

Richard E. (Dick) Heckert

Miami '44

Oxford Cup Roll No. 053

As CEO of DuPont in the late-1980s, Richard E. Heckert, *Miami '44*, involved the company in fast-growing businesses like electronics and life sciences while safeguarding more traditional chemical markets. He joined the company in 1949 as a research chemist in DuPont's experimental laboratories and was involved heavily in cellophane research and development of Mylar polyester film.

Heckert climbed the managerial ranks through the chemical, film and plastics departments and took over the fabrics and finishes department in 1969. Four years later, he was appointed to the Executive Committee and sought to remedy the sluggish corporate performance caused by increasing competition and rising energy and raw material costs.

After becoming CEO in 1986, Heckert adopted a strategy of investing resources in areas where the company excelled, retreating from weak sectors and moving into more promising ones. He reorganized DuPont's electronics, imaging and medical products ventures and consolidated its automotive products operations. He also stepped up the company's attention to marketing, instituting an annual corporate marketing excellence award. Heckert retired from DuPont in 1989.

Heckert's ties to Miami University and Oxford, Ohio, are strong. His father was a distinguished professor in Miami's School of Education from 1910 to 1924 and served as the first director of the William Holmes McGuffey Laboratory School.

Majoring in chemistry, Brother Heckert held memberships in Phi Beta Sigma, Sigma Pi Sigma, Omicron Delta Kappa and Phi Beta Kappa. He was initiated into Beta Theta Pi's Alpha chapter on October 16, 1942, serving as president during a portion of the 1943-44 academic year.

After graduation, Heckert served in the Army as a technician with a special engineering detachment at the Oak Ridge atomic energy facility. Heckert married the former Barbara Kennedy in 1945. He holds master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees from the University of Illinois.

— *Thomas C. Olver, Central Michigan '98, editor, The Beta Theta Pi*