

NFL ALUMNI

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

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FALL 2009

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ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS CONTRIBUTING STAFF

J. Scott Wunn...Publisher

Jennifer Billman...Editor

John Jones...Design

Bethany Rusch, Vicki Pape, Adam Jacobi, and Amy Dorman...Contributors

National Forensic League
125 Watson Street
P.O. Box 38
Ripon, WI 54971
Phone: 920.748.6206
Fax: 920.748.9478

alumni@nationalforensicleague.org
www.nflonline.org
www.forensiconline.net

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NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WILLIAM WOODS TATE, JR., PRESIDENT
Montgomery Bell Academy
4001 Harding Road
Nashville, TN 37205
Phone: 615.269.3959
tateb@montgomerybell.com

DON CRABTREE, VICE PRESIDENT
Park Hill High School
1909 6th Avenue
St. Joseph, MO 64505
Phone: 816.261.2661
crab@ponyexpress.net

BRO. KEVIN DALMASSE, F.S.C.
Christian Brothers Conference
3025 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Phone: 202.529.0047
kdalmasse@cbconf.org

HAROLD C. KELLER
2035 Lillie Avenue
Davenport, IA 52804
Phone: 563.323.6693
HKeller@aol.com

KANDI KING
San Antonio-Churchill HS
12049 Blanco Road
San Antonio, TX 78216
Phone: 210.442.0800, Ext. 352
kking@neisd.net

PAM CADY WYCOFF
Apple Valley High School
14450 Hayes Road
Apple Valley, MN 55124-6796
Phone: 952.431.8200
pam.wycoff@district196.org

TOMMIE LINDSEY, JR.
James Logan High School
1800 H Street
Union City, CA 94587
Phone: 510.471.2520 Ext. 4408
tommie_lindsey@nhusd.k12.ca.us

PAMELA K. MCCOMAS
Topeka High School
800 W. 10th
Topeka, KS 66612-1687
Phone: 785.295.3226
pmccomas@topeka.k12.ks.us

TIMOTHY E. SHEAFF
Dowling Catholic HS
1400 Buffalo Road
West Des Moines, IA 50265
Phone: 515.222.1035
tsheaff@dowling.pvt.k12.ia.us

CHRISTOPHER L. MCDONALD, ALTERNATE
Eagan High School
4185 Braddock Trail
Eagan, MN 55123-1575
Phone: 651.683.6900
chris.mcdonald@district196.org

**ON THE COVER:
Daniel Beaty**

CORRECTION: In our spring article entitled "How Forensics Inspires Public Service," we omitted a United States Representative who is also an NFL alum. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin was an NFL member from Groton High School in Groton, South Dakota. Coached by John Westby and Dorene Nelson, she graduated from high school in 1989.

JOHN JONES BRINGS CREATIVITY, EXPERTISE TO THIS ISSUE OF *NFL ALUMNI*

This issue of *NFL Alumni* magazine was designed by John Jones, an NFL alumnus from James E. Taylor High School in Katy, Texas. Jones was a student of Karen McGlashen (now Hatley) during both junior high and high school, competing in Texas from 1981-1984. During his senior year Jones qualified to compete in Humorous Interpretation at the NFL National Tournament in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. “I didn’t win, of course,” he remembers, “but it was fun.”

Jones attended college at the University of North Texas, receiving a Master’s degree in Communication Studies. While pursuing his graduate degree, he taught various Communication undergraduate classes including Oral Interpretation of Literature, Introduction to Communications, and Small Group Decision Making. He began his career at Southwest Airlines 14 years ago, starting out as a phone

supervisor before transitioning to a position as a graphic designer. “At the time, they were looking for someone who also had writing experience,” he notes. “I got the job and learned design as I worked.”

When Jones received *NFL Alumni* last spring, he saw an opportunity to give back to the League using his graphic design experience. “I thought, I’ll give them a call,” he explains, “since that’s what I’ve been doing for the last 10 years.” We eagerly welcomed his contributions to our magazine, now in its third year. As you will see in the following pages, his talent represents a generous gift to the League.

