

# Sal Cataudella

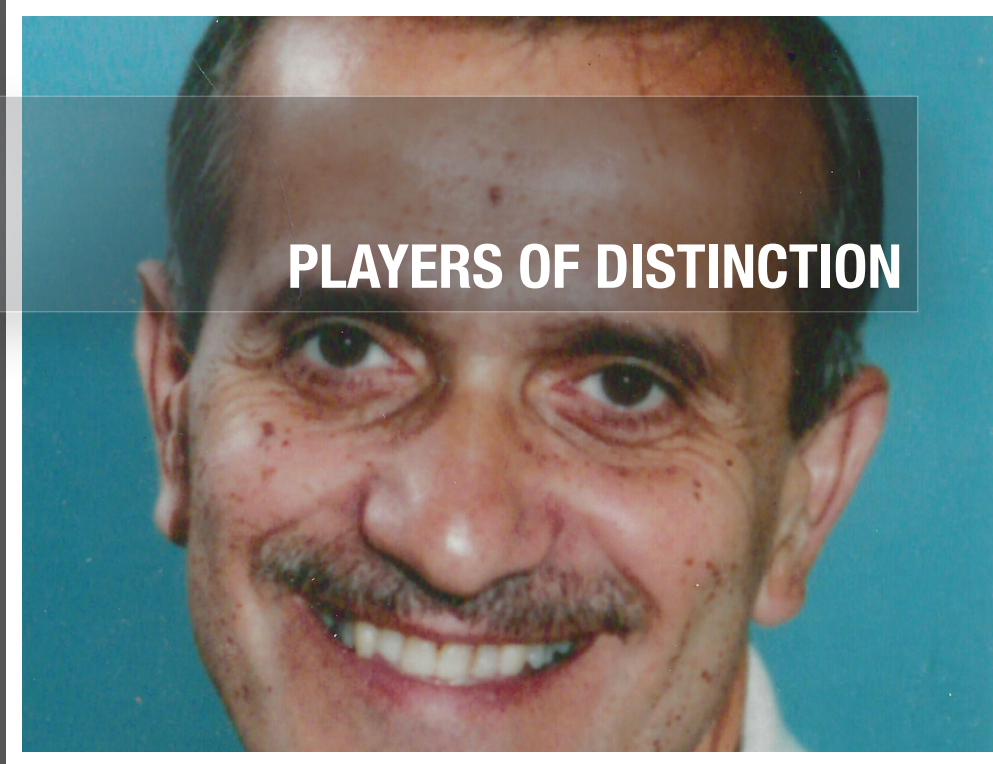
**Sal Cataudella started playing handball at George Westinghouse Vocational and Technical High School for Radio and Television.**

He and a number of other students used to hit a ball against the wall at lunch time. Sal's agility caught the attention of the gym teacher, who asked him to join the handball team, a sport Sal knew nothing about. On the team there were positions for three singles players and two doubles teams. Sal always played first doubles, practicing every day after school.

George Westinghouse had one of the top handball teams in the borough of Brooklyn. But the best first singles in the borough was John Reicher, who played for an opposing school. With his superb skills and willingness to play non-competitively with lesser players, John became a major influence on Sal, who learned a lot from observing and playing against John Reicher.

During a ten year period after high school, Sal served in the military, married, started a family, and established his own business. There seemed to be no time for handball. A move in the early 1970's to Avenue O in Midwood, Brooklyn sparked a renewed his interest in playing handball at a nearby park at East 4th Street and Avenue P. There the rumor was that an outstanding handball player by the name of Steve Sandler was one of the best players in the country. It was then that Sal began playing two on one with Steve's brother Barry against Steve. Although the twosome always lost, Sal gained experience and learned from Steve.

Later the important games centered around Coney Island's West 5th Street courts, where, on court number one (where the best players played on weekends), the loser often had to wait 4-6 matches to be completed before getting a chance to get back on the court. Everyone



## PLAYERS OF DISTINCTION

wanted to play the best teams. From the mid-1970's to the mid-1990's Sal played every weekend at Coney Island, where, in those years, it was known that a lot of money exchanged hands.

Annual USHA tournaments always found Sal competing in doubles and refereeing. He won a couple of tournaments held by the Inner City Handball Association at Orchard Beach in the Bronx, as well as a several National USHA Masters events in the Super and Super-Veteran Divisions in Coney Island. From 2009 to 2014, teamed with Steve Kraft, Sal championed every year except for 2013, when he and Kraft came in second to Joe Agosto and Dan Flickstein, the day after Kraft had fallen and broke his finger while playing singles in the Super Division of the event.

Around 2006 Sal started to play 4-wall in the long winter season at Sport Set in Rockville Center, New York, supplementing his outdoor 1-wall play in summer. However during this period of time Sal suffered several setbacks including hand surgery, bilateral knee replacements, and prostate surgery for prostate cancer.

Retired, as of this writing, for the past ten years, Sal continues to play handball. In 2015 he ran his first local tournament in Sarasota, Florida, where he and his wife were looking for a retirement home. The warm welcome he received from the Sarasota handball players played a key role in their decision to settle in Sarasota. Besides the enjoyment of the sport, handball kept Sal fit physically and mellow emotionally, while it provided him with a wealth of good friends whose camaraderie was always a pleasure.