

Interview with June Benton
Interviewer is Heather McCambly
Took Place at CHS at 8:45 a.m. on 5/14/03

HM: How long have you been at CHS? And what is your position.

JB: I have been here since it opened, so that is... about six years and I teach English, Speech and Debate, and Forensics.

HM: How different has this year been from others you have experienced here at CHS?

JB: Mainly I'd say the stress and tension level, from budget cuts, to waiver votes, to who has a job doing what next year there is just a lot of tension. Basically because of the constant uncertainty.

HM: Has the tension and uncertainty affected your relationships with student or colleagues?

JB: Well, not negatively impacted my relationships, but it has had an impact. It seems like in these times of stress we have really clung together more than ever, even though at times there definitely was disagreement about the waiver vote. As far as with students I think it has improved my relationship with them, it has opened up a lot of conversation with them that I probably would not have had if not for the added tension in the situation.

HM: Do you have any apprehensions or fears about next year and what will happen to the student in the near and distant future?

JB: Absolutely, if all or even some activities or athletics are cut it will be huge, there are so many kids here at century who are here because of activities, if they are lost we could lose kids. What many people don't know is that forensics is an OSAA activity and it too is at risk for being cut, which I think could be devastating to some of the students.

HM: How has this year's tension affected Forensics and how do you think it will in the future?

JB: Up until now it hasn't touched Forensics at all, it has been a record-breaking year, we took 14 kids to state and soon four to nationals. The amount of points my kids have earned in the past couple years has pushed me up to the diamond coach status which is huge. The ironic thing is the year that we do the best, the following year we get cut. The way it looks now there will no be a class, and without the benefit of the class there is absolutely no way we can be as successful as we have been this year. It will decrease my contact with the kids, decrease involvement, and the numbers of participants. But we still have the team.

HM: So on a lighter note, what has been the highlight of your year?

JB: The team, the forensics team had an awesome year in competition and in relationships, I have great kids, and luckily we are only losing 5 seniors so it's not too bad. We have a huge junior population that is very strong, so that always brightens up the day a bit. Also, teaching Advanced Sophomore English for the first time this year has been a treat, I love the kids, the curriculum, it is definitely a step up. This year has been great as far as teaching assignment.

HM: So far this year what has been your reaction to the various student movements, from the failed walkout, to the new SAFFE program?

JB: Well, I might get in trouble for saying this but I applaud it, I wish they would have walked out. Whenever kids feel like being civilly disobedient as long as it is civil I think it's great. It's too bad they didn't get better organized though.

HM: So what do you think specifically of SAFFE?

JB: I think the only bad thing about it is that it came so late in the year. I push it to the kids all the time, they write letters, try to get involved in the media montage, this week I think it's e-mail canvassing, I support it all.

HM: What have you seen so far in local attitude about the budget crisis?

JB: I get really mixed reactions, just last night at a softball game I had parents complaining to me about how money is spent, when I have absolutely no control over that. There are others who totally support teachers and ask questions like "how could they treat you like that?" But there are some who are just irate wanting to know what we whine so much, why we "always" want more money, pretty much blaming us. But overwhelmingly it is a concern for the kids and their education, people want their kids to learn and get a quality education. In my daughter's school people are leaving in droves for private education, they want activities, sports, and quality programs. I think if this continues we will see many more make the switch.

HM: What do you think about the National coverage of the budget crisis from "Doonesbury" to the "New York Times"?

JB: Once again I have mixed emotions, sometimes when I am getting ready and I hear another remark on the morning news I feel embarrassed frustrated that this is what we've come to. But I think that it is good because it is getting peoples attention, the legislature knows that it is being watched, there is more pressure to get something done.

HM: Okay well that is the end of my questions, is there anything else you would like to talk about before we go?

JB: No, I think we covered it all.