

George Lorbeer

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1990



Although the Lowell (S.F.) Forensic Society was founded more than three decades before George Lorbeer joined the Lowell faculty, Mr. Lorbeer was truly the master builder of the school's speech and debate program. From 1925 to 1955, he directed a program that served hundreds of talented students, from actors Carol Channing and the late Bill Bixby to current U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer. George Lorbeer's Lowell squad was often recognized by the National Forensic League as the largest in Northern California.

According to one former student, "Mr Lorbeer had a seamless way of bringing out the best in each of us by giving suggestions for improvement rather than imposing a style of his own." Another noted that Lorbeer "trained me and so many others in how to reason and express ourselves clearly, opening us to broad social issues beyond the walls of the high school. " More than fifty years after his retirement, Lowell students and coaches continue to benefit from his intense personal commitment to speech and debate.

Dedications to Lorbeer's life can still be found both in Lowell's yearbook and its alumni website a true testament to the lasting impact of this important man.

Lowell school yearbook:

The credit for the splendid record of achievement attained by Lowell debaters is largely due to Coach George C. Lorbeer. He has worked unceasingly in the interest of public speaking and for the benefit of the school. He has set as a mark a string of victories that has no precedent. He has trained a great deal of inexperienced material and has accomplished some truly wonderful results. Above all, he has aroused interest in the art of oratory unparalleled at any previous time. The prominent position of debating at Lowell High School is largely due to the honest and sincere efforts of Mr. George C. Lorbeer.

Lowell Alumni Association website:

During his tenure he attracted the school's "best and brightest" to Lowell's speech and debate program. Scrapbook snapshots and mementos of youthful exploits gives one an idea of the fun its must have been to be a Lorbeer debater. Train tickets, hotel flyers, and programs for tournaments in Hawaii, Boston, and Chicago recall the excitement of the trips to the nationals. Team photos of state meets in Modesto, Fresno, Stockton, and Los Angeles show high-spirited youngsters enjoying themselves immensely. His debating philosophy, "The only losers are those who do not participate," - still guides the school's speech program.

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