

Orphaned 'egghead' makes good . . .
 Alumni Cliff Trice and his wife Virginia
 are very popular in Houston

James A. Clark wrote the following article for The Houston Post, and called the article—Titled Texans

CITIZENS OF HOUSTON, especially taxpayers, owe something of a special and direct debt of gratitude to Cliff W. Trice.

Twice the City of Houston has offered property for oil lease. On each occasion the only bidder was the Trice Production Company. And both times oil was found under the property to enrich the city's coffers.

A handsome, friendly and enthusiastic man, Trice lives in Longview, where his company maintains its headquarters. He is only 39 years old, married to the former Virginia Stowe, whom he met at the University of Oklahoma, and has three children.

Clifford W. Trice was born in Ryan, Okla., in 1919. His father died before Cliff was born and his mother died six years afterward. Between the time of his mother's death and the time he entered the University of Oklahoma, he made his home with nine different families. His last home



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was with the family of Dave Phillips, superintendent of schools in Waurika, Okla. Phillips was interested because young Cliff had shown signs of being a good football player.

And the signs were right. For four years Cliff Trice was on the Waurika high school football team, the last two as an all-state guard.

Washed out in football at the University of Oklahoma because he was too small, Trice, a straight-A type of student in high school, decided on a career other than football.

He entered the school for petroleum engineering and also took up petroleum geology. When he was graduated from Oklahoma in 1941, it was with the highest average in the engineering school's history. Even to this day his scholastic record has not been excelled.

Trice worked his summers in the oil fields as a roustabout. He was also learning more about the business he intended to enter. But no one would ever have sus-

pected that he would become an oil operator. He was the egghead or longhair type and had about as much of the aggressiveness necessary to a wildcatter as you might find in a border village at siesta time.

Then came World War II. Trice was picked off quickly by the War Department to serve as an aide to an important general in ordnance. It was in this job that he had to develop something opposite to his introverted character. And he did.

Whereas before the war Trice worried about holding a job, he came out with the determination to build a major oil company. He went to work in 1947 for Stanolind Oil and Gas Company (now Pan American Production Company) as a reservoir engineer. In 1950 his unusual ability was recognized by H. L. Hunt of Dallas, and Trice became chief engineer for the most successful independent oil operator in the world.

Sensing that his ambition to build his own major oil company would never be realized unless he got into something on his

own, Trice was receptive to a promotion made by Houston financier David C. Bintliff in 1951 when they formed the Trans-Texas Drilling Company with Glenn Neilson. Later Neilson and Trice bought out the Bintliff interest in the company.

In 1955 Trice sold his interest to Neilson and went out on his own to form the Trice Production Company.

He still has a major company idea and went to New York in search of \$1.3 million in financing. His first stop was the Chase National Bank. There he asked a friend if he knew some people who might be interested in Texas and Louisiana oil prospects. The name of Kenneth Perry was suggested. Perry is vice-president of Johnson and Johnson, the pharmaceutical firm. Trice went to see Perry and found a welcome mat with Perry on one end and Bob Johnson, head of the firm, on the other.

That experience led to a meeting with Bill and Arthur Dana, executives in the Wall Street brokerage firm of Burton, Dana and Company. The next step was Jose-

phine and Allen MacIntosh of Hartford, members of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company family. Then the door opened to the DuPont family. Finally Arthur Netherington, senior partner in Goodbody and Company, was included.

When all of these rounds had been made successfully, Trice had his company organized and financed. His participants owned 35 per cent, his employees owned 14 per cent. That's how the Trice Production Company is set up today. The company was capitalized for \$452,000 and in the last three years alone has grossed more than \$24 million.

Since the organization of the company

on January 1, 1955, Trice has drilled 362 wells. Of that number 201 have been producers, including 16 dual or triple producers (wells producing from more than one reservoir simultaneously), and 151 have been dry holes. This average, which includes a large number of rank wildcats and other types of exploratory wells, is exceptionally good. Furthermore, the company has participated in 42 wells owned by others, and 23 of those are producers.

So far Trice has found oil cheaper than most operators. His average per-barrel cost for finding and producing oil is \$1.08. For his company, his investors, and his royalty and landowners he has found the

equivalent of 27 million barrels of oil. Today the firm is participating in something like 7,000 barrels of daily production even under present reduced allowables and pipeline proration.

