August 22, 2011

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

The current Riverside City College song “Alma Mater Riverside” was composed in 1957. The music is by Donald P. Stone (RCC Music Faculty 1948-64) and the lyrics by “Tiger Times” Associate Editor Vince Lawton. However way before that song was written, Riverside Junior College had an “Alma Mater” in use since 1925. The words and theme were by H. Norman Spohr (RJC Music Faculty 1925-40) with additional harmony credited to student Wesley Flickinger (RJC Class of 1928). The lyrics (reproduced below) are from the February 17, 1928 issue of “The Arroyo” student newspaper. The H. Norman Spohr story was printed in the October 16, 1935 issue of “The Arroyo”. Then in the 1940s, the song disappeared. An article in the November 23, 1948 “Tiger Times” student newspaper entitled “Alma Mater Found” investigated what happened to the song. The story revealed that in late 1948, a representative of El Camino College requested a copy of the song to brief their band for its appearance on Wheelock Field at a football game. What happened next is printed below:

“The telephone call created quite a stir, and no one could come up with a satisfactory answer. No one, apparently, ever heard of an ‘Alma Mater’ for Riverside College-at least not among students of the post-war era. Inquiries set afoot of Friday, however, yielded results on Monday when the Library unearthed a copy of the long-forgotten song which was last in circulation on June 5, 1943. The date indicates that the song was needed at that time during graduation week affairs. Since that time the copy has gathered dust in the Library.” “Evidence that the song has long been out of circulation is the fact that that even the wording still refers to ‘R.J.C.’, thus dating back to years before the name ‘Riverside Junior College’ dropped the ‘Junior’.”

This name change had occurred on June 4, 1945. The article suggested that the outdated opening and closing lines be changed to “Oh Alma Mater, Hail to thee” and “With constant loyalty”.

It is 4 years and 29 weeks until RCC’s 100th Anniversary on March 13, 2016.
The Riverside City College Instructional Media Center is bringing you this five year countdown to RCC’s 100th Anniversary. Our intention is to give everyone a weekly glance at the many people and events that have been a part of the college.

Our thanks go to the RCC Digital Library Archives and the District’s Office of Strategic Communications and Relations for allowing us to use their photo and newspaper collections. Thanks as well to all of the RCC students and Faculty Advisors that were a part of the yearbook and newspaper staffs. Thanks also to Tom Johnson and Gilbert Jimenez who wrote “the book” about RCC’s history. “Riverside City College 1916-1981- A 65 Year History” is available in the RCC Digital Library.

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