

They Said it Couldn't be Done

By Ralph Schaefer - 3/5/2007

Everyone in Judge Daman Cantrell's courtroom was stunned.

Frederick had flawlessly delivered his part in the Moot Court competition practice round.

That style of delivery just didn't happen until teams were in the finals or semi-finals of state competition.

But here was a young man from Lakeside Home that no one really expected anything from doing something no one expected — not even Dwain Shaw, his coach.

After all, no one really expected anything from these young people because they had been in trouble and were sent to the Lakeside School by the court.

As Shaw describes it, Judge Cantrell's face reflected real surprise. The Lakeside Home staff was totally taken aback — as was anyone else who knew the youth.

Even Shaw, as Frederick's coach, was unprepared for the presentation, even though he knew the youth was determined to do his part without a script.

"When the presentation ended, everyone crowded around Frederick, congratulating him for his effort and for the next week he was 'the man' at Lakeside," the coach continued. The Lakeside team went on to state competition, only to be tied with Broken Arrow High School and be eliminated by .04 one hundredths of a point from the state berth.

But Shaw believes that his two students, Frederick and Orion, had a real positive experience, perhaps the first real success in their young lives.

Shaw is just one of many coaches working with the Lakeside team. He was assigned the two young men and found himself in a familiar role — working with someone with too much personal baggage (trouble) and eventually got into trouble with the law.

"I knew that both needed a positive role model," Shaw continued. "Judge Cantrell had recruited me to help with the team and while I had some misgivings, I agreed."

Shaw already is prepared to work with next year's Lakeside team.

"I didn't know when I got the two young men that I would get Frederick, one of the most troubled at the school," he continued. Since they hadn't had any real positive life experiences, their attention span was considerably shorter than a typical person that age. As a result, it was necessary to work for short-term learning experience.

Shaw would provide Frederick and Orion some type of activity when they were not practicing their roles.

Initial sessions took place in Shaw's office. They were difficult sessions, but he quickly saw that Frederick wanted to be able to do it (make his presentation for the defense) without a script.

Frederick just wanted to prove himself, Shaw said. He just wanted to show prove to himself and others that he was not a bad person and that he had good qualities. He demonstrated he was not afraid to step up to the front and step out.

"I don't know how Frederick practiced," the attorney-coach continued.

That first practice in Judge Cantrell's Courtroom was intended to be an easy session. It was designed to help participants were to get the feeling of court facility. Even though everyone was in attendance, only part of the team was required to make a presentation.

At the end of that time, Judge Cantrell asked if anyone else would want to do their part, Shaw recalled. That was when Frederick stepped up.

Frederick had the script in his hand as he walked up to Judge Cantrell. When he arrived at his designated position, he turned the script over and did it verbatim. When he finished, he received a standing ovation from everyone in the courtroom.

Why the change?

Shaw believes that his role as coach and a positive role model made the difference.

"Of course," he added with a smile, "I did take them to McDonald's after we finished our practice sessions." That was OK with their families where they spent weekends away from Lakeside School. Shaw would pick the young men up from their homes on Saturday mornings for their practice.

Even though Frederick received a lot of attention because of his efforts, Orion also did well, Shaw said. But he was more quiet than his counterpart.

Both young men fulfilled their respective roles with pride and certainty, he said. It was a big ego booster for both. They showed people they had talent.

"God knows they have enough going on in their lives and this is nothing short of a miracle," Shaw said.

Frederick was King of the Hill at Lakeside because for the first time he had done something no one else had done and "he was the man."

Tulsa Business Journal, Copyright © 2010, All Rights Reserved.