

Occidental—academic

excellence for 100 years

by Nelda Thompson

During World War II, in one of those rare moments of unity amid combat, an exchange of prisoners was arranged at sea. The United States and Japan were trading "Yours" for "Ours."

The men taking part in the human game of pawns passed side by side, but they were not to speak. They were "enemies" and that was an order.

Eyes cast down, the men shuffled off to their home bases aboard ship. Not until the anchor was hauled and there was neutral water between them did the Japanese prisoner of war and his American counterpart break into grins and wave across the barrier that war had built.

They had a bond.

SHARED EXPERIENCES

A little more than ten years before, the two had shared quiz sessions and Model A's. They had chanted "Io Triumphant" after touchdowns and gorged themselves on lavish banana splits at the Tiger Cafeteria. From the safe vantage point of political theory, they had appraised the future of the world. They had groveled in the mud at the Fresh-Sophomore tug-of-war and gone through "Hell Week" together ("They called that Hell?" they asked themselves now, "A fraternity initiation?").

They had been classmates together in 1931 at Occidental College in Eagle Rock.

ATTAIN FAME

Henry Shimanouchi and U. Alexis Johnson went back to the world of sanity where each had distinguished himself. Johnson was awarded his country's highest medal of honor from the hands of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. It climaxed years of

distinguished accomplishments. Twenty-four assignments in the field of foreign service in four decades, including representing his country at the signing of the World War II peace treaty aboard the Battleship Missouri.

Shimanouchi, in a corollary diplomatic sphere, has served as Japanese consul to Los Angeles and was Japan's ambassador to Denmark.

They were just a couple of Occidental grads who met under some very heavy circumstances and went on to bring added glory to the college.

FAMOUS GRADS

The list of illustrious graduates is impressive and their professions diverse.

Occidental has held a major role in the liberal arts college concept since its beginning in 1887 with an enrollment of 15 students.

Dr. Arthur Coons, Occidental's 13th president, brought a national focus on Occidental's liberal arts program when he was named president of the American Association of Colleges in 1951 and was cited by President Eisenhower for his work.

Promoting the impact of its diversified curriculum, current college President Dr. Richard Gilman says, "A liberal arts education should provide students with an awareness of the richness and variety of traditions in which they live."

THEIR ROOTS

Proof that it has done so lies in the quality of the product, its graduates, many of whom have achieved greatness in diverse professions, all based upon the "total concept" of the student whose roots lie in the small liberal arts college.

In the field of political leadership (in addition to U. Alexis Johnson)

are Congressman Jack Kemp, former congressman Alphonzo Bell, Thomas Rees and former cabinet member and lieutenant governor of California Robert Finch. Others include Kenneth Holland, president of the Institute of International Education, former Assemblyman John L.E. Collier, and former state legislative analyst A. Alan Post.

From the day of its founding by the Rev. William Stewart Young, a Presbyterian minister from Boyle Heights, Occidental has turned out many men of the cloth. In fact, its primary description in the early days was as a "Christian College." And there was great need for such a stabilizing influence in the neophyte city of Los Angeles, where in the 80's crime and hoodlumism reigned.

MINISTERS DESPAIR

Many a minister intent upon civilizing the wild pueblo gave up on early LA with a devout (and not really blasphemous) edict on their way out.

So Occidental as a Christian college in a boom town attracting the rejects of the world had its work cut out for it. Many small colleges with intentions as lofty as Occidental's tried, but like the early missionaries gave up. Occidental remained.

Through the years the strong emphasis on theology and religion has persisted, although times have changed. Students no longer must bring excuses for cutting chapel.

Still, the alumni rolls are filled with many "reverends" and doctors of divinity.

SPACE AGE

In the field of science, Occidental is growing daily in stature. With the building of the Norris Science Center and numerous grants for the physical sciences, Occidental is keeping pace and setting new

horizons in the space age.

Dr. David Bruce Gill, an Occidental grad, has become a lab manual name in the world of physiology. Although graduating with the class of 1913, he was ready for the moon. As a research biologist at Bethesda Naval Hospital, he was assigned to study the physical well being of the first astronauts.

