The economist John Kenneth Galbraith first saw UC Berkeley's International House in July of 1933, when he was 22 years old, at the end of a long trip to California from his home in Guelph, Canada. The evening sun lit up the building's tan façade; Galbraith thought it a place of "unimaginable splendor." The intellectual fare was splendid too. As Galbraith recalled years later, he found at Berkeley's I-House "an intensity of discussion" beyond anything he encountered in all the rest of his long career.

I-House was 11 months old then, having welcomed its first residents in August 1930. It was inspired by a New Yorker named Harry Edmonds (1883–1979). One day in 1909, Edmonds said a simple "good morning" to a Chinese student at Columbia University; the student replied, "I've been in New York three weeks, and you are the first person who has spoken to me." Edmonds, moved by this experience, began hosting suppers for foreign students with his wife, Florence, bringing together people from many countries, including the U.S., to try to overcome misunderstanding, forge cross-cultural friendships, and promote a more tolerant and peaceful world. The concept reached maturity some years later when it met the generosity of John D. Rockefeller Jr. The first International House was established at Columbia; Berkeley followed. Today there are also houses in Chicago and Paris, along with dozens of sister institutions that emulate the original concept.

**Distinguished Company**

More than 60,000 students of more than 100 nationalities have lived at Berkeley's I-House over the decades,
including seven future Nobel laureates, a future prime minister, 10 future ambassadors (including John Kenneth Galbraith), and dozens of future CEOs. The house is currently celebrating its 75th anniversary while pursuing a $10 million campaign to preserve its facility, fund scholarships, and endow its intercultural programs and technology services. Now in the homestretch of the drive, the house seeks to raise an additional $1.6 million this year in order to secure a $500,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation and achieve its goal.

A Global Experience

One of the campaign leaders, Arun Sarin, CEO of the telecommunications giant Vodafone, lived at International House in the 1970s; he and his wife, Rummi, whom he met at the house in 1975, have pledged $250,000 to the drive. Sarin recalls his time at the house fondly. "I would have breakfast with somebody from Israel and lunch with somebody from Latin America and dinner with somebody from Nebraska," he says. "That experience was hugely beneficial to my development." In all, some 800 couples have kindled marriages based on I-House meetings, according to a house spokeswoman.

In its long history, Berkeley's International House has employed just three executive directors, which suggests something of the devotion engendered by the place. Joe Lurie, who has held the job since 1988, sums up what the institution is all about, saying, "Dismantling prejudice requires time and close contact. Things happen in a moment — that moment nourishes other moments — and a gathering of moments, over time, nourishes an enlargement of the human spirit."