

In Recognition: Larry Scott Deatherage

The leadership of the three largest intercollegiate policy debate organizations solicited remembrances about Larry Scott Deatherage. These contributions were essential to our collective tribute. We appreciate the difficulty involved in writing these tributes and we have decided to include each in their entirety. They follow in alphabetical order by author.

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Scott Deatherage lived a remarkable, but tragically short life. The tributes to him and his legacy are too numerous to mention and too personal for me to repeat. I'll add only a few thoughts borne of the three ways in which I was fortunate to have interacted with him.

First, Scott was a college debate rival in the early 80s. And, he was a fine debater, regularly reaching the elimination rounds of all the various tournaments. I didn't know him well, but I could see even from my vantage point that he was quite obviously competitive, focused and diligent. Further, he always had a sense of dignity about him. Perhaps it was his size combined with his demeanor. But, whatever it was, I recall noticing it at the time – and I remember it even more in hindsight. (Scott shared this most desirable of traits with another debate titan who passed this year, Ross Smith.)

Second, Scott was a college debate coaching legend. It was with complete sincerity that I would introduce him publicly as the “John Wooden” of college debate. And, like every other college debater, it was with deep *and personal* respect that I viewed his remarkable record. I, like so many others, *know and knew* the dedication, the intellect, and the tenacity that such an extraordinary record necessarily required.

And, third, Scott was hired by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues and served as our Executive Director while I served as board chair. It is ironic but yet another testament to the man that his hiring was *not* axiomatic. The NAUDL was at the time relatively newly-revitalized. We had very large ambitions, and Scott lacked much of the organizational management experience the other candidates possessed. But, Scott's abiding commitment to the activity and his unshakeable belief in its power to change the lives of students convinced us (the NAUDL Board) that his lack of non-profit management experience was beside the point. And, we knew that his coaching record of accomplishment – like any record of world class excellence over time in an challenging field – demonstrated in so many ways that we could never investigate the kind of character for which we were looking.

It was only at the very end of Scott's life and for the one and one-half years during which he was the full time Executive Director of the NAUDL – only after our weekly one on one meetings, our daily telephone conversations, and even more frequent email exchanges – did I for the first time really get to know the Scott Deatherage who I had seen only from afar for over 25 years. And, I saw it all clear as day: His methods, including his “Monday morning coffee” emails, “the speech,” and his careful deployment of his personal network; his passion for politics, sports, and our mission; and his commitment to academic debate both to the students who had already benefited from it and also to the so many hundreds of thousands more who were still without access to its benefit.

Scott himself said of his position at the NAUDL that “I have been offered what I consider the opportunity – indeed the privilege – of a lifetime; the chance to help on a national level to build debate

programs in the many thousands of high schools across the United States where that opportunity has not existed for a long, long time."

I and so many others regret that the lifetime within which we saw him work was tragically short. The work to which he was so committed, however, survives him, and his memory lives on in it.

Lenny Gail

Another day has come and gone, yet I am no closer to being able to compose my thoughts about the loss of my good friend. I have busied myself with organizing what everyone else has written, and I have read the tributes and memories – some make me laugh, some make me cry – that other friends have shared. I think the reason I am having so much trouble with this is that I can't really accept that it is true. Scott was the first friend I made in college debate outside of my squad – we met at my first debate tournament at Oklahoma Christian College in Edmund, Oklahoma. He was one year ahead of me. I don't have much memory of the events surrounding our initial meeting; I only know that I considered him a friend when the tournament was over. I have no experience with the world of college debate without Scott in it.

I remember the first time I met the “Duck.” Our squads were close both because of the geographical proximity between Waco and Denton and because his coach, Bill English had been my coach, John Gossett's coach. It was decided that the two squads would caravan together for the 27plus hour drive to California for the Coast tournaments. The Baylor folk were crowded and we had extra room. They met up with us in Denton, which meant that they had left Waco about 5:00 am. I went running up to the van looking for Scott with some new story to share with him, but I couldn't find him. I asked where he was and someone said “in the van.” I looked in the van and didn't see him, so I asked again. “Look down,” I was told. I scanned the bottom of the van and between two of the rows of seats saw these enormous feet sticking up. As I got closer I saw my friend, laid out on the floor, with a flow paper sign taped to him that read “Duck Sleeping, Do Not Disturb.” The paper flapped with his breathing and somewhat resembled a duck bill. I don't know if that's the first time the Baylor people called him “the Duck,” but it was the first time I saw it and started calling him that.

