

# MoATA Hall of Fame Spotlight

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## Gary Hazelrigg, ATC/R

### *Hall of Fame Inductee 1988*

*By Katie Sniffen, MS, ATC*

#### **Career Beginnings**

Gary always had an interest and passion for learning anatomy, motion and structure. When he learned about the start of the national certification exam, he contacted Lindsay McClean to express his interest and learn more about the qualifications. Lindsay offered to grandfather him in, but Gary insisted he take and pass the test.

Gary served 13 happy years as the first athletic trainer for Missouri Western. He then took an opportunity with Columbia Orthopedics Group (COG) to develop the Columbia Sports Medicine Center. Simultaneously, he initiated a long-standing service with the Olympic programs, particularly men's basketball, traveling the world with the likes of Larry Brown and Coach K. He was later recruited by HealthSouth as their National Director of Sports Medicine to assess the profitability of their clinics and build out a sports medicine program.

#### **Mentors**

Gary first encountered Dr. Glen McElroy while serving as the Northwest Missouri representative on the Missouri State High School Association Sports Medicine Committee. Dr. McElroy became the driving force behind the incorporation an athletic trainer at COG to develop and implement a sports medicine center. Gary describes Dr. McElroy as not only an incredible orthopedist, but an incredible human. He was impressed with how he made patient's feel important and valued. Dr. McElroy would invite Gary to see patients with him and genuinely inquire about his perspective on the case.



### *Advice for Young Professionals*

Gary stresses the importance of continuous learning. He describes a lecture he used to give students asking the question, "Where are you relevant to your future?" He uses the analogy of a train. "Get on the train to learn. Once you step off the train and quit learning, you're out of the profession. You can't do your job. Don't miss the train. Don't get off the train."

Gary also emphasizes the importance of developing your own list of people that you think are of the same mind set and will challenge you. "Get your own set of Dr. McElroy's and Dr. Andrews' and work closely with them." He remembers how they always gave him a chance to show what he could do and would listen to his ideas with a genuine willingness to try them out.

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Gary had the honor of working with several other prominent sports medicine physicians, including Dr. Jim Andrews, during his time with HealthSouth and describes the ease at which they connected as they discussed their shared vision of the future of sports medicine in the high school setting. He formed relationships with Dr. Bob Kerlan and others who grew out of the fellowship programs of Dr. Jack Hughston and Dr. Frank McCue, the founders of the AOSSM. Many of these individuals went on to establish prominent orthopedic practices such as Kerlan-Jobe and SCOE. He recalls how fortunate he was to work so closely with so many great people.

### **Memorable Moments**

For Gary, his defining moment came when he found himself standing alongside prominent Division 1 athletic trainers while volunteering for Olympic teams. As a NAIA athletic trainer, he recognized that this was an opportunity to spend time with and learn from great people that he otherwise may not have had the chance to.

At the time, the Olympic Training Center was in such need of athletic trainers that they put out a national survey to find individuals who were interested in volunteering. After almost forgetting that he had filled out the survey, Gary got a call to come spend three weeks in Colorado with the rhythmic gymnastics team. It was also at this time that COG was offering him a job, so Gary had to accept under the condition that he could still maintain this commitment. COG recognized that this was a tremendous

opportunity not only for Gary, but for their organization as well.

Gary appreciated that while this was a volunteer opportunity, there was still a degree of evaluation of both clinical skills and how well you got along with the team, coaches, and other staff. This meant that there were really valuable people left standing alongside you. He soon found a home with the men's basketball team as they competed in worldwide events including the Jone's Cup in Taiwan, PanAm Games, the World University Games in Yugoslavia, Goodwill Games, Russia Exhibit, and US World Championships in South America.

### **Contributions to the Profession**

The start of licensure in Missouri is a unique story. Gary and Ron VanDam, athletic trainer at Central Missouri, worked together to establish a new set of bylaws. They had learned from Fred Wapple at Mizzou that previous attempts to put licensure bills in the hands of legislators only went so far. Johnny Omohundro, athletic trainer for the St. Louis Cardinals Football team, offered to put the bill in the hands of their Anheuser Busch lobbyists, saying "we never get anything turned down." Sure enough, the bill passed right away and that was the start of athletic training licensure in Missouri.

Cheers!



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