Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

In 2004 KABC Channel 7 newscaster Gene Gleeson was named the 47th RCCD Alumnus of the Year. In his 30 years with KABC, Gleeson was a general assignment reporter for “ABC7 Eyewitness News” and also served as co-anchor of “Eyewitness News This Morning”. Gleeson is a native Southern Californian, born and raised in Riverside. He first broke into radio while he was still attending Ramona High School where he graduated in 1962. As Gleason said, "My Inland Empire radio experience began with six months at KDUO-FM. I then moved to KFXM and was there until 1966, I actually worked at KDUO, KCKC and KACE at the same time!" Below are photographs of Gleeson as he worked as a Disc Jockey at San Bernardino radio station KFXM. The photo on the upper right shows a young Gleeson (in the foreground) working a 1965 “Rolling Stones” concert at the L.A. Sports Arena. An equally young Mick Jagger can be seen in the background. The photo on the bottom is Gleeson conducting his “D.J. Dictionary” contest with the prize being the princely sum of $25.

After he finished his studies at RCC He transferred to San Diego State with the idea of getting a four-year degree, then going to law school. But fate intervened and after one year at San Diego State he was drafted into the Army and stationed in Germany. It was there that he became involved in the Armed Forces Network radio news department. It was then that he decided to forget about becoming a lawyer and go with a career in broadcast journalism. After the Army he returned to San Diego State University where he graduated with a B.A. in History. Gleeson later earned a Masters in Journalism from Columbia University. He attended Columbia on an NBC Fellowship. Gleeson
worked as a reporter and anchor at KFMB and KGTV in San Diego before moving to ABC7 Eyewitness News in 1980. His assignments included major aviation and technology stories. Gleeson was there for the first flight of the Space Shuttle in April, 1981; the Challenger disaster in 1986; the Columbia disaster of 2003; the first flight of the Stealth Bomber in 1989; and all the Voyager planetary flybys. He was the first news reporter to fly the Air Force's B-1 Bomber. He has also flown F-16 Fighter and other high-performance military jets. Gleeson received an Associated Press Television Radio Association Award for Best Spot News story for his reporting on the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. He also won a Golden Mike in 1986 for anchoring ABC7 Eyewitness News coverage of the Cerritos air disaster. Gleeson also won two Emmy Awards for reporting and anchoring in San Diego and Los Angeles. He won an Emmy in San Diego for coverage of the PSA Air Disaster. He followed up that story by covering the disclosure of deficiencies in the Air Traffic Control System for months afterwards. Gleeson retired in 2010.

On September 17, 1999 (as pictured above) Gene Gleeson was the featured speaker at that year’s Convocation. When he spoke, he directed most of his remarks to the incoming RCC freshmen.

“Of all my memories here I think my fondest memory and the one that, at the time, gave me great trepidation was walking into this Quadrangle for the first time 36 years ago. This was for me, RCC, a second chance and because it was my second chance to accomplish something, it has always been a particularly important part of my personal history. I went to Ramona High School, I grew up here in Riverside went to Palm Elementary school and to Sierra Junior High. The last couple of years of high
school (I) didn't do all that well. Got caught up in other things, did a lot of surfing in those days. And so, within a year or so after high school, I worked. And only after a year of working at minimum wage did I decide that maybe there was another way to go about this. And school might be a good idea even though I'd kind of given up on it the year before. And what was there? RCC. I'll never forget walking through the gates the first time and looking at this wonderful Quadrangle and seeing the students and being quite intimidated by the whole thing as a young 19-year-old who had not been to school for a year. But very quickly this campus and the student body and the faculty accepted me whole heartedly and I responded. My two and one half years at RCC were among the best I have ever had. The things that challenged me were twofold. First of all, the faculty was just amazingly good. There wasn't a class that I went to that did not challenge me, make me work hard but constantly strive, and I think successfully, to get me to reach higher than I had ever done before. I majored in history. (I) had fantastic instructors in history, just the best. Cecil Stalder and the other professors of history here were magnificent. I did well and the thought very quickly came to me to be a lawyer. (I've) never been particularly good in English but Mr. Hardy was an instructor here, who just for some reason looked at me and decided that there was some potential there and helped me rise up and learn the English language in the proper way and to study literature and enjoy it. It was just an amazing process in my personal development and I'll never forget it. Now one of the things at the time that was a problem for me and a lot of other people was that I had no financial support. My parents were very supportive in every way, I lived at home but I had to make my own money and student fees of course had to be paid. I just couldn't believe that the fees could be $17 with a $2 fee on top of that, which was not mandatory, for the Associated Student Body, and then paying for books. I would assume there're a little higher now. But what RCC did for me was to provide that wonderful atmosphere, the idea that wasn't there when I was in high school because you had to go, that it was my choice to be here. And that's the second thing that was part of the nurturing process here at RCC for me. I did not have to be here, it was my choice. There's a nice thing about that, because you make that choice. Over 18 they don't force you to go to school, it's your choice. And the learning process that is involved that, in terms of just the incentive to learn somehow came alive in me and I hope in most of you too. The point of all this is that even people like me who didn't do very well in high school and are sort of fishing around for what they're going to do in life, there is institution in this state and in this country called junior colleges. It is an institution set up perfectly for people like me. You come to an institution like this; they formulate an academic environment around you that helps you broaden your own horizons, takes you, lifts you up and shows you what the possibilities are if you simply work at it. And what will happen is sooner or later you're going to figure out what it is that fits you and you are going to jump into it and be better at it than anybody because you going to like it so much. When I walked on this campus in 1963, two years and 64 units, or whatever it was took to get an AA degree, seemed like an awful long time, an awful lot of classes, and it was. But you would be surprised, entering freshmen that after you pick up your first 14 units and then another semester and you've sort of ratcheted up and you take 16. And pretty soon it sort of rolls along and those two years go by pretty fast. And then you're transferred to a four-year college and whatever intimidation you felt when you walked in this Quadrangle is gone. You've been on a college campus. You have learned how to learn. You have gotten together with other students in study groups. You have gone to the library and poured over the books until all hours of the night. And the next two years up to your Bachelors goes by so fast and so easily because of the experience that you've had here at a wonderful institution, Riverside Community College. Thank you very much for having me, it's been a pleasure."

The photo below is Gene Gleeson's press photo from KABC Channel 7.
It is 2 years and 32 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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