

- It became apparent in the weeks ahead that the person Dornberger was answering to was Bojé, who apparently had decided to expand his title as president to a role of "acting CEO." That's the role he told me he was assuming during a telephone conversation regarding the USBC Hall of Fame Committee in September of 2007. From my personal dealings with Bojé from that point forward, and conversations with other USBC staff members, it became apparent to some staff members that he was becoming actively involved in the day-to-day operational decisions. No ABC or USBC president had ever done that.

- While USBC's bylaws require the board to hire a CEO, the "search" to fill that position wasn't initiated until nearly two years later – roughly the amount of time it took to get USBC securely settled in Texas.

On Aug. 8, 2007 – one week into the Bojé/Dornberger era, Dornberger called another staff meeting where he announced the terminations of 11 employees. It was the beginning of a movement to reduce staff.

In a span of 30 days after Bojé took office, USBC board member and former WIBC president Sylvia Broyles and USBC Vice President-Tournaments Roseann Kuhn also announced their retirements. USBC's women's association leaders were not happy that two of the organization's highest-profile women

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were leaving, especially Broyles, whom many thought would succeed Carroll as USBC's second president.

In the Aug. 20, 2007, issue of USBC *eConnection*, an electronic newsletter for USBC local and state association officers and board members, Bojé wrote his first "president's message." In explaining USBC's leadership changes, he noted, "In a separate action, the USBC board has appointed a new executive committee composed of past-president Michael Carroll, vice president Darlene Baker, Kevin (Dornberger) and me. The executive committee will work closely on an almost daily basis to expedite the decision-making needs of the organization when it isn't possible to convene the entire board."

It was the first in a series of interpretations of the bylaws that didn't sit well with USBC's grassroots association leaders. USBC bylaws had no provision for an "executive committee" – which would have given four people enormous power to make decisions, considering the board only meets two or three times a year. (A year later, when the delegates were asked to "legalize" the idea to create and empower an "executive committee," they soundly defeated the bylaws proposal.)

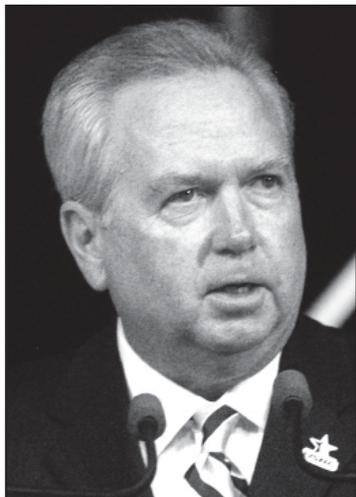
Bojé also immediately dealt with the question of BPAA taking over USBC in his *eConnection* comments.

"Do I have a desire to see BPAA take over USBC? Absolutely not. We are dramatically different organizations with different missions and visions... Understanding the unique and positive role each serves makes these organizations natural complements, not competitors. Lack of focus on the part of either makes them and the industry weaker... USBC and BPAA can and will cooperate. If both do a good job, there should be total harmony. There is only discontent when one organization thinks the other isn't doing a good job..."

In November 2007 staff meeting, Dornberger announced the USBC board had decided to begin a national search for a new USBC headquarters location, where USBC and BPAA would finally be united and could work together to repair the sport. Indianapolis, Nashville, Orlando, Wichita and Reno were mentioned as possible new locations, but Milwaukee and Arlington also would be considered. Cities would have until April 2008 to submit offers.

USBC employees who had no intention of leaving Milwaukee, but fearing the worst, began looking for jobs.

In January 2008, USBC announced its board, during a meeting at the BPAA Mid-Winter Summit in Myrtle Beach, S.C., had decided to start negotiations



Mike Carroll

"with all parties involved to relocate its headquarters to Arlington, Texas." A subsequent release from BPAA said "at its meeting on Jan. 24, the BPAA board also unanimously endorsed the proposal for purchase of a building and land in Arlington...for an integration of facilities with the USBC."

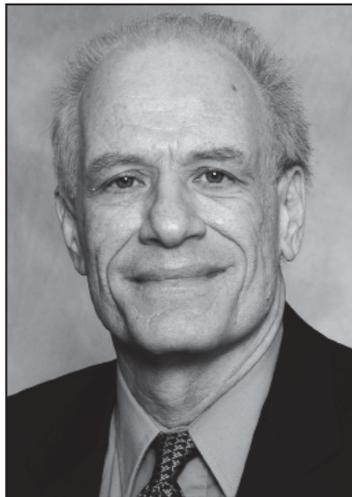
The following week at a USBC staff meeting, Dornberger was asked why the "request for bids" from the other cities had been abandoned without notice. Dornberger said the board had concluded there was no interest from other cities (even though the deadline for offers was three months away). USBC Vice President-Tournaments Jack Mordini questioned that conclusion because he had been working with Milwaukee community leaders and knew they were preparing an offer to keep USBC in Wisconsin. Mordini also knew Reno and Wichita had expressed interest in hosting the new BHQ.

When asked if BPAA would consider moving its headquarters to Greendale, Dornberger confirmed that BPAA had decided it would not consider moving to Wisconsin.

In the January 2008 edition of USBC *eConnection*, the decision to "begin negotiations" for buildings and land near BPAA's existing headquarters in Arlington was announced.

"USBC Headquarters will move to Arlington unless there is a breakdown in negotiations relating to the property," Bojé wrote. "If all details can be worked out, USBC is expected to move its headquarters operations within a year." The new complex, he noted, would include a new equipment testing and International Training and Research Center.

He outlined how the high-profile location – close to Six Flags, Cowboys Stadium and the Texas Rangers base-



Kevin Dornberger

ball stadium – would help "enhance the visibility of bowling."

He also confirmed BPAA had agreed to fund half of the cost to purchase and re-furbish the new Arlington property.

USBC halted plans for a proposed \$1 million expansion to its Greendale research center, which Dornberger had championed as a future training site for Team USA and others.

At about the same time in early 2008, the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame in St. Louis was facing a decision. A St. Louis investment group was trying to create a \$387 million Ballpark Village adjacent to the new Busch Stadium. A key step to the plan was to acquire the property the IBM/HF occupied – and shared with the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame.

The St. Louis investors made an overture to provide the IBM/HF an all-new facility as part of the Ballpark Village development. The proposed package included \$8.9 million in fully-funded project costs and a projection that attendance would double from its current 24,000 annual visitors. The offer would have been a financial bonanza for the IBM/HF, ensuring its future for years. But Bojé – an IBM/HF trustee – was adamantly opposed to the venture because he wanted the IBM/HF to be part of the proposed International Bowling Campus in Arlington.

IBM/HF chairman Pat Ciniello was among those who praised USBC's decision to try to unify the sport, but he expressed his disappointment in USBC's opposition to the Ballpark Village plan. He pointed to a Jan. 21 decision by the USBC board to deny the transfer of the "Deed of Trust" to allow the IBM/HF to move forward with its discussions.

In fact, a number of industry observers questioned whether or not the USBC Board was being pressured to move forward quickly with the Arling-

ton decision in order to stop the Ballpark Village deal.

As it turned out, the economic skid killed the Ballpark Village plans, but the Cardinals still wanted to buy the IBM/HF property. Rather than go through an "eminent domain" foreclosure, the IBM/HF sold its property to the St. Louis investment group for \$2 million in November 2008 and began making plans to move to Texas.