Our thanks to John Jones for his gracious assistance on *NFL Alumni*.

Interested in getting involved again? E-mail alumni@nationalforensicleague.org or visit www.nflonline.org/AboutNFL/DistrictContacts to find a District Chair near you. ■



DANIEL BEATY: PERFORMER WITH A PURPOSE

Daniel Beaty's relationship with words began when he was a third grader in Ms. Mavis Jackson's classroom, listening to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream"

"I BELIEVE THAT PURPOSE IS THE BRIDGE PAST EGO. HAVING A CLEARLY DEFINED PURPOSE HAS KEPT ME BALANCED IN MOMENTS OF GREAT SUCCESS AND GIVEN ME A REASON TO KEEP GOING IN MOMENTS OF DOUBT."

speech for the very first time. Through a recording, Dr. King spoke directly to eight-year old Daniel's soul when he cried, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'" Inspired, Beaty began his journey as an orator the very next day, and with the help of Ms. Jackson he crafted his first speech entitled, "I Think the Best, I Expect the Best."

"Because my model was always Dr. King, my concept of performance became rooted in a sense of service, of giving to people. Performing became the sensation of standing in front of others, opening my heart, and sharing what is there," says Beaty.

From that moment forward, Beaty's love of writing and delivering original speeches grew. By the time he was in middle school, he was a highly sought-after speaker. As he spoke to an area high school in celebration of Black History Month, eighth-grade Daniel caught the eye of Ms. Florence Krahling of the Miami Valley School in Ohio. After witnessing his talent as a speaker, Beaty was invited to test for a scholarship to the Miami Valley School. He received the scholarship, solidly ensuring his future in high school forensics.

Original Oratory was an obvious place for Beaty's NFL career to begin, yet he had begun acting in plays and decided to

additionally try his hand in Dramatic Interpretation. "DI was an incredible experience of discovering what it took to create different voices and



characters' bodies as a way to follow their emotional journey," Beaty shared in a recent interview. Beaty first competed in DI his sophomore year, performing "A Raisin in the Sun." The following year he selected "Fences," winning a state championship and placing third at NFL Nationals. Beaty took the stage as the 1994 National Champion in DI with his piece, "My Children, My Africa." Beaty remembers distinctly what that magic moment of winning Nationals felt like – a huge culmination of a journey that began in Ms. Jackson's third grade classroom.

Beaty went on to graduate from Yale University with a Bachelors in English and Music in 1998 and then earned a Masters in Acting in 2001 from the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Beaty is now a successful actor, singer, playwright, and composer in New York City, where he began Daniel Beaty Productions, Inc. He has performed at The White House, the Apollo, and The Kennedy Center. "I love to do what I do each day and am thrilled to make a living doing it," says Beaty.

Most recently, Beaty developed a half-hour comedy pilot for Showtime based on several of the characters in his one-man off-Broadway play, *Emergence-SEE!* Beaty also has two new off-Broadway shows, *Through the Night* and *Breath and Imagination*. *Breath and Imagination* is an ensemble cast which tells the story of the first world-renowned African American classical vocalist. Beaty wrote and composed a family musical, *Trippin'*, about how unlikely companions find each other and define home. Beaty will soon be releasing a book of his poems, which are currently available on

CD at www.danielbeaty.com.

Beaty explains that forensics prepared him perfectly for his present career. His DI training has parlayed into the success of his one-man play, *Emergence-SEE!*, which involves performing over forty characters in each show. Beaty also credits the long hours spent after school with Coach Florence Krahling with learning to find the arc of a story that moves and excites people. "Florence Krahling poured so much time into



me and simply believed in me. She propelled me towards excellence." Beaty firmly believes that the skills he developed in creating and delivering his Original Oratories – finding a central idea, the various ways to approach the idea, and making a point that is understood – was the best preparation for his current writing, motivational speaking, playwrighting, and screenwriting.

