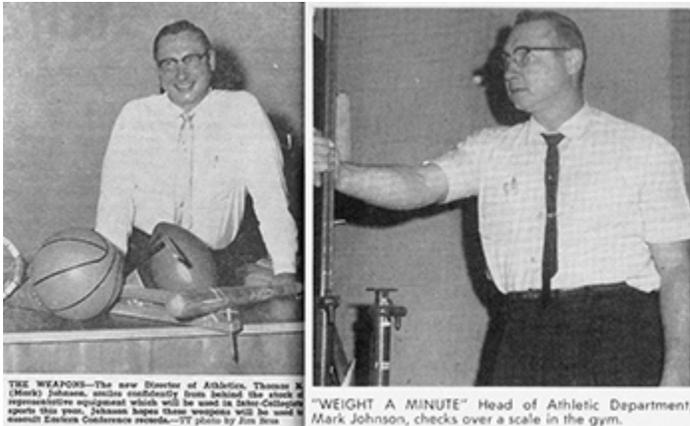


July 8, 2013

### Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

T. Mark Johnson was the Athletic Director at Riverside City College from 1960 to 1980. He was born in Willis, Kansas growing up on a farm. After high school, he received his Bachelor's degree from the Kansas State Teacher's College and his Master's Degree in Sports Education from the University of Iowa. His career was interrupted by a stint in the service during World War II, serving four years in the Marine Air Corps in the South Pacific. After the conclusion of the war, he began his teaching career as a high school coach in Kansas. He then coached college athletics and was athletic administrator for 13 years in Wichita, Kansas. In the late 1950s, he moved to Southern California because one of his sons had an asthmatic condition and needed to live in a drier climate. Johnson became a teacher at Ramona High School planning to do doctoral work at the University of Southern California. After one year at Ramona, he took the Athletic Director position at Riverside City College on September 2, 1960. His intention was to put aside his graduate work aside temporarily but, as he said in 1980, *"I just kind of fell in love with RCC. I have some regrets that I never got to the doctorate work, but I have enjoyed my experience here."* The photo (below left) appeared in the September 9, 1960 *"Tiger Times"* student newspaper. The photo (below right) appeared in the 1963 *"Tequesquite"* yearbook.



In addition to his duties as RCC Athletic Director, he also coached the RCC Cross Country and Track teams until 1972. The, below top, group is the 1962 Cross Country team. Johnson can be seen standing on the right. The, below bottom, group is the 1965 Track team. Johnson is seen standing on the left. These photos are reproduced from *"Tequesquite"* yearbooks.



CROSS COUNTRY—(top row) Dean Smith, Jim Casper, Curtis Stanton, Phil Difani, Coach T. Mark Johnson. (Front row) Jim Buchanan, Robin Shi ett, Don Kalmar, Aurelus Chando, and Tom McKee.

Front Row: Larry Boucher, Robert Marham, Bob Geddes, Frank Devitt, Dave Valerio, Tom Downey, Jim Helton, John Haggan. Back Row: Coach T. M. Johnson, Al Jordan, George Randall, Dennis Carpenter, Dan Johnston, Tom Hayes, Mike Fenska, Paul Armstrong, Manager John Tridick. The mob made up a fast team.



In the photo below (from the 1964 *“Tequesquite”* yearbook) Johnson (left) is seen with five of his RCC coaches, Don Biren, Nate DeFrancisco, Al Fages, Jerry Tarkanian and Bob Dohr. Of the five coaches, three (Biren, DeFrancisco and Tarkanian) have been inducted into the RCC Athletic Hall of Fame.

SUN WORSHIPERS — Basking on a bench outside the Gym are physical education instructors Mark Johnson (Division Chairman), Don Biren, Nate De Francisco, Al Fages, Jerry Tarkanian, and Bob Dohr. It took some doing to get these busy people to sit still long enough for a picture.



