



# With experience comes confidence: Randy Moeller transitions to the ATA Executive Director position

By CHRISTOPHER DELANEY



New ATA Executive Director Randy Moeller.

Simply put, uncertainty is a fact of life. However, even amid uncertainty, common threads remain, weaving structure and meaning into life's design. Randy Moeller, the new ATA Executive Director, often speaks of these "common threads" and emphasizes their significance in guiding life's purpose.

I recently had the distinct pleasure of speaking with Randy as he transitions into his new role after the sudden and tragic passing of Lynn Gipson in April. As I listened to Randy retell his life story, I realized the same names, clubs, opportunities and values kept resurfacing again and again. These were the threads that carried Randy from a small Minnesota gun club to Olympic venues and leadership roles at some of the largest corporations in the shooting industry. Now those threads are tugging him again, this time pulling him directly to Sparta, IL, to fill the tremendous void left behind by Lynn's passing.

When opportunity arises, Randy is the type of guy who says yes. He's not driven by personal gain but rather the constant desire to leave a lasting mark on a sport he loves. Randy lives by the simple creed: "Leave the world better than you found it." So, when he received an unexpected phone call from the ATA, which faced both grief and uncertainty, it took only a matter of days for him to pack up his life in Plymouth, MN, to heed the call.

"I threw three duffle bags of clothes and some shoes into my car and just started to drive," he said with scarcely any time to process the loss.

Just two weeks later, Randy walked the halls of ATA headquarters as the new Executive

Director. As he learns the lay of the land and becomes better acquainted with the staff, his first priorities are tackling the simple tasks that need to be addressed because of Lynn's sudden passing—the missed phone calls, the unanswered emails and the mounting paperwork that keeps our organization running. Given Lynn's unexpected death, the ATA had no official handoff, no debriefing and no orientation. But rest assured, as hard as the circumstances may be, Randy is no stranger to both the sport and the responsibility; he has spent a lifetime as an integral thread woven into trapshooting's very fabric.

## *Where the thread began*

Long before the boardrooms and Olympic planning committees, Randy entered the sport under humble circumstances with his dad's gun, tagging along to shoots with his father.

According to Randy, his father Jim was a bona fide "club rat." So was his grandfather Hugo, who helped manage a small gun club in Luverne, MN. Jim was a very active shooter; he made the 1951 junior All-American Team back when Jimmy Robinson still made the selections. He sat on the board of the Del-Tone Gun Club for decades in St. Cloud, MN, and served as president of Albany Gun Club in Albany, MN. Jim wasn't only involved in trap; he was an avid skeet shooter, serving as president of the Minnesota Skeet Shooting Association, and even being inducted into the Minnesota Skeet Hall of Fame in 1999. Needless to say, shooting was integral to the Moeller household.



Randy with a trophy from the 1990 Grand American Singles Class Championship.

As soon as Randy was old enough to carry his own shells, he began traveling the circuit with his father. While his brother Mark also shot and no doubt enjoyed himself, trapshooting struck the strongest chord with Randy. The competition and outdoor recreation the sport provided immediately captivated him. He still fondly recalls the awe he felt listening to old trapshooting yarns while his father rubbed shoulders with legends of the sport.

Randy insists that he wasn't a good shooter in his youth, but he worked hard to improve. As he entered college, he started a trap team with a few of his shooting buddies. On that team, his hard work served him well, and the coaches selected him to attend the Junior Olympic Camp in Colorado Springs, CO. From the connections he made at camp, he earned a full-ride trap and skeet shooting scholarship to George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. In college, Randy's shooting truly blossomed, culminating in his ATA Southern Zone Singles Championship win in 1990 with the lone 200.

Randy's relocation to Fairfax for college was just the first of many moves that trapshooting inspired him to make. With each new location, Randy made friendships that lasted a lifetime. Looking back today, there's scarcely a major gun club in the nation that he hasn't visited, and at each of those clubs he still knows many familiar faces. As Randy progressed further in the shooting world, those connections he made became common threads. Everywhere mentors, friendships and opportunities began weaving together a life indelibly stitched to the shooting sports.

## *The professional thread*

Whereas most college students did their internships at major companies, Randy trained with shooting clubs. He became the assistant manager at Bull Run Shooting Center in Centreville, VA, where he ran the range and gave both trap and skeet lessons. While he loved the opportunity, as graduation approached, Randy grew apprehensive, unsure where to go next after earning his degree in parks and recreation management and marketing. Unbeknownst to him, though, he impressed NRA staffers who took lessons from him at Bull Run, which led to an unexpected phone call offering him a job with the NRA's competition division. Randy graduated on a Saturday, and by Monday he was working in the NRA office just a few blocks from the White House. In short order, the NRA appointed him director of the International Shooting Group, and again, Randy packed his bags, moving this time to Colorado Springs, CO. There, he set up the offices at the Olympic Training Center.

