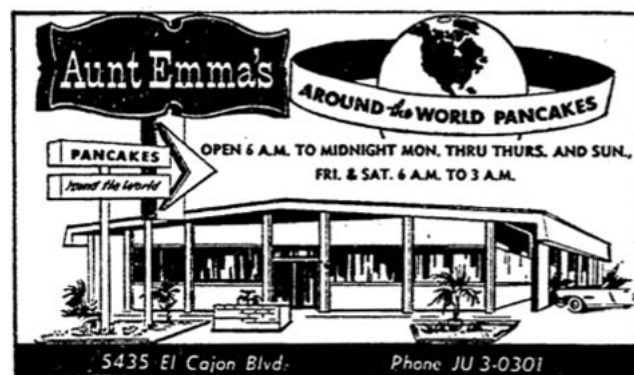


## Aunt Emma's Pancake House



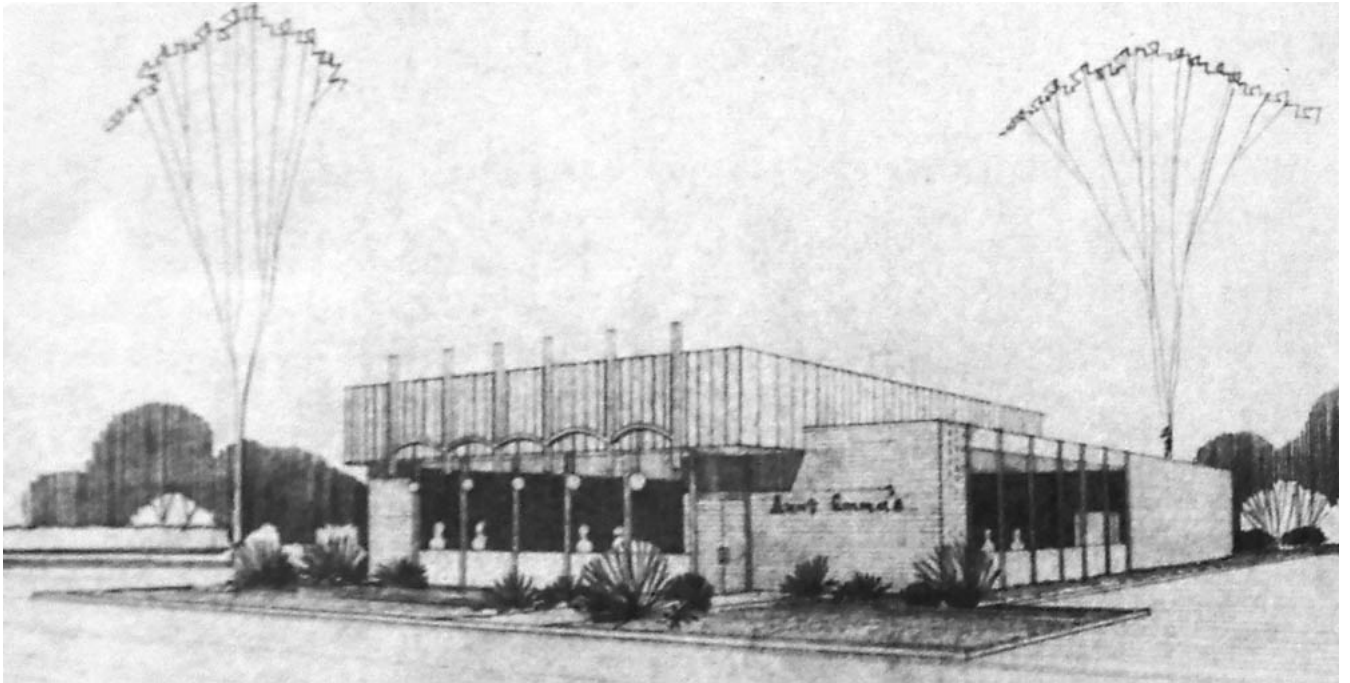
Aunt Emma's Pancake House has been at 700 E Street in Chula Vista since 1965

