

# Bridge Memories

## By Rex Latus

*Duplicate bridge in San Diego North County goes back to the late 1960's. More than 50 years have passed, much has transpired. There is no recorded history of the Unit. This article attempts to document its history before it is totally lost and forgotten. Over twenty-nine interviews were conducted including 21 Unit past Presidents. Special acknowledgement to Bettie Messer Heldring, Marilyn Rumsey and Ken Vavra for their contributions, without them this article would not have been possible. Original publication March 2007. Revised December 2015, February 2018 and January 2024. This is Unit 549 history as it is remembered.*

The American Contract Bridge League was founded December 23, 1937. Today it is the largest bridge organization in the world, with more than 165,000 members living in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Bermuda. ACBL membership peaked in 1976 with 200,000 members.

Bettie Heldring joined the ACBL in 1948. She moved to Escondido from Kansas City in 1968. In those days, bridge in San Diego County was a cottage industry. Jeanne & Bob Marks had the first ACBL sanctioned North County games in their home (originally Fallbrook and later Vista). Emily Van Pelt hosted a home game in Oceanside. The Marks also had a game at the Senior Center in Escondido on Friday night. The players had to setup and put away the tables and chairs. The players were also expected to bring in new players. The results of the Friday night game were published in the local newspaper. There was also a game which was held in a Poway trailer park. ACBL Unit 531 Oceanside – Vista – Escondido existed but was informal and unstructured.

The year was 1969. Richard M Nixon was President. Neil Armstrong set foot on the Moon. A gallon of gas was 35 cents. The "Amazin" New York Mets were World Series Champs. The Woodstock Festival drew 300,000. Charles Manson came to represent the nightmarish side of the hippie movement. Dwight D. Eisenhower died and Steffi Graf was born. Bridge in North San Diego County was changed forever.

- In 1969 Unit 531 Oceanside – Vista – Escondido became a formal entity with a Board of Directors with Bettie Heldring as the First Unit President (1969 & 1970). Since then there have been 35 Unit Presidents spanning 54 years. There is a plaque on display at the Bridge Club of North County listing all their names. Appendix A includes this list. The Unit Board Member Longevity records goes to Sheila Latus with 10 years on the board and four years as President and Art Foeste with 7 years as President.
- Bettie took a gamble in 1971 when she organized and funded (the Unit had no money) the first Unit Sectional. It was held in Rancho Bernardo at the Swim & Tennis Club. She was rewarded with a modest profit. The Directors were Lowell Andrews and Bob Bratcher. Sectional events in those days were a two session play-through. There was no meal provided between sessions. Bettie asked unit members to bake and provide cookies as snacks. This was the start of a tradition - the annual unit cookie donations - which survived until 2005. Bettie went on to manage the next five sectionals which were held at the Masonic Lodge in downtown Escondido.

San Diego North County Inland Unit 549's First Lady of Bridge



Bettie Messer Heldring circa 1975



Bettie Messer Heldring April 2006

In 1970 Bettie started the first bridge club in Escondido at the Elk's Club. Within a year Bettie gave the club to Emma Knight. Games were played at the Escondido Elks Club and then the Escondido Farm Bureau. Eventually the bridge club found a home of its own in a small shopping center on Felicita Ave between Centre City Parkway and Escondido Blvd. Emma Knight managed to acquire a loan to buy tables and chairs for the club by using her own furniture as collateral. Emma also directed games at the Rancho Bernardo Swim & Tennis Club in the early seventies but the games were "By Invitation Only".

The Escondido Bridge Center (Photo below) hosted three day games (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) and three night games (Wednesday, Friday and Sunday) every week.



Escondido Bridge Center Opens  
Newspaper photo circa 1972  
Owner Emma Knight (Standing)

Sitting to left of Emma in the photo is Jan Sumner and to the right is Garnet Brauchla (Eighth Unit President – 1977). Photo clip provided by Barbara Goeddel.

By the mid-seventies complaints from other shopping center tenants regarding parking and damage to bridge player vehicles resulted in the Felicita club closing and relocating to Rancho Bernardo Swim & Tennis Club. Thanks to the efforts of Swim & Tennis board member Warren Sloat the games became 'Open' games and Warren arranged a 'Sweetheart' deal on the rent for the club. Warren also authored the unit's first edition of the bridge newsletter – Table Talk. The newsletter was published monthly until 1986. It is not known why publication ceased.

Our tenth Unit President, John Chaison (1980) later purchased Adventures in Bridge in 1990 from Bob and Mary-Anne Rosenblum. Mary and Bob started AIB in 1981. The club passed to Danny and Jean Molnar, Cameron Cotton, and finally Wirt Gilliam in 2004. AIB closed in 2019 due to a zoning issue with the city of San Diego. The zoning issue was not lost on the BCNC Board of directors when BCNC lost its lease in December 2019. Jean Molnar later became a well-known National Director and directed many of Unit 549 Sectional Tournament's. In 1973 Marilyn Rumsey established and directed a game in Escondido at the Woman's Club. Marilyn created the Fallbrook club in 1982 which remains active today. She also taught bridge and directed at RB S&W in 1986/87.

In 1974 Buck Elsmore & Barbara Robison started the Vista Bridge Club on Santa Fe Ave behind the McMahan Furniture in Vista. Bob Bratcher bought the Vista Bridge Club from Buck and Barbara in 1975 and operated it till 1990. The club capacity was large and the 1975 GNT District 22 qualification was held at the Vista Bridge Center with over 50 teams competing. Subsequent owners were Troy Brown, Jane Horgan, Dennis Cleary and Frank Lukowicz. John Goddard was the final owner. The club closed for financial reasons in 2004.

In the early days Unit 531 membership was predominately coastal (Oceanside, Vista, Solana Beach, Encinitas, Carlsbad, Fallbrook). The minority group represented the inland area (San Marcos, Rancho Bernardo, Poway, Escondido, Rancho Penasquitos, Scripps Ranch, and Rancho Santa Fe). However in 1976 a conflict among board members created a rift. Wayne Watkins was Unit President when strong personalities and differences of opinion resulted in the formation of an offspring. Unit 549 (San Marcos, Rancho Bernardo, Poway, Escondido, Rancho Penasquitos, Scripps Ranch, and Rancho Santa Fe) was born. Oceanside and Vista remained as Unit 531. Over the years occasional boundary disputes existed between the two units. The turmoil of the seventies and eighties is forgotten now. However Unit 549 history is forever a blend of these two units.

