



# “a good balance...”

## making sport of academics in high school bowl

### AN INTERVIEW WITH ASTRID AMANN GOODSTEIN

“I will never forget that night,” said Astrid Amann Goodstein, remembering the College Bowl at the National Association of the Deaf Conference in 1988. “The room was packed...the atmosphere was electric. It was, at once, emotional and inspiring.”

Goodstein—along with Herb Larson from the California State University at Northridge, Tom Holcomb from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and the Rochester Institute of Technology, and later T. Alan Hurwitz, now vice-president of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf—had set up the “Jeopardy”-style intellectual competition. “But it was beyond my expectations,” she said. “I was in awe.”

She was also in creative thought. “Watching the sharpness of the college students drove me to the vision of expanding the bowl. I thought, *Why not a similar intellectual competition for deaf high school students?* By 1996, Goodstein had attained the sponsorship of Gallaudet University and the first Gallaudet University National Academic Bowl for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students was underway.

**ODYSSEY:** You are in a real sense the “mother” of the Gallaudet University National Academic Bowl!

**GOODSTEIN, smiling broadly:** I saw how excited the College Bowl made everyone. I had seen the same intelligence and drive in deaf high school students and I thought, *Why not?!*

**ODYSSEY:** What was the reaction of people when you broached the idea?

**GOODSTEIN:** Everyone was immediately enthusiastic. President I. King Jordan was involved from the beginning. Gallaudet’s provost, dean, and many volunteers supported the idea from day one.

**ODYSSEY:** Describe the first Academic Bowl.

**GOODSTEIN:** We started small, but the potential was immediately obvious. It rewarded students for academic success and became a place for gifted teens to meet their peers. These students were outstanding, “the big fish” within their own schools, and when they met at the Academic Bowl, they realized that there were lots of big fish out there! Many of the students keep in touch through e-mail and are in the process of becoming lifelong friends.

**ODYSSEY:** What is the most important aspect?

**GOODSTEIN:** The spirit that it generates. The students and their teachers develop high expectations. We wanted to push deaf students to a higher level of intellectual achievement. It sends the message that “sports of the mind” are as important as other sports, like football for example.

**ODYSSEY:** How do you feel as time goes on?

**GOODSTEIN:** I am truly thrilled about how the Academic Bowl has grown in 10 years. It has become more sophisticated and more challenging. An increasing number of schools offer Academic Bowl preparation as an after-school program and even as a course. Some host “pee wee” bowls, too. Plus there is the whole experience of coming to Gallaudet University, where deaf students see deaf college students—many of whom are former Academic Bowl participants—and, as a result, feel inspired to go to college themselves. The students also meet deaf professors and other role models. This gets them to think about their careers and their futures. You can’t beat it!



**Astrid Amann Goodstein** graduated from the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley and began her studies at Gallaudet University as a 16-year-old preparatory student. She earned a B.S. in library science and an M.A. in teaching English at the secondary level. Goodstein taught English for over 20 years at Kendall

Demonstration Elementary School, at the Tutorial Center, and in the English Department at Gallaudet University before becoming director of Academic Advising and then executive director of Enrollment Services. She retired in 2002 after 35 years of service.

#### **Editor’s note:**

*Goodstein sprinkled her conversation with expressions of appreciation to the National Association of the Deaf and several individuals, including Tom Holcomb, T. Alan Hurwitz, I. King Jordan, Herb Larson, Debra Lawson, and Bette Martin.*