In February 2008, USBC leadership stirred up a hornet's nest among its grassroots associations when it announced plans to revamp its awards program, including conversion of several awards to "once in a lifetime" status. Without discussion or debate with its associations, USBC had attacked one of the sport's sacred cows – the awards program – another indication that USBC's leaders and the grassroots weren't on the same page.

Shortly after announcing the USBC board announced its intention to move to Arlington, Milwaukee area economic development officials protested that they had not been given a chance to make their offer to keep USBC in the area. Bojé called an emergency meeting of the board for March 9 in Atlanta so the board could hear proposals from Milwaukee and Arlington.

BPAA executive director John Berglund and his assistant, Bill Supper, didn't help matters when they came to Greendale on Feb. 26 to make a pitch to USBC staff on the benefits of moving to the Dallas area. Berglund confirmed that BPAA had no interest in moving its people to Milwaukee. He called Milwaukee a "second-tier city," complained about how difficult and expensive it was to fly into Milwaukee, and talked about Milwaukee's high insurance rates and taxes. The Dallas area, he noted, was a growing metropolitan area, had a world-class airport, no income tax and lower insurance rates.

Berglund's claims were soon addressed by Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker who said, "The reality is that the U.S. Department of Transportation statistics show that Dallas-Fort Worth ranks 22nd highest in airfares while (Milwaukee) ranks 48th... I hope the members of the (USBC) board look at the facts and not just one person's comments."

Employees who moved found the "no income tax" advantage was offset by higher taxes in other areas, and that lower insurance costs usually meant inferior services.

Despite what appeared to be a foregone conclusion, Milwaukee, Cudahy (a Milwaukee suburb) and Milwaukee 7 (a regional development group) executives traveled to Atlanta on March 9 and laid out an offer to build a new

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headquarters building as part of an \$8 million package of incentives.

Two days later, USBC announced the board's decision to relocate its headquarters to Arlington, Texas, where it would reside alongside BPAA.

"This is a great day for bowling," Bojé said. "Relocating to Arlington would allow for the creation of an international bowling campus. We can set the foundation for tremendous growth and opportunities for decades to come."

"Both cities made excellent presentations and either would have been good locations for USBC," he added. "The board decided Arlington would be the best location should the USBC receive approval of investment from the Texas Enterprise Fund."

The release acknowledged the USBC headquarters move would take place later in 2008, would provide office space for 200 employees and a new equipment testing and International Training and Research Center. BPAA had pledged to pay half of the \$14 million investment in the new property.

In the March 13 issue of the "Business Journal," the Milwaukee contingent concluded USBC would have come out of the situation \$2 million ahead of its current financial position if it stayed in Wisconsin vs. "the \$3.5 million cost of moving to Texas."

On March 19, USBC announced it would receive a \$693,000 award from the Texas Enterprise Fund.

The 2008 USBC Annual Meeting was Bojé's first as president and it set a tone for the balance of his three-year reign. The delegates had given the power to elect officers to the board when they approved the merger in 2004. But at least some delegates wanted the authority to elect their top officers back, especially after the board had put a proprietor in charge.

An amendment to change the election process never got to the floor in Kansas City, however, because USBC legal counsel Thor Lundgren declared the proposal illegal under Wisconsin not-for-profit corporate law (despite the fact that ABC and WIBC delegates had elected their officers for decades).

USBC leadership also explained their decision to move BHQ to Arlington to USBC's delegates during the Kansas City meeting. There was no request for confirmation from the delegates. The deal was done.

The offer to purchase the former Raytheon building right down the street from BPAA's headquarters in Arlington had been signed and sealed. The questions to be resolved were: what was the move going to mean to USBC's hundreds of associations? Would USBC have adequate staff, expertise and re-



Jim Oberholtzer



Jack Mordini

sources to take care of associations needs? Would there be down-time during the move? Dornberger and Bojé assured the delegates they would barely notice a difference.

The associations, who rely heavily on BHQ staff for membership and awards processing, supplies, rules interpretations and dozens of other services, nervously accepted the decision.

In the weeks following the annual meeting, Dornberger began the grueling task of preparing for the move. The physical move proved to be the easy part: USBC simply abandoned millions of dollars worth of computers, desks, chairs, furniture and office cubical panels and fittings. It was decided it would cost as much to move the old equipment as buy all new office equipment.

A bigger concern was moving USBC's computer infrastructure – the IBM mainframe and all of its components – in a safe and timely manner. USBC Vice President-Technology Jim Oberholtzer, (a recent executive staff addition after former VP Tim Payne was ousted after an "IT audit" – ironically conducted by Oberholtzer), began to invest in newer, faster technology.

(Aside: He commented to me one day, "Good luck to the rest of the guys; I just spent their budgets...")

The IT equipment move went fairly smoothly, with little downtime.

But Dornberger's biggest problem was in trying to figure out which staff members were going to make the move. It wasn't only a question of how many, but which key positions and expertise would stay on board. The numbers fluctuated weekly because the number of "undecided" employees was substantial. Staff members were not going to play their hands until they were forced to, making Dornberger's

job even more difficult.

The original idea of getting BHQ moved ahead of the fall bowling season wasn't going to happen, so a decision was made to make the move in early October 2008 – after the majority of fall leagues had been processed.

Dornberger had also issued a call for all employees to make a commitment, one way or another. He began to get a clear picture of what his staff in Arlington was going to look like: virtually no one from the "call center," handling membership services and awards, the frontline group USBC's association leaders need, was moving. The entire finance department was staying in Milwaukee. Almost the entire IT staff had either found new employment or was looking elsewhere. Few tournament entries, public relations, human resources and event planning staffs were moving. The departments that headed south with most of their existing staff members were rules, coaching and specifications/certification.

By my unofficial count, roughly 25 employees with five or more years of experience with BHQ made the move. Another 20 or so who had been with USBC less than five years (several of these less than one year) were moving. Twenty of those moving were married or "involved" couples. In some cases, existing employees agreed to move only if USBC would create a job for their inexperienced spouses.

To ensure services to associations and members would not be disrupted any more than necessary, USBC was forced to retain 34 employees – mostly in "call center" and IT positions – who continued to work out of a small wing in the Greendale building until Dec. 31, 2009. With modern technology, most callers never knew they were talking to people in Greendale, not Arlington. And for the most part, services were

provided with only modest inconveniences.

The rest of USBC's Arlington staff was filled with new employees. A number of Team USA members were hired because Dornberger coveted their bowling knowledge, but several others, including most of Oberholtzer's computer programmers and technicians, were skilled tradesmen with very little, if any, bowling knowledge.

Most of USBC's executive staff remained with the organization after concessions were made. Mordini and Oberholtzer were allowed to commute to and from their homes in Milwaukee, where they also maintained offices in the Greendale building. Dornberger and VP-National Governing Body Neil Stremmel moved to Texas. VP-Marketing and Public Relations Tom Clark resigned and joined the PBA. USBC board member Pete Tredwell, who replaced Clark as VP-Media, moved to Texas. Susan Merrill was a new hire as Chief Financial Officer.

During the 2009 BPAA Mid-Winter Summit, discussions were held among BPAA and USBC leaders about merging many common services within the International Bowling Campus in Arlington under what was loosely called a "czar" of bowling.

