



October 28, 2013

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

It is Halloween week 2013 when thoughts drift back to past "candy gatherings" and "pranks" committed in the dead of night. The year 1956 produced two of the most visible "pranks" committed by Riverside City College students. In the mid-1950s, University of California Riverside students began construction of a 132 foot by 70 foot concrete "C" on the western slope of Box Springs Mountain that is still there to this day. This letter could be seen for miles around by Riverside residents. This landmark proved to be just too tempting for a certain Riverside College (as it was called then) fraternity. In a tongue-in-cheek article published in the May 10, 1956 issue of the "Tiger Times" newspaper, student reporter Vincent Lawton described the prank. Beneath the headline, "Flatlanders Finesse Doughty Highlanders", the story read in part:

"A spiritual and moral victory of the first chop was scored by Riverside College on the rocky slopes of Box Springs Mountain between dusk and dawn of last Thursday-Friday. Somehow, during that brief period, a GIA work party managed to convert UCR's "C" flaunted on the mountainside into a noble "RC". Details of the Herculean feat are only partially available. Fairly certain, however, is the fact that thirty men labored through most of the night to accomplish the task. How they did it in the few hours required staggers the imagination. The letter added was 130 feet long and, from side to side, covered about 60 feet. Additionally, the "C" already placed on the hill by UCR was, to quote an anonymous member of the party, 'in sloppy condition', and had to be carefully worked over to make it as neat as the "R" placed in front of it. Over and above the magnitude of the actual labor itself, was the monumental task of getting 100 sacks of powdered limestone, each weighing 130 pounds, to the 'construction' site. Here one thinks of Christophe's citadel in Haiti; there is surely no other comparison in the western hemisphere! Over six tons of lettering material, in short, had to be hauled over rugged terrain and placed neatly in position despite the handicap of darkness! The mind is appalled at the immensity of the accomplishment; one feels instinctively that not men but supermen, labored on the mountain to bring this miracle to pass. In no way detracting from the GIA triumph was the fact that UCR students, tipped off no doubt by paid agents, discovered their humiliation soon enough. Friday's sun had hardly swung into the morning sky before the Highlanders, kilties bobbing frantically, were a-swarm over the hill as they sought to cover up their disgrace. To give the clansmen full credit, they labored valiantly also. But the damage was done, and not even defiant skirls from their bagpipes could minimize the fact that all the world had seen them out-generaled on their native heather. As this copy is prepared for the eagerly waiting pressed, both sides rest warily, and even wearily. They have stacked their arms around the campfires, to be sure, but sentries walk the night. So matters stand. The GIA has struck a mighty blow for the prestige of its Alma Mater. It plans no further punitive expeditions, but will, of course, remain alert against any poteen-maddened Celts from beyond the Firth of Forth who may have gazed too deeply into the Fifth."

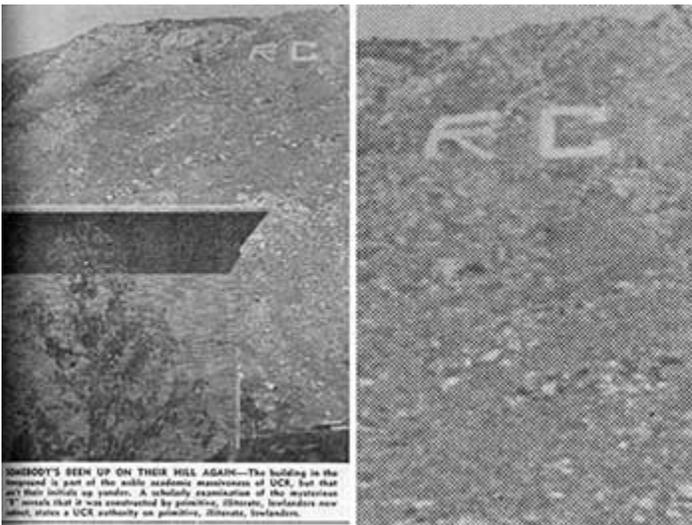
The "GIA" mentioned in the article was an RC fraternity called Gamma Iota Alpha. The student organization was founded in 1946 and consisted of military veterans attending the college. On the average, the ex-servicemen were older than the typical student attending the institution at that time. The two photos below accompanied the above article. On the left is a photo of GIA members moving the 130 pound bags of powdered limestone down the peak. The photo on the right is of the side of Box Springs Mountain. Unfortunately for the "Tiger Times" photographer, by the time he took the picture, UCR students had removed most of the "R". It had to be recreated with dotted lines added to show how it appeared before its discovery.



