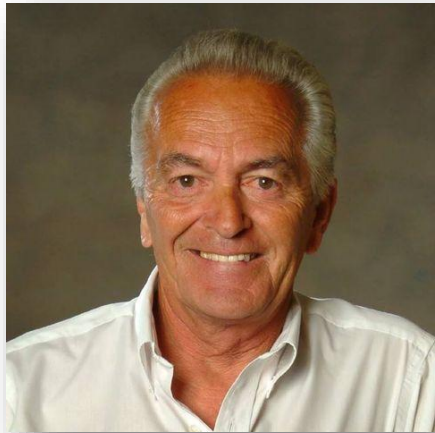


# John Francis Falzone

May 15, 1942 (Rockford, IL) February 13, 2023 (Isla Mujeres, Mexico)

Following a short illness, Rockford native, **John Francis Falzone**, known for gardening and helping grow women's bowling, died February 13, 2023, in Mexico; he was 80 years old. John spent decades managing Rockford



area bowling centers and promoting the Ladies Professional Bowlers Tour (LPBT). He was also a master gardener, an avid traveler, and a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather.

John Falzone grew up in south Rockford and attended West High School as a member of the Class of 1961. In the early 60's he met future wife, Kathleen Margaret O'Neil. According to daughter, Bonnie Falzone-Capriola: shortly after her dad got his first car, he and a buddy called a pay phone at one of the drive-ins looking for a certain friend to go cruising. My

mom and her girlfriend answered the phone and agreed to go with them. A romance ensued, and they married June 17, 1961, a marriage that lasted 61 years and produced three children.

Benny Frisella and Falzone met in sixth grade at Rockford's Barbour School. The two spent many hours at the old State and Madison Bowling Alley. Frisella said they set pins for the (bowling) leagues for a dime a lane. "When you have five people on each lane bowling three games, it adds up; so, we earned pocket change for ice cream, candy, and the movies." Frisella and Falzone developed a lifetime bond; Falzone was best man in Frisella's wedding and named his son, Benny; both men are godfathers to each other's sons. Frisella noted, "John would give you the shirt off his back."

Local television stations tagged John's passing as "A sad note for the bowling community." Falzone's early love of bowling was key to his career. In the late 60's, Falzone and Nick Segalla published *The Greater Rockford Bowlers Journal*, which they distributed to bowling centers around town. He also co-hosted "Bowling for Dollars" on WREX-TV. John Sommer, owner of Don Carter Bowling Lanes, said John worked at several of the local bowling centers, ran the Cherry Bowl for a long time, and helped the women's tour for about 25 years. The television coverage John

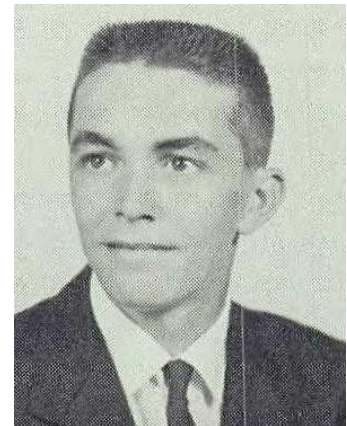
arranged for the LPBT increased the number of their annual tournaments. For his contributions, John is a member of the Women's Professional Bowling Hall of Fame, the Illinois Sports Hall of Fame, and the Rockford Bowling Association Hall of Fame. He was also a Trustee of the International Bowling Hall of Fame and a Member of the Bowling Writers Association and the Board of Directors of Strike Ten Entertainment. He was cited as a noteworthy Association executive in the *Marquis Who's Who* publication.

After retiring from the bowling business, Falzone and son, Benny, purchased Cherry Valley Garden Center, formerly known as Enders Greenhouse. Bonnie said, "Gardening was another of my dad's passions. When he was in the bowling business, he'd come home and head to the garden and work until dark."

John was proud of his Italian heritage and active in the Greater Rockford Italian American Association (GRIAA) from the time it was known as the Columbus Day Committee. A fixture at every Festa Italiana, he served as event Chair for five years and was a member of its Board of Directors. John and grandfather, Frank Falzone, were named to GRIAA's Italian American Hall of Fame.

John and Kathy Falzone relocated from the Rockford area to Morris Chapel, TN in 2021. For the last 15 years, they spent winters on a Mexican island, Isla Mujeres northeast of Cancun. According to his daughter, "Every morning before sunrise, he'd fish from a pier while watching the sun rise." Falzone will also be remembered for his signature greeting: "How you doin'?"

**John Francis Falzone** was predeceased by his parents, Joseph and Norma Falzone; brothers, Raymond C., Joseph P., Donald A., and Frank I. Falzone, Jr.; sister, Patricia S. Falzone Bove; and grandson, Barrett K. Falzone. In addition to his beloved Kathy, John is survived by his children, Bonnie, Brenda, and Benny; nine grandchildren; and six great grandchildren; and his siblings, Dixie Lee Falzone Wagner, Mary Ellen Falzone (Robert) Crowell, and Benny Falzone.



A Celebration of Life will be held in Rockford this Spring.

#### **References:**

<https://www.mystateline.com/sports/local-sports/rockford-native-and-former-lpbt-president-john-falzone-dies/amp/>

[Rockford native John Falzone known for role in women's bowling dies \(rrstar.com\),](#)

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Falzone Family Obituaries