From the mid-Seventies and well into the Eighties Bridge flourished in North County. Games at Rancho Bernardo Swim & Tennis club grew in size and frequency. Games became daily events and included several night games. The Friday night game was often comprised of 2 thirteen table sections. While in Rancho Bernardo, Emma received significant support from longtime friends Don and Flaun Stettler in managing and operating the club. Don frequently directed for free. Bettie Heldring also provided support by giving bridge lessons. There was a point in time when Emma asked the players for donations to keep the club running. However, all was not well in Rancho Bernardo. By 1985 friction developed between RB S&T Board of Directors and the Bridge Club. Swim & Tennis had limited parking and the volume of bridge players left little parking for S&T club members. Bridge players were asked to park at the adjacent Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church parking lot and walk to the club. Subsequently, one of the bridge players fell and broke an arm and sued the Swim & Tennis club. The Swim & Tennis Bridge Club days were numbered. Finally in 1987 the Swim & Tennis Board of Director asked the Bridge Club to leave.

Not long after that Emma Knight died. That marked the end of an 18 year era.

Ken Vavra bought the club in 1988. Prior to purchase Ken was one of the directors for the games at RB Swim & Tennis and a bridge instructor. In the old days at S&T there were no snacks at club games. Ken changed that. He began providing treats for the players at his games. This was revolutionary and created quite a stir among the other directors. After all they had to compete with that and at their own expense. The nerve!



Ken Vavra  
Newspaper photo circa late 1970's

Soon after purchasing the club, Ken relocated the club to Escondido. The location was on Felicita Ave at Centre City Parkway just behind the McDonalds. The new location was less than a hundred yards from where Emma Knight had her club fifteen years earlier.

Part of the RB Swim & Tennis Bridge Club found its way into the Felicita Club. On the trivial side a towel rack and a flowered needlepoint pillow with a green fringe migrated. On a more interesting note something called 'Smoke Eaters' found their way to the new location. The Smoke Eaters were a private donation from frequent player Leslie Illes.

What is a Smoke Eater? It was a device that removed smoke from the air and measured 4 feet in length and a foot and a half in width and height. Two were needed. Why so many? Why any? Well this was the time when smoking at the bridge table was allowed. And smoke they did! Non smokers were in the minority. Animosity between smokers and non smokers was as thick and blue as the smoke in the air.

In 1984 the Unit held the first ever Unit's non-smoking game. President Richard Aufmann received an earful from smokers about that. The Unit Board of Directors voted No Smoking at all Unit sanctioned games in 1987. How did they manage that? Well the Board was made up of all non smokers. The Board had to recruit an additional member so smokers would be represented. The vote was unanimous.

The ACBL introduced non smoking at the tournament level in the late 1980's. The Club went non smoking gradually starting in 1989. Smoking breaks were provided several times per game giving smokers a chance to reload before withdrawal set in. Today smoking breaks have vanished, and have been replaced by hospitality breaks.

Bidding Boxes were introduced at tournaments in the early 1990's. In 1995 Unit President Jerry Plevin reached an agreement with club owner Ken Vavra to jointly purchase bidding boxes for use by the club and unit.

Speaking of bidding boxes, remember these?



Bet you didn't know the ACBL had nothing to do with the creation of those cards. They were non-standard cards, and just depended on the manufacturer from whom you order your sets as to whether you had them.

How about these?



The Alert strip was added by the ACBL but the Alert card was again created by the manufacturers. Both are included in today's card sets.

Finally this one!



Introduced by the ACBL in 1998 and after roughly two decades of use, the controversial Stop card found in ACBL bidding boxes went missing in action from ACBL tournaments beginning January 1, 2018. While club retention remained optional both Lake San Marcos and the Bridge Club of North County immediately removed them in September 2017. The "Skip Bid" announcement was gone. Meant for the benefit of the opponents, it was more often used to alert the bidder's partner.

The Unit's First 0-99 Game was jointly held with the Monthly Unit game in 1996. That same year the Unit resumed publishing the bridge newsletter Table Talk after a 10 year hiatus. Monthly publication ceased again when COVID hit in 2020, and resumed again in 2022 when games were again face to face.

One of the most bizarre events occurred on a Wednesday night in October of 1996 and is known as 'The Great Purse Snatching Caper'. It seems some of the women players were in the habit of placing their purses on an empty table near the front door for convenience when going out to smoke between rounds. On this particular Wednesday night, the door opened and in came a teenage boy. One quick swipe and two purses (property of Betsey Illes and Barbara Foucar) and the boy was out the door. Two quick thinking bridge players gave chase but to no avail. A getaway car was waiting in the parking lot.

Once again bridge players (or at least their cars) were not popular with other shopping center tenants. Vehicle damage was a frequent event. As a result, In1998 the Bridge Club moved again. The new location was on Centre Center Parkway at Citracado. This time the PA system as well as the towel rack and the flowered needlepoint pillow followed along, but 'Smoke Eaters' were a thing of the past.

The Unit bylaws state that the Unit President must be selected from current board members. What happens if no board member is willing to accept that honor? This occurred in 2001. The board had to draft a President. Nan O'Loughlin became the first and only non board member to become Unit President (2001/2002).

Speaking of By-Laws. The current By-Laws are dated 8/20/2923 (BCNC Public Benefit Corp.). Previous available revisions are dated 2/3/2015 (BCNC Mutual Benefit Corp.) , 01/10/2005 (NCBC), 08/18/2004 ( Escondido Bridge Club), and 10/27/1985 (EBC).

In 2004 after the Vista Bridge Club closed, the two units held merger talks. At the time nothing resulted. Similar talks occurred over the years. All short lived with no change.

A Unit is the smallest geographic component of the ACBL Units are assigned to a District. There are 25 geographically defined districts that comprise the ACBL. To have ACBL sanctioned games, a Club must be affiliated with a Unit. The Escondido Bridge Club has been affiliated with Unit 549 since the 1970's. In 2004 the Rancho Santa Fe Club (Operated by Vilma & Richard Boettcher) originated as did Lake San Marcos Club (Operated by Jean Holt & Nina Laughbaum) in 2005, Fairbanks Ranch Club (Lacey Jennings) in 2006, and the Ramona Bridge Club (Operated by Mary Ann & Roy Houston) in 2011. Rancho Santa Fe was originally by "Invitation Only" but became at open club by 2005 but no longer exists. All these clubs were associated with Unit 549. By 2022 only BCNC was the only club.

Unit 549 Membership peaked in 1992 at 602. In 2022 Unit Membership bottomed out at 330. As of. Refer to Appendix B for a detailed list of Unit membership by year.

In May 2019 Unit 549 was the number 1 unit in D22 for new member gains which balanced the lost from current members.

