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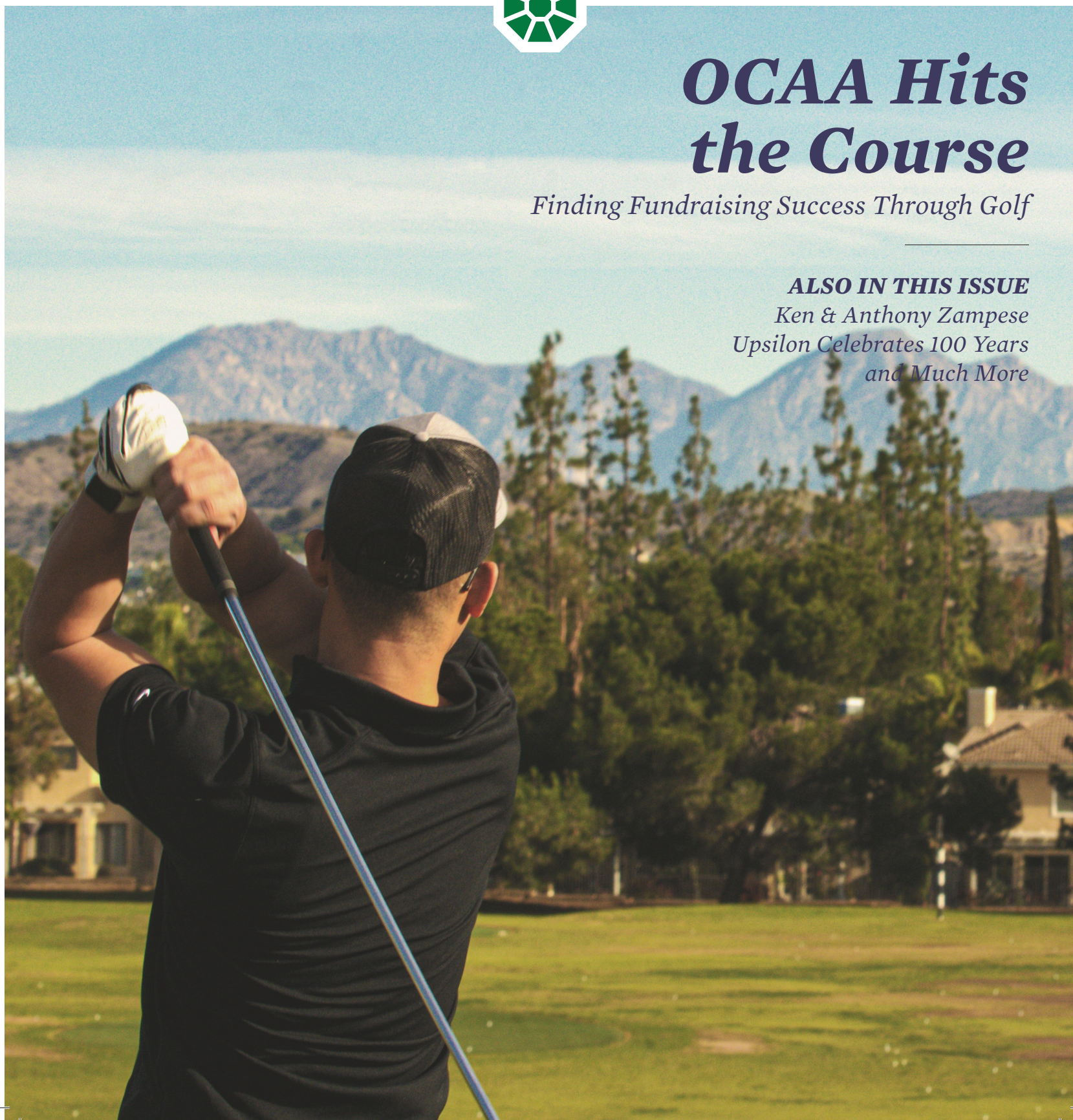


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100 YEARS OF UPSILON

by Bradley Reichard (UCLA '88), contributing writer

On May 1, 1922, there were no national Greek letter fraternities at the University of California at Los Angeles... by May 1, 1923, there was one: Sigma Pi.