In Johnson’s two decades of administering RCC’s Athletic and Physical Education programs, the disciplines underwent a major metamorphosis. From 1960 to 1980, the number of sports grew from six to nine for men and seven for women. In his last year at RCC, women began competing in Cross-Country and Track and Field for the first time. Physical Education enrollment, under Johnson grew from 900 to 3,000. The enactment of the Title IX portion of the Educational Amendments of 1972 stated that “No person in the US shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity

receiving federal financial assistance". Mid-seventies student Michele Himmelberg wanted to play basketball but there was no RCC women's team. In a 2010 interview she said, *"I remember going to Athletic Director T. Mark Johnson and knocking on his door and saying...I've got a petition here of women who've signed up that they'd really like to play basketball, could we have a team? And I remember being real nervous, and he said 'Let me see what I can do.' I remember that and just being so grateful at the time that here was someone that didn't dash my dreams or didn't dismiss it but he said 'Let's see what can happen'."* In the fall of 1974, a coach was hired and in short order the modern day RCC Women's Basketball program was born. Michele Himmelberg later blazed a trail for female sports journalists, working for equal access in the National Football League and co-founding the Association for Women in Sports Media. In 2010, Michele Himmelberg was inducted into the RCC Athletic Hall of Fame. Below are photos from the November 21, 1975 and May 21, 1976 "Viewpoints" student newspaper.



In 1980, T. Mark Johnson said *"We have maintained a program that prepares students for the four-year college and beyond and not just used the athlete as a number to win games."* Among his greatest accomplishments was the development of the RCC intramural athletics program and his participation in the revision of the state athletic code. Perhaps his greatest achievement in that realm was *"The Johnson Rule,"* which mandated that an athlete's eligibility does not go into effect until engagement in intercollegiate competition. In 1980 he said one of the most significant changes he had to deal with was the rapidly dwindling finances for funding athletics. He said that trying to sell the public on the concept of supporting community college athletics with taxes had been a *"frustration of all athletic directors the past six to seven years."* He was heartened by the, then newly organized, "Tiger Backers". Johnson pointed out, *"They are very enthusiastic about RCC. We are very fortunate to have their support."* When Johnson retired in 1980 he was not only administering Athletics and Physical Education, he also coordinated the RCC athletic facilities and was director of the school's recreation program. Besides his RCC duties, Johnson served as the Mission Conference representative from 1971 to 1980. He was also one of the principals in beginning the California Community College Athletic Directors Association in the mid-1970s, serving as the first president of the organization in 1974-75. Upon his pending retirement in 1980, some of his co-workers had this to say about T. Mark Johnson. Donna Knox (RCC women's softball coach) said, *"He was very instrumental in getting our softball program and the women's sports program in general off the ground"*. Bruce Wilson (RCC golf and intramurals coach) said *"Whenever I had any*

*problems with scheduling or any other questions, he was the man with the answers.” Dave Waxman (RCC men’s and women’s basketball coach) added “He has always been very supportive of our basketball programs and he is well respected in community college circles throughout the state, I think we are all going to really miss him here.” After leaving RCC, Johnson accepted the post of Commissioner of Athletics for the Orange Empire and Mission Conferences where he remained until 2012. In 2005 he was inducted into the RCC Athletic Hall of Fame. In addition to this honor, he had earlier been inducted into the California Community College Sports Hall of Fame in 1992. The photo, below left, appeared in the 1965 “Tequesquite” yearbook. The photo, below right, appeared in the May 30, 1980 issue of “Viewpoints”.*



He advised his Athletic Director successors at RCC to bring to the job a great deal of dedication. He stated, *“I don’t feel that most Athletic Directors are in it for the money. I think it is a kind of missionary effort.”* T. Mark Johnson passed away on June 26, 2013 at the age of 93.

It is 2 years and 35 weeks until RCC’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on March 13, 2016.

The Riverside City College Instructional Media Center is bringing you this five year countdown to RCC’s 100<sup>th</sup> 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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