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## After 35 Years at the Hacienda, Senior Bridge Players Find New Homes

*By Sophie Braccini*

Alex Teller never thought he would see the day when the Moraga seniors bridge club would feel forced out of the Hacienda de las Flores. Teller was around when the group was created 35 years ago (his wife's aunt was the founder of the bridge club) and he helped even before becoming a senior himself. "The group of players has consistently used the Hacienda two to three times a week in the La Sala building since the 70's," he said, "but when we were told by Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram to pay a fee to continue to use our customary location, we decided to go." As of July, the bridge club plays at the senior housing facilities, Moraga Royale on Monday evenings and Aegis on Friday evenings, where they are warmly welcomed.

"We never told the players that they had to go," said Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, who manages the agenda of the public Hacienda, "but it is clear that if they were not willing to contribute financially to the cost associated with their usage, having them continuing to play here was our least favorite option."

For Teller and his friends the financial argument is not valid. "We the seniors, along with the rest of the community, have paid for the Hacienda with our taxes already," he said, "many of us were already here when the town purchased the Rheem Estate in the 70's. It belongs to us, the residents, and taxing or squeezing us seniors now is not acceptable."

Jay Ingram has his own budgetary constraints and says all groups are now required to pay a fee to use public buildings, granting no grandfathering, however ancient the custom might be. "The Council approved the fee structure and we have to apply it," he said, "I know it's a change of culture but most groups have adapted and they end up paying it."

The seniors want to continue to contribute to the town and still consider Ingram their good friend, however, "It's a sorry day when seniors can no longer have complimentary use, for six hours a week, of the building designated as a community center," said Teller, "and we will not come back to the Hacienda under the current terms."

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