March 18, 2013

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

Room 110 in the A.G. Paul Quadrangle on the Riverside City College campus is dedicated to Dr. Dina Stallings. The plaque seen below is mounted next to the classroom.

Dr. Stallings taught English and Speech Communications at RCC from 1961 to 1987. Born in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Southeastern College (Oklahoma) and her MA and PhD from the University of Southern California. She began her RCC career in 1961. As the advisor to the college's Speech and Debate Squad she always felt that the student's education came first. In a March 21, 1980 article in the “Viewpoints” student newspaper, she said “We're not entering contests just to win trophies. I wouldn't participate if that were the case. We're building good all-around speakers here. The ideal of education is at work here. These people represent RCC in the best light to other schools.” She stressed what she called the three “E’s”: Ethics, Excellence and Enthusiasm. While she didn’t see the acquisition of trophies as the ultimate measure of success, more often than not, her teams won their share of honors. Below is a December 2, 1965 “Tiger Times” newspaper photo of Dr. Stallings with the Forensic Club members after an Eastern Conference Speech tournament at Orange Coast College. Standing are (left to right) Bill Southworth, Steve Y'barra, Rod Jones and Dr. Stallings. Seated are (left to right) Lois Arnold and Pat Scileppi. Scileppi would return to RCC as an Associate Professor of Speech Communications from 1969 to 2007.
Other students who benefitted from Dr. Stallings’ mentoring were: Virginia Blumenthal (Defense Attorney and President of the RCCD Board of Trustees), Nick Ferguson (Moreno Valley Unified School District and Alvord Unified School District Superintendent; 2012 RCCD Alumnus of the Year) and John Tavaglione (Riverside County Supervisor). Children’s literature was a passion for Doctor Stallings. Her interest began as soon as her first baby was born. In a May 1, 1981 “Viewpoints” interview, she said, “As soon as I got home with her I began doing research in children’s literature.” She travelled the world researching and studying the field. She spoke internationally to groups on the subject in Taiwan, Spain, England and Germany. She said “Our children are very sharp when they are little and the right books will help them grow in their feelings.”

In 1979 she received National Forensic Coach award and was named the RCC “Teacher of the Year” in 1981. In 1982, she was chosen by her RCC colleagues to deliver the 22nd Annual Faculty Lecture. The title of her talk was “Should We Become A College Z: The Community College In A Japanese Looking Glass”. In her opening remarks she honored her RCC family by saying “To my colleagues of the faculty, in teaching and administration, instructional media and the library, the heart of any institution of higher learning, I express heartfelt appreciation; primarily for the ideas, encouragement and association we have shared, which I value highly; but also, for the deep sense of pride, yet humility, which I feel in the honor of representing you in the faculty lecture, a custom dating back to the rise of higher education institutions in medieval times. To my colleagues of the classified staff whom I honor for the dedication and diligence with which they maintain this historic yet modern campus in which we all feel pride; and for making our offices not only places of efficiency, but also, and far, far more importantly, places of warmth, giving us a vital center for the aid and encouragement which helps us to feel an integrated part of the academic scene.” Below left, is a May 1, 1981 “Viewpoints” newspaper photo of Dr. Stallings and her collection of children’s literature. Next to that is an article from the June 4, 1982 “Viewpoints” newspaper covering her Faculty Lecture.
In 1987 she became the third RCC instructor to be granted the rank of full professorship. The photo below left is from the 1965 “Tequesquite” yearbook. The photo below right is from the year she was granted her full professorship.

Dr. Dina Stallings passed away on February 27, 2013. On Friday March 15, 2013, Congressman Mark Takano (RCCD Board of Trustees 1990-2012) took to the floor of the US House of Representatives to deliver a tribute to Dr. Stallings. You can view his speech by using this link: http://www.c-spanvideo.org/appearance/633043896

On Sunday March 17, 2013 a “Celebration of Life” was held in her honor at the Landis Performing Arts Center (where she gave her Faculty Lecture) on the campus of Riverside City College (where she shaped the lives of students for over 25 years). At the conclusion of her 1982 Faculty lecture she dedicated it to the memory her father who, in her words “took the time to sit with his three children on the porch steps and talk with them in the dusk of summer evenings or around the fire on winter nights. ‘It’s like this’ he used to say. ‘Education is a light! It’s the only hope for the poor, and if the poor don’t receive it, the others lose what they can give, and so everybody suffers. So all together, rich and poor alike, we make up a team always trying to move closer to that light. Remember children, each one of you has a special gift to help us move closer. You must always consider yourself in partnership with the rest of the team as students all your life, perhaps also teachers, administrators, board members or whatever you may become in the community, all a part of the same team for education as high as it can go. Transcend barriers. That’s what you have brains and hearts for. And move toward that light.’” She concluded her lecture with this prose:
“If you are a dreamer, come in
If you are a dreamer, a prayer, a tryer,
If you are a thinker or magic bean buyer …
In this time of crisis, come sit by my fire

Come in! Come in!”

It is 2 years and 51 weeks until RCC’s 100th Anniversary on March 13, 2016.

Part two of the “Countdown” on the 1918 yearbook, originally scheduled to run today, will appear next week.

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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