

Martha Kennedy

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1999



Born on the Ides of March in Los Angeles, Martha Hoke Kennedy was the youngest daughter of Rufus and Gladys Hoke. She graduated from John Marshall High School in Los Angeles, third in her class. During high school she competed for CHSSA Hall of Fame coach, Day Hanks. Very involved in student government and other school activities, she only competed in oratorical interpretation. She feels that if Hanks were alive today that he would be most surprised of her coaching successes.

Martha attended the University of Redlands and graduated with honors in three years with one semester in Salzburg, Austria. She continued her academic work to complete her masters from the University of Redlands with classes from the University of Vermont and University of California Riverside. She met her husband, Dennis Kennedy, at the University of Redlands. Dennis, also an English teacher at Redlands High School, was a successful athletic coach, specializing in cross country. They have two children and two grandchildren.

Martha Kennedy's students enjoyed a great deal of success under her leadership: Citrus Belt League Championships seventeen of the twenty years; two national champions and many finalists in impromptu, a fifth and sixth in congress, four congress semi-finalists and one in US extemp; nine state champions, with many state finalists in every individual event. In addition, her teams at state placed in the top ten of total sweepstakes every year from 1985 until she resigned from coaching in 2003 after more than twenty years. Under her leadership, her students competed in every state and national event and qualified students in every category to both state and nationals. She ran one of the largest programs in the nation, coaching alone for many of those twenty years. When she retired in June of 2006 as a four diamond NFL coach, former students from three decades came to honor her and wish her well.

In addition to her outstanding coaching success, Martha served as president and treasurer of the Citrus Belt League; CHSSA area IV chair, and NFL district chairperson. Martha also served as the 2003 local host of the California High School State Championship Tournament at the University of San Bernardino. Always a calm voice of reason, a dedicated leader and a model of class and integrity, Martha Kennedy was inducted into the California High School Speech Association Hall of Fame in 1999.

In her words, "The lifelong benefits of a high school speech and debate career go way beyond any trophy or award." She has great memories; including confusing many a debater by pulling out her knitting during prep time as she judged debates. Her memories of wonderful students year after year combine with her admiration for the many coaches who devote so much time and energy to students all over the nation. Appropriately, one student comments, "Mrs. Kennedy was my mentor before I knew I was looking for one."

