

# Dr. Y. C. James Yen

## Yale '18

### Oxford Cup Roll N° 007

Respected worldwide as a leading humanitarian and educator, Dr. Yu-Chuen James Yen received the Oxford Cup at Beta's 148th General Convention at the Grove Park Inn, Asheville, N.C., on August 20, 1987. He had become known for having set in motion forces which made possible the education of more than 60 million Chinese, bringing functional literacy to the common man for the first time.

Asked by the National War Work Council of the YMCA to go to France upon graduation from Yale to assist with the thousands of coolies in the Chinese Labor Corps recruited by the Allies in World War I, he began his literacy aid which turned out to be a "crusade" affecting millions.

*Jimmy* Yen founded the Chinese Mass Education Movement in 1923. He worked with the government to bring about primary health care to the villages and started an unprecedented program of "village scholars." This program brought the most modern techniques of agriculture and animal husbandry to the hinterlands by educating a chosen few and then having them educate the masses.

To carry this work to the world, he founded the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction in 1960. His unique practical training assisted the people of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Philippines.

President Reagan in 1987 awarded him the Eisenhower Medallion of People to People International, recognizing his efforts toward world peace. A distinguished body of scholars and scientists, asked to pick "the ten greatest revolutionaries of our time" to receive Copernican Citations in 1943 marking the 400th anniversary of the death of Copernicus, listed him along with Albert Einstein, Henry Ford, Orville Wright, Harvey Firestone and Thomas Edison. A 1987 Presidential End Hunger Award for lifetime achievement cited him for "developing and disseminating a sustained, integrated program to overcome the root causes of hunger and poverty in the Third World.

He was imaginative and aggressive in tapping some of his Beta contacts for help in his crusade. Among these were Stanley S. Kresge, *Michigan* '24; Charles P. Taft, *Yale* '18, and Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, *Whitman* '20. He told the Convention audience how such men helped him draft IRR by-laws, raised funds for IRR and served on its board at his request.

Jimmy Yen died of pneumonia in New York City on January 17, 1990, at age 96.

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