

A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN SEXTON

by James J. Unger

I recently enjoyed the opportunity for a lengthy visit with John Sexton, Dean of the New York University School of Law, in his Washington Square office. John is that rare individual who has "done it all" during both his forensic and his legal lives. The insights and reflections which he offers combine wide-ranging experiences as a championship coach, scholar, classroom teacher, legal dean and professional leader. Sharing the discussion with John and myself was Loren Danzis, Debate Coach at The American University and Chief of Administration at the National Forensics Institute.

JIM: John, you are in a unique position for Ros-trum readers to breach the two areas of what I call forensic advocacy and legal advocacy. You served for fifteen years as Debate Coach; you now serve as Dean of one of the most prominent law schools in the country. Do you feel that the standards of advocacy are any different for the person in the courtroom and the person in the debate room?

JOHN: I think there is no better preparation for law school and a career in the law than competitive debate and I think that the advocacy involved at the highest level is almost completely congruent. In fact, I think that in some ways debate is a superior training to what's offered in some law schools.

Let me be more specific. First, we as debaters are committed to a contest of ideas. We understand that in order to communicate and persuade it is critical to understand in a nuanced way what our opponent is saying, and to understand our opponent's argument in its strongest form. So this builds in a person a capacity to listen.

We also understand the malleability of words. One of the maturing processes that goes on for a competitive debater is maturing out of the sophomore explanation of a defeat in a round because the judge made a mistake, and maturing into an understanding that a judge comes into a round as a *tabula rasa*, upon which the speakers write. In order to write, the speakers have to communicate their ideas into that judge's mind. In the process of communication, the sophisticated communicator has to understand that words are very malleable and that a combination of words in a sentence or a combination of sentences in a paragraph have a kaleidoscopic quality to them and you have to constantly be aware of your listener -- in the context of competitive debate, the judge; in the context of courtroom advocacy, a jury or a judge. You have to be conscious not only of the way you mean the words, but of the way the words can be perceived by others who may in good faith enter from different vantage points. And debate is a very important

maturation process for lawyers. In fact one sees great deals of money spent these days on running jury models and studies to see how different kinds of advocacy affect different audiences. The consciousness of the audience in the communicative process is something that is very sophisticated and is taught at the best levels of competitive debate.

The notion that most discussions of ideas do not stop at a first level, you know what we call in debate "extending the argument," is an extremely important part of good legal advocacy. In a debate context, some of the "hottest" legal scholarship that's at elite schools reduces to what we would call in debate terms a first negative speech. We as debaters understand conversations about ideas have to go into several levels of extension. And legal thinking at the best level is done with those several levels of extension.

The one area where I observe legal thinking and reasoning moving beyond what we do in debate, is the superficial presentation of argumentation in time limits and the argumentative pressure one puts on with the spread. Very rarely did one ever see someone [in debate] stop to explain an argument for three of four minutes. At the highest level legal reasoning will frequently require almost a talmudic reading of text and, of course, there aren't the time constraints that there are in debate. Reasoning can go on in a much more nuanced way. I think outside of the debate room debaters are extraordinarily more attentive to the reading of text than are ordinary people. More and more I am coming to realize that debate is good preparation not just for law but for any profession, or any business.

JIM: Do you think that debate tournaments are a critical part of that education?

Debaters incorporate almost subconsciously a goal orientation which involves an identification of a goal. You want to get to point x, and point x might mean being prepared for the Emory Debate Tournament, and by the Emory Debate Tournamen-

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ment you've got to have yourself ready on [your] case and you may want a variation case for particular teams, and you've got to be prepared for affirmative cases you're going to meet. Without even thinking about it, the debaters at the highest level begin moving towards that goal of being ready for a tournament. They instinctively incorporate the need to plan out intermediate steps as a way to get to that goal. This quality of being able to think in terms of a goal that is distant, to embrace an enormous task, and to develop a plan of intermediate steps to get to it, I'm talking about the plan of preparing at the highest levels for competitive debate, becomes second nature to all of us. That knack is extraordinarily rare at all levels. It's what people in some way try to capture by the analogous experience by doing a Ph. D. dissertation. You know, I think the reason why people have to do Ph. D. dissertations is because it teaches them how to put together a complex body of material, and start going through levels of preparation the way debaters go through with debate topics. So, in the end you've produced this entire treatment of a subject and you can answer anything that comes up in any quadrant of that subject.