After experiencing the "shared services" idea under the Bowling, Inc., umbrella prior to the creation of USBC, USBC's executive group sent a letter to Bojé unanimously opposing the idea of a similar arrangement at the International Bowling Campus.

The concept of ABC, WIBC and YABA "buying services" from integrated departments under Bowling, Inc., created animosity and more inefficiencies than it solved because employees were constantly faced with whose priority was more important.

USBC's executives who had gone through the Bowling, Inc., era knew the problems and knew any similar attempt to merge staff functions in Arlington would result in similar conflicts. Maybe at some point in the future, competing staff members with different loyalties would buy into the concept, but not at the time BPAA and USBC staff members were barely getting their feet on the ground.

It was a bad idea, but Bojé apparently didn't feel it was important enough to share the executive staff's concerns with his board.

In February 2009, USBC announced it was going to undertake a search for a "permanent executive director." Dornberger was to be one of the individuals considered. At the same time, BPAA announced it was going to search for a replacement for Berglund, who had announced his plans to retire

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at the end of 2009.

And a memo to USBC staff on Feb. 6, 2009, announced that a search was going to take place to hire a new "Director of Shared Services" who would report to a joint committee of USBC and BPAA representatives and "oversee" several departments whose employees "become staff for the Shared Services group."

During the 2009 USBC Convention in Reno, Bojé and Dornberger delivered a message of "trust," which basically meant allowing the board to do whatever it decided was in USBC's best interests.

Bojé, after talking about living on the edge of risk in making the bold move to Arlington, said the USBC board was asking for a dues increase effective in 2010 that would be "imperative" for the organization.

"We must have trust. We must build trust," Bojé told the association leaders. "There's been a lack of it not just between USBC and BPAA, but between you, the stakeholders who pay for USBC. Our money comes from dues, from the people, and we must build mutual trust and respect. Trust the board to do the right thing."

The request for "trust" was denied when three versions of requests for a dues increase were defeated. A mandatory merger proposal for local and state associations was beaten down after a heated debate. A proposal to legalize an "executive committee" to conduct USBC's "emergency business" was denied. And Mike Carroll, USBC's first president, was soundly defeated in his bid for re-election to the board.

Also memorable were Dornberger's presentation on new membership options, better use of grassroots associations as part of the educational process, soliciting more input from associations on new programs, and developing new turnkey programs for proprietors. Virtually none of the concepts Dornberger outlined were realized.

Also memorable was a presentation by Chance Spann, the architect of the all-new, state-of-the-art bowl.com – USBC's most important communications link with its grassroots associations. Bowl.com made its debut as promised, but it didn't get the response USBC had hoped for. It was, instead, a nightmare. It was slow to open, nearly impossible to navigate and critical sections of the old site were nowhere to be found.

Before the summer was over, Spann was fired.

In June 2009, Stu Upson was named USBC Executive Director and Kevin Dornberger was sent to the sidelines. BPAA hired Steve Johnson as John Berglund's successor.

Also in June, the USBC board used

its discretionary authority to change the officer structure of the organization. While the bylaws specifically required a president and vice president as elected officers, the board reverted to the old ABC/WIBC system of officer progression. A "president-elect" was added, to ensure the individual next in line behind a president in his/her final term would automatically ascend to the highest office. The board also added first, second and third vice president offices, along with a secretary.

Whether the new officer lineup had any real bearing on USBC's leadership selections or not, the decision irked association leaders who viewed "automatic succession to office" as a questionable idea, and another example of the board bending the bylaws to serve its own needs. The "succession system" was not what the delegates had in mind when they adopted USBC's original bylaws.

In August 2009, the IBM/HF announced it was hiring Bill Supper, who had maybe worked for more bowling industry companies and organizations than anyone else, as its new executive director. And USBC announced it was moving its hall of fame ceremonies away from the USBC annual meeting for the first time ever. The hall of fame ceremonies were going to become a part of the U.S. Women's Open weekend in Arlington.

It was part of a continuing campaign to focus attention on the International Bowling Campus, bring visitors to the new IBM/HF and showcase the new International Training and Research Center as the host for the U.S. Women's Open finals.

In October 2009, USBC created public relations blunder when Team USA head coach Jeri Edwards was replaced by Arlington-based Rod Ross. USBC High-Performance Director David Garber said Edwards, a Matteson native and one of the sport's most popular people, had declined a previously-offered job. But Edwards said she was never offered an opportunity to apply for the same position he awarded Ross. It wasn't a question about Ross' ability; he's one of the game's best coaches.

USBC later admitted it was a budget-cutting issue. Ross was already on staff, living in Texas; Edwards wasn't. But it became an embarrassing issue for USBC because it had dismissed a woman whose record as Team USA head coach was outstanding and Dornberger, specifically, had been doing everything he could to hire skilled women into positions of leadership.

Shortly after the Edwards "firing," Dornberger announced he was leaving USBC. He is currently involved in the sport as president of the World Tenpin Bowling Association.

By that time, Oberholtzer also had been dismissed. Dornberger's hand-picked IT specialist had converted USBC's vital e-mail communications system and others to IBM-based technology that created confusion among staff and in the field. Oberholtzer also had concluded that USBC's WinLABS program – a custom-designed tool used by all associations to process memberships, awards, finances, tournament results, etc. – was antiquated and no longer merited support. He intended to convert association technology needs to an internet-based system, but the problem was, USBC had nothing ready to replace WinLABS, no staff left to support it and no programmers who understood association needs, leaving the associations in the lurch.

On Dec. 31, 2009, the last 20-or-so people who manned USBC's "remote" call center in Wisconsin packed their personal belongings and left the Greendale headquarters for the final time. And Jack Mordini, a 40-year ABC/USBC employee who was most prominently known for his efforts in building the USBC Open Championships' record growth, was among those who said good-bye on that day.

Today the building that housed the ABC, WIBC, YABA and USBC for nearly 40 years sits idle on South 76th Street in Greendale with a "for sale" sign in its front lawn. The property was once appraised at \$7.5 million; two years later, USBC is hoping it can get \$5.5 million.

On Jan. 25, 2010, the International Bowling Campus held its grand opening. An estimated 500 industry dignitaries got their first look at the new IBM/HF, International Training and Research Center and USBC/BPAA headquarters.

On the eve of the opening of the 2010 USBC Open Championships in Reno in February, USBC announced it would allow competitors in its national championships to consume alcoholic beverages for the first time. The issue ran the gamut from outrage to total apathy, but in the end, it was another public relations gaff that did nothing to help USBC's credibility.

In February 2010, USBC also undertook significant budget-cutting actions, releasing as many as 13 employees in Arlington, cancelling the planned "Clash of Bowling Champions" and converting its primary membership com-

munications tool, *US Bowler* magazine, to an online version that only a modest percentage of USBC's members would bother to look for.

In March of 2010, BPAA hired Chad Murphy as its Director of Youth, "responsible for managing its existing program and developing proprietor-driven youth initiatives." In June, Brian Graham left his position as USBC director of youth development, joining the Brunswick staff as director of consumer products marketing. The question of who is driving the youth bowling bus became even more muddled.

