May 11, 2015

Countdown to Riverside City College’s 100th Anniversary

Irmy Schlein Tilton, who was a part of the Riverside City College Cosmetology Department from 1960 to 1980, passed away on May 2, 2015 at the age of 97. Tilton began her RCC career as an Assistant Professor of Cosmetology and concluded it as the Director of Cosmetology. The photos below appeared in the 1961 and 1962 “Tequesquite” yearbooks. The caption for the first photo read: “SUPERVISION - Mrs. Irmy Tilton (standing) notes techniques employed by Cosmetology student Carol Northrup as she gives a manicure to Mrs. Shirley Parker. Students receive training in all phases of their profession.” The caption for the second photo read: “GUILDERS OF THE LILY – Cosmetology Instructors try, with varying degrees of success, to ignore the photographer. Left to right, they are Mrs. Susan Hanenberger, Mrs. Alice Neal, Mrs. Doris Spivey, and Mrs. Irmy Tilton.”
Tilton was born in Magdeburg, Germany where she was a graduate of the Victoria Lyzeem School. She also graduated from Finishing schools at Lausanne, Switzerland and London, England. As a teenager, she attended the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics where she saw U.S. sprinters Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe win gold and silver medals. Ominously she also recalled seeing Adolf Hitler attending the games. To escape the Nazi regime, she left Germany in 1939 and came to America on the liner Queen Mary. "I came to this country in style without money," she said. She first lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where she graduated from the Lake Shore School of Beauty Art. It was while in Milwaukee that she met and married her husband Albert Tilton. She went on to do graduate study at the American Hair Design Institute in New York, New York. In 1949, she and her family (which now included two sons, Dennis and Roger) moved to Riverside (where her third son Sherwin was born). She earned an A.A. degree (with distinction) from Riverside City College and subsequently earned a Bachelor of Vocational Education degree from Cal State Long Beach.

In 1965 she appeared a number of times in the “Tequesquite” yearbook. The caption for the photo below read:

“VISUAL AIDES – Cosmetology Instructors George Bernyk, Ruby Strahan, Irmy Tilton and Doris Spivey listen attentively as Department Head Irma Judd explains one of the diagrams used in teaching science, mathematics and other theoretical background related to the profession.”

She also found the time to be advisor for the Delta Chi Delta Sorority. Tilton can be seen on the second step up from the bottom on the extreme left. The second photo is her faculty portrait from the 1965 yearbook.
In the 1970s, Irmey Tilton served as a judge in the Riverside Schools Miss Personality Scholarship Show. Below are photos that were taken during the competitions.
Her tenure with RCC Cosmetology coincided with a period of expansion for the department. Both photos below came from the District publication “RCC Reports”. The first photo below appeared in the March 1979 issue. The caption read:

“COME RAIN OR SHINE —— When Riverside City College sets out to have a ground breaking ceremony, it’s not about to be intimidated by a little thing like a downpour. Taking that important first step in the construction of an addition to the college’s Cosmetology Building are, from the left, Board member Frances Nelson; Board president Leroy Gren; Neil MacLean, director of campus development; John Clouse, student body president; RCC president Charles Kane, with his head impaled on the point of an umbrella held by Judy Devine, cosmetology receptionist; Architect Wendell Harbach; Irmey Tilton, director of cosmetology; and Mary Pat Seifke, cosmetology lab assistant. The new facility will provide two new classroom/laboratories with a total of 75 student stations, rest rooms for handicapped students; teachers’ offices, and individual study labs that can double as counseling areas. — Photo by Bob Flores.”

The second photo below appeared in the June 1980 issue. The caption read:

“IRMY TILTON (left) joins in recent ribbon-cutting for the new cosmetology annex. Other participants in the event include, left to right, Jessie Meyers from the Office of Congressman George Brown, Dr. Kane, Vice President of the Board of Trustees Frances Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem Sam DiGati, and Liva Valiance and Harry Fath of Earle T. Casier Inc., General Contractors.”
On June 30, 1980, Tilton concluded her career at RCC. The story below appeared in the May 9, 1980 issue of the “Viewpoints” student newspaper. She was quoted as saying:

“The fun part of retiring is not to plan and be tied up with a schedule. I really enjoyed being a member of the college and I’ll miss the contact with the people, especially the students. I’ll never stop learning as long as I live. I’m always broadening my horizon.”

She was also profiled in the June 1980 issue of “RCC Reports”

The article read:

“After years of teaching beauty, Irmy Tilton is ready to try something new. Tilton, director of cosmetology, will retire June 30 to continue such pursuits as traveling, skiing, hiking, walking, as well as trying some new things such as spending time with a new granddaughter born while she was vacationing in Mexico during the spring break. ‘I’m looking forward to spending time with the baby and maybe even sewing a few little dresses,’ said Tilton who considers her tenure at RCC the fulfillment of a long time dream. ‘A lot has happened since I
have been here and there have been great changes in the students, but the biggest change and the most important to me is the recent completion of our new annex,’ she said. Along with the new structure, Tilton said she is proud of several new innovations in the cosmetology program such as specialty classes in manicuring and cosmetician (the care of skin and makeup). ‘We have also started an evening cosmetology program,’ beams the auburn-haired director, who seems to constantly smile, as she recalls her experiences at RCC and life in Riverside. ‘My greatest accomplishment has been my career, but raising three wonderful sons, who are all successful, and becoming a world traveler has also added tremendously to a very happy life,’ she said. Having recently returned from Mexico, Tilton recalls other trips to such places as Israel, the Mideast, Kenya, Alaska and many other places. ‘On my second trip to Europe I purchased a Eurail Pass and took off with my two suitcases all by myself,’ she recalls. ‘I had a great time, but almost ran out of money. Fortunately, I located a cousin in Berlin, who loaned me money just in case,’ she continued.

Travel and intrigue is not new to Tilton who was born in Magdeburg, Germany and educated in Switzerland, London, Germany and the United States. ‘I'll miss the college,’ she said turning back to her major pursuit for the past 20 years. ‘I've always liked the challenge involved with the program and the innovations we have made, but I will now try to find some challenges in my personal life.’ ‘I intend to travel and have new experiences while slowing down the pace, but I will not let any grass grow under my feet,’ she added confidently.

Continuing to plan her new adventures, Tilton adds that she will now get to enjoy her home life. ‘I have a lovely home, but I have never really had time to enjoy it, now I will,’ she said. While enjoying her home life, Tilton said perhaps she can begin a book or maybe two, one on human relations and another on her life and travels. But for those who are used to seeing Tilton around the RCC campus, don’t despair. ‘I’l always be involved with the college,’ she said. ‘I’ll probably enroll in a course in the fall’."

Perhaps recalling her attendance at the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics, she served as a volunteer for the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles, moving there for two weeks. She also assisted at the 1991 Los Angeles U.S. Olympic Festival. In 2002 she carried the Olympic torch 1/5 of a mile along Newport Boulevard in Newport Beach on its journey to the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. She was nominated for the honor by her son Dennis, becoming one of 7,200 torchbearers selected from 210,000 nominations. Tilton gave back to Riverside City College when she contributed to the creation of both the “David & Sadie Memorial Endowed Scholarship” (in honor of her parents) and the “Sherwin Tilton Memorial Endowed Scholarship” (in honor of her son). Tilton remained a familiar sight on the Riverside City Campus as she regularly attended the Annual Faculty and Staff Recognition Luncheon. The top two photos below are from her 90th birthday party held in 2007 at RCC. Below left she is seen attending the 2006 Faculty and Staff Recognition Luncheon. Below right she is pictured attending an RCC Associates Luncheon in 2010.
There are 43 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.