

C. Randall Byers “Randy” 1945-2002

By George A. Bettas and Jack Reneau



ABOVE: Randy discussing the finer points of measuring at the 20th Awards Program Judges' Panel in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
BELOW: Randy chukar hunting in Idaho.

The arrow was broken in sorrow when our friend Randy Byers took the last trail on August 17, 2002. The sport of fair chase hunting lost a forceful champion when Randy died at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch at the age of 56. At the time of his death Randy was among some of his closest friends — members of the Boone and Crockett Club — who made a valiant effort to save his life after he suffered a massive heart attack. Randy's untimely death came at a time when he was at the zenith of his academic career at the University of Idaho, as well as his “public service careers” as the President of the Pope and Young Club and Chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Records of North American Big Game Committee.

Randy Byers truly loved life, his family, his career, his students, and his work with the Boone and Crockett and Pope and Young Clubs. His life was characterized by his extraordinary dedication to helping others, a great sense of humor, a love of nature, a strong devotion to his profession, and a tenderness for people. He was an inspirational professor who made learning interesting and fun for his students. His self-deprecating humor taught his students to take a step back at times and take a good laugh at themselves because “it builds strong character.” He was a master teacher who mentored new and veteran faculty members alike. He was a university department Chair who took great pride in making new faculty feel welcome and taught them the rules of the game with such a “light hand” that they never felt inadequate. He was a dedicated father who over more than 20 years of teaching his two boys the real joys of hunting never once failed to encourage his boys to take the lead. He always wanted them to have the shot or land the fish. He was with them when they shot their first black bear, their first deer, their first elk, and their first cougar. They trudged through snow together, watched the desert sun, fished Idaho's rivers, loved and appreciated the outdoors.

Randy's dedication to Boone and Crockett Club's and Pope and Young Club's North American big game records systems remains unmatched in modern times by anyone other than Randy's mentor, Dr. Phil Wright. In his letter of support for Randy's Regular membership in the Boone and Crockett Club, Phil noted, “I know Dr. Byers well first from working with him as a measurer with the Pope and Young Club then as one of his committee members when he became chairman of that Club's Records Committee. He was a participant in June 1985 at the ad hoc committee I convened at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch to review the scoring problems of our Club. He later served as a Judge at the 19th Awards Program in Las Vegas, in 1986. I have corresponded with him at length about scoring problems of interest to both of our organizations. He is one of the truly dedicated official measurers who have devoted hundreds of hours of effort into

standardizing the measurement techniques now in use by both Clubs. His mature judgment about scoring matters is based upon a profound knowledge of the subject.”

This past spring Randy was elected to bowhunting’s highest position as President of the Pope and Young Club. Randy became an Associate Member of the Pope and Young Club in 1971, Regular Member in 1977, and an Official Measurer and Senior Member in 1981. He was appointed as Pope and Young Club’s Records Chairman in 1983.

Randy was appointed as a Boone and Crockett Club Official Measurer in 1981. He became a Regular Member of the Boone and Crockett Club in April 1988. Walter White recruited Randy for membership in the Boone and Crockett Club because of his leadership with the Pope and Young Club’s records program and his expertise in the Boone and Crockett Club’s records system. Although his weapon of choice was the bow and arrow, Randy had taken the prerequisite big-game animals with a rifle prior to being proposed for the Club. In this regard, Randy followed the same path to Boone and Crockett Regular membership, as did Fred Bear and Glenn St. Charles. In fact, Glenn St. Charles wrote one of Randy’s seconding letters.

Throughout his tenure on the Club’s Records of North American Big Game Committee, Randy was a strong voice for fair chase hunting and standardized measuring practices. He served as a judge on every Judges’ Panel since 1986. He was chairman of the 20th Awards Program Judges’ Panel in 1989. He was the obvious choice to chair the Records of North American Big Game Committee when Walter White decided to step down from the position in 1995.

