

Meet Aaron Carnes



The Italian Blue Team came to the Miami area in 1972 for the world championship against the American team, The Aces. As momentous as this was in the Bridge world, I was more interested in the race for President that year. Originally, Bridge had been something my maternal grandparents played in the 1940's and 1950's, once a week. It did not resonate with me at all.

I grew up in a working class neighborhood in Miami in the 40's and 50's. It was "Brooklyn South." My playmates were Italian/Russian Jews and Tennessee hillbillies. There were also elderly Swedish immigrants, a retired carpenter couple, and a Cuban man who rolled handmade cigars for sale. Most of my free time was spent with the two older Jewish kids. We spent hour upon hour playing hardball Monopoly. That, and making money, were our pursuits. I collected oil cans for a nursery and had a paper route.

School was a different experience from what most kids have today. I never took home a book through the first nine grades. My junior high reportedly had the highest number of juvenile delinquents in the country. One learned street smarts as a necessity there.

My great grandmother wanted me to go to an all-male school in Atlanta. In order to avoid more gang encounters, I agreed. It was there that Bridge came into my life. You see, the upper class men would play Bridge right after classes. Wanting to fit in, I watched them play and started to also play. This led to a casual relationship with the game that has endured.

Yale did not accept me until late July (apparently I took my studies a bit more seriously in Atlanta), so I decided to attend the University of Florida instead. It was closer and much less expensive, AND it had something missing during my three years in the Atlanta school -- girls! My first semester there were three tables of bridge going almost 24/7 in the dormitory. By the second semester, there were not enough of us left to fill one table. That experience led to meeting, through a friend, the future mother of my two children.

Bridge remained a casual thing until 1979. We had moved to Tucson in 1973 so our daughter would have a chance to live. She went from being hospitalized 12 times in Coral Gables in 1972, to only one time in 1973. By 1979 I was manager of a work efficiency unit in Tucson and had become bored. To alleviate the boredom, my wife suggested I try to find a place where bridge was played.

A friend and I went to a night game at the main club in town, run by John Puskas and his wife, Betty. We came in first that night. Afterwards, we discussed if we wanted to return to the club, as it didn't seem as if the competition was very good. We returned the next week and came in dead last. That hooked me. There are now only a few of us left from those early days, including George Good, Gene Hendricks, and Lois Jameson.

Atlanta became home years later. I started playing bridge at the main club there, and met, in 1992, the bridge player I would subsequently marry, and remain married to today. We did not hit it off at first, I learned later, as she blamed me for two bad boards

from me distracting her partner. However, some time later we were formally introduced -- both of us thinking nothing would come from our meeting. Still, Julie and I still feel blessed some 27 years after that meeting.

Julie and I moved to Tucson in 2009. It had been almost 25 years since I had lived here. My work life began as an Internal Auditor and ended as an Accountant with AT&T. The bridge players have been welcoming, and it feels great to be back and playing bridge!

Added November 2020