The 2010 USBC Convention in Reno was themed "Moving Forward Together," but it was of an apology-fest than anything else. For most of the three-day convention, USBC admitted to its failures during its first year-and-a-half in Arlington: bowl.com fell far short of its promise. New youth processing programs didn't work. Audit reports were late. An already barebones staff had been further depleted by a wave of layoffs. The Management of the SMART scholarship program was under public attack. And it didn't help matters when Upson confirmed USBC was dropping its sponsorship of the U.S. Women's Open and PBA Women's Series, and moving the Intercollegiate Bowling Championships from cable TV coverage to online video streaming.

"We are not broke," Upson said, "but...our reserves are depleted. Our tournament entries are below projections. We have reduced our budget by \$9 million to make it balance, but we are going to rebuild our reserves."

In his final convention as president, Bojé continued to ask the delegates to trust the board. A series of bylaws amendments that would have given the board almost complete control over the organization were again soundly defeated.

One of the positives to come out of the meeting was the announcement that a separate corporation had been established to move SMART's scholarship fund and management out of the USBC's system. SMART will now operate as an entity of its own.

Less than a year after being named IBM/HF executive director, Bill Supper "retired." About three months after Supper "retired," IBM/HF curator Amy Polley resigned. And about three months after "retiring" from the IBM/HF, Supper re-surfaced as managing director of the International Bowling Pro Shop and Instructors Association.

On July 31, 2010, Bojé completed his third one-year term as USBC president and on Aug. 1, Mahomet's Darlene Baker became USBC's first woman president...and that's where this part of the story ends.



John Berglund

The Story Inside the USBC Story

By Bill Vint

The "USBC Story" in this issue is a timeline of events and actions during Jeff Bojé's three one-year terms as USBC president. This article provides insight about many of the actions and decisions made during that time.

For nearly a year, I have talked with principles associated with USBC – past and present employees, board members, industry observers – asking for insight, personal experiences, facts and figures, etc., in an effort to develop an accurate behind-the-scenes picture of how things happened. Because a significant number of individuals have declined to respond on the public record (for personal reasons, fear of losing their jobs, retribution or confidentiality agreements), only those who have agreed to comment publicly are quoted in this article.

My own comments are based upon personal experiences and observations in working with USBC as an employee, and as editor of *Windy City Bowling News*. The views of others included in this article are their own.

When Bojé was elected USBC president by the USBC board in 2007, one segment of the bowling population hoped that his election would help bridge decades of acrimony between proprietors and the membership organizations. It was an enormous leap of faith for the USBC to put a bowling center owner, and past president of the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America, into the organization's most influential position.

The other segment of the population feared the USBC board had just delivered the organization into the hands of the proprietors, and situated the National Governing Body of the sport in a place where its integrity and credibility could easily be influenced by the owners of the playing field.

Shortly after taking office on Aug. 1, 2007, Bojé began to demonstrate he wasn't going to merely sit back and preside over the board. He was going to make things happen.

About USBC's staff

There are just under 3,000 state and local associations which provide key services to USBC's more than two million members, and almost all of those services are linked in one way or another to USBC's national headquarters staff. Staff's ability to perform was seriously impaired during Bojé's reign, in a variety of ways: by the loss of dozens of experienced and skilled employees, by a series of budget cuts and by damaging staff morale.

At the time Bojé came into office, I was employed by USBC as "special projects coordinator." I had several



NEARLY 2 1/2 YEARS after USBC's board of directors decided to move its headquarters to Arlington, Texas, the Greendale, Wis., building and campus the membership organizations had called home since 1972 still sits vacant, awaiting a buyer.

duties: supervise the USBC Hall of Fame, provide support for the Registered Volunteer Program (which I had helped design), and handle association communications. Parts of this article are based upon my experiences as an employee, including my exposure to USBC's changing culture under Bojé.

The following seemed like a little thing at the time, but I later realized it signaled a dramatic change in the chain-of-command within Bowling Headquarters.

I asked Bojé to write a "president's message" for eConnection, USBC's monthly newsletter to state and local association officers, to introduce himself and outline his agenda. I had done the same with Mike Carroll.

When I explained to Bojé the schedule for sending his message (the following week), he insisted it be sent the following day. When it was sent didn't matter to me, but never before had a USBC president issued instructions like that – at least, to me. I asked Tom Clark, USBC's VP-Marketing and my boss at the time, what he wanted me to do. He told me, if Bojé called, do what he said.

I wasn't the only employee Bojé called with instructions, and I was not the only person wondering who I was now reporting to – my USBC boss or Bojé?

Confusion about the chain of command was compounded by newly-appointed Interim Chief Operating Officer Kevin Dornberger's management style. Dornberger disliked meetings. He preferred employees to be self-motivated, and asked them to go about their business. The problem was that without regular management-level meetings to share information, each department was going about its business without necessarily understanding what other staff members were doing. It was a

disjointed system.

Greendale staff morale plunged when "the move" was first mentioned in the fall of 2007. A number of employees remembered 1999, when ABC, WIBC and YABA explored a possible move to Florida. The 1999 discussion centered around a \$40 million incentive package Florida was preparing, including a new "National Bowling Stadium-South" in the Orlando area, a new office facility, and much, much more. The pros and cons were discussed weekly at BHQ staff meetings, in public and among association leaders. The plan fell apart because the Florida legislature failed to approve the funding, but it was a project that made long-term sense – despite the fact that BHQ leadership had polled employees and knew 75 percent of them wouldn't move.

There was no such planning or public discussion involved with the Arlington proposal. Staff was left with the feeling that USBC's board could care less who stayed or who moved. When BPAA executive director John Berglund and assistant Bill Supper came to Greendale to pitch the merits of Arlington to staff – portraying Milwaukee as a "second-tier city" – most staff members made up their minds, even though they never revealed their intentions.

While Dornberger tried to sway key employees to move, he was hamstrung. A handful had agreed to go and others confirmed they were not moving. But the key "undecided" group was composed of people who were either actively looking, but hadn't found a new job, or were waiting for a better offer from USBC. Unless you were moving, it was hard to show up for work and give your all to support USBC's mission.

When the move was finally made, Dornberger found himself with a staff that was severely limited in key areas of expertise and experience. His entire

IT teams of programmers and technicians were gone; they were among the first to find work. The entire "Call Center" group – those who handled membership services and awards for all of the associations – declined to move. Other key departments were missing experienced staff who might have helped mentor new employees.

Dornberger hired a number of Team USA bowlers, all of whom had impressive bowling knowledge, but some of whom had unknown workplace experience. And he filled a couple of key positions with USBC board members.

Staff morale among his new employees was initially excitement and enthusiasm. But when technology issues began to arise with the aging WinLABS program and a new youth membership processing system that simply didn't work, the mood in Arlington began to sour because no one knew how to fix the problems.

During the 2009 USBC convention in Reno, Bojé made staff morale matters worse. Commenting during a Bowling Writers Association of America breakfast meeting, of all places, Bojé announced to the media that there would be no raises for USBC employees for the next year.

The problem was, no one had told the employees. On May 1, Bojé left it up to Dornberger to apologize to the employees for the salary freeze in the wake of serious budget issues.

A month later, USBC hired Stu Upson as executive director, and USBC reassigned Dornberger.

In February of 2010, Upson "laid off" 13 employees – several of whom had made the good-faith move from Milwaukee – in order to balance the budget.

Whether or not there are additional staff cuts on the horizon is yet to be determined, but the prospect has existing staff in Arlington upset and worried.

