

Sandra Gray

CHSSA HALL OF FAME 1988



Sandra Morris Gray was born in 1932 in East Palestine, Ohio. She enjoyed school but her mother was frequently called to reprimand Sandy for being overly social in class. She graduated with a high school class of sixteen students, intending to go to Smith College. Her mother wanted her to stay closer to home, so she enrolled in Mather College (now part of Case Western Reserve University) in Cleveland, Ohio. Sandy didn't finish college at Mather - instead, she married the drummer in her father's orchestra and moved to South Bend, Indiana.

Sandy took music theory classes and worked a variety of jobs before the family moved to Orange County in 1962. She registered at California State College in Fullerton as an Education major, and soon discovered debate. The school required speech majors to take two semesters of forensics classes to graduate, and Sandy joined Lee Granell's speech squad, competing in both individual events and team debate. She completed her degree in 1967 while also working as a night counselor at juvenile hall and sharing the raising of three small children. She went on to complete her master's degree from Fullerton in 1974 and took classes toward her Ph.D. at the University of Southern California.

Sandy's teaching career began at Ramona High School in 1968, where she started mid-year, teaching five speech classes and coaching both debate and individual events. One of the students qualified for Nationals in Student Congress. She continued at Ramona for three more years until moving to Tustin High School in to eliminate the nearly hour-long commute to Riverside. She also took over the direction of the forensics program. Sandy taught English classes, a speech workshop class, and general speech classes. The Tustin program had a strong core of students who joked that they had "quality over quantity," as opposed to larger programs that routinely entered large numbers of competitors. Tustin regularly captured awards at NFL district qualifying tournaments. Students won state and national awards in debate and both original and interpretive events.

Sandy served as secretary of the Citrus Belt League, Orange County Speech League president and secretary, area IV chairperson, and CHSSA president and vice president of activities. She was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the CHSSA in 1982 and chaired the Big Orange Chapter of the National Forensic League.

As a result of her injuries from a plane crash, Sandy's ability to travel was restricted. She retired from the Tustin District in 1995, ending her career at Foothill High School. After her retirement, Sandy enjoyed writing and was in the process of developing a script for a television pilot at the time of her death.

"I was a speech major who was frightened of public speaking."

When asked about her time as CHSSA president, Sandy stated "one of the wisest things we did was to begin to try to have three different types of judges in each panel at the state tournaments." She shared the pride in being part of a profession where so many give so much of their time."