

Our Bowlin Experience:

By Workampers
John Fitzsimmons
& Marianne Barrett



We are John Fitzsimmons and Marianne Barrett, married for eleven years, both in our early fifties. We hit the road as full-time Workampers in May 2012 and joined Bowlin Travel Centers on December 26, 2012 and are thrilled, honored and humbled to be a part of the Bowlin family. We have been blessed with an incredible journey (albeit brief in Workamping terms) and it has been our great fortune that our path somehow lead us to Bowlin.

Our Background:

Both born and bred in the Northeast, we each worked and lived in and around the New York City area for some thirty years. In 2007, we moved to Palm Coast, Florida (60 miles south of Jacksonville) where we settled in, found a beautiful home and continued our respective working careers.

We, as many of our generation, found ourselves looking to the future and realized that we will never be in a financial position to really “retire” as had been the norm for our parents’ generation. Of course, we had many dreams about what we would do if could retire and one thing which often came to mind was to travel, to live and to explore this beautiful country in which we live.

We were at peace with the fact we would never realize retirement, but we did find enjoyment in playing the “what-if” game by visiting RV dealerships and shows on the weekends and touring the spectrum of rigs available - from pop-ups to 40’ motor homes (none of which we knew anything about!).

But a funny thing happened to us, and at some point during one of these excursions we met some folks who introduced us to “Workamping” and little did we know, that this off-chance meeting would change our lives forever!

From this point forward much of our free-time was spent researching the Workamping lifestyle and our

primary search engine was Workamper.com.

As the thought took root that maybe we should try living our dream, Marianne spent literally hundreds of hours of research scouring the website and participated in just about every webinar Steve Anderson, WKN Pres., gave. Thanks to Steve and his team, and now armed with a plethora of knowledge, we came to the conclusion that we COULD realize our dream of seeing our country yet still earn a living. So here began our dream becoming reality!

In January 2010, we bought a used 2002 Chevy Silverado 2500 Turbo Diesel truck and in July we purchased a 2010 (leftover) Jayco Eagle 36’ 5th wheel - substantially larger and significantly more expensive than we originally planned (but boy-oh-boy are we glad we made this decision).

Over the course of the next 18 months, we purged all of our belongings, resigned from our jobs, had (2) new jobs lined up (via Workampers News) taking us through at least the end of the year, rented our home and on April 28, 2012 hit the road for Rafter J Bar Ranch in Hill City, South Dakota.

We remained at RJBR through September (we couldn’t believe that we were getting paid to work at such a beautiful place) and then we were off to Campbellsville, KY to work for Amazon from October through December which was another awesome experience.

Our Bowlin Chronicle:

During our stint in South Dakota, we followed up with Bowlin Travel Centers (found also via WKN), and after a very professional and thorough interview process with Johnny Riley (HR Director) we received a commitment to join the Bowlin team as “Managers-In-

Training” (MIT) on the store side beginning at the end of the year.

Our original intentions (which were made clear at time of hire) was to go through the MIT program through April and leave to return to South Dakota and then return in October 2013 (if they would have us) to stay indefinitely.

After our face-to-face orientation with HR, we were sent off to their Butterfield Station located 20 miles west of Deming, NM, to be trained by the store’s veteran manager, Diane.

Diane made us feel at home immediately upon our arrival, making sure that our FHU site was acceptable and that we were comfortable on our site. Once that was settled, she got us to work on in-depth training which was fast and furious, but very detailed and all tasks and procedures were to the point, clear and precise.

Within a few weeks of our training, job opportunities within Bowlin’s network were offered at some of the other locations. Though we politely declined at first, they offered us a challenging opportunity to be the Store Managers at The Thing? Dairy Queen, Travel Center & Museum in Arizona. We heartily accepted after some serious consideration and prayer.

The opportunity here at The Thing? as the Store managers has been a whirlwind, extremely gratifying, a lot of hard work, and a tremendous amount of fun. The commission that Bowlin has entrusted with us is extraordinary putting us in charge of their entire multi-million dollar operation here.

Our duties are all daily financial reporting and banking tasks; all

merchandising and inventory control (including ordering, receiving and pricing all merchandise); sales management and customer service; employment and all Human Resource matters and issues; store buildings (including museum) and compound management and maintenance...to name a few!

We are now into our seventh month here and as we look back, we are kind of in awe of what we were put in charge of and what we have accomplished thus far. But any successes are primarily due to the talented team we have in place here, and especially to the remarkable amount of guidance and support we have received from the executive management team.

Their accessibility is 24/7 and all execs and support staff are ALWAYS available and will promptly react to our any need or question. They also have been very encouraging in letting us establish our own methods, style and influence on how we manage and merchandise the store.

More About Bowlin:

Bowlin is a retail company which operates 10 traditional western style trading posts in New Mexico and southeast Arizona - offering Southwestern souvenirs, convenience store items, fuel services and Dairy Queen Brazier restaurants.



Bowlin has been offering travelers Southwestern hospitality that is steeped with tradition for over 100 years; offering a cup of coffee, a warm "Howdy," and a big smile that says, "We're happy to see you!"

Pretty simple, huh, yet these simple principles as originated by the Founder, Claude M. Bowlin, back in 1912 are still the backbone of what is a very financially strong and resilient company.

Although now a publicly traded company, they still run as if a family owned business with Michael C. Bowlin at the helm as the President and CEO.

The job opportunities and life experiences abound at Bowlin for Workampers. Their locations offer a wonderful home-base for adventuring and experiencing the spectacular landscapes and points of interest and history that are unique to this part of the country.

The FHU stores (including 50 amp service and free WiFi) are available at all locations and are exceptionally convenient (on the compound at each store's location) and many have breathtaking views (as ours does here at The Thing?).

Bowlin's Employment Opportunities:

Bowlin has tremendous job opportunities for Workampers and Bowlin's needs, along with how we Workampers are wired, is a perfect fit. Regardless of your background they put everyone through a straightforward and

thorough training period where you get all you need to excel at your job. Further, from day one, Bowlin professes to ALL new employees the ability and opportunity for growth within the company. This holds true, whether on the Store side or DQ side. The positions vary from customer service, maintenance, shift supervisor, manager-in-training program - which can lead to roles as Assistant Manager or even Store Manager.

Their compensation program is excellent and can range from an hourly rate or salary and all Store employees can earn commissions and receive monthly bonuses. Those in a management positions can also receive health insurance, and all employees can take part in the company's retirement program.

Closing:

We are blessed to be working for the Bowlin family!

When we first began on our Workamping adventure, but 17 months ago - although we were confident given all the preparations we had made, there always was a sense of doubt and anxiety as to where this odyssey was to take us. Little did we know that we would find ourselves in a better place and situation from where we came (which was very good!).

We have found a new home, a new career and new life...and thanks to Bowlin we are truly living our dream!

We are most proud to be considered a part of such a tremendous family business organization as Bowlin and our lives have forever changed. We never, ever could have dreamed of being in such a wonderful position in our lives.

Thank you Bowlin (and thank you Steve and WKN team) for granting us the opportunity to live our dream!

"The Thing?" DQ, Travel Center & Museum is 17 miles east of Benson in Arizona at Exit 322 I-10. The Bowlin Travel Center location where John & Marianne Workamp.