1959 - Don Robert Roland and his two sons Robert and Jack founded the Aunt Emma's Pancake franchise at 5435 El Cajon Blvd (corner 54th and I Cajon Blvd). Roland was born in Ohio, came to San Diego in 1911, worked at the old Monarch Drug Store at Fifth and Broadway, founded a chain of soda fountains in 1918, later founded the Don's Drive-In chain. In 1938 he founded Roland's Fountain Service at Seventh and Broadway. After his death in 1969, the restaurant franchises were gradually sold off. (*The San Diego Union*, Aug. 1, 1969)



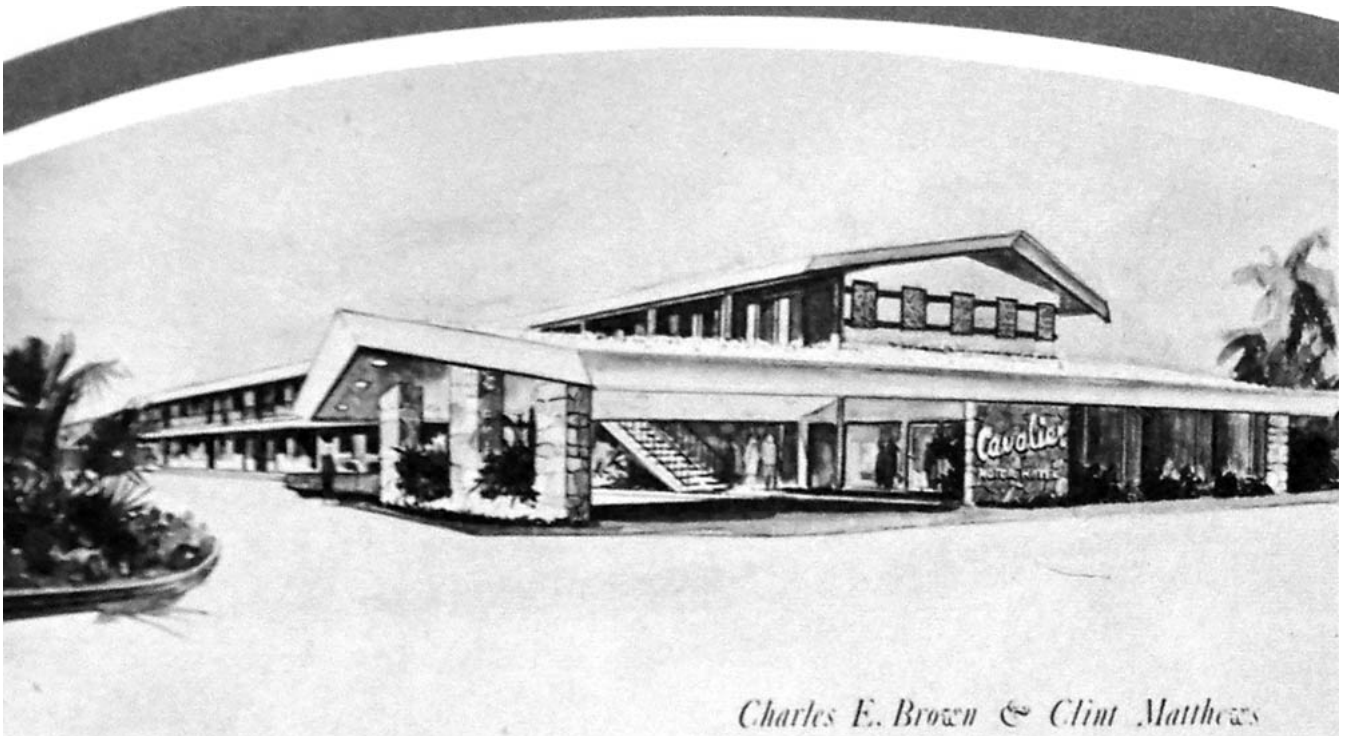
The first Aunt Emma's, from *The San Diego Union*, July 6, 1959.