Two of the roles of a Unit is to promote bridge at clubs and to improve the player's game experience. Attempts to do this over 50 years were numerous. Unfortunately the good that was done is lost in time. Only some recent activities can serve as examples. In 2002 a 299er section was added to the Monthly Unit Game only to soon disappear. In 2004 the unit purchased and donated end tables to the Escondido club. When the club expanded in 2006 additional tables were donated. In 2005 the Unit sponsored a Silver Splash (299er sectional) jointly with the Rancho Santa Fe club in addition to the unit's regularly scheduled events. The attendance did not justify additional tournaments. In 2010 the Unit loaned NCBC \$2,400 to purchase a Dealing Machine. Computer dealt cards with hand records would now be available at all club and unit games. In 2011 the Unit loaned \$1800 to NCBC to purchase BridgeMates. Electronic scoring had arrived and bridge entered the computer age. In 2014 the Unit donated new bidding box replacements to all its clubs. Later that year the Unit advanced \$1500 to secure the equipment from the

defunct NCBC for the potentially new BCNC. In May of 2017 the Unit gave a \$500 gift to each of its affiliated clubs. The Ramona Bridge Club purchased a computer monitor and shelving, BCNC acquired a game time clock and Lake San Marcos BC purchased bidding boxes. In 2019 the unit gave each of its three clubs \$750 to spend as they wished. The Pro AM aka Majors – Minors events held over the years introduced new players to the more advanced players. Every year since 2010 the Unit has sponsored an Audrey Grant teaching seminar.

Another major role of a Unit is to support local charities. Much has been done. It would be nice to have kept a 50 year tally. But alas! None was kept. Recent examples of contributions could not give justice to this effort. The total would be impressive. Unit members should be pleased to know that while enjoying their favorite pastime, they have helped make a difference in their local community. The Unit has held an annual Christmas toy drive since 2010.

In June of 2006 the Escondido Unit 549 changed its name to San Diego North County Inland. Our sister Unit 531 changed its name from Oceanside/Vista to North San Diego County Coastal. Both name changes being more descriptive of the geographic area they serve.

The Unit announced and coordinated a mentorship program in 2006 where new players can learn the finer points of the game from more experienced players. To encourage these partnerships the Club waived bridge fees for mentors at two games a week for several months.

Before 2006 new ACBL members were assigned a specific unit by the ACBL based on the individual's City. This seemed a reasonable approach as there are five Units in San Diego County. However the ACBL implementation was badly flawed and many players were credited to the wrong unit. For example Rancho Bernardo is part of Unit 549 but its official city name is San Diego. The ACBL had San Marcos and Poway incorrectly assigned to the wrong unit. Consequentially Unit 549 took a big hit in membership count. So why did that matter? Members pay an annual membership fee to the ACBL. Part of that membership fee is returned to the units. Unit boards over the years spent a significant amount of time sorting out who belongs where. To solve the problem long term membership allocation needed to be by zip code not city. In March of 2006 Rex Latus voluntarily undertook a project to do just that. A hundred ninety-one zip codes were identified and each unit was requested to identify their perception of what was theirs. The list was sent to the ACBL and then to the District 22 for approval. A couple of minor changes were made by the District Board in December 2006. With great effort over a period of years over 100 Unit 549 were properly reallocated. Individuals have the right to change their unit affiliation. This can be done by sending an email to the ACBL.

Bridge players have been witness to constant change both nationally and locally as the years progressed. Life Master Service fees were introduced by the ACBL in 1978. Prior to that Life Masters paid no dues. To be a Life Master a player needed Red and Black Points. Gold points became a requirement in 1969 and Silver points were added in 1998. National and Regional Tournaments had Men's Pairs, Women's Pairs and Mixed Pairs along with Open Pairs and SwissTeam events. Today Men's, Women's and Mixed pairs have disappeared and been replaced by Stratified and Strati-Flighted events starting in 1987. Senior Pairs became popular for a few years. The first Senior Pairs was held in 1977 at Sun City, Florida. However Senior Pair events made little sense as over 95% of ACBL membership is over sixty years old. Knockouts have largely replaced the previously popular Swiss Teams. However, knockouts originated in the 1930's. Tournament events were a two session play-thru with afternoon and evening sessions. Today most two session events are comprised of a morning and afternoon session and Sectional Pair events are single session. A plethora of Bidding Systems evolved and Conventions grew exponentially. In the 1960's four card major were the norm. Although five card majors existed it was not until the mid-seventies that five card majors gain popularity with the average player. By 2000 five card majors evolved into two-over-one and became the new norm. Bridge Conventions Complete by Amalya Kears 1990 had 1100 Pages. The ACBL Encyclopedia of Bridge 7<sup>th</sup> Edition 2011 contains 77 pages of conventions. Assuming five per page that equates to almost 400

conventions. Bridge really is a simple game! Smoking has disappeared into thin air. Players are nicer to each other since Zero Tolerance for bad behavior became ACBL policy in the late 1990's.

In the early days, clubs had one game a month called a "Master Point" game where the overall winners earned one full master point! Regular club game awards were smaller. In the sixties, seventies, and eighties club master point awards were recorded on 3 X 5 inch sheets given to the players at their local clubs. The players were responsible for mailing them to the ACBL for processing and recording. The points were appropriately called fractionals! If you won you got maybe 0.89 master points. Come in fifth and it could have been 0.1. It took a while to accumulate a full master point. Finally computers eliminated the need to mail fractional's as clubs could accumulate your points and periodically send them to the ACBL.

Sometime in the nineties an event usually identified with the economy occurred – inflation. Only this time it was master point inflation. Suddenly players could win two, three, four, or more point at a single session club game. Today every game is Master Point day.

When the ACBL introduced gold points along with stratification at Regional events, less experienced player flocked to Regional Knock-outs. "Get them (Gold Points) while they are easy" became the battle cry. The popularity of knock-outs completely decimated the pair game at tournaments.

The ACBL eventually understood the ramifications of these changes and on January 1, 2010 the following change was implemented:

Before January 2010 Life Master Point requirements were 300 (at least 50 black, 50 silver, 50 red or gold/platinum of which at least 25 must be gold or platinum). Gold Point requirement began 1969 and the Silver Point requirement was introduced in 1988.

After January 2010 Life Master point requirements became 500 (at least 75 black, 75 silver, 100 red or gold/platinum, of which at least 50 must be gold/platinum). Platinum points are only awarded in Nationally Rated events.

Before 1978 Life Masters paid no annual membership fee. In 1974 there were 20,000 Life Master. I guess, when there are too many Life Masters, things have to change.

In 2010 Rex Latus taught an introductory bridge class at Orange Glen High School. Attendance was poor and the class lasted only one semester. Card games learned by kids growing up in the mid 19 hundreds, has been replaced with video games. Most students today don't know what cards are.

By 2014 the ACBL readjusted master point awards in an effort to more fairly reward pair games vs knockouts. Pair games at tournaments are now slowly making a comeback.

Bridge has evolved over the years. Today's players are accustomed to computerized scoring with results in minutes. Imagine standing around for a half an hour after the game while results were tabulated by hand using a spreadsheet! One of the requirements for being a director was the ability to add (quickly and accurately). No Smoking filtered to the Club games along with Zero Tolerance. Night games are all but gone now. Replaced by a new genre – the morning game. Novice and Intermediate players were able to participate in limited master point games where learning the game can be done in a more relaxed environment. The Club also hosted limited master point games in the afternoon and all 'Open' games were stratified. The 1970's players would not recognize today's clubs.

