February 15, 2016

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

February 16, 2016 marks the beginning of Riverside City College’s 99th spring semester. Today the attendance of International Students is a common sight. Back in the 1950s it was still new enough to warrant coverage in the “Tiger Times” student newspaper and “Tequesquite” yearbooks. Below are some of those reports:

On January 31, 1950, the photo below appeared in the “Tiger Times” newspaper. Pictured were five Latvians that were attending Riverside College.

The photo’s caption read:

**TALKING IT OVER** – *Five former displaced persons from Latvia who have enrolled in Riverside College are shown here on campus discussing their new environment. From left to right they are Janis Rhumba, 22; Roberts Seisums, 26; Peteris Vilums, 27; Karlis Kalejs, 23 and Andrejs Olte, 22. Peteris and Andrejs are studying to become engineers, Karlis and Janis are studying chemistry and Roberts plans to become a doctor.*

The headline below ran in the January 17, 1950 issue of the “Tiger Times” newspaper.
Five young Latvian Displaced Persons, who—for the first time in their lives—are finding the opportunity to work for the realization of their ambitions, were enrolled in Riverside College. Three of them, Andrejs Olte, 22, Janis Rhumba, 22, and Roberts Seisums, 26, entered at the beginning of the second quarter. The other two, Karlis Kalejs, 23, and Peteris Vilums, 27, began auditing courses last week. All of them were brought to this country about five months ago by the Lutheran Church Council, and for a while they were employed by the Agricultural Industry and lived in the barrack camp just below Lake Evans. Many of the others brought over under the same circumstances have become migrants and have moved with the crops—but largely through the efforts of Rev. F. W. Heinecken of Trinity Lutheran Church, these boys have been given the opportunity to complete their interrupted educations. For five years they lived in German DP camps where they found themselves after fleeing Latvia before the Russians in 1944. Before this they lived in constant fear of receiving callers in the middle of the night—too often they heard the screams of their neighbors as one or more members of a family were taken off by the Reds to be forced into slave labor. In their flight from Latvia, the young men more than once had to sleep in forests and were often near death from starvation. They have no way of contacting their families, and some do not even know whether or not their folks are still living. Right now the boys are trying to put all the horror of the past behind them. Each has a good, solid, substantial future to which to look forward, and after the uncertainty they’ve had to face most of their lives, they are extremely grateful for their present opportunities. Two of the boys, Peteris and Andrejs, are studying to become engineers. Karlis and Janis are studying chemistry, and Roberts is pre-med. They had only two years of English in high school in Latvia, but this was supplemented by the English learned from American soldiers in Germany. Besides speaking Latvian and English, the former Displaced Persons have such an excellent command of the German language that instructors found it unnecessary to require them to take any “foreign” language but English. With the exception of Janis, who is employed as a custodian at Eden Lutheran Church, the young men are all working part time at Ruby’s Drive-In. But the thing that means the most to them at the moment is the fact that they all have filed for American citizenship papers. And incidentally, they no longer call themselves Andrejs, Janis, Roberts, Peteris and Karlis. Now they’re Andy, John, Robert, Pete and Charles. And as for Charles, his last name, Kalejs, is Latvian for Smith!

A Palestinian student, Hussein Abu Middain, was pictured in the 1953 “Tequesquite” yearbook.
A LETTER HOME—Hussein Abu Middain, born in Palestine, moved to Cairo, Egypt, in 1948. Three years later he came to Riverside College to begin his studies of agricultural engineering. This photograph presents Hussein writing a letter to his mother. “It is a wonderful experience,” Hussein has written, “to be received as a member of the group yet to remain an individual with so many friendly rights and privileges.”

The photo below ran in the June 10, 1954 issue of the “Tiger Times” newspaper. Pictured is Riverside student Adelyn Bonin. She was a native of Germany.
HAPPY SMILE: Adelyn Bonin thinks Riverside College is quite a place. She should know, for she’s certainly been around. A refugee from Nazi Germany during World War II, she served in the British Army in Africa and in Italy before coming to the United States.

The headline below accompanied the photo:

Coed Veteran of British Army

The article, by “Tiger Times” reporter Hannah Corbin, read:
Among the students on the Riverside College campus, we have a student who is a British Army Veteran and a woman. Adelyn Bonin, an attractive, dark haired, blue-eyed student with a charming European accent, was born in Berlin, Germany. She lived under the fanatical dictatorship of Hitler for sixteen years. The German Army ruthlessly confiscated her father’s factory and business. She has no knowledge of her parents since that fatal day. Adelyn and her sister fled in terror. Her sister is presently in the United States. Adelyn sought refuge in England with relatives and subsequently joined the Red Cross of the British Army. Her service with the army was under General Montgomery’s 8th Army, which took her into the front lines. In the line of duty she was stationed in Syria, Egypt, Palestine, and following the North African campaign she moved on into Italy. In 1946 she was with the occupation forces in Austria and was a sergeant upon discharge. Desiring to come to the United States and remained with relatives in Chicago for a year, she later came out to the Riverside area, which she now loves so well. Adelyn always wanted to attend college and now her dream is materializing. She plans on transferring to University of California in Riverside and wants to major in sociology, hoping ultimately to work in clinical psychology.

Ying Tom, a student from China was profiled in the February 25, 1954 issue of the “Tiger Times” newspaper.

The photo caption read:
FROM AFAR – Not exactly a Flying Tiger, Ying Tom has nevertheless come a long way from her native China to the Bengal campus.

Beneath the headline below,

Coed Knows First-hand about China

the article, by “Tiger Times” reporter Dianne Tucker, read:

A lively source of information about Chinese-American relations wanders around the Riverside College campus. Ying Tom is a small student from faraway places who can speak with authority about her native country, China. Born in Canton, Ying arrived in the United States about four years ago. She and her mother had taken the sea journey to join her father, whom they had not seen since Ying was a baby. The Communists had not yet taken over the southern part of China before her departure, but Ying tells of her poverty-stricken countrymen, who anticipated the arrival of the Reds in hope of some relief from economic stress. However she says that, according to recent letters that she has received from her native land, the Communist regime, now in full sway, has only increased the taxation and hardships of her people. Ying’s first few months were spent in Los Angeles. When the Tom family invested in the Rice Bowl, a Chinese restaurant in downtown Riverside, they decided to make their home here. Ying has attended three years of high school at Poly and is a freshman now at RC. Her days are filled with classes and studying; her evenings, with work at the Rice Bowl. She has little time for social activities, and she laughingly reports that her father refuses to buy a TV set until she has completed her education—for fear it will divert her from her academic life. She does manage to squeeze in some amusements though — she enjoys playing badminton, reading history books, and taking vacation trips to San Francisco where her cousin lives. As yet, she is not interested in marital life. In her native land the marriages were “fixed” for the young people by their parents. Ying is relieved that her father has relaxed this rule in view of her new environment, and encourages her to pursue a career. When she graduates from RC, she is planning to enroll in the Los Angeles College of Optometry.

There are only 4 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.