You know we invest an enormous amount of energy in our admissions process here at NYU. We're one of the two or three most selective schools in the country. Each application is read by three people and it's all quite professionalized. But frankly, as far as I was concerned Admissions could go to the quarter-final round at any of the top debate tournaments in the country and admit the students that were in that quarter-final round. I mean, not that they would come here out of high school, but just say to them, five, six years in advance, you know whenever you want to come to NYU you come because you've already identified yourself as a person who has the qualities we want. You have this goal orientation, you are self-starting, you have motivation, and many other intellectual qualities. I think there is a tremendous overlap and rigor here. Put simply, the education the folks are getting in debate, if they're doing it at the highest level, and doing it for the right reasons, is unmatched.

LOREN: *Dean Sexton, what would you designate to be the primary skills and abilities of the successful debater and the successful law student of the future. In your opinion what are some of the qualities that debate and or legal education refine?*

JOHN: I'd start off with an ability to motivate one's self, to set and see a goal, to set and see the intermediate steps that get you to that goal, neatly summarized in the maxim that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a step, or, to use another Confucian metaphor, that great people know how to move a mountain one spoonful at a time. Debaters and those who are going to excel in the law have got to have that kind of general quality.

A second quality one must have in both the areas is the simple quality to listen, to be open, to hear what someone else is saying as the first and most important part of communication. Think about it in the context of debate: you can't refute an argument if you don't understand it. If you don't listen carefully, and you respond to the version with which you're overly familiar, that's a ticket to disaster in debate. It is also a ticket to disaster in putting together a big deal for Paramount and QVC, or trying to persuade a jury that your client deserves compensation because he or she was exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Next, you have to be a creative thinker, which means, both analytical and synthetic thinking. What good debaters and good lawyers combine is an analysis of intellectual problems, synthesis and organization of material, location of wholes, totalities that other people don't see. Debaters and lawyers also see holes in the sense of gaps that other people don't see and then they fill in those gaps. All of this is tied up into an affirmative communication package where one has to be able to articulate to others, in a way that they can understand. In this case we will be dealing with people across a broad spectrum of intelligence, vocabulary, and cultural difference in the world of tomorrow as we deal more and more globally.

Dean John Sexton ...

So the essential role of the lawyer and the debater are as bridge communicators. I think these are the essential elements.

Now, how they play themselves out in specific contexts really depends on the world in which one puts oneself. It will look very different if one is a trial lawyer or if one is a deal lawyer. You know some lawyers, some of the most important lawyers in the United States, never appear in court, never come near a trial. So one can't have a stereotyped view of what lawyers do, and skills will play out in different ways. You know, written communicative skills will be more important than verbal communicative skills in some contexts. Human skills which I translate into the ability not only to hear, but to signal people through nonverbal communication

that you are hearing and listening to them, might be more important in some contexts, the ability to calm people down.

I think one thing debaters should learn, that they do not always learn, is not to personalize arguments. This is again part of the maturation process. You know as a freshman and sophomore in high school you tend to get hurt personally identifying what's going on in debate, in the competition, and in the judgements that are made for and against you. If one was in a deal making context, or in negotiations where clients really tend to go ballistic, they are very personally involved. The role of the lawyer is to model calm and depersonalization in the sense of not taking it personally and bringing objectivity to it. So these are some of the characteristics that are important for good debating and good lawyering.

JIM: John, is the preparation that a student may get in debate unlimited in nature? Many of the student readers, for example, will be involved in high school forensics. Do you think that there is a significant additive role to be played by college forensics, or are two, three years of debate enough to inculcate the kinds of skills you've been talking about?