1964 - Drawings of Cavalier Motel and Aunt Emma's Restaurant were published in a Chamber of Commerce booklet. "Franchises for Aunt Emma's Restaurants are available through the main office of Roland's Corporation, 5447 El Cajon Boulevard, San Diego." The Chula Vista franchise was the last one established by the Rolands. Between 1959 and 1964, others had been established at 6765 La Jolla Blvd and 3590 Rosecrans and 1495 Valle Parkway in Escondido and 1523 E. Main St. in El Cajon. 50 years later, the only Aunt Emma's still open are the restaurants owned by Nick Gelastopoulos in Chula Vista and National City.



A drawing Aunt Emma's Pancake House was published by the Chamber of Commerce in 1964

1964/11/12 - Cavalier Motor Hotel and Aunt Emma's Pancake House groundbreaking at 710 E St. for restaurant and motel (Star-News, Nov. 12, 1964.) ( *The Chula Vista Star-News*, Nov. 12, 1964. )



*Charles E. Brown & Clint Matthews*

A drawing Aunt Emma's Pancake House was published by the Chamber of Commerce in 1964

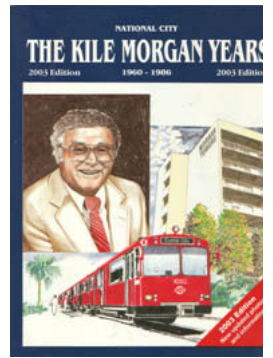
1965/03/25 - Cavalier Motor Hotel to open at 710 E Street, by Charles E. Brown and Clint Matthews, Harold and Margaret Northwood managers, and Miss Chula Vista Robin Griffith; motel of 47 rooms built by Fred Longworth

Construction; with nearby Aunt Emma's Pancake House being built by Kile Morgan, a NC councilman, and leased to the restaurant chain. Also nearby is the Cabrillo Lanes bowling alley. Matthews is a former NC mayor, native Chula Vista, born in the old Crockett place at 2nd and F, been in the TV and appliance business for 20 yrs. The new motel is a member of the Best Western Motels.

1965/03/25 - Aunt Emma's was only one building of many that Kile Morgan constructed after World War II. He wrote in his 1994 book, "After I came here and had the Rohr and Concrete Ship jobs I got into the building business. I built homes and small apartments all over the county of San Diego, mostly single family houses, anywhere from 15 to 25 houses a year. At that time I was considered a big builder. I had these carpenters and I had to keep them busy."

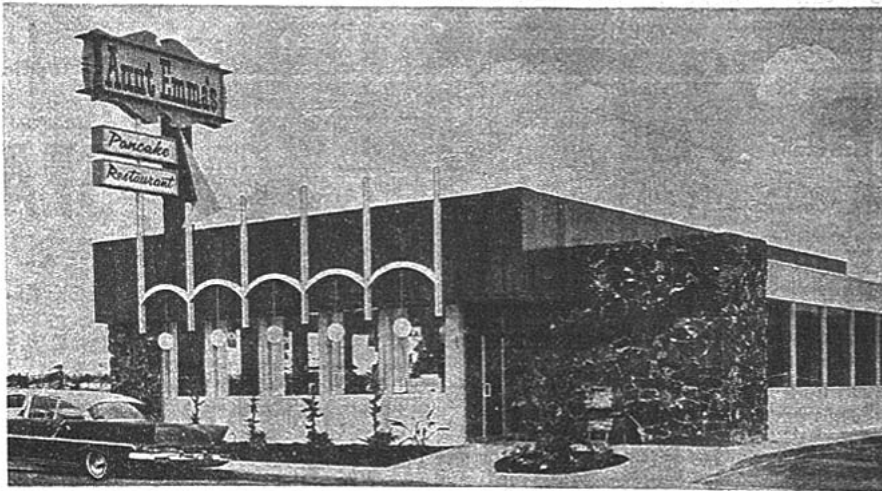
Morgan's popularity as a builder and realtor helped him get elected to the National City Council in 1960 and to be elected mayor in 1966. (Morgan, p. 75)