Beaty notes, "Having a clearly defined purpose based in service is the key to success in any field. In the entertainment business,

there are so many variables out of our control. You can't control getting cast; people may not like your interpretation of a character or the words you write. No matter what happens in our lives we have control over how we respond to it. And you can always control your intent and the heart you place in your creativity." Beaty goes on to state, "I believe that purpose is the bridge past ego. Having a clearly defined purpose has kept me balanced in moments of great success and given me a reason to keep going in moments of doubt."

Beaty's purpose in his performances, his playwrighting, and his production company represent his commitment to "transform pain into power." And the NFL learned a little something about the transformative power of words, too, as Beaty opened the final awards ceremony at this year's "Stars Fell on Alabama" National Tournament. In a crowded auditorium, packed with high school students and coaches clamoring to find a seat, a strong clear voice suddenly rang out in song, "I was born in the ghetto..." The crowd became instantly quiet, a shared chill up their spines as Daniel Beaty brought them to their feet and inspired them to be more in every sense of the word.


Beaty's forensics journey that began in Mavis Jackson's classroom and continued with Florence Krahling came full circle on the stage on that sweltering Alabama night. The audience hung on every word of this performer with a purpose who had somehow silenced a room filled with thousands. Surely Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the man who inspired a third-grade boy towards a lifelong relationship with words, knew such a feeling well.

continued on next page>>

KNOCK KNOCK

BY DANIEL BEATY

As a boy I shared a game with my father.
We played it every morning 'till I was three.
He would knock knock on my door
And I'd pretend to be asleep 'till he got right next to
the bed
Then I would get up and jump into his arms.
Good morning Papa.
And my Papa, he would tell me that he loved me.
We shared a game...knock knock.
'Till the day the knock never came
And my mama takes me on a ride
Past cornfields, on this never-ending highway,
'Till we reach a place of high rusty gates
A confused little boy, I enter the building
Carried in my mama's arms...knock knock
We reach a room of windows and brown faces.
Behind one of the windows sits my father.
I jump out of my mama's arms and run joyously
towards my papa's
Only to be confronted by this window
I knock knock trying to break through the glass,
trying to get to my father
I knock knock as my mama pulls me away before my
papa even says a word.
And for years he has never said a word
And so fifteen years later I write these words for the
little boy in me
Who still awaits his papa's knock:
Papa come home 'cause I miss you,
Miss you waking me in the mornings and telling me
you love me.
Papa come home 'cause there's things I don't know
And I thought maybe you could teach me
How to shave, how to dribble a ball,
How to talk to a lady, walk like a man,
Papa come home 'cause I decided a while back
I want to be just like you but I've forgotten who
you are.



And fifteen years later a little boy cries and so I
speak these words and try to heal,
Try to father myself and I dream up
A father who says the words my father did not –
Dear Son, I'm sorry I never came home.
For every lesson I failed to teach, hear these words:
Shave in one direction with strong deliberate
strokes to avoid irritation.
Dribble the page with the brilliance of your ballpoint
pen.
Walk like a child of God and your goddess will come
to you.
No longer will I be there to knock on your door so
you must learn to knock for yourself.
Knock knock down doors of racism and poverty I
could not.
Knock knock on doors of opportunity for the lost
brilliance of the black men who crowd these cells.
Knock knock with diligence for the sake of your
children.
Knock knock for me for as long as you are free these
prison gates cannot contain my spirit;
The best of me still lives in you.
Knock knock with the knowledge that you are my
son, but you are not my choices.
Yes, we are our father's sons and daughters, but we
are not their choices
For despite their absences we are still here.
Still alive...
Still breathing...
With the power to change this world one little boy
and girl at a time.
Knock knock.
Who's there?
We are. ■

*Used with permission from Daniel Beaty
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HOW FORENSICS SAVED A LIFE



I wanted to thank the NFL for being a key part in saving my life,” explains Manuel Halkias, coach at Canton McKinley Senior High School. This respected double-diamond coach refers to a health saga that began in March 2007 following the district Congress qualifying tournament. After feeling run down and attributing it to fatigue, he woke up one morning with extremely swollen feet. “My first thought was, ‘How do I get to school?’” he remembers. “So I was cutting up my shoes and that didn’t work. I called my brother and asked him, ‘What do I do?’” Halkias was told to go to the doctor, who made a startling discovery: while normal males of his height should have a hemoglobin count of 11 or 12, his hemoglobin count was 3.5. A day later doctors discovered why: a malignant tumor.

