November 18, 2013

Countdown to Riverside City College’s 100th Anniversary

50 years ago on Friday November 22, 1963 Riverside City College Director of Assemblies Sandy McDonald ended a musical performance in the auditorium with the words: “Thank you for the fine concert Mr. Stover (Richard Stover, Associate Professor of Music 1963-1992). I don’t think any of you know it yet, because I just found out myself…the President of the United States has been shot and just died.” Student Karen Dace described the aftermath of that announcement in an article appearing in the December 5, 1963 edition of “The Tiger Times” student newspaper. Dace, who was the Campus Editor of the newspaper, wrote:

“We students waiting for the punch line to the joke simply looked at each other with blank stares. But there was no punch line. And Sandy walked out of the auditorium, followed by disbelieving students. Everyone around me was saying ‘Is she serious?’ ‘I heard some kids talking about it before the concert but I thought they were just joking around.’ ‘This is impossible; who would be that stupid to kill JFK?’ I felt the same way as the others. ‘It just can’t be; this is America 1963; assassinations are unthought-of now; I can’t and won’t believe it.’ Then when I was out on campus, I noticed crowds of students huddled around transistor radios, listening to the fatal news. I joined the nearest crowd and heard for myself. But I knew I was having a nightmare, and soon I would be waking up screaming in the night. But I didn’t wake up. I looked around and saw tears streaming down faces that less than an hour before had been happy, smiling young faces. ‘It’s true, it’s true,’ I kept reminding myself. ‘But how could it be? I’ve lived eighteen years and nothing like this has ever happened. America is a prosperous, carefree nation and has been all during my lifetime. I just can’t conceive it.’ I bowed my head and tried to pray, but I couldn’t think; I was numb all over. I tried to cry, but couldn’t. As I walked around campus trying to grasp the incredible happenings, I saw the flag at half-mast. I then began to realize that something terrible had happened, but I still couldn’t make any sense of what I had heard. ‘Shot…dead…impossible,’ I kept repeating. I talked with my friends, and everyone had the same feelings of disbelief that I had. We agreed that we felt as though we had just come out of an American history class, hearing for the first time a touching lecture about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. I drove through town on my way home. It was like a morgue. The effects of the tragic news spread through our city like the bullets that killed our President. I woke up in the night, crying and realized it was true…”

Below are photos from the 1964 “Tequesquite” yearbook of McDonald (on the left) and Dace (on the right).
The 1964 “Tequesquite” yearbook devoted a section to the assassination. The caption for the second photo below read “IT’S NOT TRUE. Nothing like that could happen in this day and age … No one could face the truth of death.”

The two photos below show RCC students gathered in the Quadrangle “Pit” to listen to radio news reports of the assassination. The caption for the first photo below is “A CAMPUS IS STILL, A prayer is whispered – John F. Kennedy is dead. How deep the news of the President’s death was felt by the students of RCC! Numbly, students pondered the significance of the tragedy for the future.” The caption for the second photo was “THE UNBELIEVABLE. The news of the President’s death was heard on campus over small portable radios by disbelieving students and faculty members. No one believed it could happen in Modern America, but it did.”
The poem below also appeared in the 1964 yearbook. It was written by RCC student Julia Ryan. Entitled, “He Was”, it read:

“He was a Catholic, the first in history;

He was an Irish-American, much wealthier than we;

He seemed to enjoy people, laughter and poetry
– And he did.

Although wealthy, he enjoyed simplicity;

A wonderful characteristic was his humility;

His straight-back rocking chair seemed a novelty
– And it was.

He loved a beautiful woman, his children and his fate;

He loved all races and could not accept hate;

He seemed always to be fighting for things he would not tolerate;
– And he was.

Shots rang out and sent deadly bits of lead;

The nation listened to hear anything that might be said;

All the newscasters seemed to say, ‘The President’s dead,’
– And he was.

He was loyal until the tragic end;

To his nation his life he did lend;

To all people this seemed the loss of a personal friend

– And it was.”

Julia Ryan was, at the time the Assistant News Editor of “The Tiger Times” student newspaper. In the 1964-65 school-year, she would become the Editor of the “Tiger Times”. The two photos below, of the poem and Ryan, appeared in the 1964 and 1965 yearbooks respectively.

Almost one year later, the memory of the tragedy still had not diminished and a photo of John F. Kennedy appeared on the front page of the November 19, 1964 issue of the “Tiger Times” newspaper.

It is 2 years and 16 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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