December 5, 2011

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

Historic dates like September 11, 2001 and November 22, 1963 certainly strike a chord in the minds of U.S. citizens. Such is the case with December 7, 1941. This week marks the 70th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor which plunged the United States into World War II. But what was the reaction on the campus of Riverside Junior College (as it was then called)? Below are reproduced articles from the December 15, 1941 edition of the “Arroyo” student newspaper.

In the first photo box, A.G. Paul (Principal-Director-President Riverside Junior College 1920-50) had some counsel for students:

He said: “This the first time in the life of the young people on the campus that the United States has had a Christmas season at war. Before another year some of our young men may have paid the inevitable price of such a state of affairs. Many of them along with the women will doubtless be engaged in some type of service. This may mean very reduced enrollment, and it behooves us to make the most of this Christmas season. Let's make this season a time to look upon, remembering that it was the last time many of us were on this campus. This need not be a gloomy time though the outlook is somewhat black. War represents a condition that will pass. The junior college stands for eternal things, the spiritual and intellectual - these things do not pass. Let us all rejoice together in the opportunities that have prepared us to meet this emergency. The spirit of Christ was service for others. Let that be our watchword.”

In the second photo box, Dr. Francis G. Gilchrist (Life Sciences 1937-46) advised male students:
"Keep your shirts on, fellows. Don’t fly off the handle. I know because I did it in the last war. As soon as was declared I enlisted and four months later was across the water. I think I did wrong because I could have served both the country and myself better if I had waited, continued my education, and then enlisted in an officers’ training school or something similar. If a man has special ability he should develop that ability to the end of contributing to his nation’s defense in the most efficient way possible."

In the third photo box, Casper (Cas) Breuer (Riverside Junior College Student Body President 1941-42) opined:

“Students should certainly finish the quarter before enlisting. I believe that students should continue their education if possible, but I would rather enlist than be drafted.” Breuer had harsh words for students that treated “blackouts” as a joke, “Blackouts are a serious business and should be considered so by everyone.”
In the fourth photo box, an article reports that Veleda (a campus woman’s club) was forming a volunteer air raid spotter group to work in the Highgrove area.

Enrollment at Riverside Junior College certainly took a hit during the war years. In 1940-41 the students numbered 623. The student population in subsequent school years looked like this: 1941-42 (415), 1942-43 (170), and 1943-44 (184).
It is 4 years and 14 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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