2006 marked the end of another 18 year era. Ken Vavra retired and sold the Escondido Bridge Club to Lee Hofacre. Early in 2007 the club was renamed the North County Bridge Center.

On June 9<sup>th</sup> 2007 the Unit hosted a thank you party for Ken and Lee at the Escondido Bridge Center. The Master of Ceremonies was the unit's ex-president Rex Latus. A spillover crowd of over 160 players turned out to recognize Ken's contribution to bridge in San Diego North County. Thanks to Ken's efforts attracting, teaching, and retaining new players, the Unit membership grew dramatically. Attending the party was Ken's wife Kay Van Hoy. Also introduced at the gala was the new owner Lee Hofacre and his wife Joan. Thanks to Lee the club would go on. There were cards, gifts, flowers, many laughs and a video record (courtesy of Matt Belau). Oh My!



Ken Vavra and wife Kay Van Hoy



Lee and Joan Hofacre

June 7<sup>th</sup> 2007

Lee introduced the discounted game coupon sheet. It has remained very popular with today's players.

The increased cost of the larger club along with declining game attendance eventually forced the North County Bridge Center to downsize in 2012. However this did not solve the financial issue and in June of 2014 the club move to a temporary location at the East Valley Parkway Community Center. By September the club opened its new location on South Escondido Blvd just a stone's throw from the old Centre City Parkway facility. The downsizing of the club in 2012 resulted in the Unit moving its Monthly Game to Lake San Marcos. Space requirements impacted a long lasting relationship between the club and the unit. This change was unpopular with some unit members. However this change did prevail.

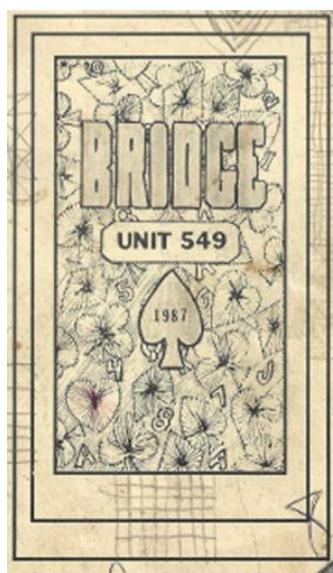
Over the years the Unit sponsored an event called the Pro-AM, where life masters played with non-life masters in an effort to mingle players who otherwise only saw each other as the morning players left the club and afternoon players entered. It is not known when this began – probably sometime in 1990's. The goal was to encourage new players to attend open games removing the stigma that the more senior players were too serious, unfriendly, and vultures to be avoided at all costs. Around 2004 the event was more appropriately renamed Majors-Minors, as there really were no Pro's. The event peaked in 2005 with 24 tables. Over the next few years the event lost popularity and became extinct. It surfaced again at the club for a few years in the form of a mentorship game. It was a better concept because it was a weekly event instead of annually. This too has faded away. It was resurrected in 2016 by the BCNC with a more appropriate name – the "Mixed Up Pairs". The event has been held annually since 2016. It is now advertised as a social event where club members have lunch and play for free. The event was well received by the players

Another special event was born in 2005 with the introduction of game named "the Perfect Swiss" by Rex Latus. While not new in the bridge world, this was the first recorded occurrence in San Diego County. Swiss Teams have an inherent flaw. The overall results are determined by victory points earned over the course of 6 to 8 matches. Problem being all the teams played different hands every match so the results were skewed. The Perfect Swiss solved this because during every match all the teams played the same hands restoring equity. The initial Perfect Swiss had 28 teams participating. The event was held for several years but eventually faded away. Probably because duplicating 10-14 sets of boards for one event was labor intensive and scrounging enough board sets was a logistics issue. Not until after the BCNC purchased a dealing machine in 2010 did the Perfect Swiss re-appear.

In 2010 Rex Latus was the unit's first President of ACBL District 22). In 2010 ACBL District 22 established a District Goodwill Committee similar to the National Goodwill Committee. President Rex Latus nominated Ken Vavra and Kay Van Hoy to the District Goodwill Committee. Ken and Kay became the first unit members to be inducted into the D22 Goodwill Committee at Palm Springs in 2010.

In 2010 the District 22 Riverside Regional dates conflicted with Unit's Sectional. The District agreed to compensate the Unit for any loss in table count compared to previous years. The Unit received a D22 check for \$2140.

Over the years San Diego County units created printed membership directories so members could hook up. The first edition is unknown. The seventh edition was printed in 1990 and listed 18 bridge clubs. The Escondido Bridge Club was not included? The twelfth edition January 2011 is the current one and listed 17 bridge clubs. Will there be a thirteenth? Probably not! With today's internet age the next logical step would be an on-line data base.



Directory Bridge Covers

Unit 549 occasionally published its own unit directory. The oldest available copy is undated but is circa 1986 and very likely earlier. If undated, how is this known you ask? Turns out the undated edition had a Burger King receipt in side it dated July 5, 1986. The last unit 549 edition was the 1987 edition

Unit games had been historically held on Sundays. But in 2004 the Unit President Lee Hofacre moved the monthly game to Saturday, where it remains to this day. This change was not without some controversy and complaint. All other units in San Diego County continue to hold their games on Sunday. Another change that occurred sometime in 2000's is the units started scheduling two unit game a month. Unit 549 has not.

From the spinoff of Unit 549 from Unit 531 in the 1977's till 2012 Unit games were traditionally held at the North County Bridge Center in Escondido. When the club was reconfigured in 2012, it became too small to host these games and the Unit game was moved to Lake San Marcos.

In the beginning two session tournaments events were normally scheduled for 1:00 PM and 7:30 PM. In the early 2000's Sectional and Regional tournaments drifted to 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM as night events became less and less popular. In 2001 Unit 549 jump on the band wagon. Knock Out events, having become all the rage, were introduced in 2008 at the Unit Sectional by Tournament Manger Matt Belau.

Another phenomenon developed around 2010. The Sectional Sunday Swiss Teams turnout began a decline. Low attendance plus disappointing support from unit members made this event financially and resource wise unattractive. By 2012 the Unit 549 Sectionals became two day events instead of the traditional three. Sunday Swiss was gone. Unit 531 followed in 2015. Other San Diego units continue to have three day events including the Sunday Swiss.

Speaking of Sectional attendance, unit records from 2003-2015 show the total sectional table count ranged from a high of 309 tables in 2009 to a low of 95 in 2015. The 2008-2009 period was the peak in attendance. The seven year average attendance before the slide started in 2010 was 241 tables including 34 teams. Average attendance since 2010 is 147.5 tables. A dramatic and traumatic change in events. It would be interesting to know what the attendance was for the first Unit Sectional in 1971.

In 2006 unit president Bill Butler was instrumental in establishing a web site that served both unit 549 and its affiliated clubs. Before the web site was abandoned in 2013 there was over 200,000 logins by unit and club members. By 2013 all the clubs and most units had their own web site. The San Diego North County Bridge Center was the last club to do so. In January 2014 Unit 549 became the last San Diego unit to launch its own website. Surprisingly not without some controversy and resistance from unit members. There was rumor of a petition signed by about 50 some members opposing the project. It was never formally presented to the Unit Board of Directors.

