

# It's all in the cards: El Paso Bridge Club celebrates 50 years



Duplicate bridge has a long history in El Paso, dating back almost a century.

The game is kept alive and well today by El Paso Bridge Club, which just celebrated its 50th year in the Decker Bridge Center at 2216 E. Yandell.

“Duplicate bridge in El Paso began several decades before officially incorporating,” said Ashley Erwin, president of the bridge club.

## Make plans

**What:** El Paso Bridge Club celebrates its 50th anniversary

**When:** Noon to 2:30 p.m., Tuesday and Friday; 6 p.m. Wednesday and Saturday at noon. Lessons are offered at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday before the noon game, which is mostly for novices.

**Where:** Decker Bridge Center, 2216 E. Yandell

**Information:** [elpasobridge.com](http://elpasobridge.com)

Officially known as ACBL, American Contract Bridge League Unit No. 159, there are no official records of the incorporation date, but Erwin believes it was incorporated around 1968.

“We had several thousand players back then, which was pretty amazing,” Erwin said.

Today, the club has about 100 members.

Erwin started playing bridge while he was in college but didn’t start again until he retired from the Navy and after his wife passed away.

“My cousin Lorraine O’Donnell got me playing bridge again,” he said. “She helped me decide to move back to El Paso 10 years ago.”

Bridge Club treasurer Kay White has been playing for about 60 years.

“In 1956 the phone rang, and my mother found out her partner was sick and couldn’t play,” she said. “My mother handed me a book on the game and told me, ‘You’re playing this afternoon.’”

She joined the bridge club when a bunch of her friends who she had lunch with encouraged her to come down to the center. “I’m a person who likes to work, that’s why I’m an officer now.”

Erwin and White tout two huge benefits of the game, especially for the “mature” crowd.

“It’s a challenging game that makes you use your brain,” Erwin said. “You have to mentally set goals. It helps the whole thinking process, especially as you age. The more you think and use your brain, the better off you’ll be.”

White agrees, saying, “Medical experts say it’s the most stimulating game, even above chess.”

The social aspect is another plus.

Both have made good friends.

“You also have to play with a partner, so you have to learn to work with another person,” Erwin said.

The difference between what they call “party” bridge and duplicate bridge is that in “party” bridge, you deal the cards like hearts or spades.

“In duplicate bridge everybody in the room plays same hands that are dealt by machine,” White said. “It’s totally playing against each person to see how much better you can do.”

When she started playing, White said, everything was done by hand.

“Now, by the time I get home all the games are on my computer,” she said. “You can make a comparison against every other person who played.”

There are 138 “standard” conventions, a sort of code that allows players to convey more information than a simple description of their hand’s suit and strength, that a person can use in duplicate bridge.

“You can use 138 or none at all,” White said. “You can use 10 and still be happy. At my age (88) I don’t need 138. Most games (at the center) start around noon so I haven’t lost my whole day.”

Right now, Erwin said, the center hosts four games a week, and also has tournaments and special events.

A new session will begin in September.

A fifth game will probably be added in the fall.

Erwin said bridge has served him well, even in his travels he can always find a game.

“It’s a great outlet,” he said. “I’ve played in New Mexico, North Carolina, even Montana.”

[By Carol Viescas / El Paso Inc.](#) Jun 20, 2025 Updated Jun 23, 2025