

THE MEMORY LINGERS ON

by Nick Peters

Joe Roth has been gone for more than 20 months, a victim of cancer, but the memory lingers on.

Had he not succumbed to malignant melanoma, February 19, 1977, the former U.C. Berkeley student-athlete today would have been a 23-year-old, second-year quarterback in pro football.

Instead, he serves as the inspiration for the second annual Joe Roth Memorial Game between California

"There's such a hole there, it will never be filled . . . sometimes, you just don't feel like getting up in the morning."

—Mrs. Lawrence Roth

and UCLA this afternoon at Memorial Stadium.

A \$1 dollar surcharge on each admission (50 cents for students) will go into the Joe Roth Scholarship Fund,

designed to give financial assistance for his senior year to a deserving junior each season.

An emotionally-charged band of Golden Bears attracted a capacity crowd of 76,780 here last year for the first Joe Roth Memorial Game. The players responded with a 17-14 upset of Southern Cal.

The surcharge contributed \$48,000 to the Scholarship Fund and, at season's end, junior quarterback Gary Graumann earned the distinction of

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being the first athlete so honored.

"It's the greatest award I've ever received as an athlete," says Graumann. "It was of special significance to me because I knew Joe on and off the field.

"Joe has not been forgotten," Graumann noted. "The older players who knew him have a very special feeling about Joe and the younger guys are learning about him. Joe Roth is very much a part of Cal tradition."

Last year, the Golden Bears honored Roth's memory with a black patch, worn on the shoulder. That symbol no longer is evident on the uniforms, but the athletes are very much aware of Joe's role in Cal gridiron lore.

"We took the patches off because we don't think Joe would have wanted people to continue making a fuss over him," explained Athletic Director Dave Maggard.

"The scholarship is a meaningful and dignified way to honor his memory," Maggard added. "Besides the \$48,000 from the USC game last year, other donations placed a total of \$90,000 in the scholarship fund.

"That doesn't include any of the income realized from this year's game," he said. "As a result, we have a sizeable amount of money in the fund and will be able to award scholarships for a number of years.

"... Joe Roth is very much a part of Cal tradition."

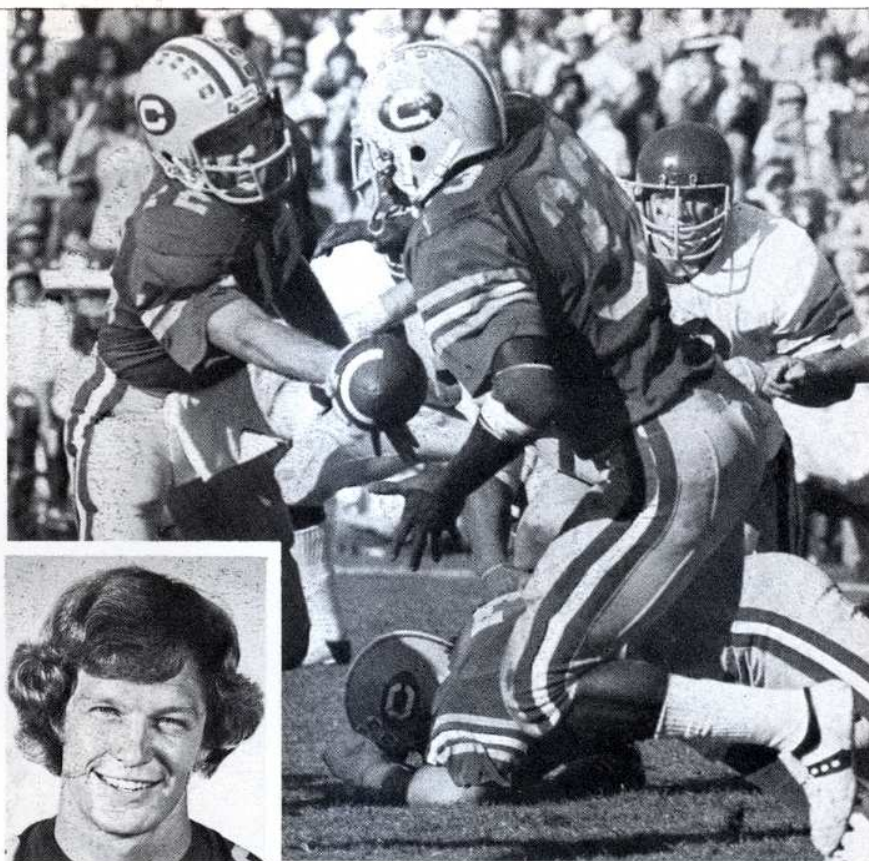
—Gary Graumann

"We also are considering other ways to spend the money, like making a donation to a scholarship fund of the visiting team, for instance," Maggard pointed out.

