September 9, 2013

Countdown to Riverside City College’s 100th Anniversary

Several weeks ago part one of the Student Activities that were illustrated in the 1933 “Tequesquite” yearbook appeared here. Part one concentrated mainly on clubs, this week is devoted to the sports offerings of what was then called Riverside Junior College. In this part, yearbook photos and their descriptions are shared. Below left is a photo of the “Women’s Athletic Association”. In the yearbook it stated: “The W.W.A. has been very active this year in all the affairs of the college, and the members have shown a great interest in their main objective – athletics. Earnest work repaid by good profit was exhibited by the women athletes in the various candy, peanut, ice cream and pop sales held at the local football games. Several candy sales held in the gymnasium were well supported and proved to be money making. Socially the women athletes enjoyed a breakfast at Fairmont Park which is traditionally an annual affair. They were also sponsors of a sport dance which was given in the gym May 24.” On the lower right is the “Lettermen’s Club”. In the yearbook it was written: “The purpose of the club is to promote sportsmanship on the athletic fields and on the campus and to interest students from the county high schools in continuing their studies and athletic activities in R.J.C. The club members helped promote and manage many of the athletic activities on the campus, as well as providing officials for local, elementary and high school games.”

Women’s Athletics consisted of four intramural sports, Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton and Field Hockey. However only two (Volleyball and Basketball) were pictured in the yearbook. Volleyball was described as follows: “The women’s athletic year opened with enough out for volleyball, the first sport, to have three teams – freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. This triangular competition increased the interest and spirit of the games and encouraged the players in being faithful to practice.” At the end of the season, the team finishing last gave a tamale supper for the entire group. Women’s Basketball was also made up of three intramural teams. The two photos below were taken in front of what is now called “Wheelock Gymnasium”. As for the two sports not pictured, “Badminton, a comparatively new sport in the American colleges, proved very attractive to the local women athletes in the 1933 season. Tennis and Volleyball enthusiasts find special interest in this sport because of its similarity to the other two games and as a consequence a large number of women participated.” As for Field Hockey, “Thirty enthusiastic sportswomen were out for this sport and two teams, composed of freshmen and sophomores, each of which had added help from the returning third year women, made the season a very interesting one. Freshmen women again proved their athletic skill by capturing both games in the final playoff of the Hockey contests, the games being played on April 19 and 26.”
Then as now, when it came to Men’s sports, Football and Basketball attracted the most attention. “With 35 applicants for berths on the RJC football team, and with 10 returning lettermen from last year’s Orange Empire championship team, (Coach) Jesse Mortensen had little trouble in picking 11 men capable of retaining the O.E.C. title.” The team won the title with a league record of 5 wins and 1 loss. They were the runners-up in the Southern California Championship game, losing to Pasadena 12 to 7. Basketball was not quite as successful. “The Mortensen coached J.C. quintet started the 1932-33 basketball season well and were rated as one of the leading contenders for the O.E.C. title. Riverside won its first four games and was holding the leading position in the conference when they went down to defeat before a fast and scrappy Santa Ana team. After this setback, Riverside lost to the Chaffy Panthers in a hectic battle on the victor’s home floor. This definitely put Riverside out of the championship running.”

In Cross Country, “The Bengal cross-country team, coached by Bill Neufield, began activities early in October. The first dual meet was with the Redlands University varsity in which the local leather-lungers lost by a small margin. In the conference meet held on the U.C.L.A. track, the Tiger panthers nosed out Pasadena J.C. in a close race for third place, behind the strong Los Angeles and Compton outfits.” As for Track, “The Tiger Track squad, defenders of the 1932 Orange Empire championship title, opened the 1933 season with fifteen returning lettermen. Among them were four O.E.C. champions. With these men and other valuable returning lettermen, Coach Bill Neufield had little trouble in molding into shape the best squad that ever represented Riverside in cinder and field events. The Riverside track team fulfilled all expectations to win the Eastern Conference Championship. The Riverside J.C. Eastern Conference champion track team, placed third in the Southern Conference meet held at Occidental Saturday, May 20. The Eastern Division champions were defeated only by the strong Los Angeles and Compton Junior College teams. Riverside fought it out with the strong Compton squad for second place. The outcome was not sure until the final event had been run off.”
Spring sport Baseball had a coach that was a professional player in the summer months, Jess Hill who attended RJC in the late 1920s and subsequently was named the Alumnus of the Year in 1970. “At the call of Coach Jesse Hill, twenty men reported for America’s national sport and thus insured Riverside of a good representation in conference baseball.” In conference play the team had a record of four wins and one loss. As for Tennis, “The 1933 Tiger net squad had a very successful season with a well balanced team that finished fourth in the league standings, under the leadership of Coach Bill Neufield. A great increase in interest was shown by the largest number of players that have ever turned out for the sport.” In the front row (second from the right) “Brandt” is Rexford Brandt who returned to RJC as an Art instructor (1937-46) and was the Alumnus of the Year for 1967.

So in 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, a total of 10 sports teams (4 for women and 6 for men) were fielded by Riverside Junior College.

This five-year “Countdown to RCC’s 100th Anniversary” began on March 14, 2011, the day after the College’s 95th Anniversary. Today the “Countdown” has completed one-half of its journey to the 100th year. It is 2 years and 26 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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