

Ann Cierley

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1993



Ann Cierley was born in Bakersfield, graduated from Bakersfield High School, and discovered there was a debate program the year before because she was madly in love with a guy who debated. But the coach wouldn't let her sign up for the class because she was "too involved in other activities." Yet she feels she learned the subject well since the romance lasted through college and she would meet him at tournaments whenever his school came to Los Angeles where she was enrolled at University of California Los Angeles.

She earned a BA and MA in History, and continued graduate studies toward the Ph.D. while working fulltime in the business world. Along the way she also completed a teaching credential by taking two high school teaching assignments in two very different worlds in Los Angeles, and that hooked her on teaching.

After applying to her old home school district (Kern High School District) in the late 50's, she declined jobs offered in Bakersfield in favor of one 120 miles east in a small (700) school that was a part of the district. She accepted a very interesting-sounding teaching assignment way out in the upper Mojave Desert at a place she had never been, the China Lake Naval Weapons Center. The adjacent little town was named Ridgecrest where the Navy had built a high school named after the base commander, Admiral Sherman E Burroughs. She intended to stay only two years, hone her skills, and then move back to civilization. She stayed 15 years. She says, "It was too much fun working there to leave those kids. I put off the doctorate."

Ann tells us that when the presenter at State was announcing the first Burroughs' Champion he said, "Burroughs-Ridgecrest. Where is that?" She and her group were so excited. The Burroughs team qualified competitors to State and National Tournaments regularly while she was coaching.

When asked why Burroughs was so successful, she tells us: "It was a Perfect Storm. A student body made up of many children of educated parents who insisted on academic success and who were involved with the school; a remarkable set of teachers who came out to assist the program whenever asked (community support, judging etc.). I even received two dozen roses from the football coaches delivered to my classroom after a particularly successful tournament. Local librarians always inquired as to the new topics when school began; and finally, every kind of support imaginable from the administration, and most of that cost money."

Ann thinks the highlight of her career was being inducted into the CHSSA Hall of Fame on the night the top three top sweepstakes schools were West Bakersfield (where she was Principal), Arroyo Grande High School (coached by her former debater, Don Heinsohn), and Bakersfield High (coached by her former debater-Craig Austin.) As she put it, "Nothing gladdens the heart of old folks more than seeing the young-'uns strut their stuff!"