The Kevin Dornberger era

Personal observations: I have always gotten along with Kevin Dornberger, through his years with ABC, as USBC legal counsel, a USA Bowling official and, eventually, as USBC's Interim COO. I considered him to be ambitious and dedicated to bowling. And I think he wanted the opportunity to lead USBC more than anything else. That's why he applied for the USBC CEO job in opposition to Roger Dalkin in 2004.

To his credit, Dalkin looked past that competition and retained Dornberger as USBC's legal counsel and vice president.

When Dornberger was named Interim COO on the day Dalkin "retired," I wasn't surprised. Based on my observations, Bojé and Dalkin weren't exactly drinking buddies. They were oil and

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water, two large egos with completely different views about how the world of bowling worked. Bojé was a for-profit guy; Dalkin was a non-profit expert.

Jack Mordini, Dalkin's closest ally throughout his reign as ABC executive director, was a person many thought should be next in line, but Mordini wasn't a consideration, maybe because of his perceived ties to Dalkin.

Whether or not Dornberger did a good job is something for others to debate. In my opinion, I knew there were actions Dornberger planned to take were either modified or overturned by Bojé. From personal my experience:

Like every other employee, Dornberger invited me to move to Arlington. He offered me a position on a new "Membership Development Team" he was organizing – a mixed group of out-of-the-box free-thinkers, veterans and youth, insiders and outsiders – to brainstorm ideas to try to reverse bowling's declining membership.

I was interested; I thought it was a great idea, but I told him I wasn't going to move. If I could commute to Arlington to do the job, I'd be more than happy to consider it. Dornberger said he'd get back to me, which he did. The commuter option was out, so I thanked him, offered to assist in any way I could, and I told him I wanted to remain on staff until my planned retirement on April 1, 2009. Between Dornberger and VP-Media Pete Tredwell (my boss at that time), we negotiated an agreement whereby I continued on staff until April 1 and I continued to handle USBC Hall of Fame liaison duties as a "contractor" until Oct. 1, 2009.

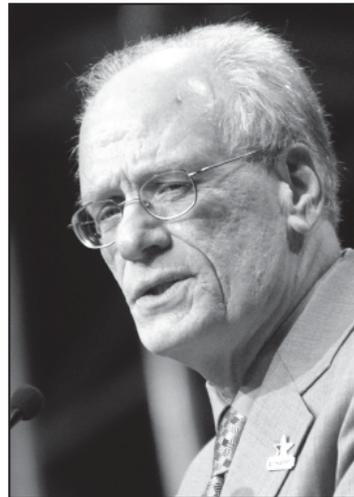
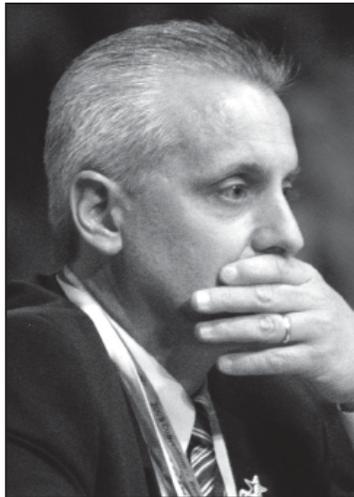
A few weeks later, I learned Dornberger's "Membership Development" concept had been "revised" and would instead become a "task force" composed of long-time association leaders – the same traditionalists who hadn't come up with a new idea in 30 years.

That complete change of direction was one in an on-going series of instances where Dornberger would make an announcement at a staff meeting and change the decision at the next meeting.

After one particularly irritating meeting, I predicted confidentially to a couple of selected friends that Dornberger would be fired within a year, that he had put himself into a position to be Bojé's scapegoat if the move to Arlington failed.

I predicted that when USBC began to fall apart, Bojé and friends would lure BPAA's John Berglund out of retirement, to return on his great white stallion to save the sport.

I got the Dornberger part right.



USBC'S FUTURE changed dramatically when proprietor Jeff Bojé (left) was elected president and assumed the role of "acting CEO." Kevin Dornberger (right) was given the role of "interim Chief Operating Officer," a position that set him up to be a scapegoat.

Pre-dating Arlington

Roger Dalkin isn't allowed to discuss internal business issues he was involved with as USBC's CEO, but he did provide some observations about conversations he had had with BPAA executive director John Berglund.

"When I became CEO of USBC, one of the agreements John Berglund and I had was that once a month, we'd meet either in Greendale or Arlington. We'd sit down for a day and talk over issues," Dalkin said. "I went to Arlington a number of times, and on a couple of occasions when I was down there, John would say 'you should look at this building next to us. It's vacant. You guys should move down and we'd be in the same area.'

The building was roughly the same size as our existing building, but it had no storage. I never went in the building because, as I said to John, 'I need to understand why it makes financial sense for USBC. We'd have to sell our building, which we wouldn't get market value for, and uproot more than 200 employees – of which 80 percent probably wouldn't come – and buy a building that's been vacant for years, renovate it so we can be sitting next to you (BPAA) when in the same breath, I could say to you – as I have on many occasions – why don't you sell your building in Arlington for \$300,000 and – you have 30 employees – of which 10-15 might come to Greendale, and we'll give you an entire wing of our building free of charge?

"There would be no overhead, no renovation costs. His answer to me was that he had no problem doing that – being from Minnesota himself – but he didn't think his board would buy the idea, and that's pretty much where we left it. He mentioned it a couple more times and I always told him, unless

there was a financial reason to move, I didn't see a reason to do it. It made more sense for BPAA to move to Greendale. We never had a discussion with the board, other than I reported what John had said to the board, and that I had offered free space in Greendale.

"After I left USBC, the discussion began again about (BPAA and USBC) being in the same building. I had always advocated that. But I also said the 1,500 miles between organizations was more often used as an excuse than a valid reason as to why things didn't get done. Corporations have offices all over the world, and they communicate and get things done.

"Location is an excuse."

The move to Arlington

Historians may one day write that USBC's move to Arlington, Texas, to create the International Bowling Campus was the most progressive step ever taken in bowling history. Hopefully, they will include some footnotes:

"When the original idea of buying the building in Arlington was proposed, American Appraisal was hired to appraise it," said Jack Mordini, who was USBC's VP-Tournaments and had responsibility for matters related to the purchase of the "new" headquarters building. "American Appraisal came back with a value of between \$5-6 million. John Berglund had negotiated a purchase price of \$8 million. I asked Berglund about that at a staff meeting and he said he'd get another appraisal that would show it was worth more than what the appraisal showed.

"I was also told the building had been vacant for quite some time, perhaps years. It was owned by a large corporation presumably as a tax write-off. They didn't want to sell it unless

they could make a killing on it, and that's what they did.

"I was also told the \$8 million offer was only good for 60 days, or the sellers were going to take it off the table. A building that was vacant for years, but would be pulled off the market in 60 days? But that helps explain why there were such a push for the board to make a quick decision.

"I think USBC over-paid for the building. Plus we paid the real estate commission of \$320,000, which is very unusual. Usually the seller pays those fees. I was also told by Berglund that we paid \$4 million for renovations – a sprinkler system, new interior ceilings, a new lobby with marble floor, etc.

"Also, in my opinion, while the building was made to work, it was not ideal from USBC's perspective, and called for significant renovations. One example is that the warehouse is on the second floor, hardly ideal for a business that ships as much as USBC does," Mordini continued.

"It cost another \$4 million to build the (International Training and Research Center).