When the city decided to ask for bids for its garbage dump property, Trice was the only bidder. This was so surprising that the city fathers almost recalled the bid. Trice had offsetting production, and Dan McCauley, his local manager (and old classmate from Oklahoma University), be-

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THE SOONER MAGAZINE
sentimentally brings you
a new feature . . .

GOLDEN DAYS

From the Roy E. Heffner Collection

IN 1936 a girl with a beautiful smile went to a mixer at O. U. Her smile, expressing everything wonderful about being young and at college, was a smile that is not easy to forget. The fact that her smile would have been forgotten except for the whim of a photographer is one of those bitter-sweet collegiate ironies which sustains alumni clubs, and transforms successful businessmen into 'little lambs' gone astray once they find themselves in the company of three other successful alumni (basso, tenori, and tenori secondo, preferably).

However, the girl's smile *was* captured (see opposite page). Her photographer, a 'campus character' who appeared at nearly all O. U. functions with his ubiquitous camera strapped on the back of his bicycle, had set up the familiar tripod, had ducked his head under the camera's old-fashioned black cape, and had taken what was later to be part of the 30,000 prints and 50,000 negatives which are prized today in the Bizzell Library as the Roy E. Heffner Collection—one of the most complete and unique records ever made of college life.

Roy E. Heffner seemingly had a much more auspicious future ahead of him, when he graduated from O. U. in 1919, than that of campus photographer and campus character: he had degrees in mathematics and electrical engineering, and had graduated at the top of his class; he received a master's in engineering from Cornell and was accepted on its faculty to teach electrical engineering and physics; and in 1922 he be-

came the head of the physics and electrical engineering departments at John Stetson University in Florida.

Then, around 1924, Heffner had an epileptic seizure. Sensitive over the occasional attacks that had threatened his future, Heffner resigned from his position.

He began a tutoring service at O. U.; and his ability and kindness (he had been a Sunday school teacher since he was 14) quickly won him respect and affection, first from engineering students, and later—as he began taking pictures—from all the students.

Heffner noted, in an autobiographical sketch which is included in the Collection, that he bought his first camera, a Kodak, in 1921 and that in 1922 "six different publications at Stetson University" had used his pictures. It is impossible to estimate how many publications at O. U. used his pictures, or how many athletes, dancers, paraders, queens, professors, picnickers, pranksters, and just plain students, first posed and then raced to his vending cart in front of the Administration building to see if the friendly man in the thick-rimmed glasses had posted their pictures. Impossible to estimate—yet easy to venture that nearly everyone who attended O. U. from 1927 to 1947 found himself, one way or another, in a Heffner photograph.

Dieting and the discovery of new medicines ended Heffner's exile from his original future. Satisfied that he could once more teach without the embarrassment of a stroke, Heffner accepted a position in

O. U.'s physics department. In the same year he married Edna C. Spencer, a teacher of the deaf. Then in 1948 he and his wife left to teach at the Haile Selassie I secondary school in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as members of the Point Four program.

It was a typical decision. Heffner wrote in his autobiography of his aim in life: "To be of greatest possible service to mankind; ready to give time and energy to worthy causes. The greatest thing in life is **LIVING** (not merely existing). Character of the man and not his environment determines his success."

If a tragic reversal such as Heffner's can be thought of as fortunate, it was most fortunate for O. U. and for the people who met and loved him at Norman. He came at a time when O. U. at last had more-or-less normal facilities (e.g., a football stadium) and was entering into the period in which F. Scott Fitzgerald, Mickey Rooney, Sigmund Romberg, Rudy Vallee, and Robert Donat would immortalize college life's "golden days."

The graphic immortality Roy E. Heffner brought to the camaraderie and bravado of thousands of Sooners is a record we intend to draw from and post on the Roll Call page. Since many of the pictures are untitled and undated we would be most interested in hearing about the people in the pictures and in passing that information on to classmates who might have lost contact with other 'little lambs' if it had not been for a wonderful man named Roy E. Heffner.

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lieved the production possibilities were there.

So Trice made what he considered a reasonable bid. He bid \$25,200. His vice-president and general counsel, former Houstonian James L. Pardue, thought of the \$200 because they figured the value of the lease, under the unusually heavy royalty arrangements, was \$25,000. The \$200 was to beat any competitor who figured as closely.