I was never one to remember the specifics of all the debates we had – though we did debate each other a lot. Joel has said we debated at least 25 times. Joel and the Duck could probably tell you what our record was and still argue over this decision or that 25 years later. I just remember that we were competitors that had great respect for each other. Our rivalry pushed each of us to be better. I learned a lot from him, and I like to think he learned from me as well.

I must have talked about him a lot because my mother was convinced that he was my boyfriend and kept asking when I was going to bring him by to meet her. It was hard to categorize the nature of our friendship, so trying to explain it was difficult. I felt that Scott was like an older brother who looked out for me. It was not until we had known each other for 3 or 4 years that Scott came to terms with his identity in a way that he felt comfortable expressing it to others. I had never had a friend who was gay, or at least one that had figured it out and was willing to talk about it. I was glad to be one of the people that he shared this time of his life with.

When we became coaches, we continued to be competitors – somehow never coached for the same school, never even taught a lab together despite the fact that we taught at so many summer camps together. Whenever one of his teams would suffer a tough loss at the NDT, I would seek him out and he would cry like a baby in my arms. When Michael and Elliott lost the doubles at the NDT, a loss that was a competitive advantage for him, he sought me out to return the hug and hold me as I cried. I couldn't help but take some joy in watching his celebratory “duck jump” – where he would jump up and down about a foot off the floor pumping his fists – even when it was the expense at one of my teams.

I certainly learned a lot more about being a coach from him than he learned from me. The energy, organization, and level of preparation and focus that he brought to this venture was humbling and unprecedented. One year when we had a particularly bad start at the first tournament my debaters, who had heard about “the speech” that the Duck gave his debaters, asked if I could give them “the speech.” I talked to Scott later that night and asked for advice on what to do to get everyone’s spirits back up, and he graciously responded.

Reading the posts that other debaters have written, particularly people who did not debate for Northwestern, but only knew Scott through summer camps, really gives one a sense of the impact that he had on so many. The number of people who have written that they went back and referred to their notes from a lecture he gave 5, 10 or 15 years ago; Aimi who said that she still has quotes from his lecture taped to her wall and that her brother took some of them from her room and moved them to his room to inspire him when he debated, really demonstrates what a special person he was, what tremendous insight he had into what it took to prepare oneself for success. I think he knew that learning to prepare oneself for success in debate was great training for preparing oneself to succeed in life.

It is hard to say goodbye. I lived more of my life with Scott a part of it than without him. We rang in many New Years, shared way too many good meals together to count, went on trips together. He was an investor in my restaurant. When I presented him with my business plan, he glanced at it and said he would have to figure out how much he could afford, but he definitely wanted to support me. Though, when he came to visit and saw that I had Pepsi products instead of Coke, I thought he might take it back. It is hard to say goodbye, but I will try. Goodbye my friend. May you rest in peace. I love you and miss you.

Sherry Hall

The Duck and I

I have spent the past 5 days in Louisiana, surrounded by friends and family but unquestionably lonely and disconnected. I love these people and thank them for supporting me during this very tough time. However, I can honestly say that I have lost the most significant figure in my adult life and I can't believe that the words that I write now will truly encompass his awesome influence on my life and that of so many others. Reading the stories and tidbits that others have offered has helped me to put off this explanation and helped me realize, wonderfully, that I was not alone in being so deeply and profoundly affected by my relationship with Scott. I can honestly say that I would not be doing anything professionally that I do know or do them how I do them without his intervention. I love my job, I love the Wildcats (they better do well in Tampa!), and I love debate almost entirely as a result one large goofy man who I was terrified of as a freshman in college who I am now proud to call friend and mentor.

A few vignettes into our strange journey:

1) As a freshman at the Roger's House I tried to stay low and avoid being noticed. I was thrilled enough to be a member of the nationally acclaimed Northwestern Debate society I was just trying to avoid being cut. I still have full notebook of thoughts from the event including the 2 DAYS of lectures from Duck on the nature of federal control in relation to Native Americans. SOVEREIGN-ITY NOW! That was before we talked about possible affs on the topic. The greatest lesson I took away from the event was the necessity of preparation. Every day an upperclassman would come in and present an affirmative idea for the room to review. Duck would tear through them like a hot knife through butter. Some he would be more excited about than others, but non was near its final product and Duck would let folks know. "Wow", I thought "those looked like good affs to me, what was I missing?" Duck always had a way of looking ahead, seeing all the angles. And even if he could not express that to you immediately, he knew and you knew that you had missed something. Second lesson, it's all about the details. My first serious interaction with the Duck was a practice round he judged. We were all first year debaters and it was not a great round. I cannot forget Duck stopping me during me the cross-ex of the 1ac after I had mis-phrased a question, "DUDE! This is college THE PLAN says, THE PLAN does..." He took the time to remind a dumb freshman from Louisiana on proper grammar in my cross ex! Preparation and the details matter from the Roger's House to the NDT.