- Donald Allison (UCLA 1923) as excerpted from the July 1924 issue of The Emerald, Volume XI, No. 2

100 years and one day after Upsilon Chapter of Sigma Pi was founded as the first national fraternity at today's UCLA, Upsilon Bruins spanning 50-plus years gathered at 612 Landfair Avenue to mark the Chapter's 100th Founders' Day and celebrate the dawn of the Chapter's second century.

"Every member of Upsilon has his own memories of chapter life, but our shared experiences are the bedrock of the tradition we hold dear," said Jay Ross ('90), President of the Upsilon Alumni Association.

Upsilon's traditions reach back to UCLA's early history, four years after the Regents of the University of California transformed the State Teachers' College at Los Angeles campus into the Southern Branch of the University of California.

On the afternoon of February 24, 1923, Delta Sigma Chi Fraternity – formerly known as the Ball and Chain Fraternity – was admitted to membership in Sigma Pi, making it the first national fraternity on campus.

During these early years, Upsilon flourished: the July 1929 issue of The Emerald reported that Upsilon's members were found in every walk of UCLA's university life, noting that there was "hardly a team, an honor society, or an activity of any kind that does not have in it at least one of the brothers."

The men who comprised Upsilon's brotherhood between 1923 and 1933 experienced fraternity life in the Chapter's first and second houses – which were located at 650 and 1012 N. New Hampshire Avenue, respectively – when UCLA was located on Vermont Avenue in today's East Hollywood neighborhood of Los Angeles.

By January 1930, the Upsilon Chapter Building Association had raised the \$50,000 needed

to finance and build a permanent chapter house at UCLA's new Westwood campus. On September 28, 1930, ground was broken for Sigma Pi Manor on a hill overlooking UCLA's athletic fields and the campus.

The April 1931 issue of The Emerald reported that "on the eve of the Ides of March 1931, Upsilon's dream, at last, came true" and that "the doors of the new chapter house were thrown open for the first time."

"After 92 years, 612 Landfair is more than just a house where UCLA students have lived. Our fraternity house is home to a bond of brotherhood that unites generations of Upsilon men," reflects Matt Sumrow ('88), President of the Upsilon Chapter Building Association.

Upsilon's alumni have contributed significantly to the Fraternity, with William Meyer ('41), General William Peers, U.S. Army ('34), Judge James Ross ('47), Dr. Maxwell Rafferty ('34), Admiral James Seely, U.S. Navy ('52), and Andrew D. Shaw ('44) each being a recipient of the Fraternity's most prestigious honor, the Founders' Award.

Equally as important are the individuals, including Taek Chang ('89), Arturo Martinez ('89), Herman Quispe ('89), and Josh Trifunovic ('00) whose support helped guide the Chapter and alumni association since the Chapter's 75th Founders' Day.

"Alumni involvement is crucial, and as we reflect on our 100th Founders' Day, we remember that traditions and brotherhood can be fragile," recalled Judge Franz Miller, ret. ('69), a member of the class that saw Upsilon's chapter hearth go dark for one short year.

"As a student, I was always impressed by the support of the Sigma Pi alumni in the form of networking, mentorship and career development," explains Chase Hay ('07).

“I’ve continued to benefit from these resources from my days at UCLA until now. Whether it is volunteering to speak at a career night, providing recommendations or referrals, or just simply connecting with [undergraduates] and young alumni to provide career advice, there have been so many simple yet impactful ways to get involved to help strengthen the future of our brotherhood. I’m proud to be able to help out the younger generations who are shaping [the Fraternity’s] future,” Hays continued.

But as the Vietnam War and 1960s cultural revolution waned, Upsilon’s fire was rekindled by Andy Guilford (‘75) and Gary Spector (‘75). The Winter 1972 issue of *The Emerald* credited these two men for leading Upsilon’s efforts to recolonize.

