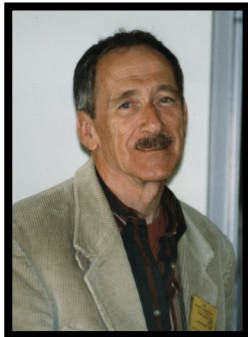


Donovan Cummings

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1987



Donovan's early years were spent on farms in northern Wisconsin. Both his mother and father had been teachers and would return to teaching later when they moved to Kenosha, Wisconsin, on the shores of Lake Michigan. Donovan credits his flair for performance to his mother. She was continually having her students produce programs for the parents. He became involved at junior high where he participated in the school play productions. His favorite role was the lead in *Rip Van Winkle*.

His coach at Kenosha High was original NFL Hall of Famer John Davies. He recalls his first debates were held after school at St. Catherine's High School in Racine and he and his partner were defeated mercilessly by their opponents. Yet he loved debate and was determined to become a winner...

Because the 1950 national tournament was held at his high school, he and his partner were allowed to enter. They went 2-2. As a junior he qualified for Nationals in dramatic interp and placed eighth.

In his senior year, Donovan qualified for the nationals at Boston University in team debate, boys' extemp, and oratory. During the spring before Nationals, he was one of three students featured in the April, 1952 Rostrum. He and his partner placed third in debate. Later he received a note from Bruno Jacob, NFL Executive Secretary, indicating he would be the last student permitted to compete in three main events at nationals.

He graduated from Northwestern University with a BS in speech education, and in the fall of 1959 accepted a teaching position at Edison in Stockton. There he coached speech in addition to teaching English, drama, and student government. When the speech coach at Stagg High resigned, he volunteered to coach both schools until the district found a coach. That was in 1976: he was still coaching both schools when he retired in 1997. For a year and a half he also coached at Franklin.

Working with minority students that constituted the majority of the school enrollment was a new experience for the Wisconsin native. He tells us that "From the beginning of my years at Edison to the end, the Afro-American, Asian, Latino, white students and parents enriched my life beyond anything I could have done for any one of them."

Donovan became a voting member of the CHSSA council in 1963 and remained a voting member until his resignation in May 2008. This is the longest voting tenure since CHSSA began in 1958. He served as YFL president, area two chair, editor, curriculum coordinator, vp curriculum, vp Activities, President ('69-72 and '86-90) and historian. An NFL Hall of Fame member, Donovan wrote and "sold" the speech tab procedure currently used by NFL Nationals and co-chaired the IE tabroom at nationals for many years. Since retiring he has taught speech to migrant education students in San Joaquin County and returned to Stockton Civic Theater.



When asked of his long career, he responded "YES...I WOULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN!!!! Debating in high school encouraged me to consider law. When I was a teen, I worked a lot with younger children, especially doing dramatic productions. Fortunately, the whole competitive experience dominated. I chose teaching and eventually coaching. BRILLIANT DECISION! I CANNOT CONCEIVE OF ANY PROFESSION MORE REWARDING.! Beautiful students, caring parents, brilliant coaching friends!"