Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

The days leading up to Thanksgiving Day typically finds most Riverside City College activities winding down in anticipation of the holiday weekend. However in the 1950s and 1990s there were several campus groups not taking the time off.

In the 1950s Thanksgiving Day Week was when the “Big Game” between Football rivals Riverside City College and San Bernardino Valley College traditionally took place. The 1951-1955 and 1957 games took place on Thanksgiving Day. The 1950 and 1956 games occurred on the day before Thanksgiving. Other student groups not taking the day off and performing at these games were the cheer/pep groups and the band. The 1951 game was covered in the 1952 “Tequesquite” yearbook. The top photo (below) is the Homecoming Dance held in Wheelock Gym the evening before the game where nearly 250 couples danced until midnight. The center photo (below) shows the game in progress and the overflow crowd on the visitor’s side of Wheelock Field. There was even a large number of fans watching the game from the access road behind the stands. The bottom photo shows the RCC side of Wheelock Field. Unfortunately for the Tigers, they were defeated by the SBVC Indians 48 to 0.

The 1953 game was pictured in the 1954 “Tequesquite” yearbook. The photo below left shows the view from the home stands. The photo on the right is of the crowd and pep band. The gentleman in the light colored suit is band...
director Evan Vail (Dean, Research and Planning; Associate Professor Music/Counseling 1950-1991). Riverside lost this game by the score of 20 to 13.

The 1955 game was documented in the 1956 yearbook. The top photo below was captioned: “OFF AND AWAY – Repeatedly (you might say a-gain and a-gain) Roger Folsom ripped off yardage. Here, with Ken Dickerson providing a block, Roger scampers away from an indignant trio of San Bernardino men”. The second photo was captioned: “RETURN OF THE BELL, friendly and clamorous symbol of victory in the annual Riverside-San Bernardino game was the climactic moment of the 1955 grid season. Not for five years has music been so sweet. This photograph of center Phil McKinnon and Coach Nate De Francisco expresses the general satisfaction felt by the whole student body.”

Nathan De Francisco was Dean, Student Affairs; Associate Professor, Physical Education from 1950 to 1986. The Tigers won the game by a score of 41 to 27. The bell in the photo (awarded to the victor of the RCC/SBVC game)
was donated to the two schools by the Santa Fe Railroad and March Air Force Base back in 1948. In the future there will be a “Countdown” dealing with the story of the “Victory Bell”. The 1957 game was well covered in the 1958 “Tequesquite” yearbook photos below. The caption for the first photo below read: “THE LONG WAY – Art Gilmore (16) fakes a reverse to Gary Fowler (46) for an end run while Lee Wallace (37), Walt Caldwell (21) and Ed Helley (39) make sure he goes the distance.” The caption for the bottom left photo was: “ON THE FIELD – All-conference speedster Art Gilmore hopped, skipped, and jumped all over the gridiron in leading Riverside to its 47-13 victory over San Bernardino.” The caption for the bottom right photo read: “DOWNED – Another Indian bites the dust during the annual Turkey Day Classic. Art Gilmore rushes in to make sure he stays down.” Arthur Gilmore, one of the all-time greats of Tiger Football, was inducted into the RCC Athletic Hall of Fame in 2008.

The photos below show the enthralled crowd at the 1957 game, Tiger players taking a breather on the bench and a half-time performance by the “Tigerettes” drill team.
For the 2013 RCC Tiger Football team, Thanksgiving Day Week will be busy as they prepare for a 1pm game on Saturday November 30th. Fullerton (11-0) will host Riverside (10-1) at Yorba Linda High School. The game is for the Southern California Football Association title and the right to represent Southern California in the California Community College Athletic Association Football State Championship game which will take place on December 14, 2013 at the home of the Northern California Champion.

This week’s “Countdown” continues in Part Two.

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In the 1990s the campus group that never took the Thanksgiving holiday off was the RCC Marching Tigers Band. As Band Director Gary Locke (Associate Professor, Music 1984-date) puts it: “RCC has done the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1990 (lead unit) and again in 2006.” Below are screen captures of the network television coverage of the 1990 Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade featuring the RCC Band as the opening act.

Gary Locke continues: “We did the Hollywood Christmas Parade 17 times! We alternated doing the opening routine, usually with some special effects, or being interviewed by the celebrity hosts. (In the 1990s) We did the

In the upper right corner photo below, TV host Steve Allen is interviewing RCC Band Director Gary Locke during a pre-parade segment.
In the lower right hand corner of the photo below, Johnny Grant, the “Honorary Mayor of Hollywood” is seen posing with some of the RCC Marching Tigers Band performers during their 1998 parade appearance.

Thanksgiving Day Week 2013 will find the RCC Marching Tigers Band in downtown Riverside making their sixth consecutive appearance at the Mission Inn’s Festival of Lights opening “Switch-On Ceremony” on Friday November 29, 2013. This event traditionally takes place on the day after Thanksgiving.

It is 2 years and 15 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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