

# THE ORIGINAL BANGO

Carl Fuggiasco recalls some of his favorite memories as the Bucks mascot

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The Milwaukee Bucks mascot “Bango” was born in 1977. It was a simple suit with a head and antlers that fell off easily, but was a spectacle for people at basketball games and parades.

Carl Fuggiasco was the first Bango, wearing the suit from 1977 until 1984.

“They said ‘hey, do you want to do this permanently?’ and I said ‘does that require surgery? Do I have to put antlers on my head?’” Fuggiasco joked.

Fuggiasco, who lives in Wauwatosa and manages the copy center for the Menomonee Falls School District, printing everything teachers need to do their job, said he has lots of memories of the job including meeting some of the best NBA players of the time, beating an NBA star at HORSE and having a special moment with a patient at Children’s Hospital.

A 22-year-old college student at the time, Fuggiasco was involved with children’s theater, which is how he ended up as Bango.

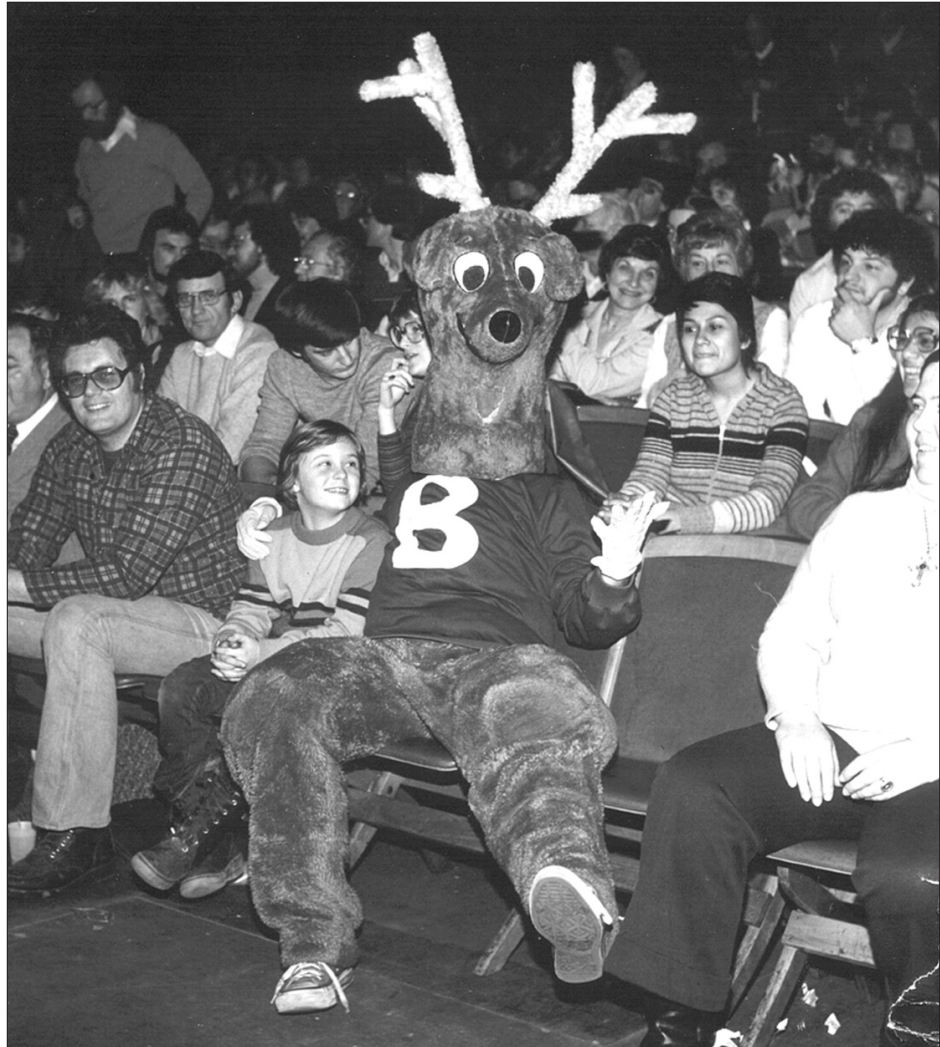
“First of all you gotta love kids; that’s priority number one (to do this job),” he said. “You got to have the heart of a child and be a little bit of an exhibitionist.”

Fuggiasco said that today mascots can do flips, dance routines and slam dunks, but the costume he wore couldn’t support that type of activity.

“I remember, I mean, that was a great team,” he said. “They just couldn’t get around the corner for the playoffs.”

A life-long sports fan, Fuggiasco has always kept up with the Bucks, but started watching a lot more when Giannis Antetokounmpo was drafted.

“(I thought the Bucks winning the NBA Championship) would never happen. That was a dream come true,” he said.



Photos courtesy of Carl Fuggiasco

Carl Fuggiasco in the Bango suit at a Bucks game. He was the team’s mascot from 1977 until 1984.

## Memories

Fuggiasco recalled a time before a game that he was reading a textbook and eating a free meal in the press room when Don Nelson, the Bucks’ coach at the time, and the assistant coach sat at the same table as him. Then, former Boston Celtics player Bill Russell, former Bucks player Oscar Robertson and NBA great Wilt Chamberlain all sat at his table.

“They all sat down, and I was just like ‘wow, this is like practically the Hall of Fame, all-time team sitting right next to me,” Fuggiasco said.

Fuggiasco said his favorite memory as Bango is from Children’s Hospital in Milwaukee.



Carl Fuggiasco with a Bango statue.

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*'It's fun as can be. I mean, what a cool job.'*

## Bango

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"We came in and we're entertaining the kids, players are signing autographs, kids are shaking my hand, but in the middle of the room there was a boy in a cage,"

Fuggiasco wasn't sure why the boy, whose name was Scottie, was in a cage, but was told he had health issues from birth.

"Then, out of nowhere, he goes 'Bango, come here,'" Fuggiasco said. "So I went over, and kind of reached my paw in, and he's petting it and starts talking away. I looked up and all the nurses and all the aids, some of the children are crying."

This was the first time Scottie had talked.

"That is the best memory," Fuggiasco said. "I often

hope that Scottie did turn out fine."

Before games, Fuggiasco used to shoot hoops on the court, but when the players came out it was his cue to leave. However, one day he ended up in a game of HORSE, a game where players have to make a basket duplicating another's shot, with Suns player Paul Westphal and Jazz player Pete Maravich.

"They were going to play HORSE for some serious money, and so they needed some sort of a control group and they yelled over to me 'hey Carl, you want to play with us?'" Fuggiasco recalled.

Because he was a basketball fan, Fuggiasco said he had mastered many of Maravich's trick shots and ended up knocking Westphal out of the game.

"It's fun as can be. I mean, what a cool job. It's just physically very

exhausting to do that kind of stuff and you're on stage constantly," Fuggiasco said. "I think one of the joys was once I took the hat off, I could go across the street to meet some friends,

and the players would walk in and say 'I'm so jealous of you because when the game is over, you're exhausted like us, but nobody knows who you are.'"

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