2) I will always remember the first time that I thought Duck knew who I was (knowing him he had some ideas about me long before hand). We were in the middle of a freshman lecture about imbedded clash and he posed a question to the group about how to rephrase a link argument more efficiently. I shyly raised my hand and ventured a guess. Duck stares down for the white board in his slightly hunched over manner and stares for a moment. "Luke, I guess you're not as dumb as you look", he remarks and the lecture rolls on. The first compliment I ever received from the man who I can now call a great friend and mentor. I loved that respect and admiration was earned from the Duck, never given freely, but once earned very hard to lose. I slowly built up a lot of credibility with the Duck, being is personal driver for a while will do that.

3) I'm not sure if he liked my intellect, my determination or something else, but after 4 years of debating for the man one day I found Duck coming to me for advice on whether after graduation my partner from the previous year should be lined up for the B team. As a recent college graduate with no coaching experience at any level I was shocked and amazed that the Duck would come to me for anything debate related let alone thoughts on pairing a team in line for a first round. I gave him my thoughts and cheered loudly for NU DD all the way to the Octos of the 2006 NDT. Duck was the first person to ever hire me as a coach or lab instructor. I'm pretty sure he saw my future in debate coaching long before I did. I remember a very long conversation before my senior year in college talking about the possibility of coaching and seriously worrying because of my lack of competitive success, that I could not stand up to other peers (to be fair I graduated with a pretty talented young debater from San Antonio). Duck looked down at me from his bar stool and I could tell the look behind his eyes, "Dude, are you kidding me?" He then went on to list a number of current and former coaches that excelled regardless of their competitive past. This conversation in many ways gave me permission to try and become a debate coach and ignore the path to law school that I had seen myself on for many years. I thank him for that.

4) I missed a phone call from Duck and he left me a voicemail. I had been busy leading a novice debate meeting at the Hooch (teaching novice debate was a passion we shared) and assumed Duck just wanted to chat about travel or some logistical matter. I opened the voice mail and was greeted by excited Duck. You know, the Duck who was loud and articulate and punching his words. He was letting me know about a freshman debater I had coached previously. She had just presented on a proposed Afghanistan Aff at the Roger's House and quite simply Duck was blown away. Using terms of high Duck compliment like "complete package" "home run" and "A PLUS" throughout the message. I kept that voice mail for a long time. It was a mini-version of the speech to me. I subtle reminder of the power of debate. If I felt down or didn't remember why I was doing what I was doing I would hit replay. Duck's voice coming over the line would remind that I could do could and in the future could do better. Duck always managed to let you know when you did good, even if you missed it yourself.

5) The last real conversation Duck and I had was shortly after I picked him up from surgery this December. We were waiting on his prescription and I could see that he was in pain. He sat awkwardly in my car and hummed along with the classic rock. Desperately trying to take his mind off the pain and his medical problems I spun the conversation to something I knew could take his mind away. The Dallas Cowboys. He outlined each of the Cowboys upcoming opponents and broke down their playoff chances (Sorry Branson, he was not optimistic). He complimented me on the Saints season so far and how his Cowboys had no chance against us. Two weeks later the Cowboys ended the Saint's chances at an undefeated season. I never got a call from Duck pointing out that fact. I'm not sure what I would give for one more call from the man to gloat about a football victory or anything else. Every conversation with the Duck mattered, you walked away knowing more than you went in and in some way better.

Larry Scott Deatherage is beyond defining in any single story or any single storyteller. He was a loving, passionate, and loyal. He was also a determined perfectionist who would let you know if you had not lived up to expectations. No one worked harder. No one enjoyed victory more. More importantly no one enjoyed sharing debate with others more. Duck always said that debate saved his life. Thank you Duck for changing my life forever. I will live each day trying to live the four pillars- character, commitment, team work and hard work. I will not settle for good when I can be

great. I will be hard on myself when I didn't give my best and easy on myself when my best wasn't good enough.

Thank you Duck. I love and miss you.

Luke Hill

Scott Deatherage was one of the most articulate and passionate ambassadors for debate to those who have no experience with the activity. He was exceptional at explaining why we do what we do and he could make our sometimes strange practices make sense. Scott could speak so convincingly about the educational and personal benefits of debate because debate had been such a profound influence on his own life. When Scott talked about debate's ability to improve students' minds and lives he was his own best evidence. His personal passion for debate could turn anyone into a debate fan. His enthusiasm and commitment were contagious.