Unit Games and Sectional location have forever been fluid from the first one in 1971 held in Rancho Bernardo at the Swim & Tennis Club to today's location at Oasis in Rancho Bernardo

Unit Games and Sectional locations include:

Swim & Tennis Club Rancho Bernardo 1971

The next five sectionals were held at the Masonic Lodge in downtown Escondido.

Numerous and Long Forgotten Locations 1977 - 1999

Crossroads Church Rancho Bernardo 2000

Church of the Resurrection Escondido 2001 – 2007

North County Bridge Center Escondido 2008

First Presbyterian Church Oceanside 2009 - 2012

Corky's Gym San Marcos 2011 and 2012

Lake San Marcos Resort San Marcos 2013 – 2018

North County Bridge Center 2018

Women's Club of Escondido 2018

St. Gabriel's Church Poway 2019 – 2020

Community Center at Seven Oaks in Rancho Bernardo 2021 - 2023

Oasis in Rancho Bernardo 2024

The unit always held it's sectionals within its geographic boundary (Escondido, Rancho Bernardo, and Poway). Venue space, parking availability and price were the primary selection criteria for sectionals. But then something weird entered the picture – Politics! The Escondido City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting non-profit organizations, such as churches, from renting space even to non-profit groups. Seems the city council wanted such activity restricted to commercial business. This put an end to a historically long seven year stay at one location at the Church of the Resurrection in Escondido. This also created a dynamic six year period from 2008 to 2013 utilizing four sites. For the first time in unit history the Unit Sectional was held outside their geographic area in Oceanside (Unit 531 North San Diego County Coastal). Beside the standard need for venue space, parking availability and rent price, two other requirements entered the picture – location (distance) and air conditioning. No body liked the drive to Oceanside and lack of a/c made it unbearable in the summer. Corky's Gym in San Marcos solved those problems but the venue itself was not ideal. The next location at the Lake San Marcos Resort was the best ever. Besides meeting all the requirements of playing space, parking availability, price, location, and air conditioning it added another dimension – ambiance. It's was a pleasant place to play. However both

the Unit and the Lake San Marcos Club were forced to relocate in February of 2018. The Lake San Marcos Resort and Convention Center increased the rental fees by a factor of five making it prohibited to remain there.

The monthly Unit game returned to NCBC in February 2018 only to move again in September to the Seven Oaks Community Center in Rancho Bernardo. While three locations within two years is barely memorable something interesting occurred. A noteworthy change in attendance.

First a look at 2005. Unit games were held at the Bridge Club of Escondido. Total table count for the year was 224 (There was no non-life master section.). This will serve as a benchmark. Next we look at 2014-2017 unit games which were held at Lake San Marcos. The table count averaged 214 never reaching the benchmark. The table count remained flat but steady thanks to a Non-Life Master section which consistently averaged 6.5 tables. But wait!

Priced out of Lake San Marcos, the unit game returned to its original home in Escondido where its 2018 prorated table count would have been 187 tables and the NLM section dropped to 3.5 tables. Not so good. But the LSM location was really a great environment. So I guess location counts.

Now for the really startling part! The unit game migrated to Rancho Bernardo in late 2018. The stats for 2019 are amazing. Annual table count jumped to 311 tables averaging 31 tables per game vs the benchmark year which averaged 18.5 tables. That's a nice increase! Now for the rest of the story. The Non-Life Master averaged almost 13 tables for the year. How about that! Why? There is no good explanation. Adventures in Bridge closed in spring of 2019 which contributed somewhat. But still? Obviously Lake San Marcos wasn't so great after all. How much does location matter?

December 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 a date to remember. Lee Hofacre (NCBC owner) passed. For eight years (2007-2014) Lee strived to keep the club going. He hoped that someday the Unit would take over the club. In March of 2007 the Unit opened a Buy the Club CD (Certificate of Deposit) with a \$1200 deposit. By October 2008 the fund grew to \$2173. However by that time the Unit realized that buying the club was not financially viable. The CD was merged with the other Unit assets.

From December 7 to December 26 there was no club owner. A new buyer could not be found. A team of volunteers kept the club open during that period, but John Hofacre (Lee's son) closed the club. He had no interest in managing it. For the first time since 1970, the club went dark.

On December 8<sup>th</sup> an On-going Operations Committed (OOC) comprised of Bill Sperry (Chairman), Rex Latus, and Miriam Saner was formed to analyze and evaluate if reopening the club was feasible and financially practical. It was determined that it could be done. In January the OOC created a Board of Directors of seven volunteers. Their goal was to reopen in January 2015, the sooner the better. The question was how to do that with no money and no lease?

The task of money wrangler went to Rex Latus. Eight unit members volunteered to provide \$1000 each and the Unit provided another \$1500 in seed money. The only condition was that it might never be repaid. Bill Sperry negotiated a new lease at the existing location. The new club was named Bridge Club of North County (BCNC). The name has a familiar ring to it but don't confuse it with NCBC.

Through the efforts of the BCNC Board of Directors (Bill Sperry President, Jean Holt, Gary Beed, Vic Pitcock, Sue Compton, Jill Roberts, and Rex Latus), the lights came back on January 12, 2015. (It might be appropriate to call them the "Magnificent Seven" but that name was taken by a 1960 Western starring Yul Brynner. Maybe they provided the inspiration for the 2016 remake. (And no they are not in it. They make be magnificent but they don't ride horses.)



The Magnificent Seven  
 2015-2017  
 Front row Vic Pitcock (left) & Bill Sperry  
 Back row left to right  
 Jean Holt, Rex Latus, Sue Compton, Jill Roberts, Gary Beed

The new club was incorporated in California as a Mutual Benefit Corporation. The IRS granted a 501(C) (7) exempt status as a Social Club). There are no owners. There are no shareholders or dividends. There are no employees. The Board of Directors receives no compensation. The on-going club operation is dependent on volunteers and contractors. The goal is a bridge club forever.

BCNC is a full time, full service bridge club with a permanent location of which there are few. Why are there only a few? In a word cost! Full time permanent locations have a lease and pay rent, utilities, insurance, maintenance, directors, accounting services and more.

Full time bridge club in San Diego County include:

- Bridge Club of North County 2015 - Present
- Redwood Club San Diego 1948 – Present (has the advantage of being on city owned property)
- Adventures In Bridge (AIB) San Diego 1981 – 2019
- Esplanade Solana Beach 2009 – 2015
- Escondido Bridge Club (AKA NCBC) 1970 - 2014
- Vista Bridge Center 1974 -2004

Of all the clubs in the United States how does EBC – NCBC – BCNC stack up?

