

2009 Dicus Award winner Samuel Brown, PT, (right) with past winners Louise Yurko, PT, MAEd, Fran Welk, PT, DPT, MEd, and Randy Roesch, PT, DPT, MBA.



Robert G. Dicus Award 2009

**Acceptance speech by award recipient
Samuel M. Brown, PT, DTP, from the 2009 PPS Annual Conference**

I'd like to thank those that nominated me, the Awards Committee, and the Private Practice section for bestowing on me such a wonderful honor. Abraham Lincoln once said, "I do not consider that I have ever accomplished anything without God." I also feel that way.

In 1969, the first basketball game I ever started at Monticello High School was like a scene out of the movie *Hoosiers*. Basketball is king in Kentucky. As we were warm-

ing up before a packed gym, Coach Harper came over to check the scorebook. The scorekeeper was a fellow named Polly Worsham, who was one of the few people who could come into our practices. As Coach Harper looked at the lineup, he said, "Polly, what's this?" "Why, it's Brown, you said he was starting." "He is, but it is 'Sam Brown,' not 'Damn Brown.'" "But coach, that's all I've ever heard you call him."

From those humble beginnings, to receive this tremendous honor is really something for me.

I want to thank my wife Linda, also a physical therapist, who has covered for me over the years while I went to meetings and has been a true “Proverbs: 31 woman” and partner for the past thirty-three and a half years. Also, thanks to our children Joseph and Natalie.

A good friend of mine told me years ago that one of the keys to success was being in the right place at the right time. That has been true for me over the years, as well as being in the wrong place a few times.

I want to thank the Kentucky Chapter and the wonderful people of that group who have supported me over the years in so many ways. I would go to Kentucky Chapter meetings because for a time, I was the only physical therapist in a ten-county area and I needed someone to talk to about patients. People like Linda Langley, Debbie Puckett, Connie Hauser, and David Apts—all pioneers in practice in Kentucky—and Larry Benz and Terry Brown. They and many more have helped me unconditionally.

I want to thank Ernie Burch, who has been a mentor and really got me involved in the section; Marilyn Moffat, whose leadership allowed me to use my skills for the betterment of the group as a part of one of the stronger boards at APTA; and Andrew Guccione, who as a Yankee liberal, became a close friend to this southern conservative.

Every major decision on the direction of our profession in the last thirty years has been influenced by one or more of these three individuals.

Along with Andrew, Ben Massey and Rick Reuss are my “iron-sharpens-iron” friends—true “Jedis” of physical therapy. They have encouraged me and made me better through our friendships. Rick is one of the most politically savvy and passionate people I know about this profession. The only negative thing I could say about Ben is that he’s a North Carolina fan.

There are so many more I need to thank like Peter Towne, Charles Magistro, Jan Richardson, and others, but time doesn’t permit. I want to thank the wonderful APTA staff like Bonnie Polvinale, Kristy Grover, Rita Pierson, Jim Nugent, and others.

All along the way I was blessed with having wonderful staffs to work with at home. Many of them, as well as many of the students I’ve had, have gone on to their own successful practices, epitomized by people like Sonya Beattie and Dwanda Guffey.

When Ernie Burch was the section president, I was the Government Affairs chair, and with the help of Rick Reuss and others we increased the level of advocacy for the section. I also was on the Nominating Committee with Lucy Buckley, and boy, was that a hoot. I was privileged to serve as liaison to the section for several years when I was on the APTA Board of Directors.

I was fortunate to represent the APTA at the 1996 Paralympics and on the American Medical Association’s RUC HCPAC. It was there, along with Jim Nugent, that we were able to raise the reimbursement for physical therapy.

I say all this because I’m from a small town and a rural physical therapist who wanted to serve and make things better. I’m here because of the wonderful relationships I’ve had and have with so many people. One of God’s most gracious gifts to me has been surrounding me with friends and wise counselors.

I didn’t know Bob Dicus, but I know all of the past winners of this prestigious award and several people who did know him. To be included on that list is truly a tremendous honor.