Within days, doctors removed the tumor and diagnosed Halkias with colon cancer. The surgery nearly killed him: sepsis developed and he was rushed into surgery again. As the situation deteriorated, doctors induced a coma. “The night things really looked bad they called my family in,” Halkias remembers. “I went through 30 units of blood. It was really ugly.” The Canton McKinley team responded with an outpouring of support, visiting in such large numbers that hospital staff had to open a special section of the ICU to accommodate the visitors. Miraculously, his vitals began to improve, and within about a week he emerged from the coma.

Halkias moved from ICU to a critical care unit, where he was confined to bed for nine weeks. Still, being in the hospital did

not dampen his commitment to coach. On a ventilator and unable to talk, he could still write out questions and comments. “As long as my eyes could see and my ears could still hear, I was going to do what I could to get these kids ready,” he reasoned. Students brought their cuttings to the hospital and performed them in sterile gowns and gloves. At one point, the hospital went through four laundry bags of gowns a day.

Once he was strong enough to leave the hospital, Halkias entered a rehabilitation center for seven months to re-learn basic skills including standing

“AS LONG AS MY EYES COULD SEE AND MY EARS COULD STILL HEAR, I WAS GOING TO DO WHAT I COULD TO GET THESE KIDS READY.”

and walking. Meanwhile, his coaching continued. Staff soon knew the students by name, and would sometimes sit in on their performances. On the weekends, unable to attend tournaments for the first time in 23 years, Halkias kept tabs on team members with his iPhone. When the team hosted its annual tournament, he numbered and stuffed ballots from his hospital bed. At times

"FORENSICS IS THAT IMPORTANT TO ME," HALKIAS EXPLAINS. "THERE WAS NO WAY I WAS GOING TO LET IT DROP BECAUSE OUR KIDS NEED THIS. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WINNING. IT HAS TO DO WITH SELF-IMPROVEMENT, GOING TO COLLEGE AND DOING FANTASTIC THINGS THERE, SEEING THESE KIDS DO THINGS THEY NEVER THOUGHT THEY COULD DO. IT WAS ENTRUSTED TO ME BY MY COACH AND I HAVE TOO MUCH TIME LEFT."



Manuel Halkias at his induction into the Ohio State Coaches' Hall of Fame

Halkias had once done. "To see how those kids were with my dad, who they didn't really know but knew I couldn't take care of him, it was great," he recalls. The day Halkias had planned to be discharged from the rehab center, his father passed away. "I couldn't make it to the front of the church at the funeral," he says, "so I just sat in the back. A whole row of kids came back and sat with me."

Returning periodically to the hospital and rehab, he was finally released around the time of the Ohio state qualifier. The timing enabled him to speak at his own induction into the Ohio State Coaches' Hall of Fame, with his siblings and several former students in attendance.

Months of hospital practices paid off as

students would bring lunch or come in to talk. Gifted with a "listening ear," Halkias would listen thoughtfully and dispense advice.

At the same time, team members befriended their coach's ailing father; playing cards with him, taking him to breakfast, and doing the things that

Canton McKinley qualified a student to attend the Birmingham Nationals. Coach Halkias was determined to travel with him. "Nationals was a test run for me to see if I could get through a week of activities," he explains. "We travelled with Canton Central Catholic, coached by a Penny Harris, a former student of mine. She has been at my side throughout this whole ordeal." Halkias quickly fell into the rhythm of the tournament, just as he had always done. His student advanced to elimination rounds, and Canton McKinley earned recognition for its 52nd trip to the National Tournament.

Today, Halkias's prognosis is excellent. Despite the advanced nature of his cancer, doctors have not found a trace of the disease since his surgery, and he has not had to have radiation or chemotherapy. "I feel better than I have in years," he says. This dedicated coach is quick to associate his recovery with the support of the forensics community. "Eastern Ohio is a wonderful place for forensics," he reports. "The coaches are like family. It's a great group of kids and people. I can't imagine how I would have gotten through this without their support."