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RE: In Memoriam – Dr. Larry Scott Deatherage 1962-12/25/2009 (B.B.A. 1984, M.A. 1986)

Scott Deatherage, known affectionately as “the Duck,” was without question the most successful coach in the history of college debate, leading Northwestern University to an incredible seven national championships in a mere eighteen years. (The next-closest coach won four national championships in a decades-long career.) He was voted the Coach of the Decade for the 1990s. To put his accomplishments into perspective, he won more national debate championships than Coach K has won basketball championships, than Bill Walsh won Super Bowls, than Joe Torre has won World Series, and than any other debate coach ever has or ever will.

Harvard’s debate coach said, “There is no close second. There is a small handful of distinguished coaches who have won half as much as Duck; none closer. Nobody will ever catch up. Nobody really even dreams of catching up anymore.”

Scott’s work as Executive Director of the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues, an organization dedicated to expanding competitive debate into urban school systems across the US with the ultimate result of vastly increasing the scholastic achievements of students in those schools, exemplified his work ethic and his dedication to others, especially others less fortunate. In only two years of Scott’s leadership, the NAUDL expanded into over 150 new schools.

Almost four years ago, I nominated Scott to be an Outstanding Alumnus of Baylor University. In my nomination letter, I said:

Scott is not a typical Baylor alumnus – you will not see him in a Baptist church on most Sundays, although he is a Christian. You will not hear him espousing many conservative political beliefs, although he is a conscientious and careful thinker. I do not, however, believe that the Alumni Association intends the Distinguished Alumnus Award to be reserved for typical Baylor

graduates. Scott is caring, kind, absolutely dedicated to his fellow man, and universally respected by those who know him.

Many friends, students, and colleagues of the Duck wrote in support of my nomination of him. There were far too many laudatory comments to include here, but some examples are worth noting. The first is from a former student and later a coaching rival:

Scott is a teacher of argument, not just a coach of winning teams. He coaches debate not in order to amass trophies, but to teach critical thinking, analysis and advocacy skills to students, students who will be (and are) leaders in their respective fields. The hallmark of Scott's teaching and coaching is a deep and abiding commitment to the students with whom he works. If you are coached by Scott, you know he is as committed to your education and success as you are. If you work with Scott, you know he is deeply invested in the well-being of the students with whom he works. If you work for Scott, you know that the decisions governing the team will be made with the utmost of integrity. And, if you coach against Scott, you know your students will be debating against well-researched, prepared, and gracious teams. Quite simply, Scott is the most successful coach the debate community has ever seen, and may ever see.

From a former student:

Scott instructed me about rhetorical flourishes. He also taught me how to be clearer, in both word and thought, than I ever thought possible. He is an amazing coach. But he is an even more amazing person. Scott teaches life lessons... what it means to be a compassionate and caring person... what it means to have dignity and class... a tireless work ethic. Scott has been many things to me over the years. He has been an educator. He has been a coach. He has been like family. He is and will remain a constant friend. I would do anything for Scott because he has already done so much for me.

From a rival coach:

The national recognition he has brought to Northwestern, and as an alum to Baylor, is immeasurable.

From a fellow alumnus of the Baylor debate team:

I marvel at his continued success in his chosen profession.... Scott is not only at the pinnacle of this profession, he is at heights never before achieved.... I would like to recommend Scott on another basis as well: his humanity and his dedication to the advancement of learning.... I am tremendously proud of Scott, as are all who know him.

From Scott's former debate coach:

Scott is clearly the most gifted teacher of his time in teaching students how to build strong arguments about issues of public controversy.... A good debate coach doesn't just train students to defeat rival schools but trains them for a life of advocacy. Scott Deatherage's record suggests that he is simply the best debate coach ever to teach students about argumentation in the history of this nation.

From Scott's graduate professor and debate director during his assistant coaching days:

Scott reminds us of what makes for a great teacher. He is patient and giving of his time. He doesn't just tell students what to do: he shows them how to do it. He demands hard work from his students and he demands that each student perform to the best of his or her ability. By insisting on excellence, and by his dedication to that principle, he enables students to perform beyond their expectations.... He is also a great leader.... He mastered the trick of achieving both a personal relationship with students and maintaining his professional distance. If he demanded hard work from students, he worked even harder. He set an example for students to live up to. Teachers do God's work. Scott does it better than most.

From a former Baylor debater:

Scott has been an enormous source of strength and a great friend over the years.

