February 18, 2014

Countdown to Riverside City College’s 100th Anniversary

The previous four “Countdowns” discussed the subject of sororities and fraternities at Riverside City College. As could be seen in some of the photos, prospective pledges had to go through an initiation process before being admitted into the organization. But by the early 1950s a new ritual of passage had become a part of RCC, “Freshman Initiation Day”. The September 30, 1954 issue of the “Tiger Times” reported:

“What made the Frosh really look like was made painfully evident during Freshmen Initiation activities Sept. 17 and 18. Unadorned and unembellished, the first year student was revealed in all his insignificance. At least that’s the sophomore’s story, and they’ll stick to it. Short pants and shapeless tee shirts exposed the knobby knees and boney arms of the freshmen to the pitiless light of the day. Even more harrowing was the costume required of the women. No makeup, and it was mighty disillusioning for some of the older inhabitants of the Tiger’s Den to discover how artificial was the innocent blush on the maiden’s cheeks, the healthy color of her lips. And those gunny sack dresses dis little for the-er-well, like their male classmates, they wore shapeless shirts. Kangaroo Court, administered with notable decorum by the more mature students, did what it could to improve appearances, even going so far as to prescribe egg shampoos. Wishing to be fair about everything, the sophomores gave the freshmen a chance to get revenge in a tug of war.”

Below is a photo of the tug of war that accompanied the above story:

The format for Freshman Initiation was for the first-year students were to adhere to a dress code set up by a sophomore committee. Frosh that violated the dress code were brought before a “Kangaroo Court” and issued a punishment. The following appeared in the September 29, 1955 “Tiger Times”:

“The weather was cool but the sophomores conspired Thursday and Friday to give the freshmen a warm reception to Riverside College. In showing their “hospitality” the sophomores “allowed” the freshmen males to wear two pair of long pants, two long shirts buttoned at the sleeves and three unlike shoes, along with ties and rooters caps. The women had it no better as they had to wear slacks, pedal pushers, a men’s shirt (backwards), one high heeled shoe, no makeup, and, of course, the rooter’s caps. During the two days the Pit was off limits and to get to the Tigers Den, the freshmen were to go through the bookstore or around and through the back way. In the event the freshmen should get thirsty they were to drink nothing but hot coffee and were to sit nowhere but in their classes.”
The photo (below left) appeared with the article. The second photo (below right) was of the same incident and appeared in the 1956 “Tequesquite” yearbook. The freshman (Judy Ryerson) was being “punished” for violating the dress code by having her hair spray painted.

Other 1956 yearbook photos of the 1955 Freshmen Initiation are reproduced below. The caption for the below left photo reads:

“All dressed up and all over the campus to go are Jean Treadway, Judy Ryerson (from the photos above) and Becky Hadley, fashioning what every well-dressed newcomer wore during late September.”

The caption for the below right photo below states:

“NONE THE WORSE - Freshman initiations can't be too bad. Beverly Archibek was a prime target for pranks, but she still looks happy.”

An October 6, 1955 “Tiger Times” (below left) article reported that Dean of Men, Ralph Bradshaw warned that “water treatments” were no longer to be used in future Freshmen Initiations. Bradshaw later was to become the third President of RCC (1963 to 1972). Below right is a photo that appeared in the October 11, 1956 “Tiger Times”. Sophomores Don Price (left) and Paul Hrbacek (right) demonstrate the proper method for freshmen to “debase” themselves as they carry upper classmen’s books.
The October 18, 1955 “Tiger Times” devoted a full page of coverage to the Freshmen Initiation. The caption for the first photo read:

“THE QUALITY OF SOPHOMORE MERCY IS NOT STRAINED – it dropped like a gentle rain upon various erring freshmen who had expected far worse punishments for their heinous crimes. Here an unidentified sinner sees that the yoke is going to be on him as Gwen Deutsch dispenses justice.”

The caption for the second photo:

“THE EGG AN I – is subject for a forthcoming essay by TT freshman journalist Jan Hurst who is here pictured getting her initiation information first hand. Like all good newshawks, Jan believes in facing facts bravely. The shell to the right denotes a near miss of a moment below.”

For the third photo:

“OH THE PAIN OF IT ALL – freshman Hal Hartley grabs his head and bows nobly as Terry Evans, to whom the merciless hands belong, smashes two eggs upon his close cut hair. Retribution followed, however as Hartley then proceeded to do the same to his fellow sufferer.”

The photo coverage continued with the two photos below. The caption of the top photo read:

“TO EACH HIS OWN – TT editor Craig Beckheyer, who has none, is open-mouthed with paleolithic envy at the rich and even nutritious coiffure of freshman Janice Phillip, who has just received an omelet treatment from sophomore beauticians. Treatment was given free to all deserving freshmen, male and female alike.”

The caption for the bottom left photo read:
“FROM THIS RAW MATERIAL – will emerge the final polished cosmopolites known as sophomores. Off-hand it would seem impossible, but a few months of the rarified atmosphere on this campus, and such freshman as those pictured here will blossom into singular physical and spiritual beauty.”

For the bottom right photo it read:

“DON’T BE CRUEL – Sophomore Roger Folsom ignores the camera as he witnesses a short lived brawl ignited by indignant freshmen near the end of the Kangaroo Court. The rebellion was swiftly crushed by the upperclassmen as the prostrate freshman legs to the right indicate.”

In the fall of 1957, the Freshman Initiation tradition was set to continue with the following requirements setup by the Initiation Committee:

**DRESS FOR MEN:**

1. Bedroom slippers or boots
2. Bermuda shorts or blue jeans rolled up to Bermuda length
3. Gym shorts to be worn over the pants
4. Rope belt
5. Large sweatshirt
6. Part hair down the middle
7. Wear woman’s silk scarves around neck

**DRESS FOR WOMEN:**

1. Men’s shoes
2. Shorts over pedal pushers
3. Baggy shirt
4. Pin curls or hair uncombed
Violators were to appear in Kangaroo Court to receive punishment.

Apparently all the mischief from previous years did not sit well with the RCC administration. The photo and headline below ran in the October 31, 1957 “Tiger Times” with the following article:

“Freshmen Initiation at Riverside City College is a thing of the past. Last Wednesday the Cabinet voted 15-2 to dispense with the annual event. The action was taken when it was learned that President O.W. Noble objected to the idea of a Kangaroo Court and asked that dressing up be made non-compulsory. Noble’s objection was based on the Education Code of the State of California which says in Article 7, section 16126 that: ‘No student … shall conspire to haze, engage in hazing, or commit any act that injures, degrades, or tends to injure, degrade, or disgrace any fellow student. The violation of this section in a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than 50 dollars, nor more than 500 dollars or imprisonment in the county jail for not more than six months or both’ Noble stated that in case of injury, the school, the superintendent of Riverside schools, and he personally could be sued, and added his main objection was that ‘They just don't know where to stop.’”
RCC Fraternities and Sororities continued with their initiations but had to follow the edict set forth by President Noble and the Student Cabinet.

It is 2 years and 3 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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