

John Sherman Cooper

Centre '22, Yale '23

Oxford Cup Roll N° 003

Athlete, Senator, Ambassador and diplomat, John Cooper received his Oxford Cup from his longtime friend in Congressional circles, John J. Rhodes, *Kansas State '38*, then President of the Fraternity, at the 146th General Convention.

The Beta magazine's account describes the recipient as "the dynamic, personable Kentuckian (who) was one of the best-known men in government and made the type of impact that will keep people talking of him for decades to come."

Cooper spent only his freshman year at Centre. However, that saw him earn a varsity football letter among underclassmen who would gain notoriety in the 1921 season with a 6-0 victory over Harvard. And it brought initiation into Beta Theta Pi with a chapter roll number between two teammates who would become famous on that team: *Bo McMillin* and *Ben Cregar*. Cooper, however, transferred to Yale, where he switched to basketball and twice captained that team . . . and was voted *most popular* and *most likely to succeed*.

After attending Harvard law school, he began law practice, spent a term in the state legislature and eight years as a county judge, ran for the Republican nomination for governor and in 1942 enlisted as an Army private. In Patton's 3rd Army in Europe, he advanced to captain, won a Bronze Star and after V-E Day was a military government officer in Bavaria. Then, while still in Germany, he won election to a circuit judgeship in Kentucky. He was elected Senator from Kentucky in 1946 and was later elected to fill two other unexpired Senate terms.

Named a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly, he became a representative of the United States in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Next, he was Ambassador-at-large to the NATO Conference on mutual defense. By 1950, *Newsweek* had called him "the ablest Republican in the Senate: and *TIME* in a cover story praised his national and international leadership. He was named Ambassador to India and Nepal in 1955.

He returned to serve in the Senate until 1960. Then he was sent to Russia on a secret assignment to talk with Kremlin leaders; his conclusions there became factors in President John F. Kennedy's foreign policy. In 1965 he was named advisor to the United States Delegation to the Treaty Signing Conference in Manila establishing the Asian Development Bank. In 1969 the Cooper-Church bill was said to have brought the Vietnam conflict into clearer focus and aided our military withdrawal from Vietnam. After a long time with the Washington law firm of Covington and Burling, he was named in 1974 by President Gerald Ford to be the first U.S. Ambassador to East Germany.

In recognition of his work on behalf of rural electrification in Kentucky as a Senator, the East Kentucky RECC has been named the John Sherman Cooper Power Plant. He died February 21, 1991, in Washington, D.C.

Robert T. Howard, DePauw '37, Historian