

The William “Pinky” Newell
Memorial Keynote Address

The Eastern Athletic Trainers’
Association

60th Anniversary

January 12, 2008

To the EATA Board of Directors I thank you for this opportunity. I am overwhelmed and honored to be selected to give this evening's Pinky Newell Keynote Address. I still can't figure out how I was selected for this honor! I know it's our 60th anniversary, so I hope it's not because someone on the EATA board thought I was present for all 60 years of EATA!

I have attended 32 of the last 33 meetings, however! Only a blizzard could keep me away! When I saw the distinguished list of past recipients, how did I deserve this honor? Many of the past honorees were and are distinguished mentors, educators, researchers, and leaders of our great profession. Why me, your every day "Joe" athletic trainer. But you know what, every athletic trainer in this room is a mentor, educator, researcher, and leader. I am just representing and speaking for all athletic trainers of all ages.

Pinky Newell was and had all these great attributes. Most of all, Pinky had a vision of the future of athletic training that was second to none! We are a very special and unique profession. Our profession has a great history thanks to Pinky and many other members here tonight (Point to the hall of fame table and head table). We also have a tremendous future because of everyone in attendance here tonight (hand to crowd).

I don't know if even Pinky would envision the big business we have become, but I do know he would not want us to forget about our members, athletes, and the physically active we serve. We must stay dedicated professionals! He would want us to never forget the foundation that the EATA and NATA was built! It's ironic that we celebrate our 60th year here tonight in Valley Forge. Many a battle took place in these surrounding areas that was the foundation of America. I've heard of the many battles that are passed EATA and NATA leaders had building our foundation. These battles still go on today. I know because myself and many others here tonight have been apart of these discussions that shape our future.

I was going to speak on the “good, the bad, and the ugly” of the Athletic Training profession, but we all know about that. I usually save that speech for our undergraduate athletic training students. Things I talk about tonight are for every one of all ages and areas of expertise. Pinky had extraordinary vision of the future of our profession. I hope that some of my varied experiences in this most treasured profession can give us insight in what I see now and in our future!

Job diversity – has been mentioned in past Pinky Newell speeches! Many in our profession, are pro or con on this issue. But job diversification is critical to the future of our profession. The creation of more employment opportunities for all our graduates and members are most important, but we can’t forget about our traditional settings and “education” for the traditional setting. If we can create more jobs in the traditional setting and expand into other setting as well, this will help our future salary structure, for all athletic trainers at all settings.

“Better jobs/ Better pay” - I’ll talk about this later.

The main problem I see with diversity is that we are all worried only about our areas of expertise and not about the profession as a whole! This can be dangerous to our profession. We must learn to respect each and every one of our areas of expertise! We are all an important part of this profession. We must be compassionate of the trials and tribulations of all Athletic Trainers at all levels.

“Divided we will fall, together we can be a strong force.”

All of us in this profession are mentors in one way or another. From the veterans to the students! Our students need to take advantage of this. You will learn so much here at the educational sessions, but you can also learn so much from the veteran Athletic Trainers just sitting and talking with them in the lobby, at lunch or dinner. Listen to these stories; we all learned so much from so many of them this way! Education is important! You can look many things up in a book, but it’s hard to look up experience! Education with experience is invaluable.

Mentors must lead by example and yet give our students some responsibilities to be creative. EX: if they see us still cleaning whirlpools, then they'll do it because they see us doing it, or if we have packed a van a certain way for away football for the past 30 years, maybe give them that job responsibility or they'll never learn to do it and guess what, we many learned something new from our students!

Students can learn from our veterans, veterans can learn from our students! Every one of us here tonight are mentors everyday. We mentor our students, athletes, coaches and co-workers! We many not always realize we're mentoring! That is why it is so important to be professional every day in every way.

Education – Pinky was a strong believer in the educational component of our profession. He would be proud of our educational reform. He might still argue the fact that we need to supervise our students properly, yet give them some autonomy so they can gain invaluable experiences, so they are able to handle situations on their own for their future.

I wish Pinky were here to give us his thoughts on this subject. We need to figure this out ourselves. Pinky might be confused as to why we limit hours of our students. He understood the importance of education and not taking advantage of our students, but he also understood that daily, dedicated commitment was important. He understood that experiencing the action was a great way to learn.

Many of our veteran educators understand that important learning occurs by being there! Scientific advancement and research help provide the backbone for our profession and should be continually fine-tuned to keep us at the top of the health care profession. With 90% of our Athletic Trainers still at the tradition setting doing clinical work every day. I think Pinky would want us to better define our standards of practice, improve our clinical core education, and teach that in our entry-level program. Then use credited masters degree programs to define specialized knowledge and skills.

We need to define our standards of practice! What we do every day!!

Once again, we are all educators! We educate every day, in everything we do in our profession.

Once again, we educate our students, student athletes, colleagues, co-workers, parents, coaches, Athletic Directors, reporters, etc. We must all respect that we are all educators in some particular way.

We are all researchers in one way or another! Some more intense than others. Many make it their specialty and do all the research, writings, studies, publications, and books that we use for the advancement of our profession, but remember many athletic trainers have been doing unofficial research for years, what they practiced clinically for 20-30 years and it has always worked as a form of research. They just haven't had the time or expertise to write it down or do blind studies.