Another Oxy alum, Dr. Paul Kerr, served as a consultant with the United Nations on the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

In the field of literature, it began with Homer Lea, the world famous rebel who studied Chinese language and warfare and became a leading force in the Chinese revolution. Lea went on to write prolifically and prophetically; one of his books, written in 1909, predicted the war between Japan and the United States.

States.

On a gentler vein but equally famous are the names of poet Robinson Jeffers and Dr. Robert Glass Cleland, noted historian and former dean and acting president at Occidental.

THE 'CLELAND YEARS'

Few who attended Occidental during the Cleland years ever forgot his lectures on English history, in which old England became more thrilling than the cinemas of the day. Instilled in the frosh mind was the great historian's command:

"Forget, if you must, your own birthday, but never, never forget the date of 1066 and the Battle of Hastings."

His incisive and picturesque vignettes of history have been published by the volume, and among historians of the west he has no peer.

Others who excelled in literary fields were Raymond Leslie Buell, an editor of Time, Fortune and other

publications; Woodrow Wirsig, former editor of Look, who became editor of "Printer's Ink," leading journal of the publication world; and columnist and author Bill Henry.

Also a graduate is Oran W. Asa, class of 1935, who owns and publishes the Northeast Newspapers.

EDUCATORS

Occidental students have spread the gospel of their early training in other ways too, particularly in the field of education. Oxy grads who have sat in the great seats of learning include Dr. Glenn S. Dumke, who became chancellor of the California State Colleges, and Dr. Morgan Odell, who served as president of Lewis and Clark College in Oregon.

Although Occidental got a slow start in the world of sports, the later years have brought considerable fame to the local college, highlighted by Sammy Lee, first diver ever to win two successive gold medals at the Olympics, track coach Dean Cromwell, football great Kemp and New Orleans Saints Head Coach Jim Mora.

Early football victories were sparse, and with such a small student body and no coach (hired as such) the team had a tough time with its arch enemy, Pomona.

'BEAT POMONA'

It was not until 1905 that the Tigers finally beat the Sagehens and bonfires burned bright. Pomona and Occidental were the two survivors of the early collegiate days in Southern California, and the desire to humble each other on the gridiron became a holy war.

At some place in time, the ritual chant of "lo Triumphe" began and was used after every touchdown. And according to early historians Oxy, who seldom scored, had little chance to practice.

Of all the requirements exacted of freshmen, number one was that they must go before tribunal and recite "lo Triumphe." No frosh has ever been able to tell what happened to those who didn't. No one dared to find out.

In 1948, Occidental went through an undefeated football season, piloted by alum Roy Dennis. More recently, the college has become a force in Division III football, reaching the NCAA playoffs three consecutive seasons from 1983-85.

In addition to "lo Triumphe," the more serious side of college songs was expressed in the hymn-like "Occidental Fair," written by Dr. William Ward, dean from 1906-1909. Dr. Ward's great love was the classical languages, and upon retiring as dean, he had more time to devote to the study of Greek. There are those who say that it was Dr. Ward who spearheaded the drive to have Occidental's hillside amphitheatre christened "Greek

Theatre," and nooting many a classic.

Times have changed since the days when young gentlemen wore cutaway coats, high collars and bow ties. Young ladies in their ankle length ruffles and upswept pompadors were demure, but determined to get an education in a world that was just beginning to become coeducational.

Old timers must not quite understand the blue jeans and tennis shoe attire of today. They might raise an eyebrow at the coeducational dorms where men and women occupy the same living quarters and live 'as "families."

But the seriousness with which the new generation approaches the matter of education hasn't changed. The relaxed atmosphere of individual initiative has replaced the old lecture and quiz syndrome, with far reaching effects.

There's an intangible tonic of "respirit," or call it Occidental spirit that transcends generations.

In the late 20th Century Occidental's boundaries have extended all over the world. The foreign study program allows youngsters to study the culture and country of their choice and then spend a quarter living their lessons.

FRATERNITIES

During the 20's and 30's when the Greek letter fraternities and sororities were of tremendous impact, there was fragmentation and rivalry. Although the Greek letters continue and many students enjoy them, only about 10 percent now join.

So the generations proceed and the generations back up, but the spirit of Occidental remains the underlying theme.

But Occidental has gone through its growing pains, and will probably have others.