He also found much-needed strength by focusing on his team. "Forensics is that important to me," he explains. "There was no way I was going to let it drop because our kids need this. It has nothing to do with winning. It has to do with self-improvement, going to college and doing fantastic things there, seeing these kids do things they never thought they could do. It was entrusted to me by my coach and I have too much time left."

Looking back over the season, Halkias notes: "Since junior high school, when one of my coaches came in and talked about speech, it's been a love affair with speech. Almost 30 years later, that love affair has not ended. I love it so much. This activity is not only phenomenal. It helped save a life." ■

PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS



The National Junior Forensic League Congress at the 2009 NJFL National Tournament in San Antonio

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

The National Forensic League recently held its second periodic Leadership Conference, attended by peer-elected coaches to conduct their regional District Tournament, recruit schools, and guide new coaches. Attendees prioritized League long-term goals and short-term action items, discussed rules and tournament procedures, and visited with staff at the national headquarters. The conference provided insightful feedback for the NFL Board of Directors in setting policy.

CATCH THEM EARLY: MIDDLE LEVEL

The National Junior Forensic League (NJFL) was founded in 1995 to extend speech and debate

opportunities to students in grades 6-8. Dr. Robert Littlefield of Fargo, North Dakota played a significant role in the formation of this program, which

models the NFL high school honor society and even has its own national tournament. Dr. Littlefield noted that with his involvement as a student member of the NFL, and as president of the Pi Kappa Delta collegiate forensic honorary, it only made sense to have a similar organization in place for middle years grades. Students

can transfer one-tenth of their NJFL merit points to NFL points (up to 10 NFL points) upon enrolling at an NFL high school program. This creates a great feeder program for high schools, and motivation for students to participate more.

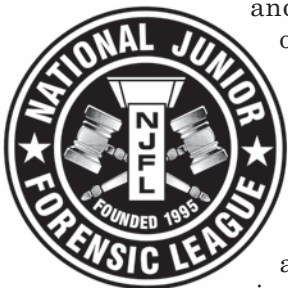
The National Middle School Forensics Tournament was held June 26-28, 2009 at St. Mary's Hall in San Antonio, Texas, and co-sponsored by the International Debate Education Association (IDEA) and the NJFL. Attending the tournament were more than 240 students from 35 schools spanning 13 states, the territory of Saipan and the guest country of South Korea. Those students constituted more than 550 entries across a dozen speech and debate events.

Earning School of Excellence awards for holistic squad performance were Sidney Lanier Middle School (Houston, TX), St. Mary's Hall (San Antonio, TX) and Ockerman Middle School (Florence, KY). Earning School of Excellence awards for performance in debate were Sidney Lanier Middle School, St. Mary's Hall, Capitol Debate (Woodstock, MD), Woodland Middle School (Brentwood, TN) and Veritas Academy (Austin, TX). Earning School of Excellence awards for performance in speech events were Sidney Lanier Middle School, St. Mary's Hall, Ockerman Middle School, St. Andrew's Episcopal School (Eidgeland, MS) and The Pike School (Andover, MA).

IDEA was established in 1999 to promote mutual understanding and democracy globally by supporting discussion and active citizenship locally. Central to IDEA's values are tolerance, international cooperation, and freedom of expression. This tournament instills and nurtures in younger students an appreciation for divergent viewpoints and diverse cultures.

KEEP THEM ENGAGED: COLLEGIATE FORENSICS

The NFL is excited to team up with select partner colleges and universities through its affiliation with the collegiate forensic honorary Pi Kappa Delta to create alumni service chapters who will help local high school programs by providing volunteer judges, coaches and fundraising assistance. Stay tuned to www.nflonline.org/Alumni for further details. ■





LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

Many debaters seem to have a need for speed, trying to fill timed presentations with as much information as possible by speaking as fast as they can. However, a recent NFL alumnus has taken this need for speed to new levels. In addition to being a Public Forum debater, he is also a professional racecar driver.

