

# Elizabeth “Betty” Perkins

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CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1987



***The following was printed in the Merced High School year book by a student upon the passing of Betty Perkins.***

The gay circus atmosphere of our 1959 yearbook production class and of the entire school was deeply saddened on February 20, 1959, when we learned of the sudden death of our popular and highly successful speech teacher, Miss Elizabeth Perkins

The first sixteen pages of *El Rodeo* had gone to press, and here we were - over in the senior section of the Merced High School annual! Thinking of her and of what she meant to the student body, we decided that surely there could be no better place to honor Miss Perkins than here, at the head of the Class of 1959. The seniors were privileged to

know her longer and better than were the other classes; it was to them that she had given most.

Miss Perkins' own college graduation occurred with honors from the University of California. After having taught at Merced High School for twenty-four years, she was named "Teacher of the Year" last year by the Women's Club, a popular selection based on letters written by her students. She was in charge of the Merced chapter of NFL, was District Chairperson of the Northern California NFL, and was acting commissioner of the San Joaquin unit. Miss Perkins established a national reputation and rating in speech and debate for Merced High School. In recognition of her outstanding ability, this wonderful teacher was given every honor NFL could bestow, and in 1945 (MHS) was given a plaque for being the outstanding chapter of NFL; an honor our chapter could not have merited without Miss Perkins' leadership.

After a circus leaves town, the music and gaiety fade away, but the memories linger on in the hearts of the townspeople whose lives have been made happier by the visit of the performers. So, too, will the works and contributions of our beloved Miss Perkins remain with us for years to come. She made our lives better. She used in full measure every bit of her skill, energy, and personality as a teacher. We shall not forget her.

***Nearly thirty years later Robert Jones (CHSSA Hall of Fame) wrote these words of Ms. Perkins***

Perhaps I should share with you my personal memory of this fine teacher, my high school speech coach. I remember this rather substantial lady with a twinkle in her eyes telling me that there was "more to life than playing football." As it happened, I played football, but on the day her death was announced, I too was touched. The campus became a quieter place. Students and teachers stood in small groups and whispered of our loss. Many cried and were held and comforted by friends. A legend had passed and we were the less for her passing. At her funeral, her best orator that year, Bill Daniels, spoke her eulogy. I do not remember what he said though I thought it fitting then, and consider it so today, that a student trained by this so special teacher should be able to come forward to say the last farewell.

**"There's  
more to life  
than  
playing  
football"**