

# Tom Natale (NGM)

**Thomas L. Natale was born at the Fifth Avenue Hospital in the City of New York, on May 15, 1935. He attended Saint James for his eight years of elementary school, and graduated high school in 1953 from Saint Leonard's Academy in Brooklyn, New York. While in high school he played basketball, baseball, and bowled.**

At the age of 18, Tom enlisted in the United States Marine Corps; this was during the time of the Korean War. Tom did not make it to Korea; he was sent to the Mediterranean, where he was part of a reinforcement group for that part of the world. After fulfilling his three year enlistment requirement, Tom left the marines as a corporal.

He returned home to Brooklyn to find work and play baseball on some local club teams. He typically played the position of catcher and was a dominant hitter in his league.

At the age of 28, Tom applied and tested for the New York City Fire Department. In '62 he became a NYC Fire Fighter and was stationed in Coney Island, Engine 245, Ladder 161, and BN 43.

It was here, at his new job as a New York City Fire Fighter that Tom was introduced to the game of handball. The Coney Island firehouse at which he was stationed had a handball court on the roof. The

fire fighters used it for exercise in between the many callouts at the station.

It was also at this time that Tom met his wife, Patricia, and started a family. For the next decade he worked, raised a family, and played handball as much as possible. He honed his skills by playing in leagues within the Fire Department as well as a city league while representing Brooklyn's Union Temple.

In 1978 Tom won the New Jersey State Singles title. That same year was the start of a streak of National Handball titles for Tom that didn't end until 2002. From 1978 until 2002 he won 34 National Masters titles in 3-wall and 4-wall, both in singles and doubles, along with 2 World Handball titles. He even qualified for two pro stops when in his forties. One of his memorable moments was the year he finished as runner-up in a National Masters 1-Wall event. He and partner Jack Hickey lost in the final to National Hall of Famer Arty Reyer and partner. The tournament stands out because 1-wall was not a game Tom played regularly, and he was proud to have reached the final and compete against Reyer who was so well known for his 1-wall accomplishments.

Tom always enjoyed the camaraderie of the sport and the many friends he made throughout his handball experience.

At the age of 65 Tom retired from competitive handball, and, at this writing, continues to play his sons and grandsons for fun.