Sean Burstyn, a 2009 graduate of Miami Beach Senior High School in Florida, began racing cars at 12 years old. A serious racing competitor, he homeschooled for much of his academic career and didn't have standard access to extracurricular activities. After enrolling in public school as a senior, he was eager to get involved and explore his interest in public advocacy. He decided to try Public Forum debate, an event which allowed him to incorporate real-life experiences into his arguments.

Even as a new debater, Burstyn played a crucial role in revitalizing the school's competitive forensics team, going so far as to personally renew his school's NFL membership. He hosted team meetings at his home, since he lived the closest to the high school. Burstyn recalls one such meeting, when "there were at least 15 students who brought printers, laptops, newspaper articles and coffee beans to make us a real cohesive

entity. I remember PFD competitors were in the kitchen, LD competitors were in the living room and the Congress competitors were sort of floating around between both rooms watching C-SPAN 1 and 2."

The benefits of forensics education came quickly to Burstyn. He learned to transform facts into passionate arguments. He also strengthened his relationship with his family by opening up new avenues of communication. For example, when he debated about rising economies, he spent time talking to his mother about her childhood in Cuba. When he debated the draft system, he spent hours with his father discussing life in college during the Vietnam War.

Because he views racing and forensics similarly, he has been successful in both arenas. In 2008, he won the Formula Automobile Racing Association car championship and clinched the title before the end of the season. In debate, he has pushed himself to compete at the highest caliber possible, pitting himself against seasoned debate veterans. His determination has paid off with his undefeated record of 29 victories and only one break-round loss to a team he greatly respects. He even qualified for the Florida State Championship.

Admittedly, the nature of preparation is different

for debate and racing; as Burstyn notes, "it wouldn't be too effective to show up to a debate with a helmet on." Still, the professionalism and focus required to succeed is similar in both. Moreover, when asked what he enjoys most about racing, his response is typical of any debater: his team (Juncos Racing). Even the thrill of racing is comparable to his debate rounds. He loves the rush of adrenaline that comes from racing close to a wall at 175 mph, similar to the moments leading up to the first debate.

Currently Burstyn attends George Washington University with a focus on Middle Eastern Studies, aspiring to become an advocate for human rights. His experiences in debate, as well as the 2008 presidential elections, instilled in him a passion for advocacy. He has also been offered a regional contract to continue racing throughout New England, ensuring that his need for speed will be met for the next several years.

Burstyn's experiences as a racecar driver and a debater make him unique in both spheres. He brings his passion from the racetrack to each debate round and his desire for change from debate into the real world. With more accomplishments awaiting him, Burstyn is certainly living life in the fast lane. ■



JESSICA KAVANA MAKES FILM WITH A FORENSICS FLAIR

If you have ever seen 1989's *Listen to Me*, you know how delightful it is to watch a movie about debate. Watching Jamie Gertz flip sides eloquently at Roy Schneider's command (and seeing Kirk Cameron fall hard for a brainy woman) is great fun. However, any debater who has groaned as Gertz tearfully unveils a vague new plan in the 2AR – and wins the debate – knows that *Listen to Me's* forensics fidelity leaves something to be desired.

Thankfully, there is a new silver screen-storyteller in town – one who knows the activity and can write a realistic round for film. NFL alum Jessica Kavana has combined her dual passions for the cinema

and forensics to tell the story of Jordan Landa, a spunky Latin girl who struggles to find the equilibrium between *Love & Debate*. After discovering her niche on the high school

**“MORE THAN ANYTHING,
DEBATE TAUGHT ME
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forensics team, Jordan struggles with the transition to college. Just as she believes the situation is under control, the “perfect guy” from her past reappears, which complicates the situation considerably.

However, while the story is timeless and the characters' relationships are genuine, the best part of the movie, at least for a forensics junkie, is watching the actors win rounds on legitimate arguments. Or, better yet, practice spread debate.

