

The Carmel Pine Cone

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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Collection of Porcelain Bowling Pins Found

By CHRIS HORTUCHE

Former Pro Bowler Association (PBA) 3-time bowler of the year - Royal "Striker" Carson, was also an artist off the lanes. We of course remember him for his dazzling delivery and devastating strikes, as well as that perfect 300 during the 1966 PBA Worlds in Champagne, IL.

His fall from grace was quick and tough to watch and left us needing another beer. Carmel photographer Matt Rivers discovered boxes and boxes of ceramic bowling pins made by the Champ while chasing a skunk out from underneath his Carmel cottage.

We now know based on this find and "Striker's" accompanying letter he used ceramics to rebuild his shattered life. The pins appear to have been made over a number of years showing improvement in both design and craftsmanship.

The entire collection will be on display at the Nancy Dodds Gallery in Carmel by the Sea, located on San Carlos & 7th.

Opening night reception will be November 6th from 5:30-7:30.

The show will run through the 22nd of November and all are invited.



PHOTO/MATT RIVERS



PHOTO/DYLAN HUNTER

STRIKE : A Love Story in Porcelain

Dear Friend,

From 1964-1968, I was the Tri-State ten pin bowling champion. And not by accident, you have got to throw a lot of strikes.

My name is Royal Carson, but they call me “Striker” for short.

My game was beautiful, filled with all kinds of man-strength and grace. I moved like a tiger. When I held that ball, it completed me. It was all that was needed: the ball, 60 feet of polished hard rock maple and Southern Yellow Pine. This was my home and those pins, they were my family.

Unfortunately, that is how I treated my life: with hard cracking, precise destruction. I also stepped up my drinking game about half way through my rein. Jack Daniels Old No. 7 Tennessee Sour Mash. First it was just at the end of the day, soon it was in my coke midday, then it made its way into my morning coffee. The more I drank the worse it became. First I lost my job, then my family, and then my game. I lost my game. No more strikes, no more partners. I moved out into a little apartment and drank until I could drink no more.

On August 31st it all changed. I was leaving my apartment and I crossed paths with my neighbor Gloria, a bouncy blonde, probably a cheerleader in high school. She was again dressed in jeans and an oversized man’s button up, covered with what I thought then was mud or cake frosting, but what I now know is clay. I had seen her leave wearing this getup many evenings.

By now we had spoken and I knew she was on her way to her pottery class. She had seen me at my worst and watched as I dried out and came back to life. We had shared idle talk at the mailboxes. I had helped her carry her bike up stairs. We were becoming friendly.

But this night was different. She asked me to go with her to class, a small gesture of charity. I guess she saw in my eyes that I needed something ...anything. I said I knew nothing about clay, which she already knew. She said I could learn, and at the very least it might help to steady my shaking hands temporarily.

Arriving at class she introduced me to a couple of people and the instructor, a 70-year-old hippy type with a long gray braid and sandals. Gloria handed me a ball of clay sat me down and went off to work on her own project on the potters’ wheel.

For weeks I pushed around that piece of clay adding water to keep it pliable. I couldn’t make anything just squeezing and squishing it, no shapes or forms ever materializing. Then one evening while waiting for Gloria to finish up, I went back into the storage area to explore. That’s where I found it.

At the time, I didn’t know what it was, but it has become my most prized possession. At some point someone had made a plaster casting of a bowling pin... a bowling pin? I knew that shape even cut in half. I loved that shape it was balanced and beautiful—like a woman, all women, every woman. It lay there covered with dust. I took it to the instructor and she explained what it was and how to cast a pin using liquid clay.

So this is now my life’s work; I learned to make clay bowling pins. I had come full circle with one huge difference: real pins are hard, heavy and almost indestructible, made to be hit by a sphere of spinning plastic going 20 mph.

These pins are fragile, highly breakable and precious, just like our lives and they have their own stories to tell.

Royal