

JUDGE ROBERT A. HEFNER:

A BIOGRAPHY

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PREFACE

It took the combined efforts of many individuals to mold the history of Oklahoma, one of whom was Robert A. Hefner. This man was the epitome of an Horatio Alger story, for through his own hard work and driving determination, he became a success. Born the son of poor Texan sodbusters, he schooled himself at night by the light of a fire and eventually earned a law degree at the University of Texas. He moved to Ardmore, Oklahoma, just after statehood and there built a fine law practice. Hefner became a wealthy man as a result of his speculations in land, but his true significance to the history of the Sooner State came not from his business enterprises but from his activities as a public servant. During his life he was the mayor of Ardmore, an associate justice of the state supreme court, and the mayor of Oklahoma City. In each of these offices, Hefner served with distinction and thus contributed to the growth and development of his community and his state. Hefner has never been studied in detail by historians, an oversight this study attempts to correct.

While contemplating the debts of gratitude I owe with regard to this work, many people come to mind. My parents, Donald and Mary Lou Trafzer, not only encouraged me in my

educational endeavors through the years, but they proofread this present study as well. A special acknowledgment is extended to my mother- and father-in-law, Nelda and Harold John Sollars, for their valuable criticism of the chapters dealing with Ardmore. Thanks also to Mary H. Trafzer, my grandmother, who also proofread the manuscript. While researching this volume, I lived in Oklahoma City with Ray McCullar as well as Paul and Judy Lambert. To these people I owe a great deal of gratitude. Appreciation is extended also to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., Evelyn Hefner Combs, William Hefner, and the Hefner Company for making the personal and business correspondence of their father available to me. I am particularly in debt to Evelyn Culver, secretary for the Hefner Company, who provided me with some interesting insights into the life of Judge Hefner. Moreover, I am indebted to my sister, Sally Trafzer and to my secretary, Jill Wise, for typing portions of this study.

One man in particular has helped me through every stage of my development in the history profession and has given generously of his time, knowledge, and experience to aid me in the drafting of this volume--Odie B. Faulk. His wisdom, foresight, and criticism, helped me through many difficult portions of this study. Professors Michael M. Smith, H. James Henderson, LeRoy H. Fischer, and Clifford Rich, all contributed to the completion of this draft through their indispensable encouragement, advice, and commentary. These professors, as well as Professor Faulk, gave prompt and

careful attention to my work, for which I am most grateful. These gentlemen naturally share in whatever value this volume may have to the understanding of Judge Hefner, but the responsibility for factual error or misinterpretation is my own.

My appreciation also is extended to the Oklahoma Heritage Association for funding this research project. The scholarship awarded to me by the Oklahoma Heritage Association enabled me to devote all my efforts into the researching and writing of this work.

Sufficient space is not available to express my deep appreciation to Anna Marie, my wife. More than any other person, Anna contributed to the completion of this project. Not only did she type and edit the work, but she offered gentle criticism and kind encouragement during those trying times when this volume was aborning.

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CHAPTER I

A HORATIO ALGER STORY

He was an old gentleman with white hair and a firm face. He looked very distinguished as he sat at his desk in deep concentration. Perhaps he was thinking about the days of his youth, remembering that he had "achieved distinction by actions, not words."¹ This man was a rugged individualist who believed that people's lives are "in their own hands and it is just what they, themselves, make out of it." As long as people had good health, he felt that "they can make their lives a great success." Moreover, his thought was that "the opportunity to be successful presents itself to everyone some time during their lifetime." Hence, "90% of success is hard work." Certainly this was the case of Robert Alexander Hefner.²

Hefner was born on February 7, 1874, in "a little town four miles north of Lone Oak in Hunt County, Texas." This community was named Hefner Chapel after his parents, William Lafayette and Sarah Jane Masters Hefner. His family had a great tradition because of its relationship to such historical figures as Charlemagne, King Edward I, and Joan of Arc. The Hefner family was established in America by Henry Hafner, who sailed from Rotterdam, Holland, in 1749 on the

ship Patience. The Hefner family settled in Virginsville, Pennsylvania, but ancestors of Robert Hefner later moved to Ashville, North Carolina.³

The Hefner family produced several soldiers who served in American armies. Johann Heinrich Heffner, the great-great grandfather of Robert, served in Jacob Baldy's Company during the American Revolution. Robert's great grandfather, Daniel Hefner, served in the War of 1812 as a private in the First Regiment of the Pennsylvania Militia. Alexander Joyce Hefner, Robert's grandfather, moved from North Carolina to Alabama where he and his wife, Syrene, had a son they named William Lafayette. About 1855, Alexander and his family moved to Hunt County, Texas. The Civil War found Alexander and William Hefner on the side of the Confederacy. Both served as officers in the Eleventh Texas Cavalry.⁴

Robert was born not long after the War Between the States. His parents were poor sodbusters who lived in "a 2-room house with a lean-to on a 60-acre farm." In 1884 Robert's father traded his farm "for about 30 head of cattle." The Hefner family pulled up their roots and by covered wagon traveled to Stephens County in West Texas. They found the move rough because they had to drive the cattle and, although the distance was a mere 185 miles, it took them thirty days to make the trip. Robert recalled that the family migrated "the way Abraham and Lot travelled some 3500 years ago when they had their little misunderstanding and divided their herds and each went his own way."