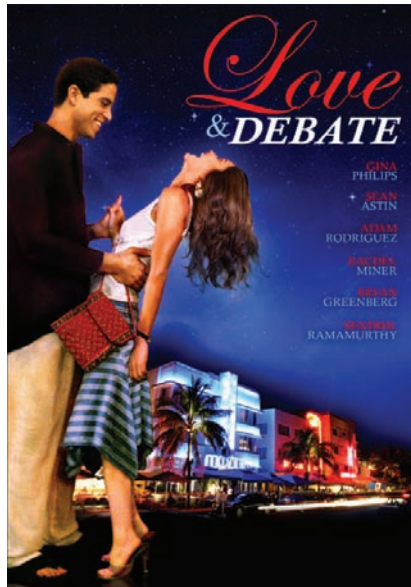
The key difference between this film and other debate movies is Kavana's history in the activity, which affords her unique insight into the personalities and struggles that make up our community. Kavana began her forensics career at North Miami Beach High School under the tutelage of Merle Ulery. The school focused primarily on speech events, so the upcoming students gleaned much of their debate knowledge from senior team members or debate camps.

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(continued from page 11)

After graduating from high school, she studied International Relations at Boston University. BU did not have a debate team, so Kavana – like her main character, Jordan – debated for Harvard. “I just had to pay my own way to the tournaments,” she remembers. While studying at BU she enrolled in a film class as “a fluke,” needing another elective. However, as the semester progressed she realized her passion for the cinema and, as she explains, “out went I.R. and in came filmmaking.” She laughs, “My parents are still waiting for me to become a lawyer.”

Parental aspirations notwithstanding, Kavana’s film career is taking off. On *Love & Debate* alone, she has worked with some of Hollywood’s most promising new stars, including Gina Philips (*Jeepers Creepers 1 & 3*), Sean Astin (*Rudy, The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*), Adam Rodriguez (*CSI: Miami*, Tyler Perry’s upcoming, *I Can Do Bad All By Myself*), Rachel Miner (*Californication, The Black Dahlia*), Bryan Greenberg (*One Tree Hill, Bride Wars*) and Sendhil Ramamurthy (*Heroes*). Despite the big name talent associated with the film, the story remains uniquely



Cover of *Love & Debate*

Kavana’s. “The Harvard coach was loosely based on Dallas Perkins,” she admits. “Saajan and Anita [played by Kavana herself] are based on people I debated against. My college roommate was just like the one in the film, crazy and great. And a lot of the stories I stole from friends!”

Still, despite her close relationship to the story, making the film was anything but easy. “I fought for over seven years to get this story made. I wrote it in 2002 and began sending it out to everyone – agents, producers, actors, contests

– basically anyone who would read it. It constantly got rejected on the basis of subject matter. It seemed that nobody found debate as exciting as I did! Then, after many, many hard years, I was finally able to secure top of the line producers, actors and distributors to believe in me and in this story, and the world of policy debate.” Luckily, debate conditioned her for just this sort of perseverance. “More than anything, debate taught me resilience – the ability to compete in any field, and when it gets bad, to keep on going.” Not surprisingly, her advice to up-and-coming filmmakers is simple: “Just be prepared,” she explains. “Every friend you ever had, you’ll call for money. Every dream you have gets wrapped into one. There is a lot of pressure. You really have to love it.” Which, there is no question that she does: “I would make ten films about debate if I could.” ■

Love & Debate is available in the NFL Publications Clearinghouse! For more information about the film, or to get your own copy, log on to nfonline.org and check out our store.

ANNUAL GIVING REPORT

Contributions to the National Forensic League ensure our ability to serve our mission of empowering students to become effective communicators, ethical individuals, critical thinkers, and leaders in a democratic society by embracing diversity, interconnection, and visionary leadership.