Scott was far more than a debate coach. He was kind. He taught dignity and class. He exemplified hard work. He was a great teacher of sharp thinking and persuasive communication. He was more interested in molding greatness in others than in being on the A list himself.

Over the years, Scott was my teammate, my coach, coach of my top competitors (both when I was still debating and when I was coaching Baylor), and a groomsman in my wedding. For 24 years, he and I were friendly rivals in the same fantasy baseball league.

I am pleased to have been the first of many to call Scott by name and thank him personally in the transcript of a final round of the NDT. I am pleased that I got to have dinner with him every time I was in Chicago – the last time a mere two months before his death. I am glad to have gone to church with him in the middle of debate workshops where we were teaching together. I am proud to have watched many, many baseball games with him.

Scott was my friend.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lyn Robbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "L" and a stylized "R".

Lyn Robbins

A Tribute to Scott Deatherage

Scott was my student and my friend. When I made my first coaching trip to Baylor in the summer of 1982 before my faculty position began in August, it was Scott Deatherage who picked me up at the airport. On the drive back to Waco, I was impressed by his intelligence, his drive, and most of all his passion for the activity and for everyone with whom he worked. In the twenty-seven years since that moment, I saw my initial impressions of him confirmed again and again.

Scott was not blessed with the innate verbal skills of many great debaters. But he had something much more important—an incredible worth ethic. Scott made himself into a great debater and one of my happiest moments as a coach occurred when Scott and Mark Dyer qualified for the elimination rounds at the NDT.

It was at the conclusion of his own debate career that Scott made the best decision of his life not only for himself, but especially for the activity he loved. He became a coach. I vividly remember watching Scott coach in the Baylor Summer Workshop and seeing him as a graduate student coach first at Baylor and later at Northwestern. To say that he was a gifted teacher of argumentation and debate would be an understatement of enormous proportions. In the summer workshop, Scott's skill as a coach quickly became a private joke. Those of us working with the program knew that Scott would complain about the quality of his students and then a few short days later those same students would win almost all their debates. It was apparent that somehow Scott saw in each student their potential strengths and somehow built on those strengths. It was humbling to see him work.

But it was nowhere near as humbling as observing from afar his work as the Director of Forensics at Northwestern. He coached so many NDT champions at Northwestern that it became newsworthy when Northwestern didn't win. I got a sense of his place in the activity when I was appointed to the Board of Trustees. At the NDT one year, I spent a lot of time talking with coaches I've known for decades about debate past and present. In one of these sessions, a much younger coach finally worked up enough courage to ask me: "Are you really the one who named him the Duck?" The only thing that impressed this young coach about the new member of the Board was that he had given Scott Deatherage his nickname.

Most of all, I like to remember the first two NDT championships that Scott's teams won at Northwestern. On both occasions, I was the second person Scott called (after David Zarefsky). Those memories mean a lot to me. After that, however, winning became so old hat that Scott wouldn't call me for weeks or even months. I have many friends who are enormously and rightfully proud of their coaching record because they coached a team that won the NDT. Scott coached seven NDT champions!

The outpouring of emotion that has occurred in the last few days makes clear both the universal respect that Scott received and that he changed the lives of many many students. What was it that made him such a life-changing teacher? I think the answer is that in his

teaching and his life he enacted the values at the heart of academic debate. He pushed students to find the best evidence, think through the pluses and minuses of all strategic choices, to not accept the conventional wisdom, to practice for all eventualities, and then to choose. He recognized that this approach did not guarantee victory in debate, but saw that it gave his teams the best chance. I think that is exactly the lesson that debate teaches about life. Seeking the best data and balancing competing alternatives will not guarantee that good decisions are made, but there is a much better chance of that happening than otherwise. Scott taught his students and his example teaches all of us how to be citizens in a democratic society, how to make the best choice possible given the constraints of limited time and limited information. And his passion for the activity and for helping his students provides an example to all of us about how to make a difference in this world. If all of us could live up to his example, the world would be a much better place.

Scott's life was far too short, but it was a life well lived that made an enormous difference for his students and his friends. We can only pay tribute to that life by striving to enact in our own lives the principles that he believed in so strongly.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Rowland

Professor, The University of Kansas

and

Chair of the NDT Board of Trustees

There is no more fitting teaching of all religious and secular celebrations at this time of year than the importance of memory. And while Scott Deatherage's passing leaves a hole impossible to fill, it also grants an opportunity to remember those most dear and those important to us all.

