



GRAND SLAM

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Card Fees to Rise

By Ron Chalmers

The Board of Directors of the Edmonton Bridge Society has voted to raise card fees, slightly and gradually.

The sustainability of our Bridge Centre requires both table count and revenue. For the past two-and-one-half years, we have focused on table count, to maintain the variety of games, meeting the interests of all players – and thereby boosting revenue.

We have pursued this strategy through aggressive marketing, lessons, social events and, I believe, a growing appreciation by all members that we must respect, befriend, and help all players – encouraging them to return to the EBC – one of North America's best bridge clubs.

Yet our table counts, over the past two years, have declined by about eight per cent.

We will continue to work at retaining or growing our table count, and we welcome all suggestions on how to attract more players to the EBC, and how to give everyone the best possible experience.

But we also must directly address our financial situation.

The Edmonton Bridge Society posted an operating deficit of \$49,683 in 2012. Offsetting that, we received \$76,652 of casino funds (from an event actually held in 2011). But we don't receive casino funds every year. Historically, we have received such funding every 18 – 20 months.

We foresee a possible temporary closure of one Edmonton casino (the Baccarat), a possible increase in the number of charities receiving casino licenses, and a possible redistribution of casino funds between urban and rural areas. So we may receive less casino funding, less often. An optimistic projection is that we will receive about \$70,000 every 22 months. That annualizes to \$38,200 per year.

On that projection, if we use all casino funds to subsidize operations, and if nothing else changes, we will incur an annual deficit of about \$12,000 to be covered either from our accumulated surplus or from higher revenues, specifically card fees.

We do have an accumulated surplus of \$335,683. Historically, this was intended for facility improvements and/or the possible purchase of a facility. As real estate costs have risen, while our membership has fallen, any purchase of a facility now appears unwise. This leaves us with an ample reserve for leasehold improvements, décor and equipment.

Conceivably, the accumulated surplus could be used to keep card fees low. The board, however, decided that this would not be appropriate – that the surplus was not built, since 1985, to subsidize operations in future years. We have not raised card fees since June, 2006, although our rent, utilities and payroll costs have risen. Our fees are slightly higher than other area clubs but ours is the only full-time facility with amenities clearly exceeding any others. Compared to other recreational activities, we believe our card fees are a bargain – and will continue to be.

The board has voted to phase in higher fees as follows:

Activity	Current	Aug 1/13	Aug 1/14
Afternoon Members	\$6	\$7	\$8
Afternoon Non-members	\$8	\$9	\$10
Evening Members	\$7	\$7	\$8
Evening Non-members	\$9	\$9	\$10
Rubber <1 cent	\$6	\$7	\$8
Rubber 1 cent+	\$8	\$9	\$10
Monthly Pass	\$80	\$90	\$100
Annual Membership	\$40	\$40	\$40

As you see, in August, 2013, the afternoon duplicate and all rubber fees will rise \$1, to the current level of evening duplicate fees. One year later, all card fees will rise another \$1. Beginner Bridge fees will match duplicate fees. Monthly passes will rise at about the same rate. Annual memberships will not rise.

If we maintain our recent count of about 5,000 tables per year, with about 2/3 in the afternoon games then, after August, 2014, our revenue will rise by about \$32,000 per year. But if our table count drops by 10 per cent, through demographics and reaction to higher fees, then our revenue will rise by only \$16,000 per year, creating a \$4,000 annual surplus (assuming no cost increases) – as opposed to a projected deficit of \$12,000 (with casino funds rolled in) with no fee increase.

The board hopes this decision will receive the approval of members. As always, it is subject to review at any General Meeting, or in any meeting of the current or future board.

CHARITY BRIDGE WEEK June 17 – 21

Our annual chance to raise funds for a local charity will be held during most sessions this week. We will be collecting \$1 per game from all players and any other donations, and forwarding these to the Alberta and NWT Alzheimers Society. In return we will offer higher championship masterpoints, special hospitality, and prizes for the top masterpoint collectors in both Open and under 300 mp categories. Don't forget! Participate often and enjoy.

