

Robert DeGross

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 2005



Bob DeGross began his speech and debate career as a student at West Covina High School in 1964. It was Nancy Hane-Ogden, his first coach, that encouraged him to pursue competitive speech. His events were oratorical interpretation, original oratory, extemp and team debate. As a junior, he teamed up with Al "Tuna" Snider in debate and they became close friends.

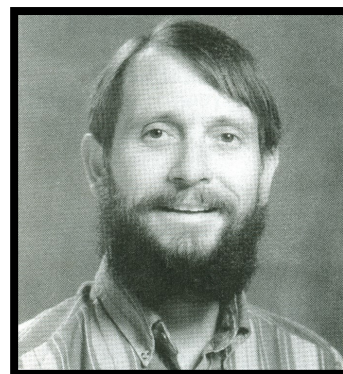
After high school, Bob graduated from UC Santa Barbara with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and shortly afterward earned his teaching credential from Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo. Bob and his wife then moved to Orange County in Virginia where he taught social studies and started an after school debate program. Following the birth of his two daughters, the family moved back to California, where he continued his teaching and coaching career at Colton High School. His students participated in speech, debate, academic decathlon and mock trial. In addition to coaching, Bob taught AP Government and Economics.

During his nineteen years as a teacher at Colton High School he coached more than eighty students to the State Tournament in every event except debate. Amongst his state qualifiers is a student congress state champion and three presiding officer state champions. His team also won the small school sweepstakes award at the state tournament.

In addition to his commitment to his students, Bob served in many service and leadership positions over his tenure. He was a member of the state congress committed for five state tournaments, Citrus Belt League President for twelve years and area IV chair before serving nearly two years as CHSSA President.

At the National level, Bob was a three diamond NFL coach, and coached fifteen students to the NFL national tournament. In addition to coaching speech, Bob advised Colton's decathlon team which won the county championship once and finished second three times. Bob also received numerous awards and recognitions for his teaching and coaching services and contributions to the Colton Unified School District.

Tragically, Bob died on March 24, 2006 due to lung and kidney failure. As a leader, teacher and friend he will be remembered for his cool even spirit. In times of crisis, Bob always stood as a calm source of reason. Jamie Scharns, Bob's successor as Citrus Belt President, wrote, "Bob was a man dedicated to the success of everyone around him...his children, his students, his team members, his colleagues, and even his replacement." His impact on California speech and debate was significant and his experience will surely be missed by those who knew him.



In honor of his service to the CHSSA the 2006 California State Tournament student congress passed a declaration dedicating the tournament to Robert DeGross.