

LEADING OFF

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Way to Go, Partner... Way to Go

MIKE PANOZZO JOINED Luby Publishing back in 1980, directly out of Marquette University's prestigious journalism school, to become the Editor of *Billiards Digest*. Billiards coverage formerly was part of *Bowlers Journal* — in the days when this magazine was called the *National Bowlers Journal and Billiard Revue*. But in 1978, then-owner Mort Luby Jr. removed the billiards coverage from *Bowlers Journal* and created *Billiards Digest*.

While the new magazine started out in decent fashion, it was missing something. It didn't have a dedicated editor, a leader. In other words, it didn't have Mike. But that problem was solved when Mort and Mike found each other in August 1980.

Mike also adhered to Mort's belief that industry-targeted magazine leaders must also become invested in the industry they serve. Throughout his career, Mike has served the billiard industry in numerous capacities, including two terms on the board of directors of the Billiard Congress of America. He also co-authored three books with the pool legend, Steve Mizerak.

Mike currently produces the billiard industry's annual hall of fame dinner. In 2007, he established the United States Billiard Media Association. In recognition of his contributions, the Billiard Congress of America honored Panozzo with its President's Award, which is considered by most to be that sport's highest honor.

I never gravitated to the billiard side of our business, but Mike has embraced and expanded his career into bowling. In addition to his roles with *Bowlers Journal* and *Bowling Center Management*, he is the individual who edited and organized the *50 Greatest Players in PBA History* book, on the occasion of the



Panozzo on assignment in Minnesota Fats's home in 1982.

PBA's 50th anniversary in 2008.

In recognition of his devotion to and success in leading both the billiard and bowling industries, the Billiard and Bowling Institute of America is presenting Mike with its BBIA Industry Service Award. He will be joining a select group of individuals — including Mort Luby Jr. and Jack Reichert — as ISA recipients who served both billiards and bowling.

Mike, who was President of BBIA in 2000, is the fourth recipient to earn the award from Luby Publishing, joining the Lubys (Mort Sr. and Mort Jr.) and Jim Dressel, the former long-time Editor of *Bowlers Journal*.

From the world of celebrities, Paul Newman, J. Edgar Hoover and Jackie

Gleason are prior winners, so Mike is in diverse and esteemed company.

The BBIA will present its 2017 Industry Service Award to Mike during its annual convention later this month at the Hilton Buffalo Thunder Resort in Santa Fe, N.M.

While Panozzo's resumé is impressive, so is the history of the BBIA. This group was created in Chicago back in 1940 to promote the growth of the billiard and bowling industries. In recent years, the association improved the printing and distribution of product information by producing a 500-plus-page consumer product catalog, which soon will be marking its sixth edition.

Perhaps BBIA's greatest impact has been made through its monetary support of various projects. The association has contributed to the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame, the Bowlers to Veterans Link, and to the Billiard Congress of America for the development of a trans-Atlantic youth billiards team tournament.

In January, BBIA donated \$10,000 to the International Bowling Media Association in order to secure the funding for the Chuck Pezzano Scholarship. Because of the donation, the scholarship value has been increased from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year. (If you know of a junior or senior in high school, or even a freshman or sophomore in college, they may qualify for the scholarship, provided that they have an interest in pursuing bowling media as a full-time or part-time career.)

Simply put, the Billiard and Bowling Institute of America positively impacts both the billiard and bowling industries — just like my business partner, Mike Panozzo.

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