

John Cardoza

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1995



It comes as some surprise to those who know Cardoza only as a speech coach, or as the President of the CHSSA for six consecutive years and Secretary for twelve years before that or as the only high school teacher elected President of the California Speech Communication Association that he never received formal training in oral communication theory or practice. Granted, there was that one high school course in "Speech" which he attended during his senior year at Yreka Union High School – but he would tell you that he did not approach the class seriously. After all, he had been a member of the Drama-Speech Club for three years and he had competed with a little success in oratory, impromptu and duo interpretation; the course in "Speech" was what is commonly known as "an easy 'A'". The course was taught by Norman Berryhill – "Mr. Boss", as the loyal members of the Drama-Speech Club called him – and Cardoza learned that public speaking was more than rhetorical flourish. For him it was about personal responsibility and others. He writes, "Those who can command words, who can shape words well, who can use words to persuade and to compel –should always do so for the greater good."

It was the same lesson learned at Santa Clara University, where Cardoza earned not only his undergraduate degree in history and a minor in theology, but also his Master's Degree in Education and his teaching and administrative credentials. The Jesuit philosophy could not be avoided: whatever is done must be done "for the greater glory of God". In other words, look beyond the self when undertaking an endeavor.

As President of CHSSA, Cardoza's agenda was clear and consistent. The purpose of CHSSA should not be limited to competition, but rather on its primary mission: Education. To that end, Cardoza shepherded the adoption of ballots which reflect California's state academic standards, thus inviting judges, competitors and coaches to see themselves as part of a greater design. Cardoza also helped to shape the CHSSA Mission Statement, supervised a complete revision of the CHSSA constitution and By-Laws, and established parliamentary procedures for the efficient conduct of Council business. And, ironically for a person who began his tenure on the state council as a computer-illiterate secretary, Cardoza joined with Vice President Activities Reed Niemi to usher CHSSA into the computer age by creating an electronic version of the allocation spreadsheet and using MS works to merge and print state contestant cards.

When asked to point to his proudest achievement, however, Cardoza's response is simple: "the kids". Having coached at four high schools in two different leagues, Cardoza has been given the opportunity to help students "re-learn what they learned in kindergarten: to be good, to play nice, to not fight – and to share their toys. In other words, they should recognize their intrinsic worth, look beyond themselves, and make the world a better place – and have a good time doing it."

