



**LOLA SHERMAN**  
Seaside Musings

## Book tells history of Carlsbad Boys & Girls Club

By tearing pews out of an abandoned church, founding board members created the Carlsbad Boys Club 62 years ago.

"Over 75,000 Served ... A Chronicle of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Carlsbad," available Friday, tells the history of the youth organization in 100-plus pages of pictures and interviews of almost 50 past club leaders.

Included are Bob Watson, a founding board member, and John Penrod, the first member.

The two men most responsible for creating the club, Walter Glines, then superintendent of the Carlsbad Union School District and noted for ending previous segregation of Hispanic students, and Albert Blacic, physical education teacher at the old Pine School and the club's first executive director, have passed away.

But Blacic's widow, the former Henrietta Scheunemann, known as "Hank," is still active, donating \$100 to the club annually on her late husband's birthday.

"What had been a church was presently unoccupied by congregants but housed millions of voracious termites," Watson remembered. It was the old Gospel Tabernacle on property at Roosevelt and Oak streets.

Watson, a veteran of

the D-Day invasion of Normandy in World War II, said he and Blacic "took two big empty paper grocery sacks down to the bank in San Diego that controlled the Boys Club Trust Fund. The banker asked us 'What are the bags for?' We replied, 'We want you to fill them up with money.'"

In total, \$100,000 was raised, and businessmen donated materials and labor. One of those painting the building exterior was Carlsbad's first police chief, Max Palkowski.

The club was incorporated July 7, 1952, nine days before the city of Carlsbad.

Much remodeled over the years — and with gymnasium and swimming pool added — the old building is called the Village Branch because there's also a new Bressi Ranch clubhouse in the middle of town.

Greg Nelson Sr., who could be called "Mr. Carlsbad Boys Club" and Chuck Smith, executive committee board member, are financing the book.

Why now? A 62nd anniversary is not generally a well-noted milestone.

"It really has to do with my timing," Nelson said in a phone interview. He said he is winding down his businesses, has turned 65 and "this is a project that has to happen."

Much previous docu-

mentation was lost in renovations and mishaps, he said.

The book was written over a year's time by Marilyn Campbell, who noted the club had provided a safe haven for her young son.

Nelson joined the club in 1959 as a 9-year-old. He has been Boy of the Year, athletic director, executive director, board president and lifetime honorary member. He's in the national Alumni Hall of Fame with Denzel Washington, Colin Powell and Jennifer Lopez.

His contribution of \$1 million jump-started the campaign to build the Bressi branch.

Each chapter in the book covers a decade, chronicling 14 executive directors and 33 board presidents.

The club was second in San Diego County — after neighboring San Dieguito — to admit girls. Now, the breakdown is 56 percent boys and 44 percent girls, and 308 are served daily at Bressi and 224 in the village.

It hasn't always been smooth sailing.

Raising enough money frequently was a problem, and meeting payroll had challenges. Maintenance, particularly of plumbing, became a concern, and one girl was frightened when the toilet fell over beneath her.

The club was threatened with loss of its license by the national Boys & Girls Clubs organization, but then came back to be honored for program excellence.

Now, there are three major fundraisers a year: a spring golf tournament, a summer bocce ball competition and a fall gala. The club has a \$2 million annual budget and 50 employees.

And it is launching a foundation to create an endowment — another reason, according to current executive director Brad Holland, to publish the club's history at this time.

Books are available, for a \$55 donation, at either branch or [bgccarlsbad.org](http://bgccarlsbad.org).

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