It is hard to say when I first met the Duck, although I assure you it was before we called him that or by any other fowl for that matter. We were both products of Texas high school debate. My first competitive recollection of him was as a hard-working (if not shy) member of a stellar Baylor college squad. The bracket gods (much less of a science back then) always seemed to match us up at some time in tournaments big or small. Scott was the epitome of good nature in debate rounds - but with a big heart. While neither his nor my speed was particularly blinding, he was also informed and curious. Back then, he was a sponge for argument, evidence, theory - all toward a great purpose. Hindsight tells us that purpose was coaching, and it goes without saying that he became one of the best.

Was Scott a persuasive debater? I'd say so. He developed the use of the dramatic pause in debate rounds better than anyone. Playing the hand he was dealt, and realizing that keeping up with the line-by-line was not always the best option for him, he would stare off into that middle ground, and bring the pace to a persuasive halt. Having observed him in a variety of public speaking roles over the last couple of decades, this style became his trademark and an educational tool. Facts...drama, metaphor...pause...facts. I will miss that. And the takeaway? You can always turn your challenges into your successes.

So much has already been said about Scott's innovations and contributions to coaching. It is more than a question of numbers. Suffice to say, his dedication to his debaters, their education, their well-being, and to the idea of debate (and competition) as a motivator produced one of the greatest string of successes college debate may every know. Then, to take the wisdom of that professional experience and organization skill and leave the comfort zone is truly remarkable. But that's precisely what Scott did in joining forces with the urban debate movement by leading NAUDL, if only and tragically for such a brief period.

All of us of a certain age can create neat compartmentalization of the various phases and descriptions of our lives. We tend to think in those terms. The real trick is to be certain enough of yourself as an individual to move back and forth between those descriptions comfortably; to continue to bring comfort and love and wisdom to those you encounter in each place. So, my Story of Scott ends where it began: he was still that friend I knew when we both had a head of hair and a head of steam. He was never so changed by his success or his challenges that he wasn't available to friends old and new. Still shy with the heart of a lion. Pause. Goodbye my friend.

Scott Segal

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I met Scott Deatherage in the summer of 1984. At that time, I had just finished high school. I arrived in Waco, Texas, to work in the summer workshops before starting college in the fall. I had heard much about Scott from the debate coaches and my former high school debate partner who was a Baylor debater. During that summer, I got the chance to get to know Scott as I worked as one of his lab assistants. The thing that I immediately noticed about Scott was not his debate knowledge (which was formidable), his way of talking (which was unique), his mannerisms (which were entertaining), or the nickname which he was assigned (which was appropriate), but was his kindness. Scott took a personal interest in me and always went out of his way to speak directly to me to try to give me advice to help me as a debater, a student, and a person. Scott was an astute judge of human character and had remarkable insight into the personalities of the coaches and other debaters at Baylor and the other places where he worked. Scott frequently went out of his way to share his advice and wisdom with me to steer me in the right direction. He provided “therapy” to me with respect to the other coaches and students with whom I interacted on a daily basis. First as a coach and later as a coach of other schools with whom we competed regularly, Scott would always take time to take me aside and provide “special counsel” to me. While I am sure that Scott did this to literally hundreds of other kids, he always made me feel “special.” Scott did this for no particular reason, other than he cared about me and those around me. At the time, I did not recognize the uniqueness of that type of person.

I kept in contact with Scott through college, even after he left Baylor to coach at Samford and later at Northwestern. During law school, when I continued to work with the Baylor debate program, Scott was a frequent source of advice and counsel regarding what was best for the Baylor program.

After law school, I must admit that my contact with Scott was sporadic. In fact, while I heard about the exploits of Scott’s debaters and touched base with him occasionally, I did not have much significant contact with Scott until he left Northwestern to assume his position with the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues.

I can remember being approached by Lenny Gail with NAUDL regarding starting the Houston Urban Debate League. When I was not sure what I was in for, I figured I needed to conduct some “due diligence.” To find out about the urban debate movement, I

decided to call on some folks “in the know.” The first person that I called was Scott. Not surprisingly, I reached his voice mail which said that he was traveling with students at a debate tournament. When he returned from the tournament, he apologized for not returning my call sooner and asked what I was interested in. I told him that I was conducting due diligence on the urban debate movement because I had been out of touch with debate for several years. I told Scott that he was the first person who came to mind. I told him that I was contacting him because I wanted to get an honest opinion from him regarding whether this program was one which was worthy of my consideration. Scott told me that he believed that the endeavor was worthy, given that he had just signed a contract the day before to become the new Executive Director.

