

Brief History of Unit 503 of the ACBL

Original version by Lee Haze, last revised September 2013

Revised by Jody Williams, November 2014

The ACBL was founded in 1937 and has members in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico. The ACBL divides this geography into 25 districts. Our Unit, Unit 503, is part of District 21, which includes Northern California and part of Northern Nevada.

Our territory is all of Palo Alto, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Mountain View, and parts of Menlo Park, Sunnyvale, and Cupertino. Unless specifically asked to do otherwise, the ACBL automatically puts new members in the territory where they live. 41% of Unit 503 are members who live outside our territory. In addition, many players from outside of our Unit play at our games.

Units supervise and promote bridge within their boundaries. They have the exclusive right to host sectionals in their territory and may conduct other special games such as unit championships. Each unit receives a share of ACBL membership fees, about \$2 per member.

We have a number of Club Owners who direct their own games. Club Owners are sanctioned by the ACBL. They must get permission from the Unit to apply to the ACBL for a sanction. Club Owners may sell their games to new owners. The Unit Board of Directors has limited oversight over Club Owners who are primarily responsible to the ACBL.

Club Owners may hold their games at the Bridge Center or at an outside location. Several Club Owners hold games outside of the Bridge Center. Club Owners who use the Bridge Center pay rent based on the number of players at the game. Club Owners also pay a sanction fee to the ACBL. Club Owners who hold games outside the Bridge Center pay for supplies they get from the Bridge Center. Supplies include cards, convention cards, copies of hand records, and pickup slips.

Our Unit is not typical. There are only about 20 Units in the country that have a facility leased by the Unit board instead of Club Owners. Most Unit Boards have no authority over Club Owners.

Unit 503 started in 1957. The first Bridge Center was at Elwell Court. It opened in March 1975. It was organized and funded by deposits made by Club Owners who chose to hold their games there. When Club Owners sold their games, the deposits were part of the sale. At the Club Owners' request, the Unit signed the lease on Elwell Court. The Board of Directors provided management. The Elwell Court location closed in May 2000. A number of Club Owners held their games at the YWCA on Alma until June 2002 when the Bridge Center on Terminal Blvd in Palo Alto opened.

Club Owners' deposits were refunded in 2001. A small amount of money was left in the Bridge Center bank account. When the Unit sublet the Terminal Avenue Bridge Center, it was financed with loans from the Unit, personal loans, donations, raffles, and the small balance in the Bridge Center checking account.

Club Owners did not deposit money for their games. The Bridge Center became the Unit's responsibility. Club Owners who wish to hold their games at the Bridge Center must sign a License Agreement with the Unit.

The Bridge Center moved to its current facility at 432A Stierlin Road in March of 2012.

Renovation and reconstruction were necessary for both the locations on Terminal Blvd and Stierlin Road. Much of the labor was donated by members and their families, especially Duane Coleman, Claire Coleman's husband.

