



December 16, 2013

### Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

The 1971 RCCD Alumnus of the Year was 1929 Riverside Junior College graduate Justice John G. Gabbert. The profile below appeared in the June 1971 "RCC Reports" District publication.

*A man whose life is the very model of how thorough preparation and extensive service to others can lead to personal friendships, public esteem and professional opportunity has been chosen 1971's Alumnus of the Year. That man is John G. Gabbert ('29), Associate Justice, State Court of Appeal, District IV, Division 2. Gabbert received most of his elementary and secondary education in Riverside, although he was actually graduated from South Pasadena High School. Entering what was then Riverside Junior College in 1927, Gabbert set the pattern for future activity by participating in debate, winning the Southern California junior college oratorical contest in his freshmen year, and working on the yearbook staff.*

(The first and second photos below show John Gabbert as a member of the Debate Team in 1928 and 1929. In the first photo he is standing on the right and in the second photo he is standing on left. In the third photo, of the 1929 Junior Lions Club, Gabbert is in the front row, fourth from the right.)



*He climaxed his junior college career by serving as Associated Student Body President in 1928-29. During his junior college years, Gabbert worked as a reporter on the old Riverside Daily Enterprise, mostly covering sports and taking general fill-in assignments.*

(The photo below is his RJC graduation photo with his credits listed underneath.)



**JOHN GABBERT**

Pre-legal course; A. S. B. President 2; J. C. Y. 1, 2, President 1; debating 1, 2; So. Calif. Oratorical Champion 1; Junior Lions 2; Southwestern Student Council 2; TE-QUESQUITE staff 1; Photo Club 2.

*Graduating from Occidental College, the future jurist attended Duke University's law school for a year and then returned to the West Coast to complete his formal legal training at Berkeley. After spending three years in the district attorney's office, Gabbert joined the legal firm of Best and Best and in due time became a full partner. He also served a short term as judge of what was then known as a police court. During World War II, Gabbert volunteered as a private and was assigned to the Criminal investigation Division of the Army, emerging as a master sergeant. During much of the time, he operated in civilian clothes, mostly in the Philippines and New Guinea. Upon his return from the Army, Gabbert re-entered private legal practice and in 1949 Governor Earl Warren named him to a newly-created third position in the Superior Court of Riverside County. Over the years, Gabbert became a member of a host of organizations and served as president or chairman of most of them. These include the 20-30 Club, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Lion's Club, Present Day Club, Republican Central Committee, De Anza Days Committee, County Committee on School District Organization, Easter Seal Society, and County Bar*

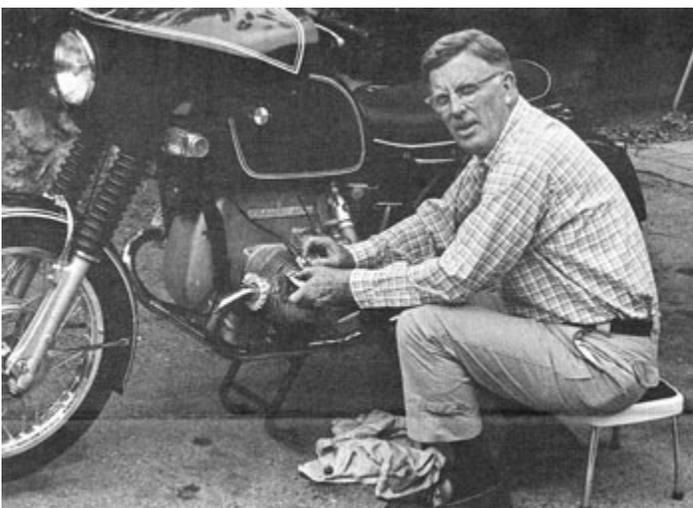
Association. He has been vice-president of the Riverside County Historical commission and a director of the Mental Health Association and Riverside Community Hospital. Currently he is a member of the executive committee of La Verne College's School of Law, a member of the faculty of the California Trial Judges' College and a trustee of the California Judges' Foundation. He also served as president of the Riverside City Schools board of education and piloted the district through its first post-war expansion program.

(In the photo below, John Gabbert is seen as a member of the Riverside City School Board circa late 1940s. Gabbert is third from the left.)



At that time the junior college was under the direction of the same board of education as the City Schools. While Justice Gabbert has found all of these activities worthwhile and productive of many lasting friendships, one other has been a source of particular satisfaction to him. That has been his role in helping to start the Citizens' University Committee. The position took a tremendous amount of time and involved him in travel throughout the state, but Gabbert feels that the committee's success in bringing the University of California to Riverside has been of inestimable value, both economically and culturally, to the area. Yet for all his pride in that fledgling on the hill, Gabbert has nothing but respect and affection for old RJC. "It was a great experience," the judge says. "I don't see how any person could have gone to a college or university where he could have received finer teaching than that afforded by such masters as Edmund Jaeger (Life Science 1922-1952), Earl McDermont (History 1921-1958), Maurice Mackenzie (History 1924-1965), Coleman Scott (English 1927-1946), F.D. Fullenwider (Business Education 1927-1946), and Edward C. McCarthy (Life Science 1927-1936)." Gabbert claims, surely with an excess of modesty, that he never would have gotten through Dr. McCarthy's botany class had he not sat next to a brilliant student named Ruth Cooper (Life Science 1931-1971), who retires today after 40 years as successor to Dr. McCarthy, and who will share the platform with Justice Gabbert at graduation exercises tonight.

