

Marty Decatur* - 1984

Marty was born and grew up in the Bronx. He began playing 1-wall handball at Castle Hill Pool, where he frequently partnered with his brother, Fred. He also competed in tournaments run by the PAL as well as those run by the NY Parks Department and sponsored by the New York Daily Mirror.

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Later he began to play at the 92nd Street Y, a club he represented for many years in USHA tournaments. Although proud of his numerous accomplishments and titles, Marty's widow was proudest of the fact that the Sportsmanship Trophy was named for him.

Decatur's calm demeanor and low profile marked his play from the day he came on the handball scene as a 5'11", 130 pounder who could pound holes in the front wall. While many of his partners became engaged in disputes and controversies on the court, Decatur remained the same person, always letting his actions on the court take the place of words spoken off the court.

His handball record speaks for itself. In doubles he won 4-wall championships with Jim Jacobs (5), Stuffie Singer (2), and Steve Lott, 3-wall doubles crowns with Paul Haber,

John Sloan, and Lou Russo, and 1-wall crowns (4) with Marty Katzen, Arty Reyer, and Steve Sandler. In addition he captured five National 3-wall singles titles and a National 1-wall singles championship. His versatility marked Marty as one of the greatest players of all time. The respect he gained from friend and foe alike during his exceptional career makes his achievements even more significant.

Legendary champion Jim Jacobs once said of Marty Decatur, "He was as good as any person could be at ending a volley. No one except Paul Haber played as well as Marty under pressure. When the score was 19-all, he always won."

But Marty's real claim to fame was his incredible attitude. It's a rare few players who treat adversity as a stepping stone. He radiated a unique ability to lift himself and

his partner to whatever level necessary to win. He just eliminated all the excuses and made up his mind to win.

"Walking on the court with him as a partner was like walking down the street with Muhammed Ali. One could be that confident with Marty as a partner. Being schooled by him was being schooled by a true master," stated friend and partner, Steve Lott.

Yet through all of Marty Decatur's remarkable handball accomplishments he remained a quiet, humble player, who gave credit to his partners for their parts in the many titles he enjoyed. In Marty's own words, "I simply played a role with some players."

The man passed much too young at 57 years of age.