Sisters-in-law Laurie and Malou Haynes.

Crown Lanes is where the action is in DeRidder

Summer evenings are hot and still in DeRidder, parish seat of Beauregard Parish. This is piney woods country, where the lumber industry once reigned supreme. In town, shops face the railroad, which runs through the heart of the city. The parish library and sheriff’s headquarters have a spit-and-polish look, as does the town park and tennis court.

Where’s the action in DeRidder? We found it at Crown Lanes. The bowling alley has become one of the city’s centers for fun, and during summer it stays busy from dawn to almost dawn.

The bowling alley is owned and operated by Mark Haynes and his father Joseph Haynes. Helping to run the business is Mark’s wife Malou and his sister Laurie Haynes.

“We moved here about three years ago,” said Laurie. “My brother was a geologist in the Philippines.”

She explained that the entire family formerly worked in the oil business. “My home town is Vidor, and I’ve worked as a mud engineer. We’ve lived in Cuba, Trinidad, Australia, Libya and Singapore.”

When the economic crunch hit the oil industry, the Haynes family decided to invest in the bowling alley. “Crown Lanes was already in existence when my family bought it,” said Laurie. “When we took it over, the owners did not allow cigarette smoking. When we changed the policy, we tripled the business.

“People can bowl from 10 a.m. until.

Once people stayed until 6 a.m.,” she laughed. The alley has 10 lanes, and it costs $1.25 a game before 5 p.m. and from then on it’s $1.50. There are pool tables at 50 cents a game, and a full snack bar serves sandwiches, snacks, soft drinks and coffee.

“And we cook our own Mexican food,” added Laurie Haynes.

“We don’t serve liquor. The entire parish is dry,” she noted. “People can bring in their own hard liquor, if they are discreet about it.”

Crown Lanes is a gathering place for people of all ages. In the mornings, mothers drop off youngsters. A local plumber even helped out by putting down PVC to create gutters in one lane for the kiddies to bowl.

“We have women’s leagues — most of our league bowlers are women,” said Haynes. “The rest are mixed leagues. Husband and wives can come in and take out their frustrations with the bowling ball. One of the leagues wanted to remain a non-smoking league. So when they bowl, we ask smoking patrons to stay out of the alley area.”

Haynes added, “DeRidder is really a very nice city, and it has good race relations. Arbin Malone, the chief of police, is a black gentleman, and he comes here to bowl. He’s quite a good bowler.

“It’s hard to say if I’d ever go back to the oil business,” she said. “There’s something to be said for small-town living.”