"Added in the costs to move – the IT infrastructure, purchase of new cubes, desks, furnishing. We sold what was left behind for about \$10,000 – probably \$250,000 worth of cubical panels, fixtures and other furnishing, which very easily could have been moved.

"That's not including human resources costs – health insurance, severance packages, moving costs, two trips to Arlington with your spouse to check out the area, and 'bonuses' to move. Not that those things are wrong in the context of doing business, but what did we gain on the other side? I'm guessing the whole (move) easily could come to \$20 million.

"I wasn't in the board meetings," Mordini continued, "but I don't know that anyone on our staff did a cost-benefit analysis.

"(Dornberger) also knew very early that there would only be 50 or so people moving. He knew he was going to have to hire a new workforce. How was USBC business going to benefit from the move? What do you wind up with after you make the move? Can USBC deliver its product cheaper and better and faster from Texas?

"We left a perfectly good building that was paid for," Mordini added. "The first talks we had were about talking with other cities. We set an April deadline for offers, but the whole process was bypassed when the board met in Myrtle Beach and said forget it, we're going to Arlington.

"What I found extremely odd was

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that Berglund and (BPAA president Jim Sturm) showed up at the USBC board meeting in Myrtle Beach and made a Power Point presentation on the benefits of moving to Arlington. It wasn't the Arlington Chamber of Commerce; it was BPAA making the pitch. Kevin called me that night and told me the board had voted to move. We had been talking with Wichita, Reno, Nashville, Milwaukee... We had reached out and, in some cases had meetings, so that's why I was so surprised.

"After the board meeting, we had to go back and tell them about the board's decision. We had been talking with people in Milwaukee about new sites at State Fair Park and one near the airport. They wanted to know if they could still talk to the board," Mordini said. "The board allowed them to come to the meeting in Atlanta, but it was a foregone conclusion."

The cost of the move drained virtually all of USBC's cash reserves, and used up \$7 million of BPAA's reserves. Some industry experts believe it was a worthwhile investment that will pay off in bowling's future. Others believe it was an ill-advised expenditure at a time the money could have been invested into new programs and promotions to stimulate growth. Almost everyone agrees, the timing couldn't have been worse in the face of the nation's stumbling economy.

But the decision wasn't Bojé's alone. He had successfully convinced the USBC board to support the idea.

"We had quite a bit of information and a lot of discussion," said former USBC board member Paul Egbers of Chicago. "The board knew the proprietors' position that they would not move to Milwaukee. I was concerned about that, and I think others were, too. But as time went on and we looked at things, the board decided Arlington seemed to make sense."

"Part of the rationale among those who supported the Arlington proposal were figures that indicated it would be much easier for USBC to recruit new talent to move to Dallas rather than to a northern city."

"The board was given all of the information it needed to make a sound decision...for the good of the industry," said former board member James Peters of Chicago. "I know many board members considered what the delegates might feel, but our role as a strategic leader was to think on a broad spectrum and we felt in majority that the move was an excellent opportunity to grow the sport and better the sport of bowling."



USBC DELEGATES expressed their "trust" issues to president Jeff Bojé throughout his three years at the organization's helm, but the one-time Bowling Proprietors' Association of America president was relentless in his efforts to gain more power for his board.

Bojé's authority

ABC, WIBC and YABA delegates approved a set of bylaws back in 2004 that defined how the new organization would be managed moving into the future. The bylaws were dramatically different than those that had governed ABC, WIBC and YABA in the past.

Under USBC, a much smaller, more nimble board of directors would establish the strategic direction and it would be able to act quickly to take care of USBC's needs. The bylaws require USBC to have a CEO (hired by the board), a president (to preside over the board and serve as USBC's spokesman) and a vice president (to preside when the president can't).

Bojé was significantly more than an officer who was content to preside over the board. He became a decision-maker on behalf of the organization.

"As president (Bojé), deemed it his responsibility to make sure that other entities were not forgotten during the move," said Tommy Lee Baxter, a long-time ABC director, original member of the USBC board and later a USBC employee. "Any decisions were his alone, and he used contractors and consultants instead of allowing staff to make decisions and run the organization as in the past."

His work ethic is not in question," Baxter continued, "just his own decision that it couldn't be done without him. Many disagree with his opinion on that statement."

"The gap between what should be 'operations and governance' has become too close for my comfort," he added. "The board, especially the president of the organization, should not be making operational decisions for the business. In too many cases decisions were made by the wrong person. That's my personal opinion."

Bojé's failure to act on the CEO search was questioned by more than one board member, but no one demanded an answer.

"Jeff was encouraged to get the CEO search underway prior to February 2009," said USBC board member Mitch Mitchell, who declined comment on why it didn't happen sooner.

"When Dornberger was named COO, I personally asked when were we going to start looking for the next CEO?" Egbers added. "But the issue kept on not getting discussed. Eventually it happened."

Nor did anyone challenge his expansion of "presidential powers." Another personal aside:

In September of 2008, Bojé called me to discuss appointments to the USBC Hall of Fame Committee (I was staff liaison to the committee), and he referred to himself as the "acting CEO" during that call. I remember it exactly because it explained, to me, so much about his actions:

Bojé was about three weeks late in making appointments to the Hall of Fame Committee. When he finally called, he prefaced the conversation by noting he considered himself "acting CEO" and that he didn't understand exactly how the Hall of Fame Committee worked, or how appointments were made. He said he was concerned future USBC presidents wouldn't understand the process, either...so he was going to appoint a task force to review the whole hall of fame process.

(To shorten this story, I explained that the entire hall of fame process — including how people got appointed — was included in the HOF Policy Manual which he had been sent...that the USBC Hall of Fame Committee and policies had been established only three years earlier by a task force Mike Carroll had appointed. But I also told him he was the president, and he could do what he wanted to do.

I asked him about his Hall of Fame concerns. The Hall of Fame committee that fall addressed every issue Bojé raised. I sent him a report. He didn't share the report with the board, but a

few weeks later, he named his new Hall of Fame Task Force.)

"I don't remember Bojé ever saying he was assuming the role of acting CEO," Egbers noted.

"The board never granted Bojé any 'acting CEO' title or authority," Peters confirmed. Mitchell agreed.

A game of influence

Maybe overshadowed in the three years of Bojé's presidency was the erosion of trust between USBC's board and executive staff, and the grassroots association leaders over who has what authority over the other.

There have always been issues of local and state associations wanting to tend to their own affairs without being told what to do by "national," while at the same time relying heavily on "national" to provide a host of services.

Further it is no secret that there are lots of good grassroots associations, and there are a lot of bad ones. That's the nature of volunteer organizations.

Bojé, who came from a business environment where he was owner of his domain and accustomed to making decisions on his own, had worked with fellow BPAA members who were business people. He was most comfortable with his peers, and they appeared to be his closest advisors.

It also appeared Bojé had very little patience with the volunteer network. He knew the volunteer army was necessary, but he really didn't know how to deal with it, and the sport wasn't moving fast enough in the direction he wanted it to go.

At his first USBC convention, he tried to look and sound like Roger Dalkin, reasoning with USBC's delegates in what was a tearful, dramatic performance. But USBC president or not, he was a proprietor in the eyes of most of the delegates, and they weren't buying what he was selling.

