Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

On June 16, 2015, long-time Riverside City College Professor, Dr. Ron Yoshino (History 1986-2011) passed away. Professor Emeritus Yoshino taught full-time at RCC for a quarter century and after retirement continued to teach at the college on a part-time basis. Dr. Yoshino was also an advisor to the Alpha Gamma Sigma chapter on campus.

In 1991, Dr. Yoshino was selected by his colleagues to deliver the 31st Distinguished Faculty...
Lecture. His topic was life in Riverside before the outbreak of World War II. His talk was entitled, “On the Brink: Riverside’s Last Day of Peace, 6 December, 1941”. Use the link below to see a video of his speech.

https://mediasite.rcc.edu/rcc/Play/5f831352bfe246948ebb6cdc180173a31d

The username is: rccd and the password is: rccd

Dr. Yoshino would always attend the annual Faculty Lecture. The photo below was taken on May 9, 2013 at the 53rd Distinguished Faculty Lecture, presented by Dr. Alexis Gray. Left to right in this photo of Faculty Lecturers are: Joseph G. Eckstein (2010), Dr. Yoshino (1991), Dr. Sharon L. Crasnow (2003), Dr. Richard Mahon (2004), Karin Skiba (2005) and Dr. Gray (2013).

Dr. Yoshino was profiled a number of times in “Viewpoints” student newspaper articles. The first story appeared on October 31, 1986, not long after he was hired by the college.
Authored by staff writer Dwayne Sharp, the article read:

“For students in instructor Ron Yoshino’s classes, some of the best education comes outside the classroom. Yoshino, a first-year associate professor of history instructor, believes four walls do not a classroom make. ‘I’ve had some of my best learning experiences outside the classroom and I’d like to see my students be able to take advantage of that also,’ he said. Hence, Yoshino’s door is always open. Yoshino said that while he was a student, one of the things he appreciated was being able to come to instructors with his questions. Yoshino began teaching at the college level in 1979. He came to RCC because he had heard of a job opening in the history department. ‘I heard they (RCC) had an opening in the history department and I just decided to check it out,’ he said. Yoshino said before accepting the RCC job, he had an offer with the Rockwell Corporation, but chose to continue teaching. ‘If I have to get up every day and do something, this is what I want to do’ he said. Yoshino’s interest in his students is apparent. He frequently begins classes, for example, by asking students how their weekends went. Yoshino is impressed with students at RCC. ‘They come from a good social cross section and most of them are motivated,’ he said. Yoshino would like to see students come away from his courses with a greater understanding of the value of history. To achieve this understanding, Yoshino makes an analogy of historical events paramount to learning dates and places. ‘History is a human process,’ he said. Yoshino, who has a master’s degree in history, considers himself a historian as well as an educator. He cites military history as an area of interest, and is currently writing a book about an American fighter group based in South Pacific during World War II. It is these outside interests that keep Yoshino from getting job burnout. ‘One of the ways we refresh ourselves is to have other activities, that’s why I continue to do research and write. Redundancy, I think, is where you run into problems,’ he said. Yoshino said he hopes to continue teaching at RCC. ‘I’ve had good experiences with the students here as well as the administration and my colleagues, I hope for a long stay at this institution,’ he said.”
A second “Viewpoints” article ran on October 16, 1991.

Staff writer Robert Smalley told of Dr. Yoshino’s background, relationship with students and his world view:

