

Robert “Buddy” Shapiro

Handball was always one of “Buddy’s” great joys in life.

His beloved father was a handball player, and some of “Buddy’s” fondest memories were of his father and him playing doubles together in Coney Island every Sunday. Earlier, when “Buddy” was a kid, Jack Harris, the oldest active handball player, used to drive him from Queens to the Coney Island courts. Harris introduced young Shapiro to all the great players of their time, including the incomparable Steve Sandler.

Shapiro became Captain of his handball team at Art and Design High School in the early 1970’s. The team won the Manhattan Championship every year, but the teams from the Bronx and Brooklyn were too strong for them.

When a bit older, Shapiro moved to Manhattan and became a “once a week” player, but he still competed against the champions, occasionally winning. He loved the science of doubles. After meeting Frank Devito, the two teamed up. They became friends for life. But they made a formidable 1-wall duo for many years defeating all the great teams of the day – even making it to the final match of the 1982 USHA National 1-Wall Doubles, which they lost in three tough games.

In a year when Devito was injured, Shapiro partnered with Danny Maroney and won a New York State Doubles Championship. A fine singles player, “Buddy” once defeated legendary Joe Durso in a singles game of a big blue tournament. But Shapiro’s favorite win came in a local opposite hand tournament in Coney Island. “Buddy” claimed to have studied Steve Sandler’s famed opposite left and backhand more than his school work.

As of this writing “Buddy” Shapiro is 60 years of age, and he still bikes to Coney Island from his home in Manhattan every Sunday trying, in his own words, “to keep small ball alive.”

PLAYERS OF DISTINCTION