Over the next two years, Bojé and "his board" took actions to try to gain virtual control over the organization by changing the bylaws to empower the board and remove decision-making from the volunteer network. In Reno earlier this year, USBC's grassroots leaders crushed a series of amendments that would have forever changed the balance of power in bowling.

Skirting the bylaws, the USBC board has taken steps to manage its own membership by revising the nomination process to influence board elections.

Another personal aside:
I ran for the USBC board earlier this year and lost. I'm not upset about losing, but I am upset by an election process that began to unfold and change as the weeks and months

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moved along:

- The original USBC policy adopted in 2004 called for the nominating committee to be composed entirely of non-board members. The bylaws required the committee to present two candidates for each vacancy (eight candidates for four open positions). The idea was to ensure a fresh perspective on all new candidates. The board, exercising its "authority" to change policy, later decided some board members should be included on the nominating committee because they would know best which candidates would fit by filling key areas of expertise.

- That's how I understood the process worked when I submitted my application prior to the Aug. 1, 2009 deadline.

- On Nov. 16, I was invited to meet with the nominating committee.

- On Nov. 24, I received this notice: Please make note of an important new policy that has been approved by the USBC Board of Directors regarding campaigning by candidates: Campaigning by the candidate is not permitted from the time the application is submitted and through the end of the Annual Meeting. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of the bowl.com forum site, written material or others campaigning for the candidate.

On Jan. 9, I flew to Dallas to be interviewed. I noted that six of the nine committee members were existing board members.

- On Jan. 11, I received notification I had not made the cut, but would be allowed to run from the floor. I notified USBC I intended to do that.

- On Feb. 1, USBC announced the nominating committee was presenting four candidates for four open positions – not two per position – because "the procedural change is to give delegates a stronger indication about which candidates the nominating committee feels will be the best fit for the board..." Other candidates would be free to run from the floor. The release also announced that future nominating committees would be composed of "seven board members."

I ran from the floor along with four other candidates. None of us knew the others were running until we got to Reno, where all five of us were given 90 seconds at a "Meet the Candidates" forum to explain who we were, why we were running, and another hour or so to answer questions. We were introduced on stage prior to the elections with 150-words-of-less scripted introductions.

The board elections are the only way USBC's convention delegates can express their satisfaction or disappoint-

ment with the board. It's the only way for delegates to put people in a position to represent their interests, but they have no way to know how well existing board members have done their jobs, or what they have contributed to the organization. The so-called "anti-campaigning rule" prevents delegates from learning much of anything about new candidates, much less what they believe. The new rules are heavily influenced in favor of those the existing board recommends.

While the USBC board obviously has fiduciary responsibilities to oversee USBC's business affairs, and therefore needs directors with specific talents, its action to control its own membership is sending the wrong message to the grassroots leadership. It looks like an incestuous system, and it denies the delegates the depth of information they need in order to make fully-informed decisions.

The board apparently got the message that the delegates didn't like the process. In June 2010, it reversed its policy about presenting two candidates for each open position during the 2011 elections. Candidates can run from the floor, but they now need to announce your intentions nine months-or-so ahead of time... And "campaigning" is still against the rules.

Will BPAA takes over USBC?

No, BPAA won't take over USBC. Nor will the two organizations merge. USBC's 501(c)3 not-for-profit tax status is too valuable to jeopardize.

The move to Arlington, in my opinion, was about influential control more than physical control.

BPAA has been unhappy with the way the membership organizations have conducted their business for years. As recently as 2004, BPAA was building reserves, and had issued a veiled threat to launch its own membership organization if the USBC merger didn't pass.

In 2007, with Bojé sitting as president, Sturm holding a USBC board seat, Dalkin "retired" and Berglund saying all the right things on behalf of BPAA's willingness to pay for half of the building, there was never a more opportune moment for the proprietors to make their push to get USBC out of Greendale, and into a new home.

BPAA is a businessman's organization. BPAA would never "donate" \$7 million to USBC without a believing it would get a return on its investment. The "profit" would be realized when organized league bowling began to grow, and growth would be more likely to happen if USBC were doing things the way BPAA wanted them to.

BPAA's refusal to move its much smaller staff to Greendale was an in-

dicator of its intentions. Had BPAA moved north instead of USBC moving south, the sport would be \$25 million ahead of the position it finds itself in today. But the move is done and now the sport will either make it work, or...

During the 2009 Bowling Writers Association of America annual meeting, where the writers were voting on a highly-controversial proposal from Berglund to become part of the Arlington empire, Bojé was invited to comment.

"I don't know why you'd want to go outside of the International Bowling Campus," he told the writers' group. "I've said a number of times...I can't lie...the IBC belongs to the industry. It was designed to be that way. The IBC, if you look at it...neither organization has any money left. We've dumped all the eggs in one basket. No one has control over it. There's no way to undo the IBC because it will take down everybody. Everybody knows the USBC has no money left to go anywhere else. It can't be undone."

"Merging" several staff functions is still on BPAA's agenda, despite warnings that it's a flawed concept. BPAA treasurer Tom Martino said during Bowl Expo in June, "As the year unfolds with continued integration of USBC and BPAA into shared services, we are urging that we move forward aggressively but cautiously."

When Bojé was recently asked by *Bowlers Journal International* publisher Keith Hamilton if there would ever be a "czar" hired for bowling," Bojé said, "Maybe...it's a real possibility. But we won't be hiring a search firm to find such a person. Instead it will be someone who stands out. In fact, anyone who applies for the job will be disqualified."

My first reaction to that comment was, would this person ride in on a big white stallion? Secondly, who is "we?" Bojé is no longer a USBC officer or board member, and he's no longer a BPAA officer or board member. Does he still get a vote?

I have several reservations about the USBC-BPAA relationship, not only because history has indicated the two have always had a love-hate relationship. My concern this time is over a "marriage" was a shotgun wedding rather than a love affair cultivated openly in public.

If the two parties had decided to get together and honeymoon in Nashville or Indy or Orlando, it might have sent a much different signal than forcing one of the newlyweds to move into the mother-in-law's house.

Reservations aside, I am 100 percent in favor of USBC and BPAA working together. Always have been, always will be. If the two don't cooperate, bowling has no future.

Will the IBC deliver on its promise?

Uniting the world of bowling at a single location in Arlington, Texas – next door to Six Flags, and just down the street from Cowboys Stadium and Texas Rangers Stadium – sounds like a wonderful idea. It has been portrayed as becoming the center of the bowling universe, a magnet that will attract bowlers world-wide.

Will the International Bowling Campus ever live up to its billing?

Will crowds of bowlers flock to the all-new, state-of-the-art International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame? In its last year of operation in St. Louis – where it sat across the street from Busch Stadium – the museum drew 24,000 visitors. In its first year of operation in Arlington, the IBM/HF is projected to draw 12,000 visitors, a 50 percent decline.

Over its lifetime in St. Louis, the IBM/HF demonstrated a bowling museum will never be a tourist attraction. It has an important place in bowling, but it will never live up to the tourism hype Berglund, Strum and other Arlington advocates have given it.

The \$4 million, 20-lane International Training and Research Center has been touted as a state-of-the-art research, testing and training center for bowling that will not only serve USBC's research and testing needs, but will become the high-tech training facility for the world of bowling.

All kinds of international and collegiate teams, among others, will offset the cost to build and maintain it?

