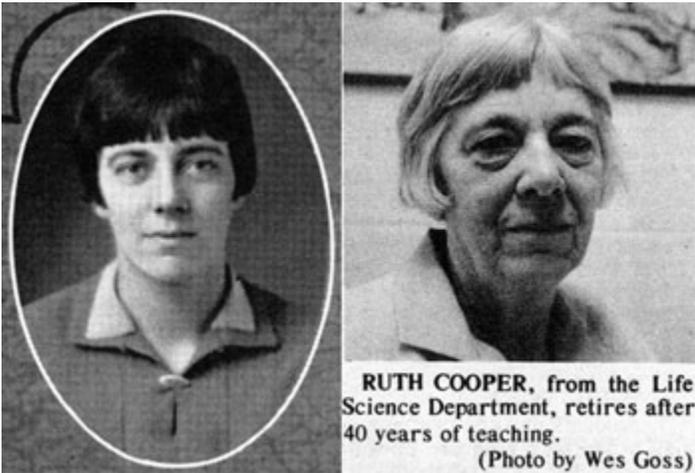




December 2, 2013

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

Ruth Cooper (Associate Professor of Botany 1931-1971) is unquestionably one of the legendary educators of the Riverside City College Life Science Department. She began at what was then called Riverside Junior College in 1926 as a student. After graduating from RJC in 1928 and UC Berkeley in 1931, she returned to her Alma Mater to teach Botany 1, 2 and 3 before retiring in 1971. Her student photo (below left) is from the 1928 *"Tequesquite"* yearbook. The photo on the right is from May 14, 1971 *"Tiger Times"* student newspaper.

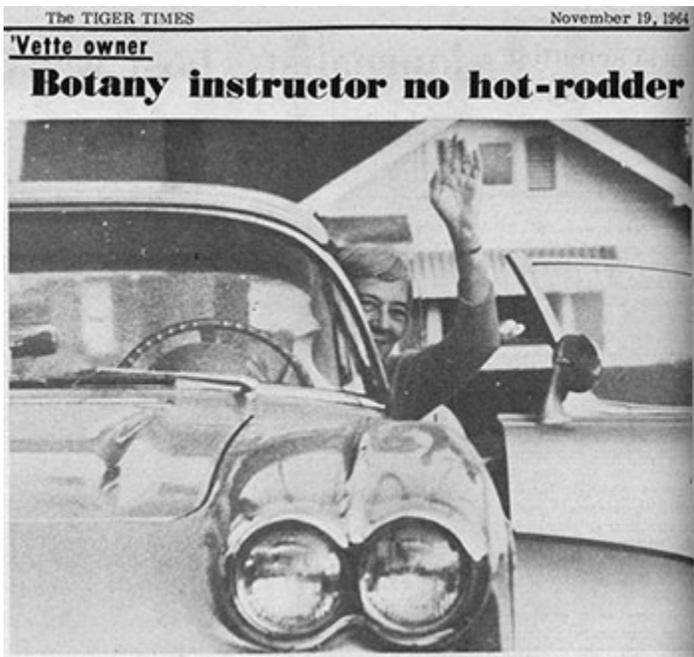


A future "Countdown" will deal with her academic career at the college but for the time being, here is a look at the fascination students had with her mode of transportation. In the 1950s and 1960s she was known for driving some the sportiest cars on campus. Below is a photo from the 1957 *"Tequesquite"* yearbook of Cooper and her car. The caption read: *"GOOD SPORT – Botanist Ruth Cooper adjusts aerial of her Thunderbird"*.



The photo below ran in the November 19, 1964 "Tiger Times" student newspaper. The article by student Marc Nurre that accompanied this photo read:

"There is a popular misconception on campus that Miss Ruth Cooper of the Life-Science Department is much like Abigail Beecher, or the Little Old Lady from Pasadena (two popular songs of the era by Freddy Cannon and Jan & Dean respectively). This rumor is perpetuated for the most part by Miss Cooper's Botany students. They have seized upon the fact that Miss Cooper drives a Corvette and expanded it into a story in which Miss Cooper races a '64 Sting-Ray on weekends. In reality the Corvette is a '58, silver, with an automatic transmission. 'Stick-shifts are too much work,' she says. And as far as those Saturday races go, Miss Cooper's students might as well resign themselves to her appearance in one piece on Monday mornings. As she puts it, 'I see that there is a value in racing, for the development of cars, but I don't go to them. They're dirty and smelly'. End Myth."



By 1965 she had moved on to a Sting-Ray. The photo below ran in the February 25, 1965 "Tiger Times" newspaper. The article, reprinted below, explained the change.

"You've seen it? So you think she's finally caught the bug. You're wrong. Even though Miss Ruth Cooper of the Life-Science Department did trade in her old Corvette for a '65 Sting-Ray, her habits of driving and reasons for owning a sports-car are still the same. She just sold the old car because she 'thought it was old enough to retire.' The only differences between the two cars are the year, the engine size (330 Hp. As opposed to the old 235) and the fact that it is air conditioned. She does like to drive (288 miles during the first four days of ownership) but she still thinks races are not for her. And, of course, all of her driving is done with the aid of automatic transmission. The reasons Miss Cooper likes the car so well are because it is not as bumpy as the old one and it's a lot quieter. 'You can talk to the person next to you without shouting,' she said."



It is 2 years and 14 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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