However the men of GIA were not finished with UCR. In September of 1956 they struck again. The article below appeared in the September 27, 1956 issue of *"The Tiger Times"*. Once again, student journalist Vincent Lawton reported the incident. Under the headline, *"Hillside Outrage Again Unsets UCR Urbanity"* he wrote:

"For the second time in five months, UCR's ninety-nine year lease on Box springs Mountain – generously granted to that school by itself – has been dealt with irreverently by heathen lowlanders! The UCR Highlanders have, as everyone knows, taken upon themselves to appropriate the hill above their institution for the display of a huge "C", a symbol rumored to have dark and perhaps unholy, significance for the Celtic mind. Imagine, therefore, the shocked horror of loyal UCRans when upon for the first day of school this year they discovered that overnight a lusty "R" had been placed in front of the precious "C"! No louder lamenting has been heard on this planet since the day the first Scot discovered that the River Galloway runs H2O rather than Vat 69. School authorities were in star chamber and so could not be interviewed. A UCR janitor was ready to talk, however: 'The vandalism was, indubitably, the work of that association of Riverside College ruffians known as the GIA. The internal evidence of the present atrocity indicated the same modus operandi as that of the last assault on our citadel, which the GIA carried out on the night of last. Here at UCR we cannot deny that, despite their blasphemous work, the GIA's engineering is superb, and the diligence involved, truly tremendous. Nonetheless, such trifling with sacrosanct objects is not to be tolerated; I have been instructed to keep boiling oil on hand in case the GIA has any future spells of irreverency'."

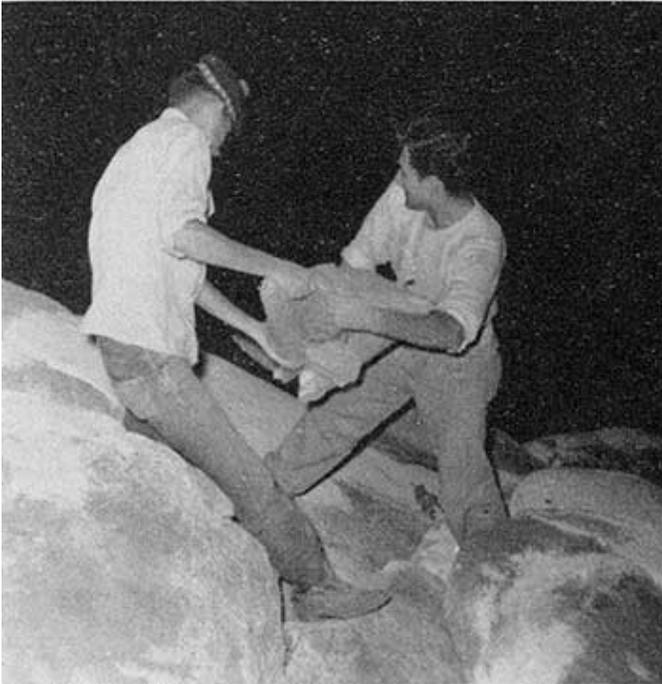
The photo below left appeared with the article. The photo on the right is a blow-up of that image.



