

Edna Spelts

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1987



Born in June of 1902 Edna Spelts is believed to be CHSSA's eldest Hall of Fame member. Edna was born in Nebraska in June of 1902. She went to "teachers' college" in Kearney, Nebraska and began her teaching career when she was only sixteen.

She taught high school in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and was president of the Nebraska Teacher's Association. She and her husband moved to California in 1949 and she taught several years at Claremont in Southern California.

Moving to Modesto in 1951 she began teaching English and Speech at Thomas Downey High School. It was not long after this that her teaching assignment became all speech.

In addition, this busy woman served as the school's student activities Director. Despite the fact that she did not join the speech community until she was nearly fifty years old, she had a great impact both as a coach and a leader.

Edna served the Yosemite Forensics League in several positions, including President. She also constantly qualified kids to the state and national finals. Prior to the formation of CHSSA Spelts along with Natalie Weber, Carmendale Fernandes, Mary Ritter, and Elizabeth Perkins felt that the state of California needed one unified speech organization. This innovative group of women began attending meetings through out the state and were ultimately instrumental in the formation of the organization.

Edna Spelts was ultimately chosen by her colleagues to serve as the newly formed California High School Speech Association's first president. In addition, she was honored by being selected an original "founding member" of the CHSSA Hall of Fame.

She retired in 1963 and was replaced at Downey by her ex-student, Ron Underwood (CHSSA Hall of Fame). In retirement she and her husband traveled in their trailer and finally settled in Mesa, Arizona. Upon the death of her husband, she met a gentleman named Clute, married and they lived happily until she died of cancer in the late 1980's.

**First CHSSA
President
and
Founding
Member of the
CHSSA
Hall of Fame**

Fellow Hall of Fame coach, Natalie Weber, describes Edna as, "Delightful, fun and enthusiastic."

For her pioneering spirit and her contributions to the California High School Speech Association and its students Edna Spelts was inducted as a founding member of the California High School Speech Association Hall of Fame in 1987!