“Ron Yoshino is a soft spoken man; at least he was when I interviewed him. He may be a raging tyrant in class but somehow I doubt that. When he speaks of history, his students at
Riverside Community College, and his co-workers agree his words are thought provoking, praising, and appreciative. Yoshino is a teacher of 'The Political and Social History of the United States' and history of California and chairs the history department. When speaking of history his words stir the mind with a desire to know more. A trait he said ‘is common among his colleagues in the history department.’ He is also co-advisor for the Alpha Gamma Sigma club, better known as AGS or the honor society, ‘It is a privilege,’ to share that position with Robin Emrich and Bill O’Rafferty, his co-advisors and ‘wonderful people’. A native Californian and third generation Japanese-American, Yoshino earned a bachelor’s degree in speech at Cal State Fresno. After working with the federal government for a while, he returned to school to earn his second B.A. then a master’s in East Asian history. He went on to earn his Ph.D. in American history at Claremont Graduate School. Yoshino has been teaching at RCC for six years and feels the faculty here is as good as any he’s seen. He said, ‘They’ve all been such a tremendous asset to me and each person has their own field of expertise. From time-to-time we’ve gone to one another for further insight into a particular area of history. I consider myself very fortunate to be working with the other professors here at RCC.’ Of the tasks that teachers face in dealing with students, Yoshino feels one of the more important is the job of nurturing the slower students so as not to lose them, while still challenging the more motivated ones. ‘I’m always surprised when I talk to the students and find that each one has their own set of expectations in the class,” he said. ‘One of the great challenges is to talk to a student and say ‘let’s work together’ and improve that person’s goal setting so that they walk out of the class with a B instead of a C, an A instead of a B, and sometimes an A instead of a D.’ When speaking of the United States he said, ‘I think what is going to be interesting to me as a historian is to see the easing of Cold War tensions with the breakup of the Soviet Union and how that’s going to affect the face of America. The perceived threat of Communism has helped shape America since 1945 and now, as we watch it virtually dissolve before our very eyes, I wonder what America will do?’ Concerning the importance of history to a student’s education he said, ‘I think that as the world shrinks and we see the dissolution of one great ideological power and the rise of many other forces, such as the Middle Eastern countries, East Asia and Germany, it seems to me that students who don’t understand the lessons that history affords us and who remain unaware of the backgrounds of other people, go into an increasingly complex and dangerous world at a disadvantage and at a great risk.’

On March 10, 2005 this article, by “Viewpoints” staff writer Ben Kwiecien, appeared.
“Although Dr. Ron Yoshino has taught at Riverside Community College for many years, few students are aware of his contribution to the student community. Yoshino, who holds a PhD in American History from Claremont Graduate School, was hired at RCC in 1986. ‘It was just one of those things I realized I had a knack for,’ said the associate professor as he explained his early decision to choose teaching as a profession. Yoshino instructs a number of classes on campus, including American history, Military history and Californian history. In addition to teaching history, Yoshino has lead instruction in Honors Colloquium, a team-taught seminar which provides an introduction to the Western humanities that he has taught since 1987.”
Yoshino also serves as faculty adviser to Alpha Gamma Sigma (AGS), RCC’s official honor society where he encourages students to become leaders and make a difference by playing a positive role in the community. ‘It pleases me a great deal that the students are able to do something like that,’ Yoshino said. A former community college student himself, Yoshino is very much aware of the academic benefits afforded to his students. ‘He recognizes the potential in his students,’ said Kathleen Sell, who currently teaches Honors Colloquium with him. ‘He helps them to recognize the rich intellectual opportunities available to them at RCC.’ As a teacher, Yoshino is chiefly concerned with the welfare of his students and the community as a whole. ‘He has a dedication towards his students,’ said Sean Price, AGS officer and Web adviser. ‘He has a kind of selflessness that is rare.’ Yoshino emphasizes respect towards the students in the classroom. ‘I think it all starts with a genuine respect for the students,’ Yoshino said. ‘Unless you genuinely respect the students, I don’t think anything constructive is going to happen.’ When asked about his ability to teach, Yoshino acknowledged that he owes it to an ability to communicate effectively and, above all else, experience in teaching that has built up over time, experience that he hopes to continue building upon at RCC in the future. ‘I’ve found a home here and I consider myself a lucky man to be surrounded by decent, right-minded, and honorable people,’ Yoshino said.”