I’ve had a guiding principle that I would encourage you to consider. It comes from a book by former football coach Frosty Westering entitled, *Make the Big Time Where You Are*. It talks about making the most of your talents. Not everyone can work in the super facilities or cities. The “big time” is not a place; it’s not a state of your mind. It is a state of your heart. It is you, one on one, with the patient, the referral source, or your community using the skill, talents, and compassion that only you have. It is simply your willingness to bloom where God has planted you.

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With that principle in mind, where are we going in physical therapy?

This health care reform stuff is scary and could affect our goals of autonomous practice, doctoring profession, practitioner of choice, and direct access. Will we be a doctoring profession or a technical occupation? Or will we be a primary caregiver for anyone who has a functional problem and then refer to other specialties as indicated? Private practice may be threatened by the vertically integrated networks, except for possibly those of us in the rural areas or in niche practices. Therefore, I believe we must shift our mindset from an association of members to a society of professionals.

So how do we get there, to the “big time”?

Historically, we have always played on the hamstrings of the tricotomy of our purpose; practice, education, and research. We must be aggressive in our advocacy, our leadership, and evaluating our purpose. We must not self-limit ourselves in the pursuit of our goals. Risks must be taken to pursue solutions to the tremendous challenges ahead. We must not forget that limitations, like fears, are often an illusion.

We all struggle with the problem of reimbursement, access, employee problems, making payroll, and the other struggles that every small business has. But as my favorite political commentator says, “Without struggle, there is no purpose.” And our real purpose is the business of physical therapy.

Ask yourself, is your community a better place because of you and your business? Does the public know who you are and what physical therapy is? If I had my way, I’d take the section’s old “This Bud’s for You” video and the APTA “Moments Like These” video and take about \$6 million and have Super Bowl commercials. In one massive effort, millions of people would know who and what physical therapy is. The commercials would be talked about for weeks and lots of physical therapists would then be doing interviews. Physical therapists around the country could host Super Bowl parties and invite other health care providers.

What do we do when we get to the “big time”?

Obviously, we have to have the clinical evidence and outcomes to justify us being there. We need to use technology more, have more clinical research to help us. We must advocate physical therapy like never before on all levels to ensure our permanence. We have a kaleidoscope of talents and skills that should secure us in the face of medicine for all time, and we must use them.

Let me explain: Linda is semiretired and is currently chairwoman for the local Growing Healthy Kids Coalition. Several months ago, she went to a meeting in Lexington and saw a demonstration of a product that she thought would help the children of our community fight against childhood obesity and early onset diabetes. It was a Hop Sports program. It is a com-

puterized physical education program with 105 pre-programmed activities. It is like a giant Wii and costs \$19,000 per unit, and she wanted 10 of them—one unit for every school in our county from kindergarten through high school.

She got the coalition to agree. She met with a grant writer and found an 80/20 matching grant. She started laying the groundwork to get the matching 20 percent, something I thought would never happen in a poor community during a recession. She went to civic groups, businesses, the school boards, the government leaders. She pleaded her cause, gave newspaper interviews. She even wrote Bill Gates and Oprah. She was successful and got pledges for more than enough money and she got the grant.

Over 3,500 kids will benefit from this and for years to come. It was a physical therapist with the knowledge and passion to “Git-R-Done!” That’s how physical therapy can impact a community. That’s making the “big time” where you are.

Passion propels people, and my challenge to you is, are you passionate enough to get bloody for the cause?

In his first inaugural address, Ronald Reagan told a story that I believe is a great description of the attitude of Bob Dicus and that all private practitioners should have.

Martin Treptow died in World War I in France. On his body was a diary, and on the flyleaf under the heading “My Pledge,” he had written these words: “America must win this war. Therefore I will work, I will save, I will sacrifice, I will endure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle depended on me alone.”

President Reagan continued, “The crisis we are facing today...requires our best effort, and our willingness to believe in ourselves and to believe in our capacity to perform great deeds; to believe that together, with God’s help, we can and will resolve the problems which now confront us. And, after all, why shouldn’t we believe that? We are Americans.”

You’ve honored me with this prestigious award and with your presence here tonight.

Thank you and may God bless. ■



Samuel Brown, PT, (left) with 1984 Dicus Award winner Jay Goodfarb, PT.