



NORTHWEST HERALD *Online*

[HOMEPAGE](#)

[CLASSIFIED](#)

[CLIP & SAVE](#)

[FANADDICT](#)

[FIND A JOB](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

SITE SPONSOR

Blaze ruins alley

Publication Northwest Herald

Date March 11, 2005

Section(s) Main

Page

By ROB PHILLIPS

rphillips@nwherald.com

WOODSTOCK - About a dozen teary-eyed people stood across the street from the burning **Edgetown Bowl** Thursday afternoon and watched black smoke roll from the crumbling building.

Flames shot from the 49-year-old bowling alley, and charred debris fell onto Route 47, which was closed for more than four hours.

"This is my life burning down," co-owner Chad Walters told an employee standing beside him. "This is our lives burning down."

Woodstock Fire Rescue District was called about 2:30 p.m. to the bowling alley, 1330 S. Eastwood Drive. The building was ruled a total loss, Woodstock Fire Chief Ralph Webster said, with damage estimated to be about \$1.5 million.

A blinding smoke blew into the intersection of Lake Avenue and Route 47; residents who lived miles away said they saw the smoke and drove to the scene.

Two employees and the four bowlers who continued to bowl after the afternoon's mixed league evacuated the building without injury.

"I heard this pounding in the office," said A.J. Mansfield, who has worked at the bowling alley for about three years. "Then I walked over and saw all these flames. I ran back and told everyone to get the hell out."

Jason Walters, who also is a co-owner, arrived at the bowling alley and tried to put the fire out with a fire extinguisher.

"The smoke just got so bad that we had to get out of there," Chad Walters said.

The Walters' parents, Steven and Carolyn Walters, bought the 20-lane alley in 2001.

Classified Ads

You have 0 items saved in your basket.

- ADVERTISERS -

AccuWeather.com[®]
Enter U.S. zipcode
or city, state

CLASSIFIED

- [Search](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Local Employment](#)
- [Auto](#)
- [MLS Listings](#)
- [Real Estate for Sale](#)
- [Real Estate for Rent](#)
- [Place an Ad](#)
- [Coupons](#)

YOUR ADS

Most e-mailed stories

User's Login

Username

Password

Remember login?

[Create a new account](#)

[Retrieve forgotten password](#)

Webster said fire officials immediately decided not to enter the building because the fire engulfed the "bowstring" roof. The roof caved in about 20 minutes after firefighters arrived, Webster said.

The cause of the fire was still under investigation. Firefighters finished about 8 p.m. because conditions in the building made it difficult to work, Webster said.

"With all the debris in the building, we're worried someone's going to get injured," Webster said.

The investigation will resume this morning, he said.

Woodstock was assisted by several fire departments, including McHenry, Crystal Lake, Huntley, Marengo, Hebron, Nunda and Harvard. Marengo rescue also assisted with the fire.

Officials stopped all traffic on Route 47 between Route 14 and Lake Avenue.

The bowling alley, which opened in 1956, was the first in McHenry County to install electronic scoring, said Ronald O'Krie, who currently owns the building and owned the business from 1968 to 2001.

Regular patrons of the bowling alley arrived at the fire in disbelief.

"I've never seen anything so devastating up close before," said Kevin Horner of Woodstock, who has been bowling at the alley for a few years.

Owner Carolyn Walters, who repeatedly turned her back to her burning business and cried, said the bowling alley hasn't seen its last strike.

"Oh ... we'll be back," she said with determination. "Woodstock will not be without the Edgetown."

- Northwest Herald reporter Geneva White contributed to this story.