Dr. Yoshino retired from RCC on June 30, 2011 but that did not end his association with the college.
“Retirement is not the end of the road for many in today's world. Take, for instance, Ron Yoshino, who has a doctorate in United States history. Yoshino officially retired at the end of the last academic year in June after 25 years with Riverside City College and a total of approximately 30 years in higher education. 'I've always considered myself one of the lucky persons who retired because they wanted to retire, rather than because they hated their job,' Yoshino said. Though he has retired, Yoshino continues to teach part time at RCC. 'I've always enjoyed the classroom and I continue to enjoy the classroom,' he said, 'maybe even more now that I don't have to carry such a heavy load for my teaching.' Yoshino was born in the central San Joaquin Valley in the small agricultural of Livingston where he lived on a 140-acre farm. California was not the only state his family called home, however. 'Through my life I've had the opportunity to live in different parts of the country, including periods of time back east in Connecticut and Alabama,' Yoshino said. 'For a person who eventually went into American history, that was a pretty good deal. I think it's important for a historian to be able to speak with a certain kind of intimacy about different areas and different kinds of people because they are different and you can't get that kind of difference just out of textbooks, it really helps to live amongst them as well.' Yoshino began his undergraduate studies at Merced College, which at the time was a brand new community college, and was part of its second graduating class. Once finished there, he went on to Cal State Fresno where he earned his bachelor's in public address and communications and master's in East Asian history. At that point he began work at Cal Poly Pomona as a part-time instructor. 'I'm not entirely sure what got me interested in studying history,' Yoshino said. 'I think, like a lot of other people, I had a sudden realization that this is what I was interested in.' 'But I do remember at a very young, perhaps first grade or second grade, reading a lot of biographies,' he said. 'Any good biographer, even at the level of text you read in first or second grade, creates a historical context. I mean, how can you understand a person in the past unless you understand where and how they lived? And so I think that was rather indirectly how I became interested in people and the different lives that they lived,' he said. 'Conversely, that also led me to an understanding of the historical matrix from which they came. That led me into history.' Yoshino did not always know what he wanted to do with this interest, however. 'Actually, I did not always intend to teach,' Yoshino said. 'Looking back on my life I guess I've always had a knack for teaching but I did not realize that it was going to be my life's work. I never used my bachelor's degree in speech formally but the training I received in public address and communications formed the backdrop of my ability to lecture in the classroom, which I guess as a college professor didn't hurt me at all,' he said with a laugh. In 1985, Yoshino finished his doctorate in United States history from Claremont Graduate University. The following year, he was hired by RCC. In addition to his teaching, Yoshino became involved with the Alpha Gamma Sigma honor society on campus as an adviser. 'I became involved in Alpha Gamma Sigma, the state community college honors society, when I first got here, partly because as a part timer at Cal Poly Pomona I did volunteer work in their history honors program and I always liked the students that I got to mix with,' he said. 'So when I came here I made a beeline for the closest honors society and never left it.' In his time with the chapter, it has continued to evolve. 'I think one of the proudest things about AGS is the way we have, over the past 25 years that I've been an adviser, become increasingly multinational, multiethnic, multiracial which I believe reinforces the notion that hard work and intelligence have no boundaries whatsoever,' Yoshino said. As well as continuing to teach part time and advise the honors society, Yoshino has plans to spend more time with his wife, Diana, and their four children. 'My wife and I like to be outdoors and we like to fly fish,' he said. 'There's any number of lakes and rivers in the western United States that I've not emptied of fish yet and so I'd like to make a concentrated
effort to do that. ‘I'm looking forward to an opportunity to see my children more frequently and bother them in their adult lives,’ Yoshino said with a grin. ‘I think it's time for me to bother them for a while.’ As the eldest of four, Yoshino also plans to spend more time with his siblings. ‘In our busy lives we got separated a little bit and it's time for me to start reacquainting myself with them and seeing them for more than just a weekend at a time,’ he said. ‘I'm looking forward to enjoying the company of my siblings.’ On top of all of this, Yoshino hopes to do volunteer work, travel and publish more writings on his area of expertise, American military aviation history. He also looks to the future with great optimism. ‘I have nothing but the highest expectations for this new generation,’ Yoshino said. ‘These will be the people who will take the pioneering effort of my generation, the post second World War baby boomers, in working in the area of equality which we have seen the expansion of genuine equality for people of color, for women, for the gay community. I am fully expecting that your generation will carry this forward into its logical conclusion, part of which we've seen in the election of an African American president, an absolutely unprecedented event in our history. I see no reason on earth why this increasing democratization of our country, this increasing inclusiveness in which we break down barriers, will end before we make sure that everyone gets a chance to sit at the American dinner table and have a great full meal,’ he said, ‘and I see no reason on earth, in my contact with young people, to doubt that will happen even better in your generation. This is ultimately the promise of America, that each generation will, in one way or another, be better than the last, and it doesn't have to be measured in the dollar sign,’ Yoshino said. But of course, this is not the end of the road for Yoshino. ‘I will happily continue teaching as long as the school will permit me,’ he said with a wide smile.”

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.