During the seven years he chaired the Records of North American Big Game Committee, Randy’s leadership moved the Club and its Awards Program through significant growth and major challenges. His leadership was instrumental in guiding delicate changes in the Awards Program through the Club’s decision-making system. He did this with the same “light hand” that he used in his university teaching and administration career. Randy’s thoughtful leadership was fundamental to the success of these major changes in the Awards Program.

Boone and Crockett Club President, Earl Morgenroth, has often made the analogy that the Records of North American Big Game Committee of the Boone and Crockett Club is to the Club as the Fighting Irish football team is to the University of Notre Dame. He noted, “The Club has 21 committees, but

the signature committee that brings national recognition to the Boone and Crockett Club is the Records of North American Big Game Committee. Randy Byers was the Knute Rockne of North American Big Game Records Keeping. He died as he had lived and I’m certain the way he would have wanted to: measuring a big game head.”

Randy’s great-grandparents on both sides of the family were original Idaho settlers and Randy was a fourth-generation Idahoan. The Collister area of Boise was named after one of Randy’s great-grandfathers, Dr. Collister, Boise’s first doctor. Randy grew up in Meridian, Idaho, on his family’s farm and attended elementary school in a one-room schoolhouse. After graduating from Meridian High School in 1964, he attended the University of Idaho and was a member of Delta Tau Delta fraternity. Randy graduated in 1968 from the University of Idaho College of Business and was named as an outstanding graduating senior. Randy went on to receive his master’s degree from the University of Wyoming and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. Professor Byers joined the University of Idaho business faculty in 1973 and served as department chairman for 18 years.

Randy was honored with numerous teaching and advising awards and recently returned to the classroom full-time, where he continued his love for teaching, which spanned almost 30 years at the University of Idaho College of Business and Economics. Because he was well-known and admired by so many of his students and advisees, the first floor level in the new J.A. Albertson’s College of Business on the University of Idaho campus was named in his honor prior to his death.

He learned to hunt from his father and grandfather and passed on the hunting passion to his sons. He was a bowhunter by choice. As a child he dreamed of big game hunting in Africa. He achieved his dream with five great hunts in the last six years. Randy found hunting challenging, mentally and physically, and was quoted as saying, “It is just part of who I am.” A granite brick will be placed upon the Boone and Crockett Club’s Millennium Circle in Randy’s memory through the generosity of Boone and Crockett Club Members. Contributions in Randy’s memory will also be used to start an endowment for the Boone and Crockett Club’s Records of North American Big Game Awards Program. ■

Some material included in this article has been taken from eulogies written by Billy Ellis, Doug Davidson, and Randy’s sons, Tod and Kirk.



Tod Byers

Dad truly loved every aspect of his life. The best way I know to share Dad with you is to tell you of the many ways I will miss him:

I will miss:

Following his footsteps in the snow.

His frequent phone calls about the animals he saw and the new places to scout.

The way he held his granddaughters close to his heart.

The coffee-stained mugs in his truck.

The affection and love he showed my mom.

Standing on a ridge in Idaho, waiting for the sun to rise, listening to an elk bugle, a turkey gobble.

Hearing him yell at his hunting dog.

His sense of humor and his smile.

Seeing him in his camo clothing, floppy hat, or wool pants.

Pointing out food stains on his shirt.

Hearing him call me on the phone and say, “It’s me,” or “Randy Byers.”

Sitting under a tree in the rain with him, neither of us saying a word, yet both communicating with each other.

These are some of the things I will remember forever.



Kirk Byers

“One feels that Randy should be out in the field on his tractor, or driving his truck and camper, or wearing his camouflage and walking through the timber. One feels he should walk through the door and smile, but I know he won’t. I know when the cool September mornings come, when the elk bugle, when the turkeys gobble, when the coveys of chukars flush and mock us from a distance, when the dog goes on point on a beautiful fall day, he will be a part of me. He will be walking up the hill ahead of me.”