Year	ACBL Rank	ACBL # Clubs	Bridge Club Table Count	
1991	31	3118	5677	Escondido Bridge Club
2007	34	2768	6254	Escondido Bridge Club
2014	220	2649	1907	North County Bridge Club

Bridge Club of North County				
2019	76	2371	4097	
2020	101	2186	2914	Closed in March COVID; On-Line
2021	123	1659	2277	Closed COVID; On-Line
2022	104	1730	1962	Closed COVID On-Line; Opened in June
2023	67	1705	2703	BCNC moved to Oasis July 2023

So how about ACBL District 22 and San Diego ranking? The club was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the district in 1991, dropping to 12<sup>th</sup> in 2014, and rebounding to 7<sup>th</sup> in 2023. In San Diego County the club has been number 2 in table count for the last 16 years.

Club Membership in January 2015 was zero but by October 2017, 418 had submitted a membership form. This included members from multiple units. By November of 2019 membership grew to 510. The club now had more members than the Unit.

One of the club's missions is to promote the game. In an effort to attract new players, the club introduced Supervised Play and several limited master point games in the mornings. An EZ Bridge class with Vic Pitcock as instructor began in October 2015 with over 40 students in attendance. Additional classes have since followed and continue today. Why does this matter? The average age of ACBL members is over 70 years. For an obvious reason new players are essential for any club's continued existence. Ken Vavra indicated that his EZ Bridge players took an average of five years before venturing into an open game. BCNC has 273 members with 0 – 20 master points. To encourage them to participate the club scheduled a weekly Thursday Newcomers Game from December 2016 through December 2017. The game disappeared in 2018 for lack of support. The good news some play in the limited master point games and a few the open game.

In June 2015 Stan Westreich volunteered to help Bill Sperry renegotiate the lease. In October a new lease was signed. Thanks to their efforts significantly better terms than the original lease were reached. In November just ten months after opening, all seed money provide by the benefactors was repaid.

In August of 2015 the Directors Institute of Escondido (DIE) held a seminar specifically for those serious about directing. It was a class to die for. Instructors Rex Latus & Jean Holt rented space from the bridge club. Seven students attended and three went on to direct. One student became a long time director at BCNC.

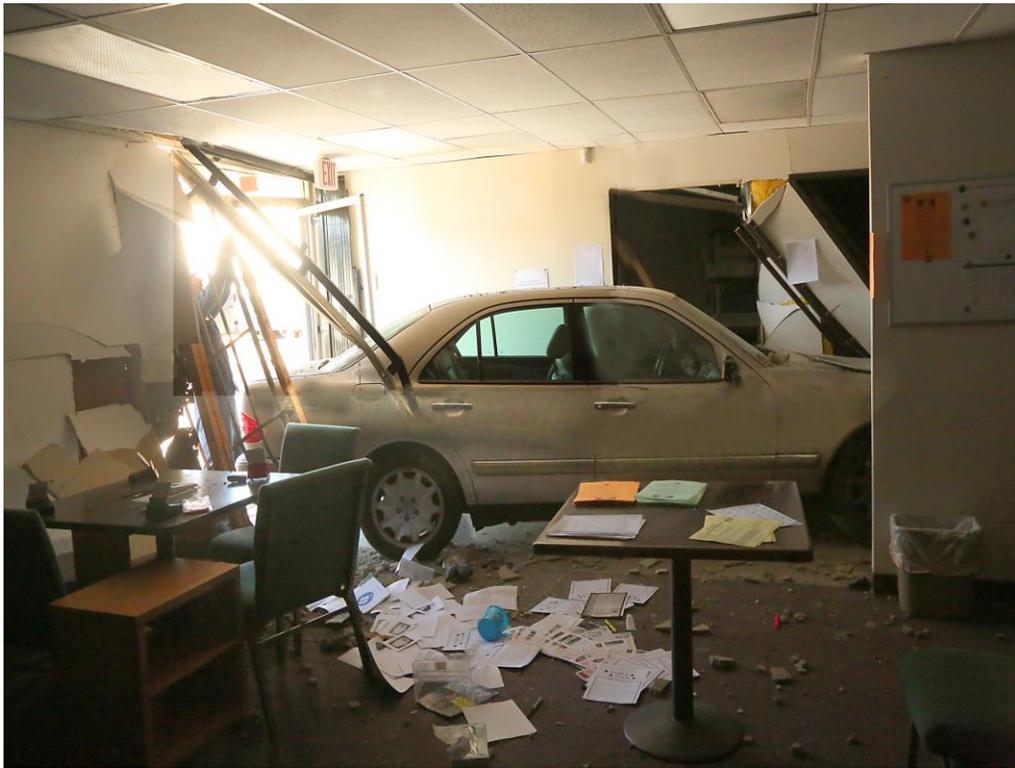
At noon on Thursday February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, a car driven by the husband of one of the clubs long time members entered through the front doors. A new lease was signed on February 11<sup>th</sup> and the club reopened in a temporary location on Felicita Ave at Centre City Parkway (Felicita Village shopping center) on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Coincidentally it is the same shopping center where Emma Knight open her club in 1972. By Monday May 30, the club returned to its original location. The Board of Directors took advantage of the accident to reconfigure the club making it more spacious. It is an ill wind that does not blow some good.



**DRIVE-THRU  
CLOSED FOR REPAIRS.**

**GO TO  
[WWW.BRIDGECLUBOFNORTHCOUNTY.ORG](http://WWW.BRIDGECLUBOFNORTHCOUNTY.ORG)  
FOR UPDATES**



The player check in table was in five pieces (one leg was outside). No one was hurt. Director Vic Pitcock's statement to channel 8 news will long be remembered.  
"Good thing I was wearing my Depends!"



The reconfigured club with its expanded playing area (June 2016)



The reconfigured club with its expanded playing area (June 2016)

In December 2017 three of the original gang of seven retired from the board of directors (Bill Sperry, Rex Latus, and Sue Compton). By January 2020 Gary Beed was the only one of the original seven still on the board. However Bill & Rex returned in 2021.

### **Lightning strikes everywhere in 2019**

Unit 549 moves from Lake San Marcos when the rent increased by fivefold. Just when we think that parking availability is everything for a bridge club, we find out that rent matters also.

Then, Adventures in Bridge closes. We discover that parking and pricing are not everything. AIB lost its lease because of San Diego city zoning laws. Turns out it was driven by parking issues created by the need to be zoned for Assembly. Assembly requires 1 car per 100 sq. ft. of assembly area plus another four space for the remaining office area. When tenants can't solve the parking issue, they complain to the city.

Rent costs and location availability have an impact on other units. San Diego and North County Coastal Units have one of their unit games at the Bridge Club of North County. Seems strange for a unit to have its game in another unit's turf. While this has happened for Sectionals, this very well might have been a first for unit games.

Finally the Bridge Club of North County loses its lease as of December 31, 2019 and needed a new home. The lease was actually a sub-lease with Romantix. The landlord was affectionately called the “Book Store” by the players.

