

Gertrude Baccus

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1987



The following is an excerpt from the local Redlands newspaper upon her death in 2001.

Gertrude Baccus taught speech and English at Redlands High School from 1949 to 1973 and in 1987 was inducted to the California High School Speech Association Hall of Fame.

Her efforts to teach students to use the spoken word for clear thinking and understanding influenced at least two generations of Redlands High School students, including many who continued personal and professional correspondence with her.

Her list of students who credited her speech teaching as a significant influence in their achievements includes at least twelve teachers; thirteen lawyers; five writers; four physicians; three clergy; one rabbi; six in government positions; six in the arts, film and music; and nineteen in business.

Popular speaker Larry Burgess, a former student who is now director of the A.K. Smiley Public Library, said, 'She not only taught you the art of speaking, but she taught and weighed heavily on the responsibility of speaking. She would say to the class, the voice and the logic you apply behind it can be a weapon or can be an agent for good.'

Born April 16, 1908, in Loveland, Colorado, she lived in Redlands since 1930. She studied drama and English at the University of Nebraska and received her BA from Doane College in Crete, Nebraska. She earned her master's degree in speech from Northwestern University.

During her twenty-four years teaching speech and English at Redlands High, her students won honors in district, state and national tournament competition, including two national championships.

Gertrude served as president of the Citrus Belt Region when the league had twenty-nine schools participating - from Indio to Pomona and Lancaster to Barstow. She also completed a three-year term on the State Speech Council as area IV chairperson. In 1987 she was elected to the CHSSA Hall of Fame as one of the ten "founders."

She was awarded a number of honors for her achievements as a teacher and speech coach. The Cal State San Bernardino speech communication department established an annual high school invitational speech tournament and named the traveling trophy "The Baccus Quality Sweepstakes Trophy" in honor of Gertrude. She also received honors from the AAUW, Cal Poly Pomona, the NFL, CAPTA and CTA.

"The voice can be a weapon or an agent for good."

-Gertrude Baccus