









*Coach Merwin Hayes offers advice and encouragement.*

On almost any given weekend throughout the school year the Wake Forest debate team is on the move. They might be debating at the University of Miami, the University of California at Berkeley, Duke University, the University of Chicago, or anywhere in between. They participate in twenty or more tournaments a year, argue one side or another in over 300 separate debates, against 150 other schools, including some of the best in the nation.

Twenty strong, paired two to a team, the Wake Forest debaters have won 54% of their debates so far this year. They have also brought home six trophies to show for their work and skill. Considering that the team is made up entirely of freshmen and sophomores the record is impressive.

But just what goes into building a team of debaters who can win, and win consistently? Dr. Merwin A. Hayes, in his first year as Wake Forest's debate coach and Assistant Professor in the Speech Department has some definite ideas on the subject. And he ought to know something about it since, among other things, he has co-authored a text book on debate which is soon to be published. Dr. Hayes came to Wake Forest from the University of Georgia where he was Assistant Professor and Director of Forensics from 1962-1965. A native of Michigan, he earned his Ph.D. degree in Speech from the University of Illinois.

At the outset Dr. Hayes maintains that there is more to debating than just competition and winning, though all debaters are all out to win. He feels that debate is most basically a very valuable technical training ground for any student who is willing to take the time to participate. "Debate trains students to reason and think clearly and to present their arguments in the best possible manner. Debaters are not trying to persuade anyone but rather show that they have properly researched and clearly organized their material and are able to cope with arguments advanced by their opponents. The true value of debate lies in the by-product of this activity, namely that debate techniques can be applied to all kinds

of questions both during college and in later life."

In essence a winning debater is no different from any other debater, he is simply better. The basic requirements are the same. First, the debater must have good evidence, and plenty of it. Second, the debater must be able to organize that evidence along with his own ideas. Third, he must thoroughly understand both sides of the question, not only because he has to argue both sides, but because he needs to be able to correct any flaws in his own arguments.

Evidence is of major importance to any debater. Every assertion must be backed up by authoritative documentation which constitutes a great part of a debater's argument. The evidence is gathered from magazines, newspapers, and books, beginning in the summer long before the first debate. It is kept up to date throughout the season. Duke Wilson, one of Wake Forest's top debaters, a sophomore from Bilboa, Canal Zone, says that he has found as many as six bits of evidence on this year's topic in a single issue of *The New York Times*. Top debaters will gather as many as a thousand pieces of evidence both affirmative and negative into long card files which they carry to every debate and use constantly.

Just as important as evidence is a debater's ability to construct a case based on that evidence, or use other evidence to break down an opponent's arguments. A good debater must think logically and clearly all the time; and he must organize what he says, not only to build a good case but to build a case which will be difficult for an opponent to refute. None of this organizing can take very long either, especially if he is arguing the negative side, since he must be careful to answer each point of the affirmative case in his allotted amount of time.

But the good debater can anticipate an opponent's position by becoming equally adept at arguing either side. He tries to think of every possible point which might be advanced by one side and discover a way to refute it. In the process he finds his own weaknesses, where he himself has been guilty of making assertions he cannot prove. He discovers the points at which he has not really thought through his position. In the process he builds an ever evolving argument, which becomes better and better as the year passes.

*Members of the debate team at Georgetown University. From left: Dick Leader, Laura Abernathy, Duke Wilson, Larry Penley, and Coach Merwin Hayes.*

The best debaters are those which are best organized. Almost all of the debaters, and the judges as well, keep what are called flow sheets on which the basic arguments advanced by each speaker are recorded. When the first Affirmative speaker begins, and makes his first point, the first Negative speaker immediately begins working through his card file for evidence he will use in his attempt to tear apart the Affirmative speaker's case. He will organize his speech according to the notes he records on his flow sheet. No debater ever just listens to an opponent, in fact he is just as busy when he is seated as when he is speaking.

This kind of debate is a very fluid, intense kind of mental activity. No two debates are exactly alike, arguments are never presented in just the same way. Not only are the debaters constantly meeting different teams with different strategies, they are constantly changing their own arguments in an effort to find the best possible presentation. Wake Forest debater, Dick Leader, a sophomore from Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, stayed up most of one night last fall just before the beginning of the Georgetown Invitational Tournament, reorganizing his whole affirmative argument.

