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Spotlight on Distinguished Service: Judy Kroll

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*Invited Article***Spotlight on Distinguished Service: Judy Kroll****Andrea Carlile, MA**

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As a young forensics educator, I am constantly reminded that my work, like the work of *Discourse*, stands on the shoulders of giants. Keeping the roots of forensics education alive is essential in growing the activity. For me our Aristotelian roots remain ever present because Aristotle's pursuit of truth lies at the core of modern forensic activity. He once wrote, "Those who educate children well are more to be honored than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well." This sentiment encapsulates the essence of a forensics giant from South Dakota, Judy Kroll. While this National Forensics League (NFL) Hall of Fame member officially retired from the classroom at Brookings High School in 2012 after 32 years, she continues to be a formidable force within the forensics community. She recently took the time to answer some questions for *Discourse*¹ about her career as a debate coach.

1. How did you become involved with forensics?

I became involved in high school. I did not do it as a freshman but a lot of my friends were involved, so I decided to try as a sophomore and I was hooked. My coach, John Westby, encouraged me to attend Northern and I ended up in Speech and Debate Education. End of story.

2. What have you enjoyed most about coaching?

The kids I coached were, and still are, amazing. The relationships I gained were worth every single minute of the thousands of hours put in. Also, many of the best friends I still have were, and are, in this activity.

3. Would you please share one or two favorite coaching experiences?

Two of my favorites:

A. In the year 2000 we qualified 3 teams in policy debate to the National NFL Tournament. These kids were able to accumulate a record 72 rounds of debate (more than any other team in the nation, and the record still stands). They also were the first two teams from the same school to be the last two undefeated teams ever in policy debate. We ended up debating ourselves, and we ended up in the final round. The students placed 2nd, 3rd, and 38th.

B. It may seem odd but another favorite time was always during any given year when my first year students would understand the term INHERENCY.

¹ Questions adapted from Central States Communication Association Newsletter.

Andrea Carlile (MA, South Dakota State University) is the Director of Forensics at South Dakota State University. She is the 2013 recipient of Pi Kappa Delta's Bob Derryberry Outstanding Contributions from a new Forensics Educator award, and the 2014 recipient of the Speech Communication Association of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Speech Teacher Award. In her brief tenure at SDSU she has coached the 2013 and 2014 South Dakota Intercollegiate Forensics Association Champions and qualified students to the AFA-NIET.

4. What advice do you have for new coaches?

My advice is:

A. Know that you are making a big commitment if your goal is having a competitive team.

B. If you are in teaching, then don't forget to educate. Teach them to understand the material. Don't do their work for them--teach them how to do it themselves. Teach them that this is a life-long activity to help them be successful in life. The goal is not about winning, but about learning how to work hard, cooperate, make life-long friends, have fun, learn that ethics and honesty will and should follow you forever... I could go on. If you take on this job you become a role model. Students want you to be their hero. They want to know you and for you to know them. So, you have a great responsibility. Do these things and they will be successful and follow you anywhere.

5. How has your involvement with SCASD benefited you with professional and networking opportunities?

SCASD has given me so many things. 1. This is where I learned that coaching was about educating and not just winning. 2. This is where I truly found that I had a font of knowledge to tap. I loved listening to the experienced educators who I learned to revere and eventually call friend. We don't always think that history is important but I learned from my elders that keeping this organization going was important for many reasons, but that education was at the forefront. Finally, everyone must give back to the organization, and everything else in life, in order to keep things going. You can't be selfish with your time and knowledge.

Kroll's insights into forensics embody the notion that she is one who strives to educate our children in the art of living well. As she reflects on a career that has included achievements most coaches only hope to reach, she keeps the purpose of forensics at the center: education and relationships. Kroll's focus on education and relationships are at the core of what I believe compels myself and a new generation of forensics educators. We all too often view ourselves as coaches first and educators second, but if we are truly, truly, living up to words of our forefather Aristotle, being a great educator like Judy Kroll will propel us and our students into a life well-lived. Kroll is certainly a giant whose shoulders we stand upon.