### **An Odyssey September 2019 to July 2023**

This becomes an adventure in bridge (No pun intended.). It all starts in September 2019 when the bad news is received from the “Book Store” concerning the club lease. Romantix has other plans for the space. So, OK BCNC had four months to relocate. Seems doable. What could go wrong?

BCNC wanted to avoid the zoning issue that closed AIB by meeting all the Escondido City zoning requirements. Great idea, but not so easy. Over time more than 25 locations were evaluated. Below are the few locations actually considered.

The first location (October 2019) had great street parking, but city requirements were 1 parking space on site for every 100 square feet of assembly area plus office space. So 27 on-site parking spaces were required but only 3 were available. So a special use permit would be required. Not to be discouraged, an analysis of available street parking was performed by Rex Latus demonstrating more than adequate street parking and the city waived the requirement. Oddly enough, had the building been on the opposite side of the street this issue would not have been an issue. Interesting zoning! The cost of interior space reconfiguration for this site was \$30,000.

However a better site materialized (November 2019) .The next site selected had 213 on-site parking spaces but an Administrative Adjustment or a Minor Conditional Use Permit would be required because total building parking requirements (all tenants) would exceed the spaces available. The floor plan was open space, so the renovation costs were minor. So OK, things look good. However not so fast! The building is zoned office/medical and the BCNC space would have to be rezoned for assembly use. That was doable, but if rezoned it has to be brought up to current building standards. So hire an architect and submit plans to the city. Well it turns out that existing fire codes required \$70,000 of improvements. Foiled again! Turns out finding space for a full service bridge club is not so simple. The probability of finding a suitable location look to be less than 5%.

Fortunately the “Book Store” plans changed, and BCNC was offered a 2 year lease extension (2020-2021). The failure to find a new location while discouraging turned out to be a blessing. How could that be? The COVID-19 virus reared its ugly head in March of 2020. Clubs closed. 2021 Nationals, Regionals, and Sectionals were cancelled. This was the “Day the Earth Stood Still” (1951 Movie Classic). BCNC and the “Book Store” negotiated a lease rental reduction of 50%. So yes, BCNC paid the monthly rent even though the club was closed.

Club Migration to on-line bridge became the only option for players. BCNC initialized on-line operations in May 2020 and operated till June of 2021 when COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. On-line games were immediately discontinued and the BCNC reopened for face to face operations. The club made a modest on-line profit thanks to the rent reduction.

However the impact of COVID-19 had a major impact on club attendance. Club table count was 50% of 2019 (4000 tables). To play proof of vaccination was required and face masks were optional except when required by CDC/State restrictions. The weak table count was not unique to BCNC. All clubs, units, and ACBL tournaments suffered the same way.

From June of 2021 to July 2023 club table count remained flat. Some players were reluctant to chance the virus. Others having gravitated to on-line never returned to face – 2 - face completion. And some probably just gave up bridge. During that period 499 players provided Proof of Vaccination. Yet table count did not increase. COVID did permanent damage to face to face attendance at clubs. Pre COVID there were 24 clubs in San Diego County. As of 2023 there are only 13.

So what affect did reduced table count have on BCNC finances? From June 2021 – July 2022 the club lost \$13,500. In June 2022 the BCNC had its first game fee increase since opening in January 2015. Morning game fees increased from \$8 to \$11 making them the same as the afternoon games. This change resulted in monthly profits of \$200 - \$300.

The lease would expire December 32, 2021, so once again the hunt was on for a new location. October 2021 a location at 541 Quince Street looked promising. Available on-site parking was 20 spaces and street parking was good. However this location was zoned Industrial and for the city this was a no-no. The club intention of being legal was wavering. A letter of Intent to lease was drafted by the landlord but contained unacceptable terms and another site bit the dust.

Next up was the Westfield Mall in Escondido (November 2021). With over 9000 parking spots, parking would never be an issue. This was the only plus. Noise level from foot traffic, children's play areas, canned music, live music, and special events make the site only satisfactory for a short term lease. You become concern when the first question asked by Westfield is "how much are you willing to pay"! But the clock was ticking. After a price was agreed on, Westfield submitted lease terms. Terms were unsatisfactory. Again close but no cigar.

Once again the "Book Store" was friendly and agreed to a one year month to month lease through 2022 while BCNC kept looking. The success that Palm Springs had raising money and building a permanent club, changed the thinking of the BCNC Board of Directors. Perhaps there were options not yet considered.

### **This was amazing!**

BCNC turned to its members to determine if the concept was viable. In October 2021 a letter was sent to the 900 players in the club database. What happened next was amazing and astonishing. In only two weeks players pledged \$180,000 in donations. Another \$200,000 were pledged as loans. BCNC pledged \$100,000 and North County Inland ACBL Unit 549 pledged \$20,000. It turned out that armed with \$500,000 maybe there were better options.

BCNC president Alan Turner was also on the Board of Directors of the Seven Oaks Community Center (SOCC) in Rancho Bernardo. Turns out SOCC had land available that they had no long term usage plan. Alan flew the idea of SOCC providing the land and BCNC building a permanent club and donating it to the community center. Some form of profit sharing would be included. The SOCC was receptive to the idea. Alas, the residents/members of Seven Oaks were not as receptive. The community response was extremely hostile and ugly. The project was abandoned (January 2022). This project cost BCNC \$10,000 in legal and architect costs. It is strange how thing work out. This too was a blessing!

While investigating another potential site in Rancho Bernardo, the property manager mention that Oasis had purchased the 24 Hour Fitness Center building in RB and suggested that BCNC check that out.

## Enter Oasis

San Diego Oasis is a unique educational program for adults 50+ who want to continue to learn and be productive throughout life. Membership is free and open to anyone 50 or older

The mission of San Diego Oasis is to ensure that adults age 50+ have opportunities to pursue vibrant, healthy, productive and meaningful lives. Oasis has been operational for 35 years and this was their first owned building. Oasis was in need of funds to renovate the building. Oasis needed three million dollars. Opportunity was knocking.

When you need the impossible to happen, what do you do? You send in the “A Team” (The A-Team (TV Series 1983–1987)).

February of 2022 BCNC President Alan Turner initiated a dialog with Simona Valanciu President & CEO of San Diego Oasis, to determine whether San Diego Oasis is a workable opportunity to meet the needs of BCNC, physically and financially. Later that month the BCNC Officers meet with boards Officers of Oasis. There is agreement to pursue a partnership and BCNC pledges \$500,000.

There are 118 parking spaces in front of the building (1<sup>st</sup> floor entrance) plus 158 spaces shared with other tenants (2<sup>nd</sup> floor entrance). Zoning was not an issue. Amazingly square footage is less than the current club, but table space is increase from 8x8 feet to 9x9 feet. The walls are soundproofed and the club has its own thermostat.

Over the next six months negotiations on the game room configuration and requirements, finances, and legal matters occurred. Finally on September 16<sup>th</sup> BCNC and Oasis sign an agreement finalizing the deal.