The publication reported how these individuals sought to show “other students and ourselves how a Fraternity could be valid and relevant to today’s society while maintaining a close fraternal atmosphere that extends beyond the brothers of Sigma Pi to our brothers in the world around us.”

Perhaps the Chapter’s most notable alumnus whose tireless commitment shaped the Chapter’s modern brotherhood is Upsilon legend Joseph Marsalek (‘50). Brother Marsalek was brought into the Upsilon fold in 1948 by UCLA’s famous athletic trainer Elvin “Ducky” Drake (1924). After serving in the Korean War, Brother Marsalek returned to UCLA to graduate.

During the following years, he served as a Board Member of the Upsilon Chapter Housing Association and then as President of

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the Upsilon Alumni Association. But most remarkably, Brother Marsalek stepped forward as Upsilon’s Chapter Advisor for 25 years from 1983 until 2007, when he passed to the Adytum on High.

In 1994, Sigma Pi Fraternity’s Grand Chapter honored Brother Marsalek with the Lyle H. Smith Chapter Advisor of the Biennium Award. In 2007, Brother Marsalek was honored yet again after being named the first recipient of the Joseph Marsalek Award for Service to Sigma Pi from the Grand Chapter.

Upsilon has a tradition of service and leadership to Sigma Pi. During the 14 years between 1948 and 1962, two Upsilon alumni – PGS Stedman C. Gould (1924) and PGS William J. Cutbirth (‘42) – offered a steady Bruin presence on the Grand Council, each capping his national service with the role of Grand Sage. PGTC Frank Gray (‘35) then served at the national chapter as Grand Third Counselor and Grand Herald from 1966 until 1970, with PGH Bruce Peterson (‘75) serving as Grand Herald between 1988 and 1990.

“Since 2007, the Upsilon-Marsalek Chapter Education Fund has increased more than nine-fold from \$45,000 to over \$400,000,” explains David Finkel (‘84), who has helped

lead the growth and development of Upsilon-Marsalek Chapter Education Fund (CEF) during the past two decades.

“Through the generous donation of \$50,000 by Joan and Stanley Gross in memory of their late son Gary Gross (‘89), and a planned giving bequest of \$50,000 by Ray Carlisle (‘36), as well as the generous support of Upsilon Alumni everywhere, the Chapter has built an education fund that, in 2022, provided 38 awards. This was the most awards issued by any Sigma Pi CEF.” Brother Finkel continued.

At the opening of Upsilon’s second century, the world is in a different place. As we continue to assess the impact of the 2020 global pandemic, the brotherhood faces a world that has been reshaped in significant ways. As Upsilon has proven before, the brotherhood has the resilience and strength to ensure continued success.

“As an undergraduate, it’s easy to think about the active chapter as the entire Sigma Pi experience, but we are seeing how that’s only a small part of the story,” reflected Upsilon Chapter Sage Will O’Halloran (‘22). “Upsilon is more than generations of guys who’ve lived in the same house: we are united in a brotherhood that is greater than the sum of the individual moments experienced by any single brother.”

“I am proud to be a part of this brotherhood and the Upsilon tradition; I know I speak on behalf of all members and neophytes when I say that we believe that our future is bright and we all look forward to what comes next,” added Upsilon Second Counselor David Spector (‘22). ❁



1) Brothers pose for a photo in 1926; 2) a photo from the 25th celebration of Upsilon Chapter featuring PGS William J. Cutbirth ('42) and Founders' Award recipient William Meyer ('41); 3) photo from a Upsilon mixer party from 1979; 4) brothers gather for a party in 1980; 5) Notable UCLA athletic trainer Elvin "Ducky" Drake (1924); 6) UCLA Basketball Center Ben Rogers ('54); 7) notable Upsilon alumnus Joseph Marsalek ('50); 8) trio of brothers; 9) brothers take part in a mixer event with Chi Omega in 1996; 10) brothers compete in the 1954 Chariot Races at UCLA; 11) Upsilon Chapter hosts a Surfer's Party in 1963; 12) a group of brothers from 1981; and 13) a recent group of brothers from the 2022-23 academic year.