

# Stephen D. Bechtel, Sr.

## *California '23*

### Oxford Cup Roll N° 006

A name with world-wide recognition in engineering and construction was added to the Beta Oxford Cup roster with the presentation to Stephen D. Bechtel, Sr., *California '23*, by President John J. Rhodes, *Kansas State '38*, on April 28, 1987, before some 100 Bay Area alumni at the San Francisco Olympic Club.

During the 40 years he was president, CEO and chairman of Bechtel Group, it expanded into seven operating companies and experienced tremendous expansion in scope of projects as well as geographically. In the 1930s it built the Hoover Dam and the seven-mile San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. In World War II, it modified hundreds of aircraft, built 500 ships and a pipeline through the sub-Arctic and was a joint venturer with the Pacific Naval Air Base Contractors in expanding airports and marine terminals in 28 Pacific islands. Since then Bechtel Corp. has grown continually, both alone and in joint ventures.

Its international projects have included pipelines, terminals and oil refineries in the Middle East, Europe, North Africa, the South Pacific and Canada. Comparatively recent undertakings have including the building of Jubail, an entirely new industrial city for 275,000 people in Saudi Arabia; a synthetic fuel project in New Zealand converting natural gas to gasoline; a 286-mile pipeline across the Andes in Colombia; two international airports in Saudi Arabia and a power plant in Egypt; decontamination of the Three Mile Island Unit 2 reactor; the Deepwater Cogeneration project in Texas and the 3,810 megawatt Palo Verde nuclear generating station in Arizona.

Bechtel Group, Inc., headquartered in San Francisco, at this time had three Betas at the helm. Stephen D. Bechtel, Sr., *California '23*, son of Founder Warren A. Bechtel; top executive responsibilities are in the hands of Chairman Stephen D. Bechtel, Jr., *Colorado '47*, and President Alden P. Yates, *Stanford '51*. Other Beta Bechtels include the late Kenneth K. Bechtel, *California '22*, and the late Warren A. Bechtel, Jr., *California '23*, Steven's brothers.

Bechtel began as a modest construction company in 1898. While still in his teens, Stephen served in France with the 20th Engineers of the American Expeditionary Force in World War I. After graduation, he joined the family business and made vice president in 1925, president after the death of his father in 1935, chairman in 1960 and senior director upon retirement in 1965.

The firm is one of the largest of all privately owned corporate groups. President Ronald Reagan chose two Bechtel men for his cabinet: George Schultz as Secretary of State and Caspar Weinberger as Secretary of Defense.

Stephen Bechtel was placed in *Fortune's* Hall of Fame for Business Leadership. The American Society of Civil Engineers included him in its Top Ten Construction Men of the Past Half-Century, and the American Academy of Achievement named him for its Golden Plate Award. He died March 14, 1989, in his home town, Oakland, California. He was 88.

*Robert T. Howard, DePauw '37, Historian*