A typical debate is a tense and businesslike affair. It is most often held in an empty classroom with only the two teams and a judge present. Time is of utmost importance, since a debate lasts exactly one hour. The debaters are told a short time before the debate which side they are to argue, and the speeches are as follows:

Affirmative I—ten minutes

Negative I—ten minutes

Affirmative II—ten minutes

Negative II—ten minutes

Negative Rebuttal I—five minutes

Affirmative Rebuttal I—five minutes

Negative Rebuttal II—five minutes

Affirmative Rebuttal II—five minutes

Time is kept on each speaker as well as a point score from 0-30 based on his individual ability. The teams are judged and the results of the debate recorded on a debate ballot, which is then turned over to tournament officials. Each team debates on the average of eight times in each weekend tournament. Based on this performance they may qualify for participation in the final four rounds to select the top team by elimination. At each tournament speaker awards are also given to those debaters with the highest point scores in the first eight rounds.

Debate at Wake Forest involves an almost unbelievable amount of work. The four top debaters; Duke Wilson, Dick Leader, Laura Abernathy, sophomore from Kingsport, Tenn., and Larry Penley, a freshman, also from Kingsport, Tenn., spend many hours each week traveling to and from tournaments and with the rest of the team in practice sessions and research. Like even the best debaters in the country, they would soon fall behind if they ever stopped working, and the dedication required to debate successfully is more than comparable

to that required by any athletic team. For example, Laura Abernathy spends on an average of four hours a day doing research, organizing her material, and practicing with fellow debaters.

The mental effort involved in a tournament is tremendous, considering the fact that each two-man team will debate eight times in two days and perhaps more if they win. Add to this the fact that the team often drives several hundred miles to and from a tournament missing regular sleep and meals and the strain is multiplied. But the real debaters love it; they come back from a tournament more ready than ever to go again. Even though they miss classes, pass up weekend campus social life, and have to make up work, they still debate, and are almost always excellent students as well.

But the debate trips are not all work. Debaters enjoy getting away from the campus to see other cities such as Washington, Detroit, San Francisco, and New Orleans. They get to know teams from other schools and have fun together. At present Wake Forest and the University of Georgia are continuing a hard fought bowling tournament from week to week on the side. But above all the tournaments are the reason for all the effort; debaters like the competition. They thrive on the exhilaration of a hard fought debate and say that the best debates are those which involve the hardest competition. They would rather debate an extremely good team than one they know they can beat.

Much of the success of Wake Forest's debate program can be attributed to the efforts, through the years, of veteran debate coach and speech professor, Franklin Shirley. Though debate at Wake Forest goes all the way back to the time of the formal debating societies, it is only in the last two decades that modern collegiate tournament debating has come into its own. During the past sixteen years, Dr. Shirley has built one of the finest forensic programs in the country. During the same period he has helped develop debate nationally as a member of the National Debate Committee of the American Forensic Association, and he is recognized as a leader by debate coaches throughout the country.

Fondly remembered by many alumni who debated, Dr. Shirley traveled many thousands miles with his teams who won many more debates than they lost, and through the years brought home a whole case full of trophies. A part of building the program consisted of beginning a Wake Forest tournament, known as the Dixie Classic Invitational Debate tournament, held every year on the last weekend in November. The Dixie Classic draws some of the best debaters in the country who compete for trophies as well as a berth in the spring National Debate Tournament.

This year sixty teams from forty-three schools participated in the Tournament. They came to Wake Forest the weekend of November 30 from as far away as Texas, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Florida. Along with the Dixie Classic, Wake Forest hosts a novice tournament and a high school tournament and Debate Day, which attracts high school debaters from all over the State.





*Debaters Dick, Larry, Duke, and Laura in action at the Georgetown Invitational Tournament.*



*Last minute preparations are made in the motel just before the first round of the tournament.*

*Debate Coach Merwin Hayes and former Coach Franklin Shirley presented awards and trophies at the Wake Forest Dixie Classic Invitational Tournament.*