In addition to the Joe Roth Scholarship Fund, additional revenue has been raised by the Joe Roth Melanoma Cancer Research Fund at San Francisco's U.C. Med Center.

At the time of Joe's death, the family requested that contributions be made to that fund in lieu of flowers. Nearly \$25,000 was accumulated, ticketed for cancer research. Additional income will come from profits realized by the Roth family upon publication of a book on Joe's life and a television screenplay on the athlete, both scheduled for release late next year.

"We are turning over anything we get to charity," said Mrs. Lawrence (Lena) Roth, Joe's mother. "We want Joe's story told for two significant reasons.



Joe hands off to fullback Tom Newton in the 17-14 upset of USC in 1975.

"First," she explained, "to help young people who are searching for some direction in their lives. I hope Joe will serve as an inspiration, perhaps. He was a great athlete, a fine student and a very good person.

"We also want to give some support to others who have cancer," Mrs. Roth offered. "I can't tell you how many letters I receive from people with cancer. They've heard of Joe's strength and want to communicate with us about it.

"After Joe died," she recalled, "we received over 700 pieces of mail. Several of his teammates, coaches and friends have dropped in to see us [at Jerome, Idaho] while passing through the Northwest."

The most touching tribute to Joe, according to Mrs. Roth, was this year's Japan Bowl at the Tokyo Coliseum in January.

The Japanese people have especially fond memories of Roth, for it was at the 1977 Japan Bowl where he made his final playing appearance, completing five of six passes for 75 yards in the West's 21-10 victory.

Five weeks later he was dead, so the Japanese rallied around his courage and dedicated the 1977 contest to Joe, inviting his parents to participate in the moving ceremonies.

"We weren't ready to come to the Joe Roth Memorial Game last year—

we couldn't have handled it," Mrs. Roth admitted, "but we're very glad we decided to go to Japan. It was an experience we'll never forget — we were treated like royalty.

"We sat in the Emperor's box at the stadium and a flock of doves was released while the band was playing a special song for Joe. Then they had a recording of Joe's voice over the loud speakers. It was his speech to the fans when he was introduced before the 1977 game.

"Then there was a moment of silence and it was very beautiful and

"The scholarship is a meaningful and dignified way to honor his memory."

—Dave Maggard

sad," she said. "My son John threw out the first ball to George Freitas of Cal and when the game was over, they awarded the Joe Roth perpetual trophy to Jim Cefalo of Penn State.

"It was difficult to retain my composure," Mrs. Roth noted. "I couldn't help but think that Joe was on that same field the previous year. It was a very emotional moment. There's such a hole there, it will never be filled."

The Japanese also honored Roth

with a special memorial album. The LP record includes a fold-out poster of Joe in his uniform, specially composed music telling his story in song, the traditional Cal fight song and voices of Joe, Ricky Bell and Mike White.

There have been no such tributes in the U.S., for the scheduled publication of Roth's biography hit a snag. Skip Bayless, the former L.A. Times sports-writer and now a columnist with the Dallas Morning News, was commissioned to write the book.

Several hours and 100,000 words later, Bayless submitted his manuscript to Grosset and Dunlap, the New York publishing firm which signed a contract with the Roth family. One of the conditions of writing the book was that Skip relinquish creative control.

That ultimately led to disagreement between the Roths and some of the content. Grosset and Dunlap apparently agreed with the family's point of view and Jim Neyland has been assigned by the publisher to author a new version.

"The first rough draft simply was not acceptable to the publisher or to the family," explained Tom Roth, Joe's brother and a former Washington State quarterback now residing in Seattle.

"Skip wasn't to blame, but the book was written too soon," Tom offered. "People were too emotional because Joe's death was too fresh an experience. It was difficult to get the proper kind of interviews.

"The new book," said Tom, "will be biographical and it will have a lot

of meat and potatoes. It will be a very true story about a special young man and the impact he had on those around him. Joe had a lot of great qualities. We hope they come out in the book and in the screenplay."

Neyland, a former editor for Hawthorne Books, has among his credits Frank Capra's biography and he also ghosted "Brooks Atkinson's Broad-

Though he was to become one of the greatest quarterbacks in Cal history, Joe was not an overnight success. He didn't start until the third game of the season against San Jose State, but became No. 1 to stay by passing for 206 yards and two TDs in a 27-24 triumph.

