

Donald J. Vettel

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1992



Don graduated from Burbank High School, earned his BA from UC Berkeley in 1966 and his MA from UC Santa Barbara in 1967.

He was a teaching assistant at UC Santa Barbara from 1967 to 1970. He taught at Hueneme High School in Oxnard from 1970 to 1971 and taught at West High School in Bakersfield starting from 1971. He began coaching speech and debate in 1973 and continued until 2003, less two-years off between 1985 and 1987 for sabbatical and meditation.

Don never competed in high school or college forensics. He feels, "for better or for worse, I'm self taught (with a lot of help from many wonderful competitors I've observed)."

Don made substantial contributions to curriculum in California, creating debate coaching materials and judging instructions. CHSSA used his beginning debate unit for some fifteen years as a basic standard of instruction. He was a strong advocate of putting communication back into team debate.

During the 1970's and early 1980's he was honored several times by the Kern Region for clinics he ran on behalf of the local league. He also received awards as outgoing SVFL President.

Don served as the Southern Valley Forensic League president for four years. He was a CHSSA council member for ten years, serving as CHSSA curriculum representative and representative at large for six years. A three diamond coach, he earned more than 6,700 NFL coaching points during his thirty years.

During Vettel's coaching tenure, West Bakersfield High School was consistently the largest chapter, and had the highest enrollment of new members and degrees in the Sierra NFL District. The school also won the NFL district tournament sweepstakes plaque ten times and the tournament trophy three times. The program also received the Leading Chapter Award in 1982 and 1989.

While Don coached students to NFL Nationals in every event, he says that he his most proud of his coaching record in debate at NFL Nationals. Of the nine students he coached to NFL nationals, six placed in the top fourteen! He was selected to be a member of the final judging panel for policy debate, because of his students success, and his expertise.

Don's program was also very successful at the state level. He has coached state champions in congress (1978), team debate (1982 & 83), boys' extemporaneous (1984) and original oratory (1988). Under his direction West Bakersfield won the State Championship sweepstakes trophy in 1982 and 1983.

For his nearly thirty years of service to CHSSA and the greater speech community Don Vettel was inducted into the CHSSA Hall of Fame in 1992.

In his own words:

"I love coaching and I know it is the most important thing I have done in my life."