Gabbert retired from the bench in 1974. He had a life-long love of motorcycles even riding one to RJC while attending the school. He would continue to cycle until the age of 88.



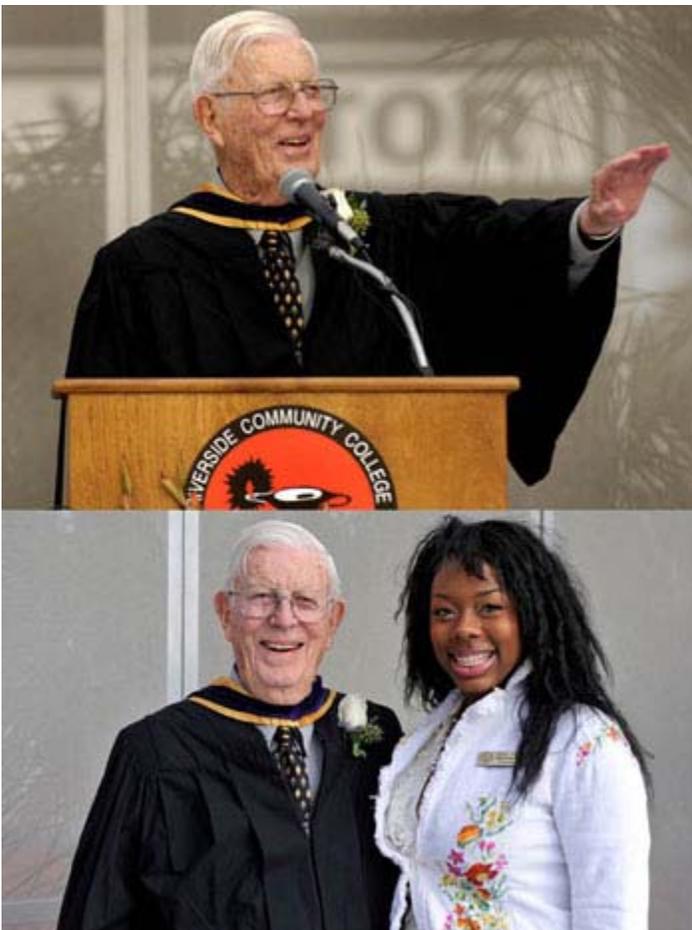
A few days before his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, John Gabbert spoke at the 2009 Riverside City College Commencement Ceremony. In part he said:

*“The programs over the Depression years here at RCC made it possible for thousands and thousands of students to hang in there and continue their education. RCC gave a hand up to great numbers enabling them to ready themselves for later and better employment. Both Ken (fellow graduate Dr. Kenneth Maxwell) and I agree that the teachers we had here were exceptional and brought the learning experience to real life. They made it permanent. They reacted with each student and took us beyond the classroom, beyond the books and beyond our own imagination. And I emphatically state that my teachers here at RCC were equal to or better than those that I had later in upper division work and in law school. RCC has always opened the door to knowledge and the chance for a better and more productive life.”*

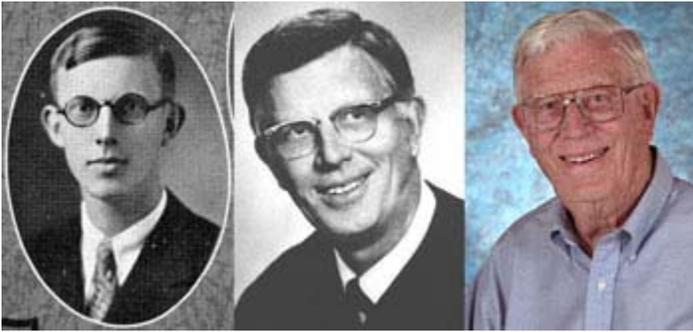
To see a video of his complete speech, use the link below:

<http://mediasite.rcc.edu/rcc/Play/ff70559b10434a428f81d626de8143b81d>

Below, Gabbert is pictured speaking to the gathering and posing with 2008-09 ASRCC President Meshay Brown.



Below John Gabbert is seen (left to right) as a student in the 1928 “Tequesquite” yearbook, in 1971 as he was named RCCD Alumnus of the Year and in 2009.



Justice John G. Gabbert passed away on December 9, 2013 at the age of 104 years.

“Countdown to RCC’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” will be on a two-week hiatus during Winter Break. The “Countdown” of “Christmas 1963 (Part Two)” originally scheduled to run today will be seen on January 6, 2014.

It is 2 years and 12 weeks until RCC’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on March 13, 2016.

The Riverside City College Instructional Media Center is bringing you this five year countdown to RCC’s 100<sup>th</sup> 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.