

Meet Arlene Loca

I reside in Indian River, MI, and I am a snowbird and have spent the past three years wintering in Tucson.

When I lost my husband in 1997, I spent time playing golf and Euchre. In 2004 one of my golf partners invited me to visit her in Tucson. We played golf during the day, and in the evening, she insisted on teaching me to play bridge. I told her emphatically that I was not interested. I had watched the ladies in the golf clubhouse playing bridge, and they never laughed or joked. It was way too serious for me. She insisted and said, "You will love it." Well, she was right .



With her help, I began to learn the game Goren style. When we got back to MI, we started to play at the local bridge club. She was still working, so eventually I started going to the club by myself. They offered lessons and had bridge players they called "rovers" to play with you if you did not have a partner.

After playing with different partners, I began to tell my friend what I was learning. From there, she started playing the new system, which I called "don't let the opps get the bid if you can help it."

After a time, I went on a cruise that offered bridge. I was still very much a novice, but the folks there were so encouraging and helpful. Since there weren't too many players, I am sure they welcomed anyone who could hold cards in their hands—so they let me play. Several players were so patient. Toward the end of the cruise, there was a knock on my door. There stood one of the bridge players, and he had a blue ribbon for me. So sweet. We laughed, and he encouraged me to keep working on my game.

The couple who hosted the bridge sessions was from Kentucky, and the gentleman would help his wife, as she was the director. He worked for ACBL. A year or so ago, they wrote an article in the *Bridge Bulletin* stating that his wife had developed dementia. I wrote a note to him expressing my sadness, and he responded, saying he remembered me and thanked me for sending him the note. I told him how much it meant for me to be able to come and play and feel so welcome.

I played Euchre for many years but never developed the friendships I have made through bridge. My girlfriend, who insisted that I learn to play, went with me to many tournaments. Two mutual friends went with us to help me attain my Life Master status. We played on a Swiss team, and I earned my Life Master and Bronze Life Master on the same day. My friend, an excellent player who began playing in college, had never joined the ACBL. Now she, too, is a Life Master and would have been many years ago, had she joined the ACBL earlier. So, in essence, I played with a low-point player who probably would have had thousands of points.

I have been a BBO member for years and have practiced many nights learning to play the hands. I have received many tips from various players who were helpful.

I became very good friends with Julie O'Neil, and had lunch with her often. I miss her, since she has moved to California, but we talk often. In the same breath, I have to say how much I enjoy partnering with Rick Dunie. We have had some good games together. I hope we will all be back at the table soon. I miss seeing everyone.