It was tough sledding to start any kind of a college in Los Angeles in 1887. It took courage and determination and it also took cash. Charter students at Occidental paid only \$50 a semester. It didn't quite make it. Those who wanted to study painting, music, modern languages and "training of the body" (physical education) paid an additional \$4.

By 1890 the curriculum included geometry, mathematics, physiology, apologetics (defense of theory of Christianity), rhetoric, Shakespeare, botany, physics, Christian evidence and geology, all handled by a faculty of ten.

The tuition for boarding students at that time ran \$295, which was a bit on the high side. When hard times hit just before the turn of the century, the fledgling college suffered budget trouble. Merging with McPherron's Academy took off a little of the pressure, but there was a

100 years of Occidental history

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constant struggle for sufficient funds. Enrollment dropped and graduation was postponed.

It didn't seem possible that things could get worse, but they did. On the morning of Jan. 13, 1896, the Boyle Heights campus went up in smoke. It was blamed on an earlier earthquake that had dislodged a flue by the chimney.

After the fire, classes were held in Boyle Heights Presbyterian Church, where, according to Occidental professor Andrew Rolle in his book, "Occidental: The First 75 Years," the rent was exchanged for 190 yards of carpet.

The "traveling campus" then moved downtown in a wheelbarrow to share quarters with St. Vincent's College at Sixth and Hill.

HIGHLAND PARK

The need for a permanent location became acute. Through fundraising and generosity of friends, the Highland Park property was purchased from Sarah Judson.

Isolated from city life, the new campus took form. The red brick main building remains today as an apartment house near North Figueroa between Avenue 50 and Avenue 51.

Transportation was a problem. The Santa Fe Railroad ran right through the college's property and classes often had to stop completely while the trains rumbled by.

A daredevil in those days was Fred Thompson, who would walk along the top of boxcars. Thompson was discovered by Mary Pickford and became an actor, portraying a cowboy in Westerns.

EAGLE ROCK SITE

As the city grew nearer, Occidental grew larger and plans were made to move the campus to its present location in Eagle Rock.

Construction of the campus began in 1912 and the plans were impressive: Mediterranean buildings of white stucco with tile roofs.

Occidental had barely moved in to its new home when World War I began. Before the U.S. became involved, the hawks and doves of the campus debated in free forum, the hallmark of free speech which has survived 90 years at Occidental.

Anti-German was running high and the board of education banned the teaching of German in public institutions, an act opposed by students and journalists at the college.

fered through financial panic in its infancy, but times were bad. Tuition couldn't be met, causing a greater need for scholarships and student aid. Jobs were created for those who had to work their way through college.

Grandiose plans, such as night football games at the Rose Bowl and further building projects, had to be postponed.

But Occidental survived and eventually prospered with its 1937 graduation and 50th anniversary celebration, attended by educators from all over the world.

WORLD WAR II

World War II began while a distinguished visitor was on campus. Eleanor Roosevelt, a friend of Dr. and Mrs. Remsen Bird, listened to her husband's wartime address to the people on President Bird's radio.

World War II had heavy impact. Under a federal plan, 400 Naval personnel moved on campus and everything took on a military air, much to the displeasure of students.

Draft status changed from day to day. Science students were "loaned" to Caltech to work on rocket programs. Occidental installed a mini-defense system which became a blueprint for larger undertakings. Mayor Fletcher Bowron cited Oxy as one of the leaders in the field of civil defense.

Fraternalities and sororities rented out their facilities and many of them never returned to the former Pan Hellenic glory.

During the post-war years, Occidental broadened its curriculum and started the foreign students plan. The campus began to resemble the crossroads of the world, with students, sometimes in their native dress, strolling the campus. American students were packing their bags for overseas assignments. A Model United Nations was organized.

WOMEN AT THE COLLEGE

During the early days of the college, consideration was given to Occidental becoming an all-male college. But more prophetic voices ruled and Occidental not only remained coeducational, but became well-known for its women of achievement.

Probably the best known woman at the college was Florence Brady, a member of the class of 1919 who became registrar in 1927, a position she held for more than 10 years. She was named president of the American Association of College Registrars in 1962. A resident of Eagle Rock, Brady also received the Alumni Seal award in 1967.

A contemporary of Brady's, Janet Hoit, who served as college comptroller in 1958, received the Alumni Seal in 1969.

