

Now & Then in Ripon ... *Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society*

RC: The campus that Put Ripon in the national spotlight

By Pat Grahm

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series examining how Ripon College has drawn national attention to the city of Ripon. Part two will highlight the alumni and faculty whose accomplishments carried the college's influence far beyond Wisconsin.

With a population of 7,860, Ripon can be looked at as just another small community in Wisconsin. Other than the founding of the Republican Party at the Little White Schoolhouse in 1854, one might think not much has happened in the city that attracted national attention.

Ripon College, founded in 1851 and celebrating its 175th anniversary this year, has made sure America has continued to notice the community of Ripon.

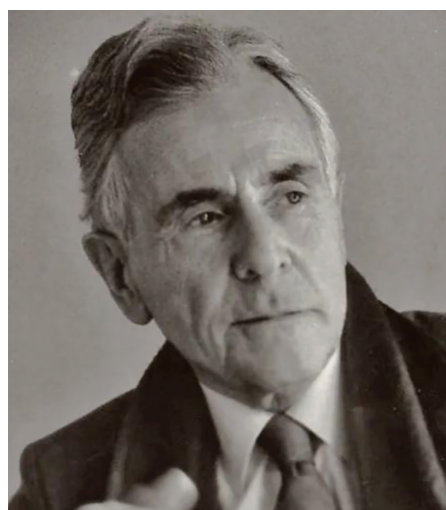
Over the years, the small liberal arts college — today with fewer than 750 students — has appeared in movies, made national headlines, hosted influential programs and even earned a reputation for the paranormal.

Indiana Jones and Professor Tyree

In the 1989 film "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade," Marshall College archaeology professor Dr. Henry "Indiana" Jones Jr. tells his students, "Archaeology is the search for facts, not truth. If it's truth you're looking for, Dr. Tyree's philosophy class is down the hall."

Indiana Jones was played by Harrison Ford, who attended Ripon College until 1964, but never graduated. The movie quote is a direct nod to Ford's real-life philosophy professor, William Tyree (1917-2016).

A Methodist minister and World War II Navy officer, Tyree joined



HARRISON FORD attended Ripon College and in his first "Indiana Jones" movie talked about Professor Tyree (above). This is a direct nod to Ford's real-life philosophy professor, William Tyree. It is small mentions like this that keep Ripon in the national spotlight.

submitted photo



AL JARREAU RIDES down Watson Street as a Badger Boys State governor. The Ripon College graduate was one of numerous leaders in business, government, entertainment and athletics to be part of the program in the nearly 80 years it was held on the Ripon College campus.

RCP file photo

Ripon College in 1950 after earning his doctorate and spent his entire 33-year teaching career there before retiring in 1983.

Bicycles for freshmen

Ripon College made national news in 2008, when it gave every incoming freshman who agreed to leave their car at home a Trek 820 mountain bike, helmet and Master Lock U-Lock.

The program was created to ease the shortage of campus parking while encouraging environmentally friendly transportation.

It ended around 2011, when alumni funding expired and the college shifted its sustainability efforts to other initiatives.

Badger Boys State

From 1941 through 2019, Ripon College hosted Wisconsin Badger Boys State, a week-long civic leadership program for high school juniors sponsored by the American Legion.

The program produced numerous leaders in business, government, entertainment and athletics. Among its notable alumni are Microsoft President Brad Smith, seven-time Grammy Award winner Al Jarreau, Emmy Award-winning actor Daniel Travanti of Hill Street Blues, presidential speechwriter Lee Huebner and former Wisconsin Badgers football coach Paul Chryst.

Three Wisconsin governors, numerous legislators and other public officials also attended the program.

Midwest's second-most haunted college?

In 2014, Ripon College was named the second-most haunted college in the Midwest and continues to be featured on paranormal websites and in books. The campus occupies the site of Ripon's first cemetery and sits adjacent to today's Hillside



RIPON COLLEGE'S FIRST building, East Hall, was built near the site of Ripon's first cemetery. Bodies buried there had to be moved so that the building could be constructed. Perhaps this is one reason why Ripon was named the second-most haunted college campus in the Midwest.

submitted photo



MATTHEW SWITZLER OF Rosendale stands with his new Trek mountain bicycle in 2008. He received the bike through Ripon College's Velorution Project, which made national news when it was announced.

RCP file photo

Cemetery.

Among the many ghost stories are Raphael, who reportedly haunts the theater department, the mysterious Black Bart of Mapes Hall and a haunted painting in the Rodman Center for the Arts.

Other tales include students who once exhumed the remains of John Williams (c.1843-1923) and displayed his skull in a dorm room, along with reports of a little girl whose ghost turns pages of sheet music and switches off lights in the music department.

Burger's 1967 commencement speech

In 1967, Warren Burger (1907-1995) was the commencement

speaker at Ripon College. His speech was reprinted in the *U.S. News & World Report Magazine*.

President Richard Nixon later read Burger's speech and this caused him to nominate Burger as chief justice of the Supreme Court in 1969. He held this position until his retirement in 1986. A plaque commemorating the speech hangs on the front Harwood Memorial Union, where outdoor graduations take place.

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information, visit www.riponhistory.org, facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety or instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/.