

BINGO

By ZINA MEDGAS

Some skill, and a lot of hope, worry, and luck are what bingo players bring with them to win.

Every Wednesday night, the VFW Post 6823 at 23414 Orchard Lake Road opens its hall to any and all bingo players.

"The first time I came here was about two months ago and there were only about 78 people here. Now there's almost 200," said player Margaret Shelton.

With many players come years of experience, a variety of luck charms, and packs of cigarettes.

Elaine Jensen said she has been playing bingo for almost 30 years. "My grandmother got me started," she said.

The manager, Carroll Wetterford, said some regulars smoke 3-4 packs of cigarettes a night while worrying over their bingo cards.

Many players bring good luck charms to help them win. Wetterford explained that people bring all kinds of luck charms. Some sit in the same chair every Wednesday, and become upset if someone is sitting in "their" chair.

The kinds of luck charms vary. Rabbits' feet are common, while stuffed

animals, ceramic cats, and little toy snakes can be seen propped up in front of people's cards.

In front of the scene of players hunched over their cards with lucky charms on hand is the announcer and bingo machine. Announcer Louis Martiniani pulls small red and white balls out of a machine that resembles a popcorn popper at a movie theater.

As he reads the letter and number the same sequence appears on a lighted board behind him.

As he calls the numbers, some players groan, others cheer, and each game someone shouts, "Bingo!"

The types of people vary as much as their comments. The players range from 22-year-old men to 85- and 90-year-old women.

"We had one woman here that was close to 100," Wetterford said. "And boy, was she sharp."

All bingo players, whatever their age, come to play for enjoyment and the possibility of winning money.

"It's fun and we might win," said Elaine Jensen.

"I've got six kids," added Margaret Shelton.

Whatever their reason for going and playing, the VFW hall is packed almost to capacity every Wednesday night.

Photos by Craig Newman