Kegel founder John Davis, who built his own multi-million-dollar research and training center in Sebring, Fla., doesn't think the ITRC has a chance to make money.

"No one asked me," he said. "I would have shown them my books."

PBA Hall of Famer Del Ballard Jr. and former Team USA member and former USBC board member Bill Hoffman were hired in 2008 to "sell" training packages to the international community. They had more than a year in advance of the opening to line up clients. Ballard is no longer with USBC and Hoffman has had limited success selling USBC training programs to teams in their home countries, rather than coming to the U.S. Why? "Because they can save \$20,000 or so if they don't have to travel to Arlington," he said.

In the meantime, the European Tenpin Bowling Federation has developed a high-performance training program at the Kuortane High Performance Olympic Training Center in Finland, and Kegel has just opened a new

Story *The Inside* the **USBC Story**

Kegel Training Center-Europe inside Dolfijn Bowlingcentrum in the Netherlands. With two such training facilities readily available in Europe, USBC's ability to attract international business has been seriously compromised.

Marketing responsibilities for the ITRC have been assigned to Strike Ten Entertainment's Frank DeSocio, based on his experience as a bowling center operator. DeSocio is well known for the "bowl a game, get one free" coupon promotions he has sold to corporate partners. Rumors that he was booking children's birthday parties to boost business at the ITRC have been denied by USBC representatives.

The real measure of the year-old International Bowling Campus and its collection of bowling entities may not be known for years, according to a pair of respected industry leaders.

Joe Schumacher, who preceded

Jim Sturm as BPAA president and has been an influential figure in the Arlington concept, said in 2008, "The horizon for goal achievement is 25 years.

"If there is not a reasonable expectation that competitive bowling will be stronger in 2033 than it is today, then quite possibly our current efforts are a misuse of resources. If, however, we take the type of action needed to provide a successful future for competitive bowling, then every dollar of current investment will have been well spent. The BPAA board of directors indicted (its) confidence in our collective ability to achieve our goal by giving the BPAA officers the authority to commit all of its current reserves to this effort.

"A 25-year horizon gives the sense that we have a long time in which to bring our goal to reality," Schumacher continued. "In fact, I believe we have a window as narrow as five years in

which to put the structure in place and begin to implement the programs needed to be successful..."

Former USBC CEO Roger Dalkin shared the far horizon vision.

"I always look at things from a 25-year perspective," Dalkin said. "Will anyone care about what happened 25 years from now? Will the move have an impact on the organization? When WIBC moved from Columbus, Ohio, to Greendale, that was probably very traumatic for WIBC's people. Looking back now, it's not an issue today.

"The formation of USBC, 25 years from now, will be an important thing. The moving of headquarters is not. In the scheme of things, where the headquarters is located is not an issue.

"I've kinda chuckled about bowling writers saying it's important to be next to Texas Stadium and Six Flags. But I'll bet dollars-to-donuts more cars

pass the building in Greendale in any given day than pass the building in Arlington because of the location.

"Here's another comparison: have you ever tried to find the location of the United States Golf Association headquarters? It's in the middle of farmland in New Jersey and if you don't own a GPS, you'd never find it.

"Being close to Texas Stadium doesn't mean a thing, any more than being across the street from Southridge Mall had anything to do with the Greendale building. It's an office building; it can be located anywhere."

The part of the vision that is a huge concern is this: now what?

All of the attention has been invested in getting USBC and BPAA into the same bedroom. Will they wake up tomorrow and make bowling grow?

That's the \$25 million question. We'll all find out the answer in 2033.

Jeff Bojé meets the press

Editor's Note: Windy City Bowling News posed a series of questions related to his USBC service to immediate past president Jeff Boje. Below are his responses.

1) You came into the USBC presidency as not only the first proprietor to head the organization, but as a BPAA past president. How did that background shape your vision of how you wanted to preside over USBC?

JB: "My experience as a bowling center operator, as well as being a former BPAA president, helped me understand the bowler's needs at a grassroots level and what center managers need to help grow the sport. At the time I got involved with ABC/WIBC/YABA, there was a disconnect between proprietors and the member organizations. I felt, and still do feel, that both groups need to work together with a common goal of growing bowling by meeting the needs of the bowler. They each have a unique role in doing this but both must work together to have success in growing our sport."

2) In a very short span of time, it became apparent that improving the working relationship between USBC and BPAA was a priority. Who initiated getting the move to get the two organizations together – BPAA or USBC?

JB: "The officers of both organizations shared the same vision: to help bowling first, not just help their respective organizations. It wasn't one or two people who made this move happen; it was two courageous boards."

3) It was announced in the fall of 2007 that a national search for a suitable location would be conducted to find a new home for USBC/BPAA, but at the January 2008 BPAA Mid-Winter Summit, the USBC Board suspended the search and announced USBC was moving to Arlington. That decision was confirmed during an April meeting in Atlanta, where Milwaukee and Arlington both made proposals. What was the urgency of making the decision at that time? Why did USBC not wait until the USBC Convention to discuss the issue with USBC's delegates?

JB: "The leaders of USBC and BPAA were presented a short time window where we felt the property in Arlington could be obtained. The Arlington location has unique advantages, so we moved forward with a sense of urgency. Member organizations elect a board of directors to make important business decisions and I believe the board made a good decision that will greatly benefit bowling in the long run. In a perfect world a discussion with the USBC delegates would have been an option. However, waiting for convention on something like this is not realistic. Imagine trying to buy a house, but telling the seller you need to take a

vote at your family reunion next summer before closing the sale."

4) Did the offer from the St. Louis Ball Park Village people to keep the IBM/HF in St. Louis have any bearing on accelerating the decision to move to Arlington?

JB: "It was one component of the need to make a decision with some sense of urgency. We had to give the IBM/HF some assurances of our invitation for them to join USBC and BPAA at the International Bowling Campus in Arlington. If you remember, the IBM/HF was ready to strike a deal with the Cordish Group, and St. Louis Cardinals, to become part of the village. In the end, the Ball Park Village deal fell through and I'm certain that the board of directors of the museum is happy with the ultimate decision to be part of the campus in Arlington. I feel quite certain that the International Bowling Campus in Arlington would still have happened even had the IBM/HF not joined it at its inception. It did make a good thing even better by joining in on the project at the onset."

5) Was the board given a business plan or risk analysis on what the move to Arlington might cost in terms of actual expenses, loss of manpower, etc.?

JB: "Of course. You don't make a business decision of significance without analyzing the numbers."

6) The USBC bylaws call for the board to hire a "CEO" to run the organization. Why did it take two years before a search was undertaken to fill that position?

JB: "While not holding the title of CEO, Kevin Dornberger served as Chief Officer running the organization in the spirit and intent of the bylaw. Kevin did a great job of getting us through the move and hiring staff. I admire Kevin a great deal for the job that he did while leading the organization. Now we are counting on Stu Upson to take us to the next level of operating efficiency and renewing USBC's focus on the membership."

7) During your tenure, the USBC board failed to gain the trust of the delegates. Why do you think that happened?

JB: "Just because the delegates do not always agree with the USBC Board does not necessarily indicate a lack of trust. Sometimes it really is just a lack of understanding or a difference in point of view. I believe there is a higher level of trust now than we have seen in recent years.

"During the 2009 convention while I supported a dues increase, I urged delegates to vote against it when the issue was brought up for a second vote on a technicality after many delegates had left.

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