My good fortune was to work with Scott closely between December 2007 and his death on starting the Houston Urban Debate League. Over those two years, Scott and I exchanged countless e-mails, spoke regularly, and got to see quite a bit of each other. I am so thankful that I was able to establish contact with him again. Nothing had changed. He still spoke slowly, he still said “additionally” several times during each few moments of conversation, he still was an astute judge of character, and he still had a very enlightened view of the various personalities involved in the debate community. Most of all, Scott still had that kindness and ability to make you feel special and to make you feel as if he had all the time in the world to address whatever issue or problem that was important. Scott was a tireless worker for the urban debate movement. He truly believed in the transformative power of debate. For me, overarching that was Scott’s kindness which shined upon and warmed others, asking for nothing in return.

We will all miss Scott as a debater, coach, educator, colleague, and friend. But more than that, in his passing, we will all recognize that his brand of kindness is hard to find.



Griffin Vincent

I have known Scott Deatherage as a judge during his undergraduate debate days, professional colleague at Baylor, Samford, and Northwestern, a powerful competitor in debate at Northwestern, and as a leader in the Urban Debate League movement. We are both Texans, and, we would proudly specify: Houstonians. Our debate roots were centered in a state that through our collective tenure required a year of speech communication and a further semester of debate or drama as a requirement for high school graduation. Our age gap put me in the role of mentor for most of those roles—but I find that increasingly my *sitzt em leben* as I see the end of my fifties approaching at the end of this new year. I find my role as occasional eulogist stretched beyond belief this year...

Debate is a family, like it or not, often dysfunctional, but still filled with linkage through our devotion to the life of the mind. I have read the CEDA list, the fruit of Sherry Hall's hard work, and my personal favorite testimonial, Josh Zive's notion that Scott was a star in the "world of misfit toys."

I have been consumed with holidays in Nashville and my son's wedding these last 2 weeks, and I have needed time to separate the joy of life's journey for my child, and life's ending for someone I valued. Scott was a respectable debater who grew to become, by record, the greatest debate coach in history. I experienced his challenges in many conversations about the trajectory of debate at Northwestern, his overwhelming sense of meeting the legacy in a program so historically gifted, and his need to grow. The latter is my experience of his life's path. Scott cared so much about political reform that he sought to leave Northwestern in the early 90's to support Bill Clinton's call to change. In the wake of much counsel, he stayed at Northwestern. When the leadership of NFL was open he considered that move as he valued high school debate so much as the foundation of his own capacity to deal with the tragedy of losing his parents. During the 2000's he sought to support the UDL and we had many conversations about how that could be accomplished.

I will never forget the weekend, stuck in a blizzard in Milwaukee after finishing school selection for the new UDL in that city, that Lenny Gail called me and told me that Scott was the new Executive Director of the National Association for UDLs. I was shocked and silent and, I think in retrospect, Lenny thought I was not happy with Scott's selection. After a few moments I told him that Scott was the biggest thorn in Emory's competitive side—could I have a moment to reflect on the end of that competition (who knew Dan Fitzmier, one of Emory's own would surface...) before I wrapped my mind around Scott in the national UDL leadership role?

The bulk of the CEDA posts have referenced his college debate coaching career. I want to emphasize his last job. Scott called me 3 months into his NAUDL leadership role and told me it was the hardest job he had ever had and wanted a phone conference—and needed a hug, not to mention that he could not even imagine keeping up with the email volume. He never caught up to email, but he did an awesome job: 150 new schools, new states, amazing fundraising, and, more than all of this: consciousness raising among the top high school and college debate alumni that the UDL was right; that being a "winner in a rigged game" as Jonathan Kozol would characterize it, required paying forward the debt of debate training. We were planning and working on funding for an annual summer debate camp for UDL kids and teachers in Atlanta with Scott, Will Baker, and me as the staff for teachers;

James Roland and Diana Dunker as teachers for the students. It was, however, more than a mingling of the 3 national UDL organizations, it was a reflection of Scott's capacity to grow from listening to the kids and teachers he chose to serve. We will continue to work on the project in his memory.

At my son's wedding in Nashville this week there was a large table of Northwestern graduate students, including the fabulous Caitlin Bruce, and the newly engaged Randall Bush and Rachel Haig. I had the privilege of hoping they could dispense with my image as the scary woman on the stage at the Emory high school tournament who was, improbably, their good friend and fellow Northwestern graduate student's Mom, long enough for me to thank them for leaving their grief to celebrate the new beginning represented at a wedding. It was a particularly special moment for our family that they came to share our celebration amidst such challenge.

