



EL PASO HIGH, 1928 — Miss May Belle Long, center, and two other 1928 El Paso High School P.E. teachers, Miss Louie Mae Langford (Whittaker) and Miss Adrian Michaelson, act 'phony' with rubber dumbbells.



BRIDGE LIFE MASTER — Although she didn't begin playing bridge as a regular player until 1951, Miss May Belle Long captured with National Women's Pairs bridge title with Mrs. H. A. "Effie" Woods in Denver, Colo. in 1961. In winning this tournament she gained more than enough points to become a life master. As a youngster, Miss Long hated bridge, because it kept her inside on sunny days. But as she got older and could not participate in tennis and basketball she turned to bridge because it was a "sitting-down game."

—(Photo by Carol Viescas)



ALL-STAR — A P.E. teacher at El Paso High School from 1925 to 1933, Miss May Belle Long was on all-star basketball, hockey and fencing teams while she was a student at University of California, Berkeley.

May Belle Masters Physical, Mental Games

By CAROL VIESCAS

Name the game and Miss May Belle Long is probably an expert in it, from having been an all-star basketball player at University of California, Berkeley to being a life master bridge player.

A P.E. Teacher at El Paso High School from 1925 until 1933, Miss Long is a perfectionist in both physical and mental games.

She received a B.A. in mathematics from U.C. Berkeley, where she was an all-star player, not only in basketball, but also in hockey and fencing. She received a M.A. in physical education from Columbia University in 1932.

At El Paso High she taught dancing and aerobics. She and her girls gave many demonstrations at Liberty Hall, performed at service clubs during World War II, football game halliwies and even early Sun Carnival

celebrations.

She also taught tennis at El Paso before they had courts of their own, borrowing the courts of the old El Paso Tennis club. "I can remember taking my first period tennis class down the hill to the courts in 1927," says Miss Long.

The school did not have its own courts until the 30's. "They were named the 'Sunshine' Courts after the student body president that year, 'Sunshine' Albert Schwartz," she comments.

Miss Long guided her tennis girls to eight state championships. Sylvia Lerner and Barbara Walker, doubles, 1931; Lorraine Richard and Jane Holder, 1944; Thelma Rantoff and Mae Chew, 1952; Barbara Walker singles, 1958; Betty Sney, 1949; Peggy Robertson, 1928 and Linda Livingston, 1952.

In World War II, because of lack of a male teacher, she also was boys tennis coach and

guided Dick Smith, Edgar Chew Jr. and Bobby Goldfarb to state championships.

She was no slouch at tennis herself winning three City Women's titles from 1928-46, every woman's doubles title from 1932 until 1941 with Miss Chella Phillips. Three Nine Mexico doubles championships with Miss Phillips in 1935, 1937 and 1938, city mixed doubles title with Edgar Chew, New Mexico mixed doubles title with Alfred Witholder, Colorado Springs Cheyenne M. Club women's doubles title with Margaret Davis in 1938 and El Paso Night League mixed doubles with Joe Pennington in 1947 and 1948.

Miss Long also participated in the Business Girls Basketball League at the Y.W.C.A. and Community Center in the late 1920's and 1930's. The teams were sponsored by different businesses. "I remember playing in the Oasis team sponsored by Fred

Hervey and on a strange one named the Pretty Baby Coffee Co.," states Miss Long.

She has a national rating as a basketball umpire, tennis umpire and a Red Cross water safety instructor. She even coauthored a P.E. Textbook with J. S. Nield in 1947 called "Developmental Physical Education."

"I played basketball until I was forty years old and tennis until I was fifty. It wasn't until my last years of teaching that I found a 'sitting down' game, bridge," she says.

She taught mathematics at El Paso from 1934 to 1938 when she began to get interested in bridge. She was a fast learner, for in 1942 she won the National Woman's Pairs in Denver, Colo., with Mrs. H. A. "Effie" Woods who Miss Long says is "El Paso's greatest bridge player."

With this win in a few short years, Miss Long had earned the number of points necessary

to become a life master. There were only 10 life masters at that time in El Paso. There are now over 30.

When Miss Woods first learned to play with her parents and sister many years ago, she didn't like the game. "I always thought it was a waste of time, especially when it was sunny outside. But I had to make up the fourth. I would bring a book to the table to read while I was playing."

"But when I finally got bitten by the bridge bug, I really went after it."

To go to tournaments, Miss Long often had to get time off from teaching. "I would ask Juth Hardy (now assistant superintendent of schools) if he could get a substitute for me Friday. He wouldn't say a word, he'd just look up at me and say, 'Is Mrs. (Elizabeth) Hansen (her bridge partner) going too?'"

She says the most important thing to learn in bridge is how

to count. "You have to know exactly what cards players have in their hands. You can usually get a pretty accurate idea by what they bid. For instance if someone bids two hearts, they usually have at least six hearts, two of which are the top four honors (jack, queen, king, ace)."

Games are not the only things Miss Long is interested in. She has taken three tours of

Europe, two trips to Hawaii, and even took a trip to Alaska with bridge friend, Mrs. Hansen. And, naturally, they managed to find the only bridge club in Anchorage, Alaska to play in.

Obviously, bridge is now her first love. "It hasn't been dull" she remarks, "I'll never learn it all." Then she chuckles, "And now they save me a North-South place at the bridge table so I don't have to move."