JOHN: It's not easily captured in years. A lot has to do with intensity. The experience that I had as a student in high school for example, even though I was at a very good program was not nearly as intense as the experience that the students at St. Brendan's had in our program. I think the general answer to your question, for students coming out of a wide variety of programs, is that probably there is a payoff in continuing to refine the skills. There certainly is an advantage in learning from a different mentor, working with a good college coach. But, one of the things one has to learn in law and in life is a kind of internal standard of excellence and a standard of learning.

If I can use my first year law students as an example. You know they come here, all of them, with a lifetime of success in academics. When I go in to teach the 150 first year students here, all of whom have graduated from college, the best colleges, with A minus averages or better, and many of them have Phd, and MDs, and CPAs, and they have already been gratified throughout their life by success in academics. And, suddenly they're in a first year class where there are no exams until Janu-

ary, and where they read a case in a casebook which cites other cases which cite other cases which cite other cases; and literally, if you just continued to read you would be in a never ending process. And frequently they say to me, "John, why don't we have monthly exams so we can know how we're doing." Or, "We feel the work is never done. We find ourselves in the movie theater on Saturday night watching a movie and we're feeling guilty because there's another case we could be reading that was cited in the case that we last read." I say to them, and I think it's part of legal education and also part of debate if one makes the connection, that one has to learn when one has done enough. And one has to develop an internal clock for that.

For example, in preparing for a debate tournament there is always another article that can be read to try to find yet another quote. You have to sense the time in which you have read enough to start making, putting together, your case. And the time in which you should stop reading on one topic and begin reading on another topic to prepare another line of argumentation. That's very much a matter of an internal clock, and I think debate and law school teach that same thing. Its also a matter of settling one's own standard of excellence, and not allowing those standards to come from external gratification.

Now to carry forth the discussion with my first year students. With them you have got to move away from grades because when they're out there in a professional world, they have to know themselves whether they've done an "A" job, or whether they don't want to do an "A" job, and they'd rather do a "B" job professionally, but essentially have more time for their families. These are trade-offs they have to begin to learn to make. Now, in debate, we do a good job preparing the students for part of that maturation process. What debate fails to do in some ways is teach them to move away from the external gratification.

I don't know if Jim remembers this, but in the fifteen years I worked with the St. Brendan's students, never once did those students see a ballot from a round. And never once did they ask judges if they had won or lost the round. And, we didn't tell them whether they had won or lost the round. We always had one of our graduates, or me, or somebody else, sitting in on the round. And, we would discuss how they could improve on their performance. One of the things that debate does with the balloting and the ranking and the trophies is provi-

...debater, coach, lawyer.

sion of this kind of external gratification. But I think in general probably the college experience is worthwhile and I think the advantage of doing it with a different mentor is a very positive thing.

LOREN: *Dean Sexton, you spoke of the role of the mentor. I want to move our conversation to the subject of coaching. You spoke of your positions as both coach of St. Brendan's and professor of NYU first year law students. So many great debaters are the product, at least partially, of great coaching. What are some of the similarities and differences you see between the role of debate instruction verses the role of legal instruction?*

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JOHN: Debate presents an ideal toward which legal education must move. My own views here are very much a product of my own background in debate. In my view teachers have to be committed to a contest of ideas, and clearly teachers who are working in the context of debate are committed to that, but they also are committed to very intense and communitarian personal involvement with students. Whereas, I think legal educators do a very good job of attending to the first of those characteristics, they don't do a very good job of attending to the second. Legal education in the United States for the last century has been conducted paradigmatically in a large class environment with relatively little contact outside of the classroom between professors and students. And I think there is an unease about this. There is a general movement to the direction of trying to disaggregate the classes, at least in some context, to create more contact between students and professors. And I think that is something legal education has to work on. We tend to be large in classroom teaching. And if you're going to have an experience in law school, it's going to be with one or two professors, instead of with all of your professors. And I think we have to change that. We certainly are putting a lot of resources into changing it here at NYU.

