

THE

SATISFACTION

OF TEACHING

by Ray F. Ensher

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In 1959, after a stint in the Army and five years of teacher training at Fresno University, I was hired to teach English, Drama and speech at Sanger Union High School. One requirement of the job was that I set up a speech and debate squad. To draft a cadre of studious, energetic young people and teach them to think logically and speak coherently was a task, even for the late fifties.

Slowly but surely the team took shape. After weeks of recruiting, the guidance counselor and I were able to recruit twelve young people -- one girl. Most of the youngsters were from farm families, with some having FFA speech experience. These were courageous young people since even in those days high school students engaged in critical thinking exercises were considered eggheads.

We knew we were the "new boy on the block" among such prestigious and experienced school competitors as China Lake, Bakersfield High, Redwood High (Visalia), Fresno High, Bullard, Roosevelt, Clovis and other valley secondary schools making up the then Redwood Forensic League. In spite of all the difficulties, our young team began to be recognized for their perseverance, talent and doing their home-

work. They improved enough during the three years of building the program to be recognized by the National Forensic League. A number of the young people advanced to State competition.

The satisfaction I received from those beginning years has always remained with me. In any such effort there is a very special camaraderie a teacher never forgets.

These same young adults went on to build on their speaking talent. Today, three of them are successful local lawyers, several are teachers, one has received his Ph. D. and a full professorship in Michigan; another worked with a congressman, and still another became a public relations director and for a while was a pledge host on Channel 18. Their success makes rising early all those Saturday mornings, the hard work and effort worthwhile.

There is a joy in teaching regardless of the low pay, constant public criticism, and extra hours that go with the territory. The joy is in seeing the children who go through our public schools do well as citizens and leaders throughout our American communities.

It is enough to know you did make a difference

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