



As a medical student at the Sanford School of Medicine, James Garrick had no idea sports medicine would become his career.

How could he? The medical specialty didn't exist. But he made it his life's work thanks to a professor at the Mayo Clinic where Garrick was completing his residency training. "He called me into his office, usually a bad sign," Garrick said. "He told me, 'If you would like to take three months off and run a medical facility in Vail, Colo., we'll approve it.'" Garrick quickly accepted the job for practical reasons. "Residents made \$200 a month," he said. "I could make enough money in Vail to get me through the next year."

But the job blossomed into a career, and Garrick became a pioneer in sports medicine. He founded the first academic sports medicine program in the country. He founded an innovative clinic to treat sports injuries in San Francisco. He provided his expertise in a workout video with Jane Fonda. He's conducted research for the NFL Players Association and served as the team physician for the U.S. Figure Skating Team. And he's become a leading expert on treating dance injuries, working with the San Francisco Ballet.

Garrick describes his career success as a series of fortunate events. "None of this was planned out very well in advance," he said. But the commitment he brought to even his first temporary job shows how he did not let opportunity slip through his grasp.

Ski Injuries

To prepare for his job during the ski season in Colorado, Garrick began searching for medical literature to learn about treating ski injuries. "There wasn't anything," Garrick said. "I had no idea what I was going to see." Garrick then initiated the biggest study of ski injuries in the world up until that time. Eventually, 11 fulltime investigators were placed at slopes throughout the country to gather more data.

Garrick said he experienced a bit of culture shock in Vail. He was a long way from his hometown of Webster, South Dakota. "Dealing with resort attendees during vacations is no walk in the park," he said. "I don't think it brings out the best in people if you are paying a trillion dollars to ski in Vail and on the second day you break your leg. I was always the bearer of bad tidings."

His relations with the ski patrol members were better. He was flattered that the ski patrol would take him, a self-described "terrible skier," to every part of the mountain to ski. "I thought they were doing this because they cared for me," he said. "In reality, they were making sure I could get to any place on the mountain in case anything happened to them." Although he misread their initial intentions, Garrick says some of the patrol members remain among his best friends.

Vietnam Service

Garrick had deferred his service in Vietnam until his residency was completed by joining the Naval reserves. That meant in 1967 he was pressed into service as a doctor at an air base near Da Nang. "It was great," Garrick said of his service in Vietnam. "I wouldn't trade it for any time in my life. You were doing work that was important."

Garrick also launched another research study, documenting effective management of casualties. Garrick felt the project was so important he voluntarily extended his tour three months to 15 months to complete it.

After serving in Vietnam, he joined the Naval Medical Research Institute and became a professor at University of California-Davis. The ski injury study he launched in Vail continued when he was in Vietnam. When he got back, the data was gathered, and he published an academic paper on his findings.

Academic Sports Medicine

His paper caught the attention of the University of Washington. Garrick says forward-thinking administrators had decided care for university athletes should be more scientific. The university's medical school created a sports medicine department and hired Garrick to direct it.

"Football and basketball players always received good care from athletic trainers but athletes in other sports didn't get that much attention," Garrick said. "We changed that. We got care for everyone."

He also helped the medical community take athletic trainers seriously. "How we rehabilitate from sports injuries and how we diagnose them is a reflection of the way athletic trainers learned to do this," Garrick said. "We don't put people in casts anymore. We mobilize people quickly after an injury as much as possible. Athletic trainers were doing this, and wondered why doctors kept putting people in casts and taking months to rehab. Athletic trainers don't get enough credit."

In fact, Garrick said, the head athletic trainer at the University of Washington shaped much of his thinking on treating sports injuries. "He taught me more than anybody in my whole career," he said. "Trainers were miles ahead of doctors as far as practical management of athletic teams."

While at Washington, Garrick also began treating dancers "because the head of the dance department bludgeoned me into doing it." She essentially wouldn't take no for an answer and wanted the same care for her dancers as athletes received. "I was engulfed in a world I didn't understand very well," Garrick said.

He was a quick study and his work at the college eventually led to working with the San Francisco Ballet. "I've been taking care of professional dancers ever since."

Football Field Study

Before moving to San Francisco, Garrick led the first major university study of Astroturf™ at Washington. Concerns were raised that the surface contributed to injuries. The study concluded Astroturf™ was fine when it was wet. When it was dry, its traction was so good it did lead to more injuries. The wet climate in Washington helped reduce the impact of the surface. Garrick even had the field crew wet the field before football games "until coaches had a fit."

His Astroturf™ study attracted the attention of the NFL's Players Association, which wanted its own study conducted. Garrick complied. It wasn't his only brush with the national limelight.

His work with world-class dancers led him to begin caring for figure skaters. Garrick served several years as the team physician for the U.S. Figure Skating Team. He also helped add medical credibility to Jane Fonda's workout videos, which were part of the fitness craze of the 1980s. He even starred in one. And Fonda wrote the forward to one of the sports medicine books he co-authored. "I wish I could take credit for planning my career but as you can see it wasn't that way," Garrick said. "These things just happened."

In the end, he became a renowned expert in sports medicine in the City by the Bay, a long way from his rural roots. "I appreciated growing up in South Dakota and getting the bulk of my education in South Dakota," Garrick said. "I periodically agonize about moving back as I near retirement, but I am not sure I could handle the winters anymore. I've been in California too long, and the weather is too good."

Sidebar: Unexpected Video Star

James Garrick, M.D., was the co-author of several well-received consumer books on how to avoid sports injuries, but his biggest brush with celebrity was co-starring in a workout video with Jane Fonda.

Garrick even made the cover of the video, "Jane Fonda's Workout: Sports Aid." The 1987 video was the result of years of Garrick advising Fonda on her videos.

Years earlier, Fonda's latest video was receiving some criticism as being too vigorous. She had an aerobics studio in San Francisco, where Garrick had founded the Center for Sports Medicine, which was recently renamed in his honor as the James G. Garrick Centers for Sports Medicine. One day while in the city, Fonda decided to consult with Garrick, one of the leading experts in his field. That meeting led to a new role for him.

"For three years, we vetted all of her videos," Garrick said. "She would send us a rough cut and I would go through it with a group of people at the Center and review it. Interestingly, she never balked one moment at following our suggestions."

Fonda is a well-known critic of the Vietnam War while Garrick was a veteran of the conflict. But he said the two simply never talked politics and adds: "She was a delight to work with."

Their working relationship culminated in the 90-minute video focusing on treating sports injuries in which Garrick co-starred. "I was in the right place at the right time," he said.

Fonda wrote the foreword to the 1986 book, *Peak Condition*, which Garrick co-wrote with Peter Redetsky, Ph.D.,