

# Tom Montgomery

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CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1993



At the time of his birth his parents' residence was Sacramento, California, but Tom claimed he was not very cooperative: He decided to be premature. His parents were traveling cross-country. So, he was actually born in Wewoka, Oklahoma. He jokes that he was there three days and never went back.

He spent most of his formative days in Ripon, California. The school district was so small, high school teachers doubled as counselors. Four of them went to his grammar school (the only one in town) to sign up eighth graders for high school. The teacher assigned to Tom just happened to be the speech teacher. Of course, he recommended speech. Tom agreed. Such began a four year high school debate and I.E. career for Tom. He qualified for State in his junior and senior years. His junior year was the last year State was held at UC Santa Barbara, and his senior year the tournament was held at Stanford.

He recalled that they debated a ban on all nuclear weapons in his senior year and that his first round of extemp at State asked him to assess the chances of Robert Kennedy becoming president. Kennedy was assassinated a month later.

Tom was awarded a four year full scholarship to the University of the Pacific for debate. He received a BA with a double major in communication arts and history. In his freshman year he debated with a senior, Dennis Warren, whom he later helped prep for appearances on the Dick Cavett Show.

He was coached in college by a legend-Paul Winters, one of the leading college coaches in the nation for more than twenty-five years. His debate win-loss ratio as a freshman was eighty percent. This led him to keep insisting that he be allowed to travel out of state for competition. He claimed he was tired of debating Bill Southworth - later to become a nationally known college debate coach - from Redlands every two weeks. Tom recalled, "One day Doc called us into his office and announced we were going out of state the next weekend. He handed me an envelope which contained two Greyhound bus tickets to Ashland, Oregon. After a nine hour bus trip, three feet of snow, and no car in a town with one taxi, the next mention of going out of state came from Doc-not from me."

He began teaching and coaching at Lodi High School in 1977 where he taught and coached until his untimely death in 2004. His resume includes four state champion students, CHSSA Hall of Fame, and the NFL Hall of Fame. He co-chaired the IE tab room at State for nineteen years and Nationals for fifteen years. He was also the co-author of the tabulation plan adopted for Nationals, replacing the old "up/down" system. Tom also served many years as Yosemite Forensics League president and treasurer and was a five diamond NFL coach.

