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 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 oilfields as a roustabout. He was also learning more about the business he intended to enter. But no one would ever have suspected 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 Triceworried 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-
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 became 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 Selsele 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.
HEADLINERS
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believed the production possibilities were there.

So Trice made what he considered a reason-
able 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 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 pro-
duced, it was estimated that for an invest-
ment of $235,000 the company could expect
a return of about $500,000 when mainte-
nance 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 ben-
et of the taxpayers of Houston.

Lately the company has had trouble sell-
ing 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 inflation-
ist.

"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 de-
mand. 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 Shreve-
port. 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 paid to work at another place in another
company's success. This policy doesn't ap-
ply 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 occa-
sions the Trice offices in Houston, LaFay-
ette, 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 Bap-
tist laymen. All of his money-earning life
he has tithed.

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

SOONER SCENE
Continued from Page 2

ern)—all of Oklahoma City; Bryan Waid
(Cameron), Lawton; Mrs. Zemula Wil-
liams (Langston), Sapulpa; Mrs. W. W.
Starr (Northwestern), Alva; Maurine S.
Smith (Northeastern State), Tahlequah;
M. W. England and Pete Williams (Pan-
handle A&M), Goodwell and Boise City,
respectively; Casper Duffer (East Central),
Ada; Foreman Carlile (Connors State),
Vian; L. M. Torbert (Northeastern Okla-
ha A&M), Miami; W. W. Hess (Okla-
oma Military Academy), Claremore;
James A. Burnham (Southwestern), Can-
ton; John Ringwald (Murray State), Tish-
omingo; Jones D. Reeves (Eastern Okla-
ha A&M), Wilburton; and Jack Wil-
liams (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 Okla-
oma.

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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