Much was done to remove symbols of sexism on campus, with club such as Tiger Paws and Tiger Claws combined for both sexes and the elimination of separate deans for men and women.

The sixties affected all American campuses, and Occidental was no exception. Anti-war feeling ran high, but there was a more mature approach at Oxy to the rebuttal. The Remsen Bird lecture series opened Thorne Hall to all who had a message. The messages were diverse and sometimes controversial, from Dr. Spock to rock groups.

Occidental's appeal is still universal and its third generation of students perpetuate its symbols and traditions. Its past well-defined and its present secure, what lies ahead can best be told in the message of promise once issued by the late Dr. Arthur Coons:

"A college cannot be merely contemporaneous. It must be responsive to change, ready to discard both the clearly transient and the clearly obsolete. It must live for the future."

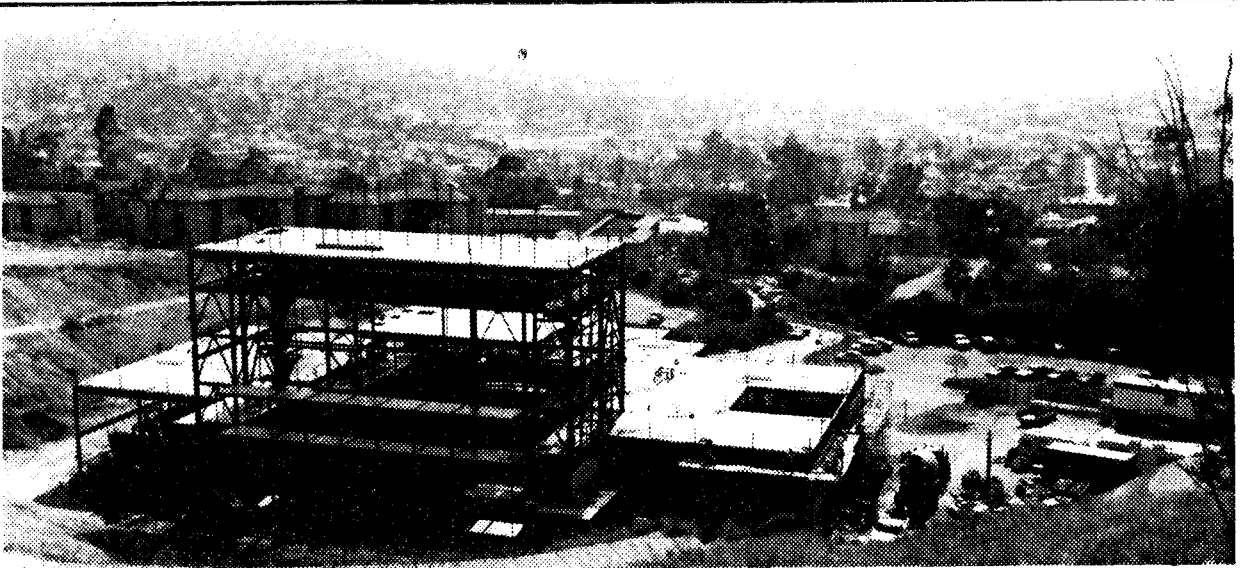
POST-WAR BUILDING

Post-war activities were highlighted by extensive building plans. The shovel used for groundbreaking was notched every time it turned earth for a new project.

Inter-campus rivalries became wild with Occidental's tiger mascot suffering many indignities, including kidnapping, declawing and being painted green. Opposing mascots suffered as well.

Occidental became a recognized hub of the Eagle Rock scene in the 1920s. In 1925, the Eagle Rock Chamber of Commerce supported and helped finance the construction of the 5000-seat Greek theatre.

The depression years were not unfamiliar to the college, having suf-



Keck Performing Arts Theatre

The Keck Theatre, currently under construction on the upper campus of the college next to the Remsen Bird Hillside Theatre, will provide a 414-seat auditorium, costume and scenery facilities, and offices of the theatre arts department. Completion of the structure is scheduled for February 1988, although it may not open to the public until later that year. To the left of the structure are the Eileen Norris Residence Halls.



