

Bridge Memories

By Rex Latus

Duplicate bridge in San Diego North County goes back to the late 1960's. Over 45 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 20 Unit past Presidents. Special acknowledgement to Bettie Messer Heldring, Marilyn Rumsey and Ken Varva for their contributions, without them this article would not have been possible. Original publication March 2007. Revised December 2015. 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 167,000 members living in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Bermuda.

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 and Bettie Heldring as the First Unit President (1969 & 1970). Since then there have been 35 Unit Presidents spanning 45 years. There is a plaque on display at the Bridge Club of North County listing all their names.

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 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".

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 our bridge newsletter – Table Talk. The newsletter was published monthly until 1986. It is not known why publication ceased.

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.

Our tenth Unit President, John Chaison (1980) later went on to establish and operate Adventures In Bridge located in San Diego. 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. Subsequent owners were Troy Brown, Jane Hogan, 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). The minority group represented the inland area (Rancho Bernardo/Poway/Escondido). 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 (Rancho Bernardo, Poway and Escondido) 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 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. The 1975 GNT district qualification was held at the Vista Bridge Center with over 50 teams competing.

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 S&M 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.

While in Rancho Bernardo, Emma received significant support from long time 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.

Ken Varva 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 Varva
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 Varva to jointly purchase bidding boxes for use by the club and unit.

The Unit's First 0-99 Game was jointly held with the Monthly Unit game in 1996. That same year the Unit resumed publishing our bridge newsletter Table Talk after a 10 year hiatus. Monthly publication continues today.

Probably the most bizarre event may have 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, In 1998 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 11/12/2008. Previous available revisions are dated 01/10/2005, 08/18/2004, and 10/27/1985

In 1976 Units 531 and 549 parted company. 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 originated as did Lake San Marcos Club in 2005, Fairbanks Ranch Club in 2006, and the Ramona Bridge Club 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.

Unit 549 Membership peaked in 1994 at 557. In 2004 Unit Membership bottomed out at 379. As of November 2015 membership is 428.

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 45 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. 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. The Pro AM aka Majors – Minors events held over the years introduced new players to the more advanced players.

Another major role of a Unit is to support local charities. Much has been done. It would be nice to have kept a 45 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.

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. With great effort over a period of years over 100 Unit 549 were properly reallocated. To solve the problem long term membership allocation needed to be by zip code not city. In March of 2006 Rex Latus voluntarily under took 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. 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. Today 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. 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 easily became the battle cry. Along with master point inflation came Life Master Propagation. In addition the popularity of knock-outs completely decimated the pair game.

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).

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.

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

Today's players are accustomed to computerized scoring with results in minutes. Imagine standing around for a half an hour 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 Varva retired and sold the Escondido Bridge Club to Lee Hofacre. Early in 2007 the club was renamed the North County Bridge Center.

On June 9th 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 Varva and wife Kay Van Hoy



Lee and Joan Hofacre

June 7th 2007

The new club was larger and renamed North County Bridge Center. 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 is now 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.

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 the BCNC purchased a dealing machine in 2010 did the Perfect Swiss reappear.

In 2009 Rex Latus went on to become the first unit member to into the ACBL National Goodwill Committee (2009) and the unit's first President of ACBL be inducted District 22 (2010). In 2010 ACBL District 22 established a District Goodwill Committee similar to the National Goodwill Committee. District 22 President Rex Latus nominated Ken Varva 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 compensation 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 membership directories so members could hook up. The Association of San Diego Bridge Units current directory (January 2011) is their Twelfth Edition. The seventh edition was printed in 1990. The first edition is unknown. Will there be a thirteenth? Probably! But number twelve may be the last printed edition. With today's internet age the next logical step would be an on-line data base always available and always up to date. We will need to wait and see.

Unit 549 occasionally published its own unit directory. The oldest available copy is undated but is 1986 and very likely earlier. If undated, how is this known you ask? Well there was a 1987 edition. Turns out the undated edition has a Burger King receipt in side it dated July 5, 1986. The Association of San Diego Bridge Units twelfth edition listed 15 bridge clubs. Interestingly enough the undated edition contained 20.

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 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 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 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 Lake San Marcos Resort.

Swim & Tennis Club Rancho Bernardo 1971
Numerous and Long Forgotten Locations 1972 - 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 Summer 2011 and 2012
Lake San Marcos Resort San Marcos 2013 - today

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 other non-profit groups such as the ACBL. 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 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 latest location at the Lake San Marcos Resort is 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 a pleasant place to play.

December 7th 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 8th 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 with 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.

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 to be released in 2017. (And no they are not in it. They make be magnificent but they don't ride horses.)

The new club was incorporated in California as a Mutual Benefit Corporation. The IRS has 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.

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 with over 40 students in attendance.

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.

The future of bridge in North County again looks bright.

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
Kymer 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 2015