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**"TO DO SOMETHING,
 HOWEVER SMALL,
 TO MAKE OTHERS
 HAPPIER AND
 BETTER, IS THE
 HIGHEST AMBITION,
 THE MOST
 ELEVATING HOPE,
 WHICH CAN INSPIRE
 A HUMAN BEING."**

-JOHN LUBBOCK

**"I HAVE FOUND THAT AMONG ITS OTHER BENEFITS,
GIVING LIBERATES THE SOUL OF THE GIVER."**

- MAYA ANGELOU

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**"ALL MEN ARE CAUGHT IN AN INESCAPABLE NETWORK OF
MUTUALITY. TIED IN A SINGLE GARMENT OF DESTINY."**

-MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

THE STORY OF A LIFETIME



Gary Arndt and village kids on Rennell in the Solomon Islands

Alumnus Gary Arndt has plenty of stories to share, as he has spent the better part of three years traveling the globe, interacting with different cultures and absorbing all the world has to offer. He joined the NFL while a student at Appleton East High School in Wisconsin. An active debater and extemporaneous speaker, the highlight of his high school career came from placing in the top ten in Foreign Extemporaneous Speaking at the 1987 National Tournament. After graduating in 1987, he attended Macalester College in Minnesota, earning a triple major while continuing in debate. His success in debate continued with respective quarter and octofinal finishes at the 1990 and 1991 CEDA National Tournaments.

The debate bug had certainly bitten Arndt hard, and upon graduating college he returned

to coach at his alma mater in Wisconsin. He worked with his former team for three years, and during that time his students earned three state titles and multiple finals appearances at Nationals. Arndt's favorite forensic memory come from the Wisconsin State policy debate tournament in 1993, when "we beat a vastly better team from Brookfield Central." He smiles, noting that, "When they hit us again at the Tournament of Champions later in the year, they were prepared and they creamed us."

Taking advantage of the advances in technology, Arndt went on to start one of the first Internet consulting firms in the country, now a consulting branch for British Telecom. Ever ambitious, the consulting firm wasn't enough for Arndt, so he returned to school in 2004 to study geology. In 1999, a three-

week business trip took him to Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, France, Belgium, Germany, and the UK. He subsequently took trips to Iceland, the Bahamas, and Argentina. In 2007, he "had one of those moments where you have to decide what you really want to do in your life." He thought back to that business trip and realized just how much he loved to travel. He decided to sell his house, pack only the essentials, and hit the road.

For three years, he has traveled to every corner of the globe, from New York to the Netherlands, San Francisco to Saipan, and everywhere in between. The first question asked of him often involves his favorite destination. He states: "I get that question all the time. My stock response is that asking me for a favorite place is like asking a mother for a favorite child" (And yet, every mother does secretly have a favorite, and for Arndt, he secretly favors Fiji). Language barriers never trouble him. He naturally adapts to the local language, picking up what he can, and when all else fails, English usually gets him by.

For Arndt, the best part about traveling is learning about new places and constantly meeting new people. While he has been traveling steadily for three years now, his stay in any one city depends entirely upon how much he wants to see. "Sometimes I just like to take a break," he explains. "I stayed in Saigon, Vietnam for
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Monk walking in the morning, Luang Prabang, Laos (Taken by Arndt)

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125 Watson Street
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three weeks just because I enjoyed the city. I was in Melbourne, Australia for a month to get a new passport. In this leg of the trip I have been generally going west. In the future I think I'll be doing shorter 3-4 month trips in different regions." Between site-seeing and interacting with the locals, he's busy updating his active travel blog and honing his photography skills.

When asked about how his experiences in forensics have shaped his story, Arndt quickly responds that debate and extemp were the single most important things he has done so far: "Having done so much extemp and debate, it puts a very different perspective on things when you can see and experience firsthand the places you've been reading about for so much of

your life." Always the advocate, he hammers home the benefits of forensics whenever he talks about education. He wants others to know that the research habits and competitive nature trained in forensics have served him well throughout life.

The double-edged reality of creating our stories is just that: they're always in the process of creation. Gary Arndt's story is a story of change, of evolution, of risk, growth, and challenge. He has lived out his story with no regrets save one: "I wish I had done this sooner." ■

To read more about Arndt's travels, visit his blog at www.everything-everywhere.com.



Bedouin camp in Wadi Rum, Jordan (taken by Arndt)