In 1966, when Bill Mulligan (Physical Education, 1966-1975) was hired to be Riverside City College's head basketball coach, he had a tough act to follow. Jerry Tarkanian, the previous RCC coach, had just led the Tiger team to three consecutive California Community College State Championships (1964-66). Below is a February 23, 1967 article from the “Tiger Times” student newspaper by Diane Hixson where Mulligan reflected on his first season with RCC.

“Sit down, baldy!” These cutting words were screamed at Riverside City College's basketball mentor, William Graham Mulligan, by an irate Imperial Valley fan in Brawley last December as the RCC Tigers sprang one of the year's major upsets by crushing the Imperial Valley College Arabs, 94-87. The Tiger squad, coaches, trainers, radio announcers from KPRO and perhaps five faithful RCC fans watched the amazing Tigers rally in the last half to take the lead and stall to save the victory. With a great big smile and a soft chuckle, Mulligan, RCC’s genial Irishman, reminisced his experiences during his first season in Riverside.

**TOSSED OUT**

Mulligan recalled his funniest experience as the time he was tossed out of the Golden West-Riverside game earlier this season in Costa Mesa. “It wasn't funny then, but it is now,” chuckled Mulligan. Asked about his most interesting experience this season, Mulligan once again returned to the Imperial Valley game. Mulligan admits he went to Imperial Valley with some self-doubt, since Riverside was 5-4 in the win-loss column. “They (Imperial Valley) were so big, I made my kids go back into the locker room and sit down, because I didn't want them to see them,” recalled Mulligan. Mulligan conceded that, without a doubt, the Imperial Valley victory was the greatest win so far this season. Mulligan came to RCC to accept the greatest challenge of his life, that of following Coach Jerry Tarkanian’s incredible record of three state championships and four Eastern Conference titles in a four-year span. Tarkanian took over coaching duties at Pasadena City College this year.

**FOOLS RUSH IN**

When basketball practice first began this year, Mulligan was asked how he felt about stepping into Tarkanian's shoes, and he laughingly replied, “Only a fool would do it!” Becoming serious, he continued, “It is a great challenge. I coached at USC for two years against UCLA and I'm used to challenges like this. It shouldn't bother me too much.” Now with the season ending and the Tigers in tight contention for the EC championship, Mulligan commented again on following in Tarkanian's footsteps, “It was the biggest challenge of my life. A very difficult thing to do.” “Jerry and I have been friends for years and he helped me get the job. After our first five games when we were 1-4, I had serious misgivings about
whether I made a mistake.” Following Tarkanian took lots of courage, but Mulligan has a pretty distinguished record in his own right. Before coming to RCC, he had a lifetime record of 233-41 (Tarkanian’s was 245-59).

MULLIGAN’S CAREER

Mulligan coaching career began as the B mentor at Long Beach Poly and in two short years he ran the record to an all-time high of 50-4. Moving up to the varsity, he won five conference championships, two CIF (California Interscholastic Federation) titles and computed a 151 24 record in six years. At one time his teams ran up a string of 32 consecutive league triumphs. As a part of Riverside City College’s summer community services program, Mulligan conducted a basketball clinic for boys and he has conducted summer campaigns for handicapped children. Mulligan and his wife Dorothy have three children, Billy, 8, Shawn, 6, and Brian, 5 and they like living in Riverside very much. “The town support is tremendous and the people are very friendly. The faculty has helped to make it enjoyable,” said Mulligan.

TWO QUESTIONS

In conclusion, Mulligan responded to two big questions: All over the state, Riverside fans are known to be basketball rabid—do you think the fans are really what they are built up to be? “They are—I think they’ve helped us win about four just by their presence,” observed Mulligan. He added, “An away game is like playing on a neutral floor.” As he leaned back in his chair in the cool coaches’ offices under the Wheelock bleaches, Mulligan answered the final question with a gleam in eye. What about RCC’s chances for the championship? “We can’t expect help from the other teams in beating Orange Coast. We must win them all ourselves and at least guarantee a tie for first and then a playoff to see who goes to state. Our players feel as if they can win. Losing the great shooting of Larry Bonzoemet is a tremendous obstacle to overcome,” Mulligan concluded.

Below is a photo of Mulligan from the June 1968 issue of RCC’s “Spectator” magazine. Sitting with the coach is player Mike Barnes who played with the Tigers from 1966 to 1968. Barnes returned to RCC in 1981 as an Associate Professor of Counseling. He also coached the RCC Women’s Basketball team. His 1985-86 team was undefeated (33-0) and won the State title.
The three photos below are from the “Viewpoints” student newspaper. The photo on the left is from December 4, 1970, the middle photo from December 11, 1970 and the photo on the right from March 7, 1974.

The two photos below appeared in the January 17, 1975 edition of “Viewpoints”.

On October 22, 2015, Bill Mulligan was inducted into the RCC Athletic Hall of Fame. The tribute below appeared in that night’s program.

**Bill Mulligan**

*Coach, Men’s Basketball, 1966-75*

No account of RCC men’s basketball glory days would be complete without the prominent mention of Bill Mulligan, one of the few who is remembered as both a players’ coach and a coaches’ coach. Mulligan came to RCC on the heels of the legendary Jerry Tarkanian—a man he admired but didn’t worry about emulating, instead charting his own course into the record books. In the process, he became the third winningest coach in RCC men’s basketball history. While he was new to RCC, he wasn’t new to coaching. Mulligan got his start at Long Beach Poly High, coaching the Jackrabbits to a couple of CIF championships before signing on at USC as an assistant coach. He stayed at USC for seven years, cherishing the “thrill of the game” competing against the likes of UCLA. Invited by Tarkanian to apply for the RCC job, Mulligan accepted the challenge. Success followed, taking Mulligan from RCC to Saddleback College to UC Irvine, where he turned a new Division 1 team into a state and national powerhouse. Over Mulligan’s nine-year tenure at RCC, his teams posted
an overall record of 189-97. His 189 victories make him the third winningest coach in the program’s history. His .661 winning percentage is sixth best among coaches with five years or more service time. He posted five 20-win seasons. His 1972-73 team may have been his best. Behind players Tony Masi, Mark Warkentien, Walt Wilson, John Coit, Ray Johnson and Charles Aubert, the Tigers went 28-6 and won the conference title with a 15-1 record. At UC Irvine, Mulligan teams led the nation in scoring seven times, beat UNLV teams six times, and UCLA twice. His saddle shoes and sweaters were the equivalent of the Tarkanian towel, recognized by fans and opponents across the country. Mulligan, who passed in 2010, is the fourth men’s basketball coach to be inducted into the RCC Athletic Hall of Fame, joining Dave Waxman, Bob Schermerhorn and Tarkanian.

There are 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. 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.