1965/03/25 - Advertisement was published for the opening of the motel: "NOW OPEN! - Cavalier MOTOR HOTEL 710 "E" STREET, CHULA VISTA, CALIF. Just off Freeway 101 (Interstate 5) Phone 420-5183 For Reservations! 50 new air conditioned rooms. Queen-size and extra long beds. Luxurious furnishings. free television. Continuous background music. Heated Pool - Reasonable Rates OPEN FOR INSPECTION Cocktails and Bowling Next Door Pancake House to Open in Approximately 6 Weeks. A coffee shop, bowling and cocktail lounge are available at the nearby Cabrillo Lanes and an Aunt Emma's Pancake House will be completed adjacent to the Motor hotel soon." ( *The Chula Vista Star-News*, Mar. 25, 1965 )



# Gala *Grand Opening* AUNT EMMA'S NEW PANCAKE HOUSE-RESTAURANT

OPEN 24 HOURS DAILY 700 E STREET, CHULA VISTA SEATS 150 PATRONS!



BEAUTIFUL MODERN NEW AUNT EMMA'S PANCAKE HOUSE-RESTAURANT

The grand opening was advertised in the *Chula Vista Star-News* June 17, 1965

1965/06/17 - Aunt Emma's Pancake House grand opening with Harry Bronstein as manager (and soon to become co-owner with the Rolands). It advertised that it will be open 24 hours, including Sunday, and can seat 150. "We have a reputation for seating our guests from 5 to 8 minutes. We realize that churches are interested in the welfare of the family. Sharing food together in a Christian atmosphere is important. No liquor is ever served at Aunt Emma's." ( *The Chula Vista Star-News*, June 17, 1965 )

**KING SIZE BREAKFAST SPECIAL**  
 Everyday Except Saturday & Sunday

- BACON or SAUSAGE
- EGGS
- HASH BROWNS
- PANCAKES OR TOAST
- POT OF COFFEE

**88c**

WE NEVER CLOSE

**AUNT EMMA'S**

- SAN DIEGO, El Cajon Blvd. at 54th
- ESCONDIDO VILLAGE (East) Escondido
- CHULA VISTA 700 "E" Street

Advertisement in *The San Diego Union*, Nov. 2, 1965

1967 - A newspaper editorial pointed out that tourism was becoming big business in San Diego. The Chula Vista City Council recently passed its first motel room tax to fund tourism promotion. Billboards were erected on I-5 north and south of the city directing motorists to "Eat Sleep Shop Relax" in Chula Vista. "The South Bay Historical Society has been quietly working for a number of years" on getting the County Board of Supervisors to approve a 1000-acre park south of Imperial Beach to attract tourists. National City Mayor Kile Morgan has proposed buying and restoring the Granger Music Hall. Imperial Beach wants to build a Marina in the sloughs south of the city. "Tourists are flocking to San Diego County in increasing and almost unbelievable numbers. Tourism is a strong number three in our economy, with Navy and aerospace just ahead of it. There is no reason why the South Bay shouldn't go after its share of this burgeoning industry with attractions that will give tourists a reason for visiting this part of the county too." (*The Chula Vista Star-News* editorial, July 13, 1967.)