One month later, Roth directed the Bears to a 28-14 upset of USC at Me-



Gary Graumann (right) receives the Joe Roth Award of Honor from Father Don Baxter of Newman Hall. Graumann was selected by his teammates to receive the award which is funded by a private donor and given to Newman Hall. The criteria for the selection was based upon the example set by the late Cal quarterback.

way." Neyland also has written plays for Broadway and off-Broadway productions.

The two-hour teleplay is being produced by George LeMaire of Lorimar Productions in Hollywood.

"It's too early to think about casting," said LeMaire. "Our production is independent from the book and we are planning for a late 1979 release by NBC. The only thing we know is that the teleplay will be an up thing, not a down thing."

Watsonville freelancer Peter S. Beagle has been hired by LeMaire to write the teleplay. Beagle's list of novels includes "The Last Unicorn," "Lila and The Werewolf," "The Lady and Her Tiger," "A Fine and Private Place," "Polk of the Air" and "I See by My Outfit."

His screenplays include the animated "Lord of the Rings" and "The Dove." Beagle presently is working on "The Sky is Falling," a TV screenplay about the B-45 which crashed into the Empire State Building in 1945.

Roth, who also was honored with a memorial game staged by Grossmont College, came to Cal from that junior college in 1975 and immediately became a hit with his fellow students because of his friendliness and unassuming nature.

memorial Stadium. The next week, he set a school record with 380 passing yards in a 27-24 victory over Washington. By season's end, he'd passed for 1,880 yards and a record-tying 14 TDs as Cal finished with an 8-3 mark as the Pac-8 co-champion.

The most touching tribute to Joe, according to Mrs. Roth, was this year's Japan Bowl at the Tokyo Coliseum in January.

All-American honors seemed inevitable his senior season, but Joe simply was not the same—nor did he have the support of departed senior standouts like Chuck Muncie and Steve Rivera.

Roth started fast, passing for 379 yards at Georgia, including a record 88-yard TD bomb to Wesley Walker. Then he set another Cal mark with 27 completions at Oklahoma. Those two games, statistically, were his finest hour.

The Golden Bears finished a disappointing 6-5 and their star quarterback was struggling, perhaps beginning to lose his strength as the virulent melanoma attacked his body.

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Roth became No. 1 to stay by passing for 206 yards and two TD's against San Jose State.

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Joe's calmness under pressure and his self-confidence made him a natural leader on and off the field.

The fatal disease was not detected until the conclusion of the season, but Joe Roth wouldn't quit. He underwent chemotherapy treatment and mustered enough energy to show up for East-West Shrine Game practice. He didn't play as the cancer caused severe back cramps.

But Joe accepted an invitation to play at Honolulu's Hula Bowl the following week and got into the game a few days after confirming his affliction. Then came the Japan Bowl before Joe headed home for more chemotherapy.

Roth started fast, passing for 379 yards at Georgia, including a record 88-yard TD bomb to Wesley Walker.

"He was amazing on that trip," recalled present Cal head coach Roger Theder. "He was in pain, but acted like nothing was the matter. Joe just didn't want people feeling sorry for him. He wanted to be treated like everyone else."

But Joe Roth wasn't like everyone else. He exemplified courage under adversity, clinging to his ebbing life



Joe's crafty ball-handling as well as his passing helped lead the Bears to an 8-3 record in 1975.

with faith and dignity. That's why he'll be remembered long after the final clatter of shoulder pads this afternoon.

Joe Roth Memorial Scholarship Fund

Many Bear Backers and other friends of Men's Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of California have asked through this past year what they may do to help perpetuate the name of Joe Roth. In his brief time with us, Joe came to serve as a wonderful symbol of sportsmanship, courage and

JOE ROTH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Enclosed is my contribution to the Joe Roth Memorial Scholarship Fund. My check in the amount of \$_____ is enclosed. (Please make payable to "Regents, U.C.", with notation "Joe Roth Fund" on your check.)

Mail to: Joe Roth Fund
61 Harmon Gym
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720



Joe Roth, 1955-1977.



Gary Graumann, senior quarterback, 1977 winner of the Joe Roth Memorial Award.

worthwhile human endeavor. Many loved him, miss him and wish to do what they can to keep the spirit of Joe Roth living forever.

The Joe Roth Memorial Scholarship Fund was created last year to help achieve this objective, the income from the fund to be used for athletic scholarships. The recipient of the Joe Roth Memorial Award is selected annually on the basis of scholarship, leadership, character and athletic skills.