

Carl Adolph Kroch

Cornell '35

Oxford Cup Roll N° 010

Versatile as his achievements and eclectic in his tastes, Carl Kroch is a long way from being just the bookseller on whose acumen his fame is based.

One of this nation's foremost dealers in fine books, he could have earned an Oxford Cup merely as a host to booklovers, and the booklovers you'll find in his stores will have come from all over the world. With bookstores named Kroch's or Kroch's & Brentano's since Cornell graduation, from a Lake Shore Drive address and a Wabash location in Chicago, he also manages interests as a partner in the Cincinnati Reds Baseball Team, as president of the Booksellers Catalogue Service, Inc., and as a member of the boards of directors of Northwestern Memorial Hospital, the Illinois Humane Society, Western-Southern Life Insurance Company and the USO. He is a presidential councillor of Cornell.

Born in Chicago June 21, 1914, he joined Kroch's Bookstores, Inc., founded by his father, in 1935 and became its president in 1949. He added presidency of Brentano's Bookstores, Inc., in 1950 and from 1954 until 1986 was president and a director of the combined Kroch's & Brentano's, inc., Chicago. He then was chairman and CEO 1986-93 and became chairman emeritus in 1994. Along the way, the establishment grew from a fine store in Chicago's Loop to sumptuous branches across the United States.

William Harrison Fetridge, *Northwestern* '29, in an article in the Fall 1980 issue of *The Beta Theta Pi*, termed it a company with 18 stores and more to come. The store at 29 South Wabash was called the world's largest bookstore, stocking 90,000 titles. It had been three stores when he assumed responsibility for expansion in 1935. It was listed for 30 outlets by 1987, a year after he committed one million dollars to endow the position of University Librarian at Cornell. And in 1992, Cornell opened the Carl A. Kroch Library in honor of its benefactor. The three-story, 97,000-square-foot repository has room for 1.3 million volumes.

Brother Kroch had turned down a buyout offer because of the reshuffling and layoffs which he felt would befall his loyal staff. To prevent takeovers, he and his wife Jeanette, who owned all of the Kroch's and Brentano's stock, sold half of it to a stock plan owned by the employees. The other half was scheduled to be sold to the plan over the next five years. He remained as chairman and trustee of the stock fund but relinquished day-to-day control to a long-time associate, William J. McCarthy. Also in 1986 he was recognized as "The Hero of the Book" by The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the first bookseller so honored. Previous honorees included Ray Eames, Richard Rodgers, Margaret Mead, Archibald MacLeish, Charles A. Lindbergh and Alfred A. Knopf.

He is author of *American Booksellers and Publishers: A Personal Perspective*, published 1981. He became a Naval Reserve lieutenant in World War II as an engineering officer aboard the destroyer *Osterhaus* for 23 months in the South Pacific. His memberships include the American Booksellers Association, the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, the Better Business Bureau of Chicago and the Wine and Food Society.

Robert T. Howard, DePauw '37, Historian