

CARL PORTER AWARD TO ONE-WALL'S ARTIE FUCHS

What began as a simple game for a six-year-old boy growing up in East Flatbush, Brooklyn has resulted, some sixty years later, in the prestigious Carl Porter Award for the man. The magnanimous contributions Artie Fuchs has made to one-wall handball have long been observed by New York one-wallers. And now the rest of the handball world has been made aware of Fuchs, who has given so much of his time and energy to foster the one-wall game.



As a boy and as a young man Artie's one-wall playing was groomed at Lincoln Terrace Park, where he played mostly "pink ball" with the big Spaulding ball: I played there from '61-'65 against guys like Myron Kaufman and Abie Fox. But they were much better than I was, so they played me with only their opposite hands against my two. I loved the competition and the challenge, and, as a bonus, I got the best exercise too. It was also the least expensive sport a kid could play. You just needed a quarter for the ball."

During those years, Artie also played PSAL handball for Tilden High School, where he was introduced to the official hard black ball. "I played for Tilden from '61-'63," Artie remembers. "In '62 I was a first doubles player. We won our district title, but lost the borough championship to Lafayette. In '63 I played third singles."

From 1966-1968 Artie served his country as a soldier in the US Army. He was stationed in West Germany during most of his military career. Once home again, he resumed playing recreational handball at Bedford Avenue and Avenue X in Brooklyn. Artie recollects one of his opponents from that local venue: "Jack Londin was one of the guys who played there. He was a singles and doubles champion during the '30's.

(Londin was AAU Doubles Champ in '33 and AAU Singles Champ in '35.) But Londin must have been in his late sixties or early seventies when I played him.”

Artie went on to play on weekends at Avenue P, during the era when Steve Sandler was playing his “circus” games: “My crew,” says Artie, “played on the middle court away from the gambling action. I finally started going to Coney Island to play around 1980. It was there that I learned about tournament competition. I didn’t even know that the Brownsville Boys Club hosted the USHA Nationals during the ‘60’s and into the ‘70’s. But I enjoyed meeting and playing the guys at West 5th.”

In 1995, Hall of Famer Albert Apuzzi asked Artie to assist him in running a tournament at the Hebrew Educational Society in Canarsie, Brooklyn. “I enjoyed being around the guys and the game,” says Artie, “so I agreed.” By 1996 Artie began running four tournaments each year, two open events and two masters events: “Every November and March since then up until 2008 one event would start at 7:30 AM, and by the time the second event would end, it would be past 6PM. It adds up to 48 tournaments in 15 years.”

In 2000, Artie met a group of one-wall masters aged players, who confined their play to Staten Island. “They were good players,” Artie states, “but they didn’t enter tournaments.” With help from Jim Lonano, one of the Staten Island group, Artie planned and arranged tournaments at the College of Staten Island: “We played mostly on the outdoor courts except when it rained. The College administration was not too receptive about our using their indoor facility. But sometimes they made allowances for us. We had some great matches there with guys like Jim Lonano, Joe Hines, Hugo Camacho, Al Weinstein, Stu Kirzner, Norm Adler, Rob Robinson, and others. We’d get as many as thirty-six men in an event. Eventually it became popular, and guys all the way from Long Island entered. Mike Lipman, Ray Clark, Sal Cataudella, and Mike Grabowski played in several of the Staten Island events. I teamed with Grabowski twice, and I won the tournament three times. In 2002, Mike and I beat Kirzner and Camacho in the finals. In 2004, we won against Ray Clark and Felix Zilberbrand, and in 2006, I won with Paul Angel against Steve Berger and Dan Danilczyk. In 2003, I had had rotator cuff surgery. And in 2005, I had quadruple bypass surgery. Obviously, I didn’t play those years. Eventually to accommodate the Long Islanders I ran a tournament out in Cedar Creek, so

they wouldn't have to travel so far for early morning games. I also ran two tournaments at the Flatbush Y, one in 2001 and one in 2002. For most of the tournaments, I ran I got a lot of help from Jack Feldman, who used to man the desk with me. I couldn't have done it without him. ”

Artie has been on the one-wall committee since 2000, and remains very active in the planning and execution of various local tournaments. For ten years now, he has assisted Vern Roberts and Mike Meltzer during the annual One-Wall Nationals. “I help at the desk,” adds Artie, “including setting up hospitality and arranging backup courts with the HES in case of rain. I also volunteer to referee whenever I'm needed. In 2002 I actually won the National “C” Doubles event with Ron Pescatore.”

Artie has been married for 42 years to Bonnie. They reside from May through September in the Homecrest section of Brooklyn, not far from Sheepshead Bay. From October though April they remain in sunny Tamarac, Florida. Their only daughter, Randi is 30 and lives in Manhattan. Genial and modest, Artie seems somewhat abashed by the tribute paid him by the one-wall community and the USHA: “As a kid,” Artie humbly says, “when we played baseball I liked being in charge, especially making the batting order. I like setting things up and then seeing them run to perfection. I guess it's why I've given my time to run tournaments.”

“I also enjoy playing and observing the players, especially the guys who have a no-nonsense approach, like Joe Kaplan or Willie Polanco. It's such a pleasure to watch them play – 100% effort and no arguing. After all – handball is an outlet for people – a game to get us away from arguing.”

Artie Fuchs came to my attention only within the last five or six years. That, clearly, had been my loss. He is befriended and respected by the entire one-wall community. Artie Fuchs is to be soundly congratulated for becoming the deserving recipient of the sixth Carl Porter plaque to be awarded since its inception