

William A. Cook

Northwestern '49

Oxford Cup Roll No. 067

William A. Cook, *Northwestern '53*: Billionaire, inventor, tour bus driver. His interests run the gamut — producing a Broadway musical, owning a British professional basketball team and driving John Cougar Mellencamp's tour bus — but one thing is for certain: the medical device industry would not be the same today without him.

Brother Cook graduated from Northwestern University and was an Army surgical technician. Later, he created a cardiovascular catheter with a \$1,500 blowtorch, soldering iron and plastic tubing.

Shortly after leaving MPL Inc. in 1962 — a company Brother Cook co-founded with Brian E. Baldwin, *Northwestern '54* — he formed the Cook Group Inc. The principal factory of this new enterprise was originally located in the spare bedroom of his apartment. Cook's first products were wire guides, needles and catheters. Today, those products are just a few of the more than 50,000 that his companies manufacture worldwide.

It didn't take long for Brother Cook to spread the business out to medicine, overseas medical product manufacturing and distribution, real estate, retail management and other industries. He focused on making the company a leader in the production of catheters, wire guides, introducer needles and sheaths, stents and stent grafts, embolization coils, intraluminal filters and other minimally invasive devices.

Although Cook Group has offices all over the world, its headquarters remain in Bloomington, Indiana, where 60 percent of the company's total workforce is located. Brother Cook sought out the southern Indiana town — population 69,291 — for its quality of life, strong schools and skilled labor pool. His ties to the small, Midwestern town run deep. Despite his overwhelming financial success, Cook and his wife Gayle still live in the three-bedroom house they purchased in 1967.

Brother Cook has renovated two hotels (sites of two of Beta Theta Pi's General Conventions in 1976 and 1982) and built a \$250 million, 80,000-square-foot nautical-theme casino in French Lick, Indiana.