JIM: *Perhaps the fundamental decision which I find at least traveling around the country at both the college level and the high school level that has to be faced by the coach, the director of forensics, is budgetary adjustment. Ever more schools are forced to make a decision between having a relative small squad which will travel extensively on a national circuit of competition, or taking the alter-*

native route which is to have a relatively large squad, but will satisfy itself with local and regional outreach in terms of the competitive level. If you were structuring a program at this point in time, how do you think you might allocate your own resources? In which direction do you think you might be more inclined to move?

JOHN: Well, my first reaction would be to reject this bipolar world that the question creates. As you know, we never had a dime, a budget. St. Brendan's was a relatively poor school with students who came from families that were not even upper-middle class. They were working class families that couldn't afford to send their kids around. But we just committed ourselves to finding a way to generate the money from non-budgetary sources, and expended a lot of effort in that regard. I pride myself that in the fifteen years that I worked with the students at St. Brendan's, we never put a student off that team for lack of ability.

Now if I were forced into the bipolar world that you describe, I guess the first question I would ask myself is, "how good is the region where I am?" I mean nationalization for the sake of nationalization has some appeals, because I think there are certain lessons one learns by encountering people from other parts of the country and people who by the nature of being from other parts of the country have developed whole different lines of attack to a topic. So there are advantages to nationalization. But if one is in a very, very strong region, one can maybe capture eighty percent of the advantages of debate. So I would want to know how strong the region is.

I think in general the bipolar world you are really creating is not so much a regional -- national bipolar world as it is, do I run a program with sev-

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enty five or a hundred students in it, or do I run a program with five or six students in it? And there I have stronger feelings because now it comes back to the communitarian intense nature of what this experience is in my view at its best. On my model, that family nature grows up around the intensity of the experience and is an important component of it. And that means relative smallness and not a program of a hundred or a hundred and fifty or two hundred kids, not phalanxes of teams going out where their coach doesn't really have a lot of individual contact with the students. I just couldn't imagine running a program like that because I think you're compromising too much of the rigor and the quality of instruction that I'm looking for in this. I'd

rather multiply coaches. I wouldn't label teams A B C D or E, I'd have different names or colors or something like that, and have more programs at a school, you know then one program of a hundred people.

I should mention something that may not be obvious, but that is a very important component of the ideal as I see it. We did a lot more than debate. I could not have justified the time that I demanded of the students who made the commitment to the society if all we were doing was debate. Part of the message was that this was about ideas. The metaphor I used to use was about expanding the number of octaves on the piano that one played intellectually. And you know one did that in a vertical way with regard to the debate topic. But, they did that constantly in a horizontal way by exposing themselves to experiences otherwise not available. And this was a critical part of what we did. As part of the debate program, we read the great books, and discussed them together. We also extensively studied the history of art and music. We visited museums. We went to plays and concerts. Each year we would go to Tanglewood as a group to hear the Boston Symphony Orchestra for three days. I tried to commit to each of the girls that she would see each of the forty-eight states, the forty-eight continuous states, before she graduated. My dream was to get them to Alaska, but I could never get money to get them to Alaska. I did get some of them to Hawaii as well as the forty-eight states. As far as I know we kept that promise for each of the kids.

If all a national debate program constitutes is moving to a different part of the country, to debate in classrooms that happen to be in a different state, then the only advantage one is getting out of a national debating program is the fact that one possibly is encountering students who have thought about the topic differently. Now that, of course, imposes on each of us moving within this world of debate yet another obligation. We have got to get persons willing to put in all the hours of debate; but you have to get a person who is also willing to put in the time to do these other things and has the capacity to do these other things. But, I'm sorry. That just comes with being given this great gift of being able to work with some of the finest and brightest young people in the country, in the most intense experience that they'll ever have in their lives if you do it right.

