June 15, 2015

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

As Riverside City College is about to begin the 2015 summer semester, we take a look back at "Arroyo" student newspaper articles from 1939. In October and November of that year, the newspaper ran a series of columns by Riverside Junior College Faculty reminiscing about what they did during past vacations. The first article in this series appeared in the October 4, 1939 edition of the newspaper and was written by Dr. Paul Lewis Fisher (Life Sciences 1937-1941). Fisher's column was entitled “Washington Thoughts and Reactions to Recent Events”.

“WASHINGTON HAS GROWN. The unofficial reports state its population as 800,000. Thirty years ago it was a small city of a little over 200,000. Twenty years ago, during and after the World War, the population increased over 100 per cent, being exceeded only by Los Angeles, Detroit and, I believe, Cleveland. Since the New Deal came into the picture, it is the only city to increase by 100 per cent. Forty, per cent of this population works for ‘Uncle Sam.' To house its employees during the World War the government rented all available private office space. The rental bill was huge. Since that time the federal triangle is almost completed at a cost of approximately 30 million dollars. In spite of this, the New Deal is still renting practically all of the private office space. The rental bill is still huge. The comparatively small area of Washington coupled with the large population makes the city one of the most crowded in our country. The weather of the capital city is certainly not the most desirable, either, being warm and humid in summer and cold, very cold, and humid in winter. We experienced many thunder storms. One Saturday in Asbury Park, New Jersey, 14.81 inches of rain fell in 14 hours. This was the day the ‘Comet,' crack train of the Central of New Jersey, went off the track. My reason for going to Washington last summer was for conferences, to conduct research projects, and to finish a publication on tree seed failures in nursery beds. This is the field of work in which I was engaged in the U. S. Department of Agriculture before coming to Riverside Junior College. Since 1937 I have been employed as a collaborator in these studies. But that is another story. Washington sees political parties and politicians come and go, and, of course, each exerts its influence on the local citizens. Those of us who claim Washington as our home, however, find an indescribable thrill to it, not connected in any way with the changing politics. One learns more of the political situation in the United States outside of Washington. There, only the ‘inner sanctorum’ talk freely of these things. The Civil Service Act prohibits political expression on the part of federal
employees. The Hatch Bill, passed in the last session of Congress, inhibits political activity even more. From what could be gathered, however, it seems that the people of Washington are not in favor of a third term. The same seems to be the opinion of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Gallup Poll, considered good in Washington, says the President will not be reelected. However, if this country should get into the war, anything could happen. If there should be a change in the presidency, the consensus gives either Vandenberg or Taft the lead as the Republican candidate. The Democrats are split in their allegiance, with Garner holding a strong lead. Garner has been a silent man in Washington, but he is respected. As expressed everywhere in the country as I traveled about, Washington citizens, alike, want us to keep our feet clean in the European war. War was declared before we left and at the present time the government departments are working full speed on a war basis, with even more employees, to bring every phase of the work up to the minute and to prepare for future emergencies. We thought seriously of the tragedy of war when we saw young boys guarding the railroad bridges as we traveled west on the Canadian Pacific and when we were escorted by two destroyers from Vancouver to Seattle on a British vessel. To turn to a lighter vein, Mr. Lee Borah, in a recent issue of the 'National Geographic,' says that if he should leave Washington he could always remember these familiar sights: 'Negros dancing on the street on Halloween; the glow of flowers on green lawns; the easy drawl of a speech neither truly southern nor yet of the north; the flash of a cardinal in the trees of a park; the song of a warbler beneath my office window; the lights, of the city as I approached it from Arlington over the Memorial Bridge; fireworks in the Washington Monument grounds; the worn old leather chairs brought by Supreme Court Justices to their new marble temple; the mauve of fading light on the Japanese cherry blossoms; and, most precious of all, the somber glory of the Lincoln Memorial sparkling above its image in the reflecting pool.' These are the memories of Washington, the City Beautiful. Will fate decree that you or I should join the thousands already there?"

The photos below of Fisher appeared in "Tequesquite" yearbooks of the time. The top two came from 1938 and 1939. The bottom pair appeared in the 1940 and 1941 yearbooks.
(Correction: The October 11, 1939 article written by Peter Ortiz was actually the second in the series “Vacation Memories”).

There are 38 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.