In the culture and theology of West Africa there is a notion of the living, the living dead, and the ancestors. The living dead are those who still have acquaintances and family alive to tell their story; ancestors are those whose living cohort has ended, but are still in memory for their larger contributions to history. I suspect Scott, now among the living dead, will become an ancestor. I can think of no greater legacy for any of us.

Postscript: I wrote this today and was ready to send it when I saw David Glass's powerful post. I truly hope that the many triumphs and challenges that were Scott's will instruct us in the complexities of a human life in all its dimensions.

Melissa Wade

I, as the Director of the University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society, spent many of the last ten years searching for our differences. Scott, as the Director of Northwestern University, spent most of that time searching for our similarities.

Our professional relationship was defined early when he beat me in two consecutive elimination rounds back when Wake and North Carolina were a Thanksgiving swing 25 years ago. Scott "won" early and often in our competitive relationship and that never changed as our roles in the activity evolved.

But I respected how "he" won, how "he" engaged me personally even when we disagreed on issues, and was very intrigued how my "different" debaters built a relationship with his "words" in the 2004 debate documentary, although never with him directly. "Don't ask, argue" got more run in our squad room for a couple of years than "By any means necessary."

Scott and I didn't have an extremely social relationship, but we had mutual respect and admiration for one another at many levels.

Someone earlier suggested they looked forward to what Scott would teach the UDL, but I looked forward to both what he would learn, as well as what he would teach. He was always eager to share those thoughts with me as our paths crossed over the years and our challenge of differenced impacted his thinking, his strategy, and his actions. He had a term I learned recently, "revolutionary patience" as I searched to better understand who I was and what meaning that had for how we both learn and teach.

And btw, he was one of the best I've ever met at "learning," that's one of the things I respected most about him, and likely an important attribute in the creation of the most competitively successful NDT/CEDA debate coach of our time. In search of our differences, I have not always given Scott the credit he deserves for his competitive success, and sadly, I will never have the chance to tell him personally.

I always thought I had time...

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On the island of misfit toys that is college debate, the Duck felt like a kindred spirit to me. We were both large, loud, and comfortable being very emotional. Throughout my years in debate, the voice and visage of the Duck would become one of the touchstones that would let me know I was in a friendly place--even when that voice and visage were not being particularly friendly at the time.

I did not know the Duck as debater--I knew him as a coach and judge. And while the Duck and I disagreed on a wide variety of issues, I always loved listening to the Duck talk about the things he really loved, his debaters and the people that make up the history of NDT debate.

A few months ago I found myself sitting at a bar downstairs from my office with the Duck. We were supposed to be talking about something else (likely me giving money to NAUDL), but as I expected, the conversation turned to our favorite topic--debaters and debates from the past. What was supposed to be a 15-minute drink turned into a couple of hours of Duck and I trying to out hyperbolize each other about the people we loved from debate.

As the conversation continued, we ended up (as we always did) on our favorite topic to discuss---Mike Gottlieb. Everyone knew that Mike was a Kansas kid who turned into one of the best debaters ever under the Duck, but the Duck knew that some of us in Lawrence always rooted for Mike like he was a blood relative. Bragging on Mike was easy, but listening to the Duck talk about Mike could make you feel better even if you had no idea who Mike was. When the Duck talked about his former debaters it was infused with a type of pride and love that is unmistakable to me now that I have become a father. For me, a conversation with the Duck about former debaters was more than a war story, it was ritual in community. Those conversations could remind you of how much you loved your coaches as a debater, and how much you loved your debaters as a coach. I will miss those conversations because the Duck understood something that took me a long time to appreciate---that while personal success in debate is a lot of fun, there is nothing more rewarding than investing your passion into someone else and watching them accomplish things you never could.

The last quiet time I spent with the Duck was sitting on the rooftop patio of Frank Cross's abode in Austin during the NDT. I remember sitting with the Duck, Scott Segal, Frank, and Robin Rowland telling war stories, talking crap, and having fun. I also remember looking across the table at Duck and realizing that although we were very different, he looked genuinely happy and relaxed in ways that were oddly familiar to me. I believe that the familiarity grew from a shared sense that being in the company of our debate friends was often the only place we really felt relaxed and happy. That although we certainly love and appreciate our families and friends not in debate, that the people in debate were family in every sense that the word family really matters. In the end, for many of us the people who coached us, that we coached, and that we competed against are where we find shelter from the storm.

Sitting on that patio laughing, I realized that although there are many people who knew Duck better than I did, he was a part of my family. The Duck was a debater, a coach, and a

friend. I miss him. Some people do debate. People like the Duck are debate.

Josh Zive