1968 - The city hoped to promote tourism during San Diego's bicentennial year of 1968. Mayor Dan McCorquodale proposed building a bronze statue of Father Serra to emphasize Serra's route through this area in 1769 on his way to the San Diego Mission. Clint Matthews proposed creation of a 17-mile scenic route through the city, starting at new Visitor's Bureau at I-5 and E Street, then east on E Street to Bonita Road, past Glen Abbey through Bonita to Southwestern College, then west on Telegraph Canyon and L Street to I-5. In September, the City Council set up a special fund of \$20,000 to promote tourism. Clint Matthews, owner of the Cavalier Motel, led the formation of a new group, mostly motel and restaurant owners, to administer this special fund. This group formed the non-profit Chula Vista Visitors and Convention Bureau, separate from the Chamber of Commerce that had been divided over how to promote tourism. The leaders of the new Bureau were Clint Matthews, Jack Mabby, co-owner of the Vagabound Motel, Dick Agee, owner of AG's Coffee Shop, Glen James, owner of the Richfield gas station, Irene McElwain of the Atlas Travel Agency, Josh Field, owner of the Rohr Manor Motel, Merle Palmer, future owner of Holiday Inn, Tony Charlton of Tony's Mobile Station, Harry Bronstein, co-owner of Aunt Emma's Pancake House, Bob Crowther of Bob's Coffee Shop, Bill Whitehead of Christie's. Clint Matthews offered to host a Visitor's Bureau in his Cavalier Motel. (*The Chula Vista Star-News*, May 12 and Sept. 15, 1968)



**Another Aunt Emma's  
Breakfast Special**  
Aunt Emma's own Original Recipe  
3 Buttermilk Pancakes and

**79<sup>c</sup>** 2 Eggs (any style)  
2 Link Sausage or  
2 Strips of Bacon

(No Substitutes Please)  
**Mon.-Fri. Anytime . . . .**  
This offer expires 11/16/79  
OUR BATTER IS MADE FRESH DAILY FROM OUR RECIPE  
HOLLANDIA DAIRY BUTTERMILK

**AT THESE LOCATIONS**  
54th & EL CAJON BLVD. — SAN DIEGO  
1523 E. MAIN ST. — EL CAJON  
700 E. ST. — CHULA VISTA  
1495 E. VALLEY PARKWAY — ESCONDIDO

**ANOTHER**



**Spicy Peach Filled  
PANCAKE**

SERVED WITH  
POWDERED SUGAR  
& WHIPPED CREAM  
Mon-Fri Only

**\$1.99**

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**Aunt EMMA's** BRING THE FAMILY  
FAMOUS

**FISH FRY** **ALL THE FISH YOU CAN EAT!**  
(Icelandic Cod Fish Fry)  
at Restaurant Location Only

**\$3.59** Per Person

SERVED WITH COLE SLAW or COTTAGE CHEESE,  
FRENCH FRIES, ROLL & BUTTER  
EVERY MON., WED., FRI. 4 to 9 P.M.

**FISH FRY & BREAKFAST AT ALL LOCATIONS**

El Cajon Blvd. at 54th	1495 E. Valley Pkwy.	1523 E. Main	700 E. St.
SAN DIEGO	ESCONDIDO	EL CAJON	CHULA VISTA

Advertisements in *The San Diego Union*, Nov. 4, 1979 (left) and Nov. 1, 1981 (right)

1998 - Nick Gelastopoulos purchased Aunt Emma's.

2009/02/25 - "A kitchen fire early yesterday prompted a temporary closure of Aunt Emma's Pancake Restaurant in Chula Vista, but it will reopen soon and celebrate its 50th anniversary this fall, the owner said. The blaze about 4:50 a.m. caused roughly \$20,000 damage to the restaurant on E Street near Woodlawn Avenue, said its owner, Nick Gelastopoulos. A delivery person called 911 after arriving at the business and seeing smoke and hearing a fire alarm, a fire dispatcher said. Firefighters extinguished the blaze 20 minutes later. The Chula Vista Fire Department was investigating the cause of the blaze. Gelastopoulos said it was apparently sparked by a gas leak and was largely doused by an automatic fire-suppression system that dropped powder onto the flames. The fire damaged several ovens in the kitchen, and firefighters shattered a side door when responding, Gelastopoulos said. The dining area was not damaged. The restaurant is the last of a chain of restaurants that once included eateries in El Cajon, in San Diego's College Area and in Escondido, Gelastopoulos said. It will celebrate its 50th anniversary, probably on Oct. 15, he added, with a 50-cent breakfast menu and coffee for a nickel. (*The San Diego Union-Tribune*, Feb. 25, 2009.)



