Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

On October 17, 2013, this year's RCC Athletic Hall of Fame Awards were presented at a ceremony held at the Mission Inn Music Room. The inductees were: Noureddine Morceli (Male Athlete), Melissa de Jonckheere (Female Athlete), Bob Schermerhorn (Coach), The Founding Tiger Backers (Bengal Award) and George and Mary Linda Daddona (President’s Award). Also honored was Ken Nickerson (Contributor). 1941 alumnus Nickerson has been contributing to Tiger Athletics since the 1950s. In a video interview conducted for his induction into the RCC Athletic Hall of Fame, Nickerson had this to say about his Alma Mater:

“RCC as I recall, had about 300 students and it was a lovely little school. I enjoyed it. It had good professors and I was able to play Football. It was just a nice, nice, pleasant place to be.”

Below is a photo collection of Riverside Junior College (as it was known then) from 1940 and 1941 “Tequesquite” yearbooks when Nickerson was a student.

Nickerson played Football while attending RJC. During the 1940 season, the team traveled to Los Angeles to play the UCLA Freshman team in the Coliseum. Unfortunately for RJC, the Bruins prevailed by a score of 26 to 0. After the game the Riverside team sat in box seats and watched the Varsity UCLA-Stanford game. Below are photos from the RCC-UCLA Frosh game. Dressed in suit, tie and vest is Football Coach Jesse P. Mortensen (Physical Education 1930-1948).
Of his Tiger teammates, Nickerson said:

“We had a good bunch of fellows on the Football team and best friends that I made for all my life.”

Below are two photos of Nickerson from the 1940 “Tequesquite” yearbook.

Below left is a photo of Nickerson from the October 30, 1940 issue of “The Arroyo” student newspaper. Below right is a photo of him emerging from the tunnel at Wheelock Field from the 1941 “Tequesquite”.

Nickerson’s greatest game took place on a 1940 Thanksgiving evening against San Bernardino Valley College. The following is an account of the game from the December 4, 1940 issue of “The Arroyo”.
“Riverside’s J.C. Bengals completely avenged their earlier defeat at the hands of San Bernardino’s Indians by drubbing the Indians 20-13 before a crowd of 3,000 shivering spectators. Led by the flashy running and blocking of Ken Nickerson, the Tigers struck in the second and fourth periods to roll up 20 points. To supplement the touchdown scoring of Nickerson, Butcher’s accurate toe supplied two out of three conversions. It was Nickerson’s last game for Riverside and he turned in a performance that will long be remembered. He returned the San Berdoo kickoff the length of the field for the first touchdown. The next time he struck off guard from deep in Bengal territory, eluded the Berdoo secondary, aided by good blocking, and sprinted down the field for another score. Riverside led 14-13. This would have been a fitting finish to a two year career but at the end of a long sustained drive Nick took the ball and scooted over to make his sum total of points for the night 18. The game was everything it was built up to be and more, too. The battle was never too one-sided but after the third period there was little doubt as to the outcome. The Gate City boys just had a little too much Nickerson and line to suit them. After the game the members of the football squad were given a dinner at Bourell’s Cafeteria. When football players eat they really devour but everyone was filled before they left the cafe.”

Nickerson’s gridiron heroics earned a mention in the 1941 “Tequesquite” yearbook.

Nickerson went on to attend and graduate from the Colorado School of Mines with a Geological Engineering degree and became a successful field geologist. He worked for such notable companies as Kennecott and McElroy Ranch Company, Miracle-Fifer and Nebraska Drillers and as a mineral consultant. He retired as president of Royal Resources and Royal Gold. Today at the age of 94 he has homes in both Michigan and Florida. Every year, without fail, a check shows up from Nickerson in support of RCC Athletics. Below is a link to view a recent video interview with Ken Nickerson:

http://connect.rcc.edu/tvwg2wv.en3bfv/
It is 2 years and 20 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.

For copyright purposes, all images originating from Riverside City College publications and the District’s Office of Strategic Communications and Relations are the property of the Riverside Community College District.