***JIM:** What led you, John, to leave debate? You were one of the most prominent debate coaches in the country and now your connections with debate are much more reduced.*

JOHN: I think reduced is probably an understatement. I made a decision in 1972 that the time had come for me personally to leave debate. It was more a personal decision than one connected to debate itself. I had been intensely involved in debate since I had been in high school. When I graduated from high school in 1959, I immediately started the team at St. Brendan's in 1960. By 1972 I had been involved in St. Brendan's for twelve years and involved is in a way an understatement because I think it is literally true that it was as intense a teaching experience as one could have. People familiar with debate won't be surprised that some weeks I spent a hundred hours with the "society" as we called it. So through 1972 I had really been subordinating everything else professional in my life, to that. I had also consciously postponed going to law school in order to stay involved with my debaters because I knew that I couldn't do law school and debate well together. So I made that decision in 1972, but felt that I couldn't walk out on my four years of students at St. Brendan's at the time. So when I made the decision I decided that we just wouldn't take any more students into the society and I would wait until those who were freshman graduated and there were six young women who were freshman that year who went through those final three years. So when 1975 came and the last of those folks graduated I went off to law school. This had been such an extraordinary and meaningful chapter of my life for me and had such a strong pull on me and I loved debate so much and I loved the people, especially the students in debate, so much that I felt the only way to move away from it was to move away from it absolutely and not come back. These are kind of sacred and compartmentalized years for me. I am sure that over the years I have idealized them, and they're even better now than they actually were. But, they are very special to me and I've kind of wanted to maintain them in my memory in that way.

NYU Law School

***LOREN:** Dean Sexton, I want to shift our conversation to the issue of research. With the focus on authoritative analysis and evidence, both in the legal profession and in competitive debate, meth-*

ods of collecting the best research have become very relevant to producing success. Today those methods of research are changing: CD-ROM, Lexis/Nexis, Westlaw. What do you see as the role of technology in these two disciplines?

JOHN: I think it's transformative and daunting, for people my age. When I think of all the time that we spent in libraries sitting there on the floor going through obscure journals trying to find yet another level of information. And when one contrasts that with the fact that one can just sit down at Nexis or Lexis or one of these machines and just plug in words, its mind boggling. Now, with a database that's available, you enter and you sit at your computer and you ruminate not in preexisting categories, but in categories that strike you as rising out of the problem you are dealing with. And you type in associated words and you can pull in not from pigeon hole categories, but from an unadulterated, uncategorized database, everything that's relevant. It just makes cutting edge thinking and argumentation possible in a revolutionary way. It's not just the technological, but the whole new ways of thinking that become possible. And of course that analogy works perfectly with debate as well. Instead of going to the index of the *New York Times*, and trying to find all the articles on category x, now you can begin to play around with concepts and its clear to me in dozens of different ways this technology, none of which as a CEO I understand, is the course of the future.

I'm building the first global law school. We're one of the elite law schools in the United States and playing off the advantage of being in New York City so it seems natural to connect ourselves to the great law schools around the world. And one of the ways we're doing that is technologically and in our library. We have a plan underway for example with the leading law school in Japan to connect their library and our library so that our students sitting in our dorm can access their collection which is the

largest in Japan and their students sitting in their dorms can do the same to ours which is one of the two or three largest collections in the United States. That's one obvious application. But I think the more profound application will be the way thought modeling will simply just occur differently in this technological world. Obviously, it will play back into debate at the research level. It will also play back into debate, so I would hope you get to the point where you don't have to carry these [tubs] around.