EBC Semi Annual General Meeting

Saturday July 27 4:15pm

Members are invited to join us for this update meeting of our society. A one session duplicate game precedes the meeting at 1:00 pm. There will be a game for the Open and under 500mps. Regular Rubber and Beginner bridge will be offered as well. After the meeting members are invited to enjoy a BBQ supper. Preregistration is not required. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

North American Pairs

We will be holding various qualifying games for this grassroots competition throughout July and August. Qualifiers can compete at the District level to get a subsidy and represent our District at the Spring Nationals in Dallas. At the club level you just have to come in the top half of the field. Most games will be stratified A/B/C where A is Open, B is under 2000 mps and C is Non lifemasters under 500 mps. Where possible we will hold separate Flight C games. There is a small added cost but also more masterpoints available. Check the calendar for dates.

Fund Raising Casino July 4 – 5

Thank you to **Bill Cox** and all those who have offered to volunteer to work at the Yellowhead Casino on these dates. We could not operate our club without these vital funds.

Alberta Regional

Red Deer is hosting our summer regional the week of August 12 -18. It is only a short drive to enjoy good competition and excellent hospitality. Enjoy!

MASTERS OF THE GAME

The following players have recently achieved milestones in their bridge journey. Congratulations to:

Ross Armour Silver Life Master (1000 MPs)

Wendy Buchan Bronze Life Master (500 MPs) and New Life Master

THE EDMONTON BRIDGE CENTRE: A BRIEF HISTORY

We thought it would be informative to tell all members, and especially our newer members, The Edmonton Bridge Centre Story. Our own **Lorna McDonald**, a devoted and well known club member, kindly put together her personal perspective of the evolution of the Edmonton Bridge Centre. Thank you, Lorna, for sharing these memories.

Edmonton Bridge Centre – Then

The Edmonton Bridge Centre was born on June 1, 1985 after months of hard work by its' founding fathers, **Steve Willard** (dec.), **Barry Pritchard**, **Lucille Barton**, **Bob Toffan**, **Doug Rankin** (dec.) , and **Myrna Thomas**.

Originally, the Edmonton Bridge Centre was called the Klondike Bridge Club and was privately owned by **Peter** and **Lloyda Jones**. It was the dream of members of the Klondike Bridge Club to purchase the club from the Joneses and take it public. To achieve this goal Peter and Lloyda were approached with an offer, which they accepted, and it was now up to members to raise the cash. Debentures were sold for \$200.00 each and I recall wondering where we'd get the money to buy one of these very expensive debentures. I was very young at the time with 3 small sons and \$200.00 was a lot of money. I came up with the \$200.00 though as, at the time, bridge was my passion and I wouldn't dream of not being involved. As the bridge club flourished, the debentures were repaid, with interest. Members were given the option to donate the debenture to the club and become a "Life Member" of the Edmonton Bridge Club. If you look on the wall, you will see a list of those Life Members.

Once we came up with the money through the debenture sale, The Edmonton Bridge Society was incorporated and its new board of directors

took over. They coaxed **Steve Bates**, who was living and working in Calgary at the time, to move to Edmonton and be the manager of the club. Steve was just beginning his career as a Tournament Director and the opening day of the new Edmonton Bridge Centre was going to find him directing a tournament in Lethbridge. Luckily for us it was a small tournament and he was allowed to get back to Edmonton to join in the opening day ceremonies. I remember **Doug Rankin** telling me that this new Edmonton Bridge Centre was going to be the finest bridge club in North America, staffed by the best people and they were starting with **Steve Bates**. (This was all because he wanted me to direct Friday evening games and didn't want me wearing jeans to do it.) The Edmonton Bridge Centre first operated out of a two story building off 99th Street in the south side before moving to our present location in 1991. When Steve's tournament director duties prevented him from continuing to manage the club, Calgary again supplied the new manager, **Dann Kramer**. After Dann returned to Calgary, the Edmonton Bridge Center found Edmonton's own **Matthew Greenways** who has been the face of the club for over 18 years.

For years the EBC thrived and, indeed, **Doug Rankin's** vision was achieved. Visitors often told us that we had the best bridge club they'd ever been to. With the aging population and young people being more interested in video games than mind games, bridge attendance slowly declined and we found ourselves downsizing. For those of you who are recent to the bridge club, when we moved to our present site we had double the space we have now. We had a separate smoking room, (yes, we smoked at the bridge club), a rubber bridge room, separated from the duplicate side as the rubber players could get quite rowdy back then. We had a large pool table which I spent a lot of time at losing money to the pool sharks in the group. On Friday evenings everyone would gather after work at the bridge club and play poker for quarters. It was the best of times in my life and the Edmonton Bridge Centre had everything to do with that.