

Belton
Bridge Center Origins

By Patsy Hackler

In June of 1994, I retired from teaching and started playing duplicate bridge on a regular basis at the Las Cruces Bridge Center located on Valley Drive. The building was owned by Mary McMillin and Rosie Dinsmore. The following year, I was one of four people asked to take over the Friday game. The others were Barbara Brooks, Bettie Settles and Laun Morrell.

The Friday game averaged four or five tables. As new owners of their game, we four decided to increase attendance by serving a complete free lunch before each game. The table count rose to nine or ten tables immediately. The four owners each cleared about \$20 per month after rent and food costs and ACBL fees.

In years past, the annual Sectional Tournaments were run by Bill Barkley and Fred Edgington. These prudent men brought CD's with the profit and in 1997, the Unit had about \$10,000 in the bank. By that time, Barbara Brooks and Laun Morrell had dropped out as Friday club owners and Bettie Settles and I remained to run the game. Bill Smithers and his wife, Mary, ran the Monday night and Tuesday games.

We became very discouraged about the condition of the club house and thought that things might improve if the Unit became owner of the building. Our offer to purchase it was refused, so we began to look at new options. Bill Smithers, Unit President, a committee composed of Ben Longwell (A retired realtor), Frank Brooks and myself. After much searching, we found the we current building, which was located on Madrid Road.

Members were enthusiastic about a new bridge center and donated \$38,634. David Gose was recruited to lead the construction of the center. We also named the building the Belton Bridge Center in honor of his daughter and son in law who had been killed by a drunk driver while serving in the military.

Billie Eddington and Fred Edgington, who invested the money from the Sectional Tournaments, arranged for the Blue Bell Square Dance Club to donate and install the wood floor in the current building. The square dancers use the building for dancing at night when there are no bridge games.