While Randy's role at the Olympic Training Center gave him international experience, it



Randy (right) with Shane Naylor during his time with Remington.

was his transition to a leadership role with USA Shooting that led to his self-proclaimed “pinnacle of his career.” As members of the U.S. shooting team increasingly pushed for more control of international competition, USA Shooting officially separated from the NRA in 1994. With Atlanta slated to host the 1996 Olympics, Randy led USA Shooting efforts organizing junior, national and international championships, building the Olympic shooting facilities, and hosting the many meetings required to pull off the world’s largest sporting competition. Yet again, Randy packed his bags and moved, this time to prepare Atlanta to host the Olympics.

The Olympics were a flurry of activity and a total success. Atlanta welcomed the best shooters from around the globe, and Randy stood just feet away as gold medals were draped around the necks of our American athletes. However, as the echoes from the last gunshots faded, Randy again questioned what came next. It was fate that again intervened.

Just weeks before the Games concluded, another unexpected phone call came in, this one from Trapshooting Hall of Fame eshrinee Rudy Etchen offering Randy a position with Remington as the company transitioned from Delaware to North Carolina. Randy, true to his

amenable attitude, packed his duffle bags and drove down the road once again. He spent 10 years with Remington in a variety of marketing and sales roles that included working with their pro staff and the gun club business, marketing reloading supplies, shells and targets to clubs nationwide. Randy became Remington’s familiar face as he staffed their booths at all the major shoots.

Randy didn’t just excel at Remington; he thrived in numerous other outdoor shooting sport roles throughout his career. These opportunities have led him to Lewistown, MT; Sidney, NE; and Plymouth, MN. Randy has managed hundreds of outdoor vendors with Sports Inc, overseen product selection and marketing for Cabela’s Gun Library, and served as the director of sales with Bill Hicks & Co., a national firearms distributor. However, Randy speaks most passionately about his work as the Executive Director/CEO of the MidwayUSA Foundation.

“There is nothing better than seeing braces-filled smiles of kids on the trap field, high-fiving each other after smashing another target, Randy said.”

This passion led Larry and Brenda Potterfield and their board to hire Randy to develop and implement a plan to educate the outdoor community about the endowment programs offered by MidwayUSA Foundation. Through his efforts, the \$80 million endowment fund grew to more than \$140 million in assets, providing permanent financial support for growing youth shooting sports.

Throughout it all, the Olympic planning, the boardroom meetings, the corporate offices and all the responsibility and pressure that came with his positions, Randy made time to shoot more than 150,000 registered ATA targets. After all, it’s the trap field where the true heartbeat of the shooting sports resides. Leadership, Randy believes, should never drift too far from that familiar rhythm. He still finds himself most at home standing alongside his fellow shooters on the line, surrounded by familiar faces and the common threads that first drew him to the sport all those years ago.

### Looking forward

Randy’s story, as impressive as it is, isn’t over. The countless threads weaving their way through every chapter of his life have uniquely prepared him for the challenges to come as the ATA’s new Executive Director. And while Randy steps into his new role at an emotionally difficult time, he sees the familiar strength that has sustained the organization for generations.

As familiar faces reunited to pay their final respects at Lynn’s service, Randy was reminded of the true heart that binds together the shooting community, one that will persevere long into the future.

Randy praises trapshooting’s passionate volunteers, always willing to help score rounds, fill trap houses, and lend their expertise to the newer shooters. He commends local clubs for not only hosting registered shoots but also for opening their grounds and welcoming outdoor recreation of all kinds. Mostly, though, Randy speaks to those breathing new life into the sport by growing the recent youth shooting movement. Over the past decade, AIM, SCTP and the USA Clay Target League have reinvigorated the shooting sports through the infusion of young blood, and in doing so, trapshooting’s legacy is passed on to the next generation.

To Randy, trapshooting’s greatest strength lies in its unique ability to bring multiple generations together. The trap range is one of the few places where the 80-year-old shooter and the teenager compete on equal terms, where the blue-collar shooter stands shoulder to shoulder with the white-collar one, and where multiple generations of the same family can craft memories that last a lifetime. In this way, Randy seeks to preserve trapshooting’s spirit.

Even so, Randy carries a wealth of leadership and marketing experience, experience that will no doubt be put to good use modernizing the ATA well into the future. Whether it’s coordinating Olympic venues or managing professional relationships, Randy understands the challenges and complexities facing organizations as dynamic as the ATA. Above all, though, Randy returns to the same principle that has guided him throughout his career: leave things better than you found them.

For all of the professional titles he has carried and all the unexpected phone calls that led to long drives and new opportunities, it’s the people Randy speaks most fondly about. The weight of his leadership roles is not lost on him, but neither is the understanding that the sport wouldn’t exist without the volunteers, families, friendships and community willing to uphold the traditions that make this sport worth preserving.

Now, as Randy Moeller walks the grounds of Sparta as the ATA’s new Executive Director, the same common threads that carried him through a lifetime in the shooting sports continue weaving a lasting legacy forward.



Randy hunting near Raton, NM.



Randy (second from right) with Bob Glatz, Dean Townsend and Jeff Wagner at Missoula Trap & Skeet Club.