

# MoATA Hall of Fame Spotlight

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## Randy Biggerstaff, ATC/R

*Hall of Fame Inductee 1995*

*By Katie Sniffen, MS, ATC*

### **Career Beginnings**

A friend of Randy's convinced him to become a manager for the football team his sophomore year of high school. That summer, the coaches put on a football camp at the Lake of the Ozarks and recruited Randy and his friend as kitchen boys. During the camp, the coaches set them up with a 'Student Trainer Course,' sponsored by Cramer Chemical Company, that taught them how to tape. The next fall Johnson & Johnson (J&J) hosted an Illinois/Missouri high school all-star game and needed an athletic trainer for the Illinois team. A J&J rep that knew Randy asked if he would be interested, but Randy admitted he did not feel comfortable in his skills yet. Randy started to meet with the rep in his basement for apprenticeship in order to prepare for the position. Randy then took on the athletic training roll for the Illinois all-star team and began to meet many of the individuals that shaped his career.

Randy went on to be an athletic training student at that University of Missouri and became the acting athletic trainer for the wrestling and baseball teams.

### **Mentors**

Randy reflects on being able to observe both positive and negative models of athletic training during his early years as a student. Most notably, he remembers taking two injured football athletes to Jack Rockwell, then athletic trainer for the St. Louis Cardinals football team. He describes Jack as a great role model of athletic training that generated intrigue in the profession for him. He developed a friendship with Jack throughout his career.



### *Advice for Young Professionals*

Randy emphasizes that there are three things you need to have:

“You need to have somebody you love, some kind of spiritual belief in your life, and something you're passionate about.”

He adds that he thinks the most important parts are the spiritual belief and your partner. He describes the ideal partner as your best friend and someone that will support you and tell you when you're doing something wrong or spending too much time in the athletic training room.

Randy also encourages the athletic training membership to approach our profession's development as we do with the teams we work with.

“We're all the same team, maybe going different places, but we need to work together.”

# Randy Biggerstaff, ATC/R

## *Hall of Fame Inductee 1995*

Randy was recruited as an athletic training student by both Duke LaRue at West Virginia University and Freddie Wappel at University of Missouri. After choosing to go to Mizzou in 1969 for \$1/hour wages, Freddy quickly became a long-term mentor.

Other mentors include John Lopez of the Baltimore Colts and Mateja, Randy's best friend from Mizzou. Additionally, Randy developed a lot of influential relationships with individuals while serving on NATA committees and working with physicians over the years. Dr. Wilkins was the first team physician he worked with and contributes a lot of his personal and professional development to that relationship.

### **Memorable Moments**

While an athletic training student at Mizzou, Randy was set to travel with the baseball team to Mexico in March of 1972. He was supposed to leave with the team at 5am but remembers waking up to the sunlight coming in the window. Having missed the flight and also realizing that all the medical supplies didn't make the trip, Randy ventured out on his own to catch up with the team.

On his connecting flight, Randy's plane lost two of its generators and began plummeting to the ground. A stewardess got smashed by the drink cart and broke her clavicle; another hit her head. He remembers, almost comically now, all the tiny drinks falling out of the cart and "clinging" down the aisle. Yet he still recalls the fear of seeing the tree tops a short distance reach out his window

and the oxygen masks deployed from the ceiling. The pilots were able to level the plane and quickly asked if anyone could check on their flight attendants. Randy and another woman pulled the cart off the injured attendant, strapped her in a seat and secured her arm in a sling. The next report they got was that they would be "going into Houston hot."

### **Contributions to the Profession**

Randy's career is noteworthy for the trailblazing of athletic trainers in the clinical setting. When he graduated from Mizzou, there were no athletic trainers in the high school setting. He started at Granite City School District for four years before he and Dr. Harlen Hunter identified the need for a sports medicine clinic. In 1977, they opened a clinic near University of Missouri – St. Louis that cared for high school athletes. Over the 20 years in operation, they moved to Chesterfield, MO and gradually began providing consulting services as more high schools began to employ athletic trainers.

During this time, the practice of athletic training in the clinical setting was very non-traditional. Randy formed the original special interest group for the clinical practice.

In 1997, Randy transitioned his attention to Lindenwood University. Randy became both the inaugural Program Director and Head Athletic Trainer for Lindenwood's 22 sports. In 2003, the program became accredited and the athletics' program has grown to 52 sports with 11 full-time staff and 5 graduate assistants.



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