JIM: *What would happen if the advances in technology grow such that we can just sit at home and have our own tournaments? By that I mean, connect up with students all around the country through the telephone, or perhaps video. Do you envision fairly shortly that we will not need to do all this traveling any more at all?*

JOHN: I was just out at Sony-Columbia. One of our graduates is the CEO out there and he took me into this experimental theater they have where the movies are this super-advanced technology; it's like virtual reality. And we're going to be in that world in ten years. I think that one will be able to capture in that world a great deal of the advantage of competitive debate, as one can capture in chess today, through these computer modems. You can play chess with people you never see. I am sure that might be a way to expand participation in your [debate] program; it might be a way to cut down on the need for week-in week-out travel that we did. But I would argue strenuously that there are all kinds of things you lose if you just came to depend upon technology exclusively. First of all, this is the romantic in me, I mean there was something about getting in that van on Thursdays together and just riding off which was mystical. There's something about human bonding. I'm talking now about the bonding of us as a society, those of us who were involved at St. Brendan's. And I'm sure that our experience is not unique.

New York University

JIM: *Perhaps the most attractive career option open to debaters, is one in the law. And yet confronted with the image media of the law, whether you're talking about Perry Mason or L.A. Law, there is the idea that bad lawyers make good news. The legal profession is not held in very high esteem in many areas of the country. You tell us, just your own quick assessment of the soundness of that profession and more importantly, how exciting a career opportunity you think studies in the law open up to an individual?*

JOHN: Individuals have different interests. My son's an actor, there are the mathematicians in the world, there are scientists. For me, there's not a close second in terms of excitement, intellectual stimulation, empowerment to make a difference, to law. You know, deTocqueville noticed about America that we are a society where law is essentially our civil religion. We made a decision as a country, a correct decision in my view, not to have an official governmental religion. But, we look to law much like religion. We turned law into the economic underpinning of the country. We turned to law to set the fundamental relationships of government and people. We turned to law to resolve our

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most difficult disputes. It's not surprising given that role, that lawyers are not held in higher repute.

If you give to a particular profession the obligation of examining and treating the most difficult disputes in society you will create a lot of tension, a lot of anger, a lot of unhappiness around what that profession does. So, it is not surprising that society has both the general view of lawyers that it does which is negative and the concrete view of lawyers that it does which is where most people say they are very happy with the lawyer representing them. But the profession is a profession where you can really make a difference. And you can make a difference in virtually any forum you want. It's debate at the highest level. I can't think of anything that I would find more exciting, and I suspect that for many of those who have been drawn to debate, that they would find more exciting.

JIM: *I wondered if you might speak briefly to something that your own literature titles "The Law School in the Global Village." This concept of the global village is something that's in many respects new to high school students. I wonder what you might say would be some of the ramifications of this concept of the global village and how it operates or interacts with the teaching of law?*

JOHN: One of the inevitabilities of the next century is the fact that national boundaries will become less and less significant, and we will move closer and closer to a notion of ourselves as a global village. And as that happens, it is equally clear and inevitable that law and the rule of law is going to be the basic underpinning of globalization. Economic transactions can not occur without a confidence on both sides that contracts, for example, will be honored.

I visited China last spring and it's clear that one of the impediments that China has right now to economic development is the fact that they have no tradition of contract. And they're groping for an understanding of what the very notion of contract means. And of course they're turning to the United States for a model. It is also clear that the rule of law will be the underpinning of the movement of societies from nondemocratic to democratic forms of government. This is not an economic issue, this is an individual rights issue. And I saw that when I visited South Korea which has its first democratically elected president and as he gropes with moving from a totalitarian government to a democratic government the rule of law is important.

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You might think he's the greatest or the worst, but you'd love to have him on your team

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So, it's clear that one of our major export commodities over the next century is going to be law. And it's clear that globalization is going to occur. For legal education, we're going to have to confront the fact that virtually no lawyer will be able to behave as a local lawyer. All lawyers will become global lawyers.

JIM: *As Dean of one of the most prominent law schools in the country, I'd like to ask if you could give me your impressions about the quality of public policy argument as it is practiced in front on the public today by our elected officials.*

JOHN: Well, there's a marked difference between the quality of public policy discussion in the popular media and public policy discussion in the media that is designed more for the intellectual elite of the country. The contrast between for example the network nightly news on the one hand and C-SPAN on the other. And I think that I would join the chorus of people who bemoan the movement to kind of media image and sound-bites. I mean this is antithetical to what debate is about. One talks about an average quote on network television now being done in seven seconds and the average story being under three minutes on the network news.