After this latest incident, Riverside's Press-Enterprise newspaper called the vandalism the work of "junior college pranksters". GIA president Paul Hrbacek wrote a letter to the editor taking mild exception to what he felt was a derogatory reference to RC students. He commented that they were only continuing *"a long tradition of student spirit at the college"*. Into the fray stepped none other than former Riverside College President A.G. Paul who, six years earlier, retired after a more than thirty year career at the college. Paul also wrote a letter to the Press-Enterprise in which he commended Hrbacek for his letter. In part he wrote:

"Your appraisal of the Riverside college spirit is a correct interpretation of its founders back in 1916. Many of them, if alive today, would appreciate seeing it so well expressed in print. You probably realize that 'pranksters' are not new in the history of the college."

The "double prank" by the GIA fraternity on UCR rated a mention in the 1957 *"Tequesquite"* yearbook photo below.



YOU SEE RC — Riversiders were amazed to wake up one morning and view an RC replacing the UC on Box Springs Mountain. Rumor had it that a band of night-riders from the lowlands had tampered with the Highlanders monogram. All the Tequesquite staff knows about it is that here is a picture of GIAs Don Amador and Dick Manuel wrestling sacks of cement high on a windy hill. None of the journalists cares to speculate about what they were doing, however.

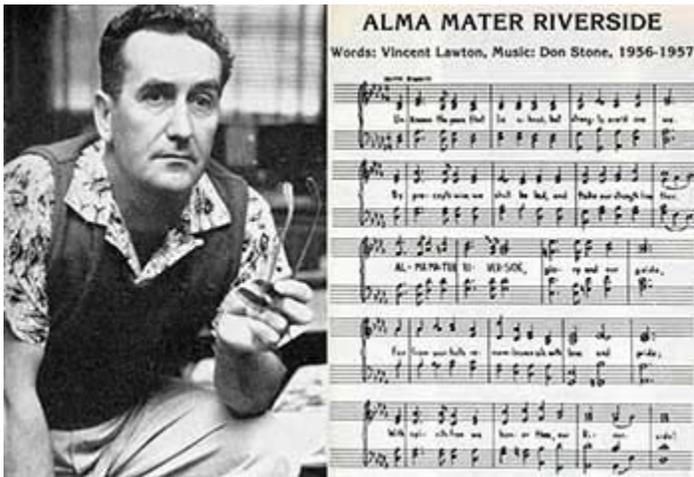
Below is another photo from the 1957 *"Tequesquite"*. The entire membership of Gamma Iota Alpha is pictured with president Hrbacek seen in the lower left hand corner.



SPARK PLUGS — Gamma Iota Alpha's chief function on campus this year seemed to be to give the Tiger Times something to write about. High point of the year may well have been the well-organized GIA triumph on the Ugly Man Contest, although their candidates were notably successful in other electoral campaigns as well. The veterans were remarkably active — for men of their age — in the inter-fraternity football games.

GAMMA IOTA ALPHA MEMBERS — First row: Paul Hrbacek (President), Don Amador, Don Thompson, Bill Derryberry, Mel Baker, Tom Williams, Lem Faber (advisor), John Gamble, Virgil Michaels, Barry Barber, Doyle Callaway, Alan Bott. Second row: John Horton (co-advisor), Bob Stapleford, Rixon Rafter, Doug Farnison, Ron Garland, Ken Carter, Ronnie Grable, Kent Adams, Walter Zyko, Tom Russell, Roland Robbins, Bob Plummer, Doug Warren. Third row: Carmon Green, Ed O'Neill, Francis Baker, Dale Miller, George Schall, Bill Kinsinger, Rene "Frosty" Freeze, Franz Schulte, Milton Webb, Jerry Julian, Glen Newstead.

An additional note about Vincent Lawton, in 1957 the current RCC anthem, “Alma Mater Riverside” was written by Donald Stone (Professor of Music and Foreign Languages 1948-64) and RCC student Lawton, who by then was the Associate Editor of the “Tiger Times” student newspaper. Below is a photo of Vincent Lawton and sheet music for RCC’s Alma Mater.



It is 2 years and 19 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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