We must again respect each other's areas of expertise and work together. Alvin Toffler has a quote, "The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and re-learn!"

This is so important in our profession for all of us at any point in our careers. We can never stop learning, especially in our profession. Things are changing every day. We must keep abreast of these changes. I'm sure Pinky Newell never envisioned us in legal battles both at the State and Federal levels (I applaud Chuck Kimmel, our NATA President for engaging in this battle with the Physical Therapist, I did warn you, did I not?) I believe we need to keep up the fight for Federal legislation regarding Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, (CMS) which restricts a certified Athletic Trainer's ability to practice rehabilitative services. And even though many people don't think this affects all of us, it does! It's a respect thing. It filters down to all athletic trainers. We can't lose this battle.

We have to continue to work on improving all our State Practice Acts as well as winning our Federal Legislative battle. Pinky may never have envisioned our need for the marketing of athletic trainers. We are so used to being in the background for so long, we aren't used to promoting ourselves, but this is something we need. Curriculums might look at course work in public relations and media training. Interpersonal skills are paramount in our profession. How to relate and talk with coaches, athletes, patients, parents, media, and athletic directors, is so important in the communication process today.

We may even need courses on how to testify to the Senate and Congress to help pass State and Federal Legislation, as many of us in this room have had to do. I'm sure Pinky would have been excited to do this! Another area I think needs to be addressed in our curriculum programs in conjunction with PR/Media training is contract negotiation for better pay and working conditions. Don't get me wrong, we still need to be dedicated and put in the time to do our jobs. Our younger athletic trainers need to know that they still have to pay their dues and prove their worth to demand the big bucks! Big bucks, who knows anything about that!

A trend I see in our profession is too many people leaving the profession because of the long hours and low pay. We are not retaining our members. Something needs to be done and I believe the NATA has strategies in place to hopefully rectify things. Many of us work with coaches and athletes who are making or going to make millions. We need to prove our worth and start getting a piece of the pie. Negotiating is key. We need to educate all of our athletic trainers on how to do this.

During my first college job (1975-85) I made overtime. Think of this today, with the hours athletic trainers work. I had a choice, comp time or over time. My athletic director made a valid point. You can't put milk and bread on the table for your children with comp time. They eventually tried to cut the overtime my last year. It was hard to do the same job in less hours for half the pay. I missed my first football game in 10 years. This was difficult for me. The next week we had a game at Temple

Stadium and they asked their athletic trainers to cover. Of course being friends of mine and the strong bond our profession has, they said no.

Real fast the President told the Athletic Director to pay me and get me back. Do you realize what happened? That was the start of a union! Maybe this is what we need? When people (coaches) need athletic trainers for camp etc. sometimes we need to say no until the pay is just. I've negotiated all my contracts just like many here have done. When our high school athletic trainers can make six figures and have weekends off then it's time to teach negotiating contracts. It's our future and the future of the profession that's at stake.

Most importantly, we all need to get more involved in our State, District, EATA, and National Organizations to keep them strong! There are some of the greatest leaders of our profession here tonight (motion to Hall of Fame table and head table). You can be one of them some day. You can make a difference. I guarantee you that you will make friends for life at this convention – I know I have. The NATA is changing it's entire leadership structure so more people can get involved. Take advantage of this, just get involved! You will love it, I know I did! One of the greatest accomplishments EATA has done is the resurgence of the students program, and the start of the student delegates! This will build our leaders of the future.

“The greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more!”

From our students we can always learn. In preparing for a talk to a college athletic trainers club, they wrote down a series of questions for me to try and answer. They were most interesting! A question that really popped out was the questions “tips on what makes a good athletic trainer”

Think about this for a minute. I'm sure you all have 10-25 tips. Maybe this weekend we should all write them down and put them in a box at registration and let our computer gurus tabulate them.

We could expound on these, but tonight let us take them for what they are. Here are a few that I believe in.

- **Be professional at all times!**
- **Study hard early in your career, soak everything up from your mentors**
- **Stay abreast of new trends in our profession**
- **Get involved in your profession**
- **Network**
- **Don't be shy**
- **Find out what you want to do in your profession**
- **Stay educated**
- **Know your state laws**
- **Be dedicated to your job and profession**
- **Again, always act professionally**
- **Be proud of your chosen profession**
- **Be sincere, care about people, your athletes, patients, friends and colleagues!**

These last two are paramount. We are a close-knit unit, let that not change. We must respect all areas of expertise for us to survive. So many of us are friends for life. People that we have met here at EATA years ago are our closest friends years later! We are like family!! We all come together during crisis and help each other during tough times. If you are an athletic trainer be proud! When someone asks, "what you do?" I never want to hear anyone say, "I'm just an athletic trainer." You are in the greatest, most special of professions and you ARE an athletic trainer, be proud of that! Jackie Robinson's plaque "A life is not important, expect in the impact it has on other lives!"

There are so many of you out there that have impacted my life. I only hope I had some impact on your lives and our profession!

I am most appreciative and touched to speak for Pinky Newell. I will cherish this evening forever!!

Thank you!

Now let's get to the Party Dolls!