

# Corey Tindall (1993-2010)

## Forever Young by Esther Smith

with preface by Shawn Briscoe

I have often professed that one of the main reasons I love forensics is because of the communal nature of the activity. It is my belief that we truly embody the spirit evoked by the mantra that schools develop a *community of learners*.

Within a team, we often form the bonds found in families rather than mere colleagues or, even, teammates. In my own coaching career, this is evident whenever I invariably refer to my high school students as *my kids* or when my competitors at the University of Alaska Anchorage started calling me *Mom*. Outside a team, my experience finds that most members of the forensics world are also committed to developing the community as a whole. This is often evidenced in the critiques we give competitors from other schools, when debaters share suggestions with their opponents after a round on how to improve their case or point them towards some evidence which would be useful in the future, when we mill around laughing and talking in the common areas between rounds, or when we truly rejoice in the competitive success of not just our students but those from other schools.

Yes, I do believe that it is this spirit of community which helped hook me on forensics in my high school years and keeps me committed to the activity even now.

Unfortunately, the events and circumstances in any family and any community are not always happy ones. On August 10<sup>th</sup>, tragedy struck our squad and the Alaska forensics community when a plane carrying former Senator Ted Stevens crashed near Dillingham, Alaska. Amongst the passengers who died were Corey Tindall (soon to be a junior) and her mother Dana.

I could tell you that Corey was a natural and gifted forensics competitor, regularly competing in Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, Congress, Extemp, Humorous Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation, and Duo Interpretation. She won numerous awards in local tournaments, including a quarterfinal placing in LD at the 2010 Alaska State Championship Tournament. But, that only scratches the surface. She represented the heart and soul of our squad... we even named her MVP of the team at the end of her freshman season.

You see, Corey could always be counted on to be at practice with a smile. She was always engaging in (or instigating) some sort of lighthearted prank on her teammates and coaches. She would spearhead fundraising activities and team socials. She would explore new events... she planned to experiment with policy debate, this season. She was one of the few Alaskans to venture to a Lower 48 tournament in both 2009 and 2010. She even bravely (and somewhat under the board) double-entered in Student Congress and Duo Interpretation at the Harvard Invitational her freshman year.

Brave, talented, happy, optimistic, bound for great things. That's Corey.

Now, for the first time in my life, I'm not sure how to approach the upcoming season. Normally, I would be knee deep in planning the upcoming semester... talking about piece selections, considering case areas, mapping out a lecture schedule...

Instead, my only concern is about my students' emotional well-being... helping my kids through this tragedy. As with any family, I know we'll get through it, and Corey's spirit will live in all of us. Below, you will find a letter written by one of Corey's rivals, a 2010 graduate of Chugiak HS. This note attests to both Corey's spirit and the communal nature of our activity. You see, Chugiak was probably our debate team's biggest rival last season, since both schools

focused on LD and policy. On the one hand, you might expect bitterness and cut-throat competition. Thankfully, that's not the world of forensics that I am familiar with.

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We never could agree on whether or not suspected terrorists should be tried in U.S. military tribunals or civilian courts. She took the former course, bound by her appointed victory in the championship round of the 2010 British Parliamentary debate tournament. As headstrong as ever, I disagreed--staunchly refusing to concede any minor or arbitrary theory. Ultimately, we never did agree, and I still think she would have willingly lobbied in opposition today if the opportunity arose.

That's Corey for you: one part adamant, another part carefree. I recall when she first shared the details of a growing crush on a mutual friend. Curled up in my hammock, suspended at the top of a staircase during a debate tournament, she giggled nervously--confiding in whispers. Sharing in the careful, yet gloriously happy way only smitten girls can, she analyzed the subject--hyperbolizing and personifying each possibility of romantic action. That particular interest never did play out in the intended and preferred manner, but that hardly bothered Corey. She simply relished a powerful friendship with a companion she simply and unequivocally adored. A refusal was never an inherent failure; on the contrary, it was yet another door to an alternative form of happiness.

Months later, that same girl would muse and gossip at a frivolous slumber party--fully swathed in plentiful blankets. Conversation revolved around the approaching prom and sometimes unrelated drama that only debaters could create. Earlier that evening, we Chugiak females (in a fit of absolute creativity) had attempted to convince Corey and other South girls that they would have to endure a Fight Club-inspired rite of passage before entering my house for the evening. Though gullible may be written on the ceiling for much of the Alaskan teen populace, Corey never did fall for our joke. I like to think that, given the opportunity and challenge, she would have competed and won nonetheless.

Damn was that girl a fighter. I debated her through DDF four or five times, but the first and the last rounds remain most lucid in my otherwise confused mind. The first occurrence was early in her freshman year--in fact, it was her first tournament ever, and one of her earliest debates. I honestly cannot remember the resolution at hand, but I do clearly recall examining and probing every point and subpoint contested in the debate. I may have barely won, but I didn't, for a second, underestimate her potential as an advancing competitor. She was fierce and edgy, a force to be reckoned with early on.

The second debate will now be remembered as her last [Alaskan] one. It centered around the aforementioned topic of prosecuting accused terrorists and was painfully rigid and tension filled. Meticulously arguing through five preliminary rounds, Corey was visibly excited (and just a tad bit nervous) to be one of the selected competitors in the final round. In the end, her and her partner's hard work paid off and they were awarded first place--an outcome Corey couldn't help but glow about ever since. Independently, she exhibited a prowess in communications by

receiving second place in speaker points at the same tournament. As a sixteen year old sophomore, she was elated and everyone could tell.

Though those two memories act as my rosetta stone for remembering all that is Corey, there were many more amazing and hilarious memories. Chugiak-South parties at a variety of homes produced crazy and embarrassing moments I will barely hint at here. Corey laughed and smiled so hard each time she was selected for a new Truth or Dare, barely complaining but instead bravely pushing onward; she squeezed her small frame into a crowded shower so she could be one of many blamed for completely ruining Dylan's bathroom. With her South comrades, she endured the ride from deep Anchorage to Peters Creek for my and my best friend's graduation party. Jumping on a trampoline and shivering by a bonfire, she was a truly loyal friend who always had a plethora of full stories to share.

Perhaps most telling was her behavior during Congress. Anyone who has ever competed in this trying event will know that there are three variants of Congress: the form that is purely fun, with no agenda or maturity; the form that is empty of enjoyment, with enduring boredom and seriousness; and the form that is only possible at State, an odd mixture of drama and dryness. At each Corey argued with poise and audacity--casually altering her persona to fit the necessity of the occasion. She could be remarkably funny, she could be unmistakably serious. If need be, she would ask POI after POI to prove that, yes, she was truly a superior Congresswoman. Oh, and should she be nominated as a Presiding Officer, she would give a killer speech explaining exactly why she deserved to run a swift yet enjoyable chamber (and she did just that). Prior to each round, though, Corey exhibited an exquisite form of confidence and, simply put, hilarity. When a team member procured an ipod playing Lady Gaga's "Just Dance," she obliged by shimmying around the room and on top of chairs. When the judges arrived, each of us could barely contain our laughter at the preceding event.

She could dance freely, bake cakes with humility, and smile illustriously. She traveled with a childlike wonder of the world and argued that her mother was a truly magical woman and advocate. She loved--no, completely adored--every person on her debate team and would urge each to seize the day. She couldn't wait to grow up and make a difference on this earth.

Corey Tindall may have lived only sixteen years, but she left a mark on each and every one of our hearts. To those she left behind, she will always be forever young.

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