

# 'He Was My Inspiration'

*by Doug Cowan*

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**V**al was the first person outside my family that believed in me, and taught me to believe that I was a winner. He taught me the importance of preparation that has served me even to this day, and instilled in me a work ethic that is responsible for my success.

Mr. Foubert was my Debate Coach at Sammamish High School, where I graduated in 1961. He changed my life dramatically. I became a lawyer and have practiced law now for 39 years.

I cherish the moment, at least 25 years ago now, when I saw Mr. Foubert and one of his daughters at Benjamin's Restaurant in Bellevue, and was able to tell him in his daughter's presence just how important he was in my life.

The way he worked with my debate partner, Mike Brock, and me, taught us critical analysis, how to dissect the other side's position, to search for their weaknesses and to prepare for the opposition's attack on our own weaknesses. Pretty good preparation for a lawyer, wouldn't you say? We won a number of tournaments and made it all the way to the State Finals in Debate at the championship tournament held at Washington State University that year.

He was a teacher and a mentor, but ultimately he was a friend -- except when we stepped out of line!.

The most important thing was that he liked me and believed in me and made me unafraid to lose as long as I did the best I could do and prepared as hard as I could -- although I hated to lose then as much as I hate to lose today!

He was my inspiration. I still think of him often.