

# Suburban Life

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## Mainstay of area's women's pool league packs up her stick

By Sue Mason  
staff writer

There was a time when you could find Theresa Podina behind the eight ball. The 66-year-old Farmington Hills resident was a mainstay of the Northwest Women's Pool League.

Not anymore. She has blown the dust off her fingertips and packed away her pool stick. It's time, she says, to let the younger players take over.

"It really was more fun for me when I was younger, now I play my set and come home," she said. "But I enjoy getting out one night a week and chewing the fat with the girls."

The league has been in existence for 35 years; its members calling their shots at neighborhood bars like the 4820, Topianna and Glimp's that have long since closed. The members were mostly barmaids who wanted to have some fun and shared an interest in shooting pool.

Podina is the oldest of existing pool league members. Most are in their 20s and 30s now and unlike the early years, most have office or factory jobs.

"We're just a bunch of girls having fun," Podina said of the league's early years. "Back then, some were mothers and it was a night out for them."

In many ways the pool league is like a bowling league. There are dues (\$5 a week), a 30-week season (September to May), trophies for the first- and second-place teams and for sinking the eight ball on a break, prize money and an awards banquet.

**THE PLAYERS** make up the rules, changing them by vote as needed at the start of the season. The rules include calling the shots and pockets, scoring on a good hit and no stop. And "sportsmanship is always the rule," Podina said.

They even had referees for awhile, but that didn't work out.

*"Oh sure, I'll miss it, but I'll get a schedule and if I feel like it, get dressed and go. I'll play as a substitute; it'll be just as much fun."*

— Theresa Podina

"They'd have a few drinks and not call the games right," Podina recalled.

The league has eight to 10 teams of six players each pair. Each team has a "home" bar. These days the bars include the Old Redford Bowl, Old Timer's Bar, Joe Dee's, Mingles, Starters and Deb's. Teams play each other four times during the season twice at each other's home bar.

For Podina, being a member of a women's pool league was an extension of the job she gave up about seven years ago. She was a barmaid, working nights "because that's where the money was." She worked in places like the Venice Bar and closed out her career at the Bank Bar on Fenkell in Detroit.

Like many of the league members, she played for a night out. The first year of league was for fun; after that there were trophies for the winning teams.

"I always worked in a bar and shot (pool) for the fun of it," she said. "This was a fun night out. In fact, I played through three pregnancies and never missed a game."

**FELLOW LEAGUE** member Alice McGee of Livonia recalls Podina checking herself out of the hospital to play pool.

"We call her our Mother Theresa," she said. "She's such a giving person."

The league recently honored Podina for her longevity. The party included league members she hadn't seen in years. It also featured a Po-

dina specialty — snacks.

"She always brought snacks for the teams and so when she asked what she could bring for the party, we had her bring cheese and crackers," McGee said.

"I think that's what they really miss," Podina said of her weekly treats. "Every Wednesday, I'd bring different cheeses, dips and potato chips for both teams."

Through the years, the shooting has improved immensely, the players are more skilled and they practice "more." "Now," according to McGee, "it's more than just a night out."

"I've seen the league vastly improve and the women vastly improve," she said. "When I joined I had shot a little. I was ready to quit at the end of the season, but Theresa told me no because I knew how to play and hold a stick."

**THERE ARE** other women's leagues now, but when the northwest league was new some bar patrons didn't recognize it for what it was and would challenge the table during the games.

"We had customers put their money on the table, not realizing we were playing in a league," Podina recalled.

"We used to get strange looks when we'd show up to play," McGee added. "It's not like going into the bar to play, it's competition. We shoot banks, kicks, cut and combinations, and most of us have our own sticks."



JIM JAGOFFEL/staff photographer

Sixty six year old Theresa Podina demonstrates her break that helped her collect a variety of first place trophies during her 35 years with the Northwest Women's Pool League.

As much fun as the league play has been for Podina, knee replacement surgery, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have led her de-

cide to leave the league to younger women like McGee. But she isn't backing away from it completely. "Oh sure, I'll miss it, but I'll get a

schedule and if I feel like it, get dressed and go," she said. "I'll play as a substitute, it'll be just as much fun."

## Protect-a-Deck

Company was born because so many decks needed protection

By Lorraine McClellan  
staff writer

**WHEN STEVE** Grubba was spending a lot of time last spring wondering how he was going to make some extra money, the young entrepreneur said the an-

swer had been all around him all the time.

"There were an awful lot of decks surrounding me on my way to and from work every day and they were all dirty," the Farmington Hills resident said. "I had been working for four years with paint, sealants, stain, wood. I had often been asked ques-

tions on how to protect wood for one reason or another. "It wasn't long before Protect-a-Deck was born and I was on my way to being my own boss."

Of the work he's doing now Grubba says, "I have done a lot of research on sealants and I know more than the majority of the salesmen

selling them in hardware stores.

"I'm a perfectionist. Every deck job I've ever done was done as though it was done for my favorite relative. It's paid off. I've rejuvenated decks for a couple of neighbors who I've just talked to about what I was doing, but most of my customers have come through word of

mouth. There's a lot of nice people out there and many of them have become my friends who pass the word along."

"I've made a 13-year-old deck with no maintenance whatever look like new."

**GRUBBA OFFERS** some advice to the do-it-yourselfer.

For new decks: Sealer application is a must. It will prevent cracking, warping and dry rot.

Wait a month after the deck is installed to apply the sealer. This allows for any moisture content to decrease.

Seal the deck before the landscaping is installed. Dirt and debris left on the deck from the landscaping will get ground into the wood.

Use two coats of sealant. Follow directions given with the product and allow from 24-48 hours to dry thoroughly.

This should be repeated every year.

For old decks: The gray color older decks acquire is caused by the sun, dirt and pollution, moisture that causes swelling of the wood, then being quick-dried by the sun.

The color can be changed — or cleaned off — by power washing.

Power washers can be rented and act much like a sand blaster, except the results are caused by water.

The new color will depend on the age and condition of the deck. Generally, the older the wood, the richer the wood color will be.

Then use a sealant.

This should be repeated every year. There is no such thing as a two-year sealer.

Using a sealer that is combined with a stain can mask problems that arise.

Make sure your deck is clean before sealing, or you are going to seal the dirt into the wood. If the deck is

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— Steve Grubba

dirty before you seal, this can cause mildew problems.

Maintain the deck by sweeping off all standing water and hose the deck periodically.

**GRUBBA SAYS** the only thing that might keep a do-it-yourselfer from following his directions is the power washing.

"You either have to be very young or very strong or have a lot of endurance to maneuver one of those things — and they are the only machine that's going to give you a decent cleaning job," he said.

"I can get an old deck clean down to the raw wood in a couple of hours (using a power washer) but I know others not used to that kind of work that took six to eight hours to do exactly the same thing."

Grubba takes a minimum of three days to protect a deck. One day for the cleaning. The next day is used to completely dry the deck. The next day he applies the sealer.

"That second day must be a sunny one," he says. "The deck has to be dried out for at least 24 hours before the sealer is applied."

Grubba says prices run from \$200 to \$350, depending on the size of the deck and the work that has to be done.

He is a graduate of Lawrence Tech and can be reached at 478-9453. Estimates are free.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Steve Grubba started his own business, Protect-a-Deck, last summer and says there are still a lot of dirty decks around that need his help.