You know what kind of treatment you have of extensions of arguments. It's sad to see our policy discussions, for example, on the President's health care plan or on NAFTA reduced to sound-bites and demagoguery.

Frankly I think that of all the presidents during my lifetime -- I can't remember FDR or Truman -- but from Eisenhower on including John Kennedy, I think Bill Clinton is the closest thing to a high school debater that we've ever had. I mean you might think he's the greatest or the worst, but you'd love to have him on your debate team. And you'd love to have Hillary on your debate team. Even Al Gore is not so bad, although he reminds me more of an orator than a debater. And I don't mean to mention only the incumbents, There are some good people out there, and when one sees them in the context like C-SPAN where they have a couple of hours to discuss an issue, one understands the capacity for public policy discussion that's there.

We now have just a massive cultural diminishing of our attention span, related to being a visual, rather than a written and verbal, culture. But I think that the deficiency in public policy discussion can be traced to the deep cultural problem that we're becoming more and more a culture of imme-

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**One has to learn when one
has done enough. One has
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diately stimulation and gratification and short attention span, and we're moving away from being a society that values depth and is willing to delay gratification. And to that extent I think that debate is a good antidote.

***JIM:** John, let me just ask if you have any final thoughts that you might like to share with us.*

JOHN: None except to say to the extraordinary people who are involved in working with forensics, what tremendous admiration I have for them. And, to those whose paths crossed with mine, to those who gave me many good memories, I just want to say I always think of those years lovingly and with great gratitude. I would not trade those fifteen years working with the students at St. Brendan's for anything. They were sacred years for me. They were sacred years principally because of the students, but in large measure too because of some of the magnificent people whom I met, some of whom I'm confident are still involved in this activity which is without peer. And I just would like them to know that I think of them often and always with love and I have great admiration for them. And if they're ever around NYU and want to stop in with a bus load of their debaters, I'd be happy to see them!

JOHN SEXTON

The most successful high school debate coach of his time, John Edward Sexton established and directed the debate program at St. Brendan's, a small Catholic Girls High School in Brooklyn, N.Y.

At St. Brendan's Mr. Sexton raised over \$100,000 a year to conduct a total educational program that traveled and debated nationally.

John Sexton began his debate career as a Brooklyn Prep (NY) student. As NFL member 104613 he graduated with 401 points. He began coaching while in college and was awarded his coaching diamond in 1970.

St. Brendan's was in the final round of debate at the 1967 National Tournament, one of seven appearances at Nationals. Three times St. Brendan's was the largest NFL chapter in the New York City District.

At the National Catholic Forensic League "the girls" as they were often called on the circuit reached the final round six times and won five. Add to this 5 state and 4 NFL District debate titles.

John traveled the team widely and successfully. They were Barkley Forum Champions at Emory University in 1970 and 1975. Mr. Sexton was elected a key coach in 1973.

Other National invitational tournament successes were achieved at Georgetown, the Miami Beach Forensic Festival, Wake Forest and other major invitational tournaments.

Brother Gregory Rene', former NCFL President, remembers John's teams as "exceptionally well prepared."

John earned a BA in History in 1963, an MA in Comparative Religion in 1965 and a Ph. D. in History of American Religion in 1978 all from Fordham University. He graduated J.D. *magna cum laude* from Harvard Law School in 1979. He has co-authored five books on the law as well as numerous articles.

Before being named Dean at the New York University School of Law, John clerked for Chief Justice Warren Burger at the Supreme Court and Judge David Bazelon at the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington D.C. Previous to his legal studies John taught religion in three New York colleges and ran a large national test preparation service.

Dean Sexton currently serves as a special master supervising pretrial proceedings in the Love Canal Litigation. John has testified before congressional committees and filed briefs before the US Supreme Court.

As Dean at NYU he is building a "global law school" for the 21st Century.