Trice bid with his eyes wide open. At the time he and his aides believed there was a good possibility for three good wells on the dump. Each, they estimated, would cost about \$70,000. They further figured that each would produce about 120,000 barrels on a 10-acre spacing pattern. Since the city was to get a quarter royalty and the land-owners an eighth, Trice was left with five-eighths. If all other figures were right, there was no bad luck, and the wells produced, it was estimated that for an investment of \$235,000 the company could expect a return of about \$500,000 when maintenance and other costs were deducted. The hope, too, was for deeper production which did not develop.

This would have worked out fine, too, except that the wells looked so good that Trice kept on drilling until he had hit 11 producers and one dry hole on the 320 acres. Since then, however, all except the three original wells have gone to salt water. The original three seem good for as long as it will take to pay them out. The hope is that they might produce long enough to also pay for what amounts to nine dry holes.

When the city offered to lease the prison farm, Trice made a bid simply out of good will. The relations between the city and the company had been so good that Trice wanted to show his appreciation. It was decided that \$25 an acre was a fair price, so that was the bid. Again Trice was the only bidder. So McCauley went to work and studied the geology (this had not been done before), and a well was drilled with only faint hope of success. Again Trice hit oil in a most unexpected place and all to the benefit of the taxpayers of Houston.

Lately the company has had trouble selling its oil because of the market situation, but arrangements were made recently to supply a special market at a price below that posted for the type of crude.

Cliff Trice is an unusual oil-man in many

respects. He does everything on credit. He says his participants, the bankers, and the supply houses make his kind of existence possible.

He frankly admits to being an inflationist.

"I believe people want to work and that the government owes no one a job," he says.

"We usually have 3 or 4 million people unemployed. That's normal. Temporarily there are more than 5 million out of work today," he says. "These people want new homes, new products, better cars, and all of the abundance our productive power can provide them with. The only way they can get those things is on terms—credit. That's how I operate and that is my philosophy.

"I believe that to accomplish our goal we will have to produce to meet the demand. I see nothing wrong with the value of the dollar going down as it has so long as people can continue to buy more of the things they want," he said. "The true value in this country will always be in real property. There is only so much real estate. As the population increases there will be less for each individual, so real values are bound to keep increasing."

For his own business Trice believes in diversification. He recently participated in the building of a modern motel in Shreveport. He is helping to build others. And he has other diversification ideas.

One thing about Trice is that he never seems to lose an employee. The reason is simple. Ask any Trice employee. They all get to participate one way or another in the company's success. This policy doesn't apply just to executives. It goes right down to the secretaries, clerks and men in the field.

"I want all of our people to be so secure they can work for the Trice Production Company without a worry," he says. "Then I believe we will get better, more efficient, performance.

Trice knows every individual who works for him. Occasionally there is a company party in Longview, Texas, at the exclusive Cherokee Club in Longview. On such occasions the Trice offices in Houston, LaFayette, Oklahoma City, Midland, Wichita Falls and Longview virtually close shop.

The parties serve the purpose of having everyone from everywhere know everyone else in the Trice organization. It knits the family together.

Trice is one of the country's leading Baptist laymen. All of his money-earning life he has tithed.

The Trice children are Alice Ann, 4, Judy Gail, 11, and Clifford Davis, 2½.

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ern)—all of Oklahoma City; Bryan Waid (Cameron), Lawton; Mrs. Zemula Williams (Langston), Sapulpa; Mrs. W. W. Starr (Northwestern), Alva; Maurine S. Smith (Northeastern State), Tahlequah; M. W. England and Pete Williams (Panhandle A&M), Goodwell and Boise City, respectively; Casper Duffer (East Central), Ada; Foreman Carlile (Connors State), Vian; L. M. Torbert (Northeastern Oklahoma A&M), Miami; W. W. Bess (Oklahoma Military Academy), Claremore; James A. Burnham (Southwestern), Canton; John Ringwald (Murray State), Tishomingo; Jones D. Reeves (Eastern Oklahoma A&M), Wilburton; and Jack Williams (Northern Oklahoma Jr. College), Tonkawa.

Never before have so many people been so well informed or so willing to work for the development of higher education in Oklahoma.

When the legislature meets in January, it must decide whether or not Oklahoma is going to offer adequate college training or resort to a program of mediocrity.

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