Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

The glory days for fraternities (and sororities) at Riverside City College were from the post-World War II years until the late 1960s. The four dominant fraternities during this time period were Kappa Upsilon, Gama Iota Alpha, Sigma Rho Chi and Eta Pi. Kappa Upsilon was founded in 1937. The following is what the 1938 "Tequesquite" yearbook had to say about the fraternity during its inaugural year:

"The Kappa Upsilon fraternity was formed in the middle of the college year, composed to a large extent of the members of the College Y.M.C.A., which it succeeded. Motives for its founding were to form a brotherhood and to establish among a group of fellows the understanding and good will which contribute so much to the worth of college life. Another motive which prompted the formation of the fraternity was that the group of men thus organized would better be able to serve the college. Outstanding among the services rendered to the school was the impressive planting of a redwood tree in memory of Dr. E.C. McCarty, a former botany instructor. Regular supper meetings were held each Monday evening at the Y.M.C.A. with business meetings afterward. Hay rides, beach parties, and house parties have provided many good times for the men. The fraternity is made up of a very carefully selected group of men. Among requirements which must be met by members is a grade average of ‘C’ or better.”

Below is a 1938 yearbook photo of the fraternity.

In the 1957 yearbook their activities were described as:

“RABBLE ROUSERS-To promote more school spirit and to give service to the school and to their community have been the objectives of Kappa Upsilon this year. Among the many highlights of the year was their pledge dinner dance at the Moulin Rouge, and they also sponsored this year’s homecoming queen. They were in charge of all the parades and bonfires.”

Below are photos of various KU activities as covered in RCC yearbooks. In the upper left hand corner 1959 photo, the fraternity stands guard over the “Victory Bell” which was awarded to the winner of the annual RCC / SBVC Football game. The bell was always subject to “prank” activity by the two colleges prior to the game. Below that photo, the KUs await their turn to give blood during a 1962 donation drive. To the right are 1959 (top) and 1962 (bottom) photos of Football Homecoming Parade floats constructed by KU.
In 1966 the yearbook defined the activities of the fraternity as:

“This year Kappa Upsilon fraternity has sponsored two dances, one at school and the other at the Legion Hall in Fairmont Park. During Marti Gras they sponsored a dunking tank that won first prize for collecting the most money. In addition they sponsored a book sale at the first part of the spring semester.”

However by the end of the 1960s Kappa Upsilon was no more. Below is a photo of the fraternity from the 1966 yearbook.

Following the conclusion of World War II, many former soldiers enrolled at RCC. Gamma Iota Alpha was formed in 1946 with its membership made up exclusively of veterans. In the 1946 yearbook, the fraternity was described as follows:

“With an influx of many veterans on the campus, the ex-GI's deemed it necessary to have an association of their own. The result was that the College organization was admitted as the second Gamma Iota Alpha chapter in California. The first president that banged his gavel in front of this group was William Nail, who was succeeded by Jack Piazza. In the wake of the G.I.A. activities, they have successfully launched a barn-dance, hay-ride, and an assembly which wowed on-lookers with a chorus line composed of ex-GI's. Following the Veterans’ assembly a Whiskerino was held. The G.I.A. was instrumental in opening the new Student Union.”

Below is a 1946 yearbook photo of the G.I.A. chorus line that appeared at the assembly.
Since the membership of the G.I.A. fraternity was made up of military service veterans, they tended to be a bit older than those in other fraternities. However, that didn’t prevent them from participating in all the activities usually associated with college Greek organizations. In the yearbook photos below, the G.I.A. can be seen participating in both official and unofficial activities. In the top 1953 photo, G.I.A. members are in the process of building a bonfire for a pre-game football rally. Below right is a 1961 photo of a float built by the fraternity for an RCC Football Homecoming parade held in downtown Riverside. Of the below left photo, the 1957 yearbook reported:

“YOU SEE RC-Riversiders were amazed to wake up one morning and view an “RC” replacing the “UC” on Box Springs Mountain. Rumor had it that a band of night-riders from the lowlands had tampered with the Highlanders monogram. All the Tequesquite staff knows about it that here is a picture of GIAs Don Amador and Dick Manuel wrestling sacks of cement high on a windy hill. None of the journalists cares to speculate about what they were doing however.”

The “RC” stood for “Riverside College” as RCC was known in the post-WW II years.
The 1966 yearbook said of G.I.A.:

“GAMMA IOTA ALPHA is a fraternity open to all veterans on campus and non-veterans by invitation. This year G.I.A. actively worked on the passage of the Cold War G.I. Bill. Since the passage of this bill, they have been revamping their organization to meet the social, cultural and academic needs of the expected rush of Veterans on RCC’s campus next fall.”

In the late 1960s, G.I.A. fell victim to the general student indifference towards fraternities and sororities and disbanded. The G.I.A. photo below was reproduced from the 1966 yearbook.

Next week, photos of the Sigma Rho Chi and Eta Pi fraternities.

It is 2 years and 5 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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