BCNC president Alan Turner (2<sup>nd</sup> for left) presents its donation of \$500,000 to Oasis February 2023. Oasis president Simona Valanciut is on the far right.

<b>Donations</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Bridge Club</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>33.10%</b>
<b>ACBL Unit 549</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>6.62%</b>
<b>Board of Directors</b>	<b>\$38,250</b>	<b>12.66%</b>
<b>Players</b>	<b>\$143,800</b>	<b>47.61%</b>
<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>\$302,050</b>	

The goal of \$300,000 in donations was achieved thanks to 139 individual contributors. Also loans from four supporters totaling \$210,000 have been received. Much of it interest free. Several other loans were offered but not needed.

The building's initial occupancy date was January 2023. Conveniently the BCNC lease agreement ended December 31, 2022. Then as expected the occupancy date changes as San Diego City inspection requirements pushed the estimated occupancy dates to April and then July. Once again the "Book Store" was amiable to a month to month lease until occupancy.

First game at Oasis was Monday June 26<sup>th</sup> 2023. An official celebration was held Saturday July 1. In the words of the A Team (TV series 1983-1987) – "Love it when a plan comes together".

Finding a new home took only 3.8 years. The Odyssey finally ends.



### The A Team

Front row left to right Trish Frinel, Cheryl Fosdick, Sharon Feingold, and Joan Gershman.  
Back row left to right Rex Latus, Gary Beed, Ken Matson, Alan Turner, and Bill Sperry.



BCNC Oasis is as good as it gets "Paradise"

The July 1st BCNC Celebration at Oasis was one for the books.

There were 43 tables in play, breaking a record set June 9th 2007 when the Unit hosted a thank you party for Ken Vavra at the Escondido Bridge Center. A spillover crowd (extra space provided by an adjacent church) of over 160 players turned out to recognize Ken's contribution to bridge in San Diego North County.

The Bridge Club of Escondido on Center City Parkway at Citracado Parkway operated by Ken Vavra had a capacity of 29 tables. The largest turnout was 28 tables for a Swiss team event dubbed the "Perfect Swiss". The Bridge Club of North County had a capacity of 24 tables. Only once was that achieved for a special event. The Bridge Club of North County at Oasis has a capacity of 20 tables.

BCNC applied for 501 (c) (3) charity status change from the IRS. The club initially was granted tax exception as a 501 (c) (7) Recreational club organization in 2015. The change to 501 (c) (3) charity status was approved August 4<sup>th</sup> 2022 and effective December 31, 2021. Any donations to BCNC were now tax deductible. This change was driven by the desire to have donations for the Oasis partnership tax exempt.

The club created a financial plan for paying off the loans and returning club reserve balances to a healthy level. The club grew from 1900 tables in 2014 to 4000 tables in just five years. The plan forecasts a return to a pre COVID table count of 4000 in eight years. So the plan has a conservative table growth of just 10% per year. The plan had an end of year 2023 estimated table count of 2160. So how did it turn out? Actual table count for 2023 is 2717, an increase of 38.5%. So where is the club table count compared to its 2023 financial plan? After only six months at Oasis, BCNC is at the end of year 2027 plan.

Funny how things work out. When one door closes another door opens (often attributed to Alexander Graham Bell, though there is no concrete evidence of him saying this).

Appendix A

ACBL Unit 549 San Diego North County Inland  
Presidents

Bettie Messer	1969 1970
Marge Hibbs	1971
Mary Oliver	1972
Ruth Weaver	1973
Cliff Lovejoy	1974
Helen Fox	1975
Wayne Watkins	1976
Garnet Brauchia	1977
Donalda Lutz	1978
Flaun Stettler	1979
John Chaison	1980
Flaun Stettler	1981
Char Gorden	1982 1983
Dick Aufmann	1984
Susan Zolezzi	1985 1986
Barbara Memering	1987
Stan Oleksy	1988
Betsey Illes	1989
Kathy Goss	1990
Gil Morell	1991 1992
Louis D. Wilson	1993
Polly Flentie	1994
Jerry Plevin	1995
Peggy Bednar	1996
KyMBER Hoover	1997
Ann Dixon - Wood	1998
Bill Opie	1999
Kay Haralson	1999 2000
Nan O'Loughlin	2001 2002
Lee Hofacre	2003 2004
Rex Latus	2005
Bill Butler	2006 2007
Matt Belau	2008 2009
Bill Sperry	2010 2012
Sheila Latus	2013 2016
Art Foeste	2017 2023

## Appendix B

## Unit 549 Membership by Year

1990	542
1991	527
<b>1992</b>	<b>602</b>
1993	557
1994	557
1995	512
1996	496
1997	459
1998	410
1999	400
2000	380
2001	384
2002	423
2003	388
2004	379
2005	378
2006	407
2007	435
2008	421
2009	432
2010	406
2011	398
2012	397
2013	417
2014	409
2015	427
2016	404
2017	409
2018	417
2019	428
2020	390
2021	339
2022	330
2023	312

In case you are wondering, ACBL records only go back to 1991. A computer disc crash resulted in data loss prior to that year. The Unit phone directory from 1986 contained 400 members and the 1987 directory contained 451 members. How complete these directories were is not known.

## Appendix C BCNC Table Counts & National Ranking

### Club Table Counts and ACLB Raking

YEAR	ACBL US Rank*	Nbr. Tables	San Diego County # Clubs	
1991	31/3118	5677	22	Escondido Bridge Club
1992	31/3247	5681	23	
1993	40/3363	5561	24	
1994	35/3295	6078	20	
1995	41/3294	5555	22	
1996	36/3268	6018	20	
1997	36/3154	5757	20	
1998	36/3050	5660	20	
1999	42/3005	5017	21	
2000	44/2964	4650	20	
2001	41/2918	5413	17	
2002	50/2902	5095	18	
2003	52/2860	4729	21	
2004	47/2840	5202	22	
2005	38/2792	5831	23	
2006	38/2771	5894	25	
<b>2007</b>	<b>34/2768</b>	<b>6254</b>	26	
2008	39/2748	5799	28	
2009	69/2786	4447	27	
2010	104/2765	3372	26	
2011	110/2714	3403	23	
2012	94/2716	3722	25	
2013	136/2696	3005	25	
2014	216/2649	1907	23	NCBC goes dark
2015	161/2592	2533	23	BCNC is established
2016	123/2509	3154	25	
2017	101/2438	3569	23	
2018	102/2393	3502	24	
<b>2019</b>	<b>75/2319</b>	<b>4097</b>	24	Pre COVID
2020	107/4110	2466	25	COVID Hits March
2021	124/1619	2184	16	<b>COVID</b>
2022	114/1625	1962	17	Club opens in June
2023	96/1880	2717	13	

\* xxx/zzzz xx is ACBL National Rank. zzzz is the total ACBL clubs nationally