The old Keith's Drive-In at 214 National City Blvd. became Aunt Emma's June 15, 2009.

2009/10/30 - Aunt Emma's Says Thanks for 50 Years, by Phillip Brents. "Breakfast eaters, harken: Nov. 5 is a date to circle-in red ink on your calendar. On that date, Aunt Emma's Pancake House will offer 50-cent pancakes and 5-cent cups of coffee in celebration of its 50th anniversary. The restaurant, located at 700 E St., Chula Vista, opens its doors at 6a.m. The one-day celebration of throwback-pricing is a gift to the community by owner Nick Gelastopoulos; who has owned the popular west side eatery since 1998. The restaurant celebrated its 40th anniversary with similar retro prices. Community is what Gelastopoulos stands for. "I like that we're a part of the community" he said. "I live in Chula Vista. I got married in Chula Vista. I have two kids going to school here. I love the Chula Vista community." That love affair goes both ways. Since Gelastopoulos purchased the Chula Vista restaurant, did repair work and reopened it with a-renewed zeal to better serve its customer base, the establishment first founded in 1959 has delivered dividends in more ways than just a profit margin. It has become a way of life for the one-time Greek soccer player. More than a decade later, Gelastopoulos continues to honor 2-for-1 coupons distributed throughout the community. The restaurant also continues to offer early-bird and daily specials despite the downturn in the economy. Serving the everyman, and everywoman, has been a focus for the Aunt Emma's owner. "We've kept things economical," Gelastopoulos said. "We've never raised our prices drastically. We still have \$3.99 specials. We have a lot of regulars. I have made a lot of friends here. The restaurant has had a wave of history since 1959." The time-tested pancake recipe has a secret according to the owner and it is not in the list of ingredients. In fact, the original recipe has mysteriously disappeared a few times over the years due to its popularity. But Gelastopoulos would rather not reveal what the secret is. Suffice it to say that there are currently 24 varieties of pancakes, the newest menu addition being the Nutella pancakes (crepes with hazelnut, chocolate and bananas). The restaurant also has recently upgraded its buckwheat pancake recipe. The buttermilk pancakes (served with whipped butter and syrup) have been the cornerstone of the establishment since it opened. A short stack includes three plate-size griddle cakes and costs \$4.89, with a full stack (five pancakes) going for \$6.29. Many varieties beckon customers with low calorie options but then there are the popular strawberry, apple and cajeta crepes that are just too tantalizing to pass up when trying to watch one's waistline. Many other breakfast items (egg and omelette dishes) also come with pancakes. A full array of lunch and specialty sandwich items comprise about a third of the menu. The popularity of the restaurant's breakfast menu (served all day) has created some problems with parking. Gelastopoulos has remedied that by renting parking spaces at the adjacent Best Western Inn. Aunt Emma's patrons can park anywhere in the Best Western lot for free. Business hours are 6 am to 3 p.m. The 50th anniversary specials will also be honored at Aunt Emma's sister restaurant in National City, the former Keith's Restaurant. Gelastopoulos purchased Keith's on June 15 of this year and kept the eatery located at 214 National City Blvd., open while the change of ownership took effect. The Aunt Emma's signage and new menu went into effect Oct. 19. The same menu is offered at both locations, with a few of the more popular specials from Keith's having been integrated into the expanded culinary selections. But that's another story." ( *The Chula Vista Star-News*, Oct. 30, 2009 )

#### SOURCES:

- *The San Diego Union and San Diego Union-Tribune and Chula Vista Star-News* newspapers.
- Morgan, Kile. *National City, The Kile Morgan Years 1960-1986*. National City CA: The Olive Tree Press, 1994, 2003.
- **Aunt Emma's Pancakes**

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