Sylvan setting

Students can usually be found studying or socializing in the quad area of the Occidental Campus on sunny afternoons. Johnson Hall (left) and Fowler Hall house classrooms and faculty offices. Johnson houses departments of languages and linguistics, philosophy, education and religious studies; the departments of physics, mathematics, and geology, as well as a nuclear reactor, are housed in Fowler.

Activities mark 100th anniversary

Activities commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of Occidental College Monday, April 20, are scheduled at these times:

● 11 a.m.—lunch in the quad with entertainment by magicians, musicians, fencers and folk dancers.

● 11:40 a.m.—Welcome by President Richard C. Gilman.

● 11:55 a.m.—Presentation of the 1987 time capsule contents.

● 12 noon—Proclamations by Rep. Ed Roybal and Councilman Richard Alatorre.

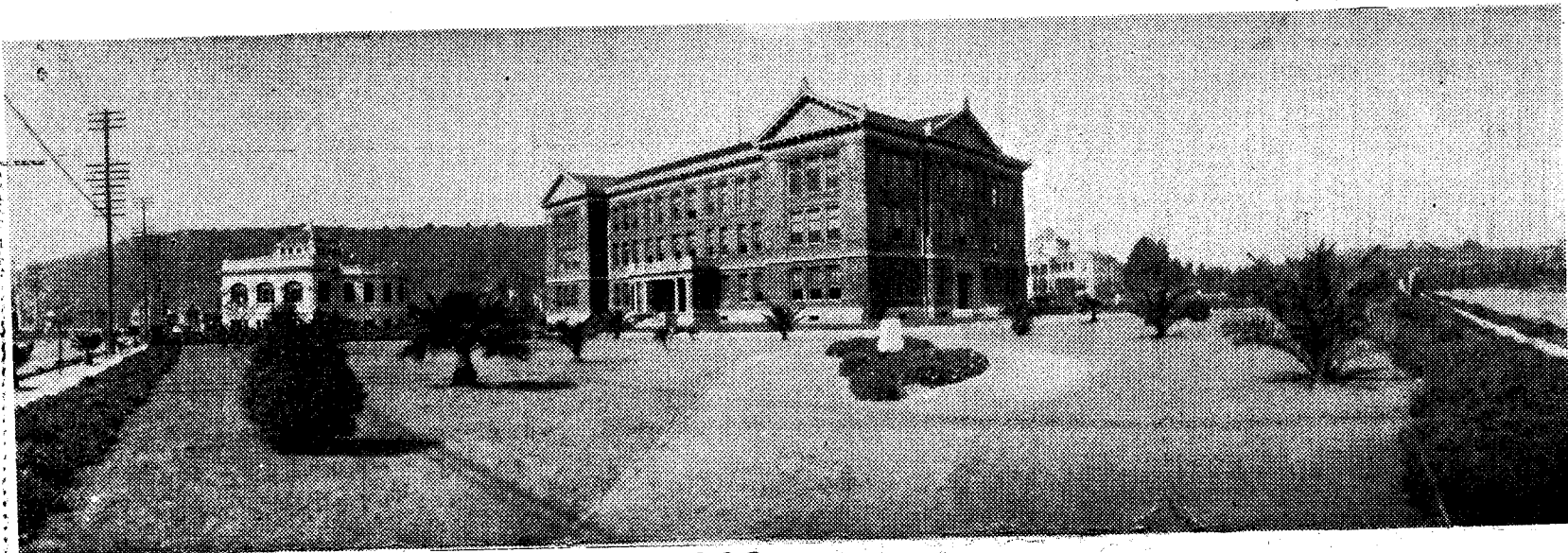
● 12:25 p.m.—“Ode to Occidental” performed by composer and music professor Alan Chapman.

● 12:30 p.m.—Campus community forms two-story “O” for centennial photo.

● 12:45 p.m.—Ten-tier birthday cake cut and served.

● 1-3 p.m.—Student carnival in quad and a student quadathlon.

● 3-5 p.m.—Community open house featuring campus tours and 1887 science and humanities classes re-enacted.



A 1908 panorama

The three-story brick building which was Occidental College at Avenue 50 and North Figueroa Street was a commanding presence in 1908, the date of this panoramic photo. The small

palm trees at the left of the photo are on Figueroa Street and the white building at left is on Avenue 50. The Occidental College building is still in use as an apartment house.