They settled in "a place known as Peach Creek . . . located about three miles south of the small town of Eliasville."⁵

After their arrival in Stephens County, Robert's father "bought 160 acres of unimproved land, on credit, for about \$3.00 per acre." Robert helped his folks build their family dwelling by "digging a dugout about 12 feet by 15 feet." They "dug a distance of about five feet below the surface of the earth and set up split logs around the wall in picket fashion." The wall "extended some three feet above the surface" and a dirt roof was added. The entire family of seven "slept, cooked and ate in the one room." This humble home served as the dwelling place for the family for more than two years before they built a picket house. Robert helped erect the "split post oak logs" which served as the wall of the new house. He helped set the logs "in the ground about 18 inches" and made sure that they "extended above the ground . . . 8 feet." After they built a wooden roof and a limestone floor, the Hefners added a kitchen and a dining room in the form of a lean-to.⁶

Unlike many boys who could romp and play during their childhood, Robert had to grub "trees out by the roots with the old fashion grubbing hoe and ax." During that first year "about 50 acres of land was cleared, the trees were burned, and . . . the ground broken. Their land was fenced out of the trees and brush" that they had grubbed out.⁷ Once the land had been cleared, Robert helped plow the tough Texas soil. Often he did this "with a single oxen

for the purpose of breaking out the middle of the rows of cotton or corn."⁸ His days were spent "doing most anything around on the farm like picking cotton." The Hefners grew grain, vegetables, corn, and cotton, and they "raised enough . . . to take care of our food necessities."⁹

Only one crop was produced for cash purposes--cotton. After the cotton was picked, Robert helped haul it "18 miles to Breckenridge" where it was "sold to Ward Bros. in the seed for about 2½¢ or 3¢ a pound." When the Hefners could afford it, they would take their cotton to Eliasville and have it ginned. Robert later recalled that it was difficult to market the ginned cotton because "it was necessary to haul it to Ranger which was a station on the Texas & Pacific Railroad." Although this town was only 35 miles away, "it usually took about three days to make the trip to Ranger." Ginned cotton sold for 5¢ to 7¢ per pound, and bales usually weighed about 500 pounds. Since the Hefners "never raised more than eight or ten bales a year . . . the maximum money received yearly was about \$250 or \$300." This money was not saved but was used instead to purchase clothing, tools, and living necessities. What little money they had left was donated to the church.¹⁰

During his boyhood Robert Hefner experienced many hardships which shaped his thinking and cemented his ideas and values. The most important incident that formed his philosophy of life occurred during the great drought of 1887. Robert was a boy of thirteen, but his adventure at

this time stood "out like a Horatio Alger story." All farmers in West Texas, including William Hefner, were hurt by the severe drought. Therefore, Hefner's father took three thousand sheep for twelve months on a commission basis. For his efforts William was to receive "one-third of all the lambs raised during the year and one-fourth of all the wool that was sheared from the sheep."¹¹ It became Robert's "duty to herd these sheep for the entire year."¹² West Texas was a wilderness in the 1880s and was infested with "wolves, coyotes, and other varmits." During the first two or three months Robert tended the sheep around the ranch "until the range was eaten out around home." Then he moved them on to other pastures on the frontier.¹³

While camping on the range, Robert lived in a tent and cooked on an open fire. His days were filled with work as he and his sheepdog watched and protected the herd. His nights, however, were spent in devoted reading, for his only companions were "books." No one stayed with Robert; the only person he saw that year was a member of his family who brought him supplies. Robert grazed his sheep along "practically all of the territory lying along the Breckenridge and Graham road."¹⁴ He never forgot that on one occasion he "was sitting against a big tree . . . and a big wild buck came running through the bush and ran right up almost against me." Robert recalled that "when it discovered me it put on the brakes and went the other direction." Nonetheless, he was never certain "whether it was

the deer or myself that was scared the worse!"¹⁵ There were other dangers on the range; one morning the young sheperd was suddenly awakened "by the bleating of the sheep being attacked by a wild animal." He found that a mountain lion had eaten one of the sheep before he could help it. Lewis Johnson, Hefner's brother-in-law, once stated that Robert's experiences while he lived on the frontier "explains some of the traits of character so firmly fixed in that youth and so tenaciously held to." During his long vigil he "acquired the habit of independent thinking and self reliance." It also "fixed the ambition for an education" because "self study was not difficult to one with such a long protracted experience of isolation." Johnson was correct in his assertions, for Hefner's character, like that of others who grew up on the frontier, was shaped by his experiences and his environment.¹⁶

By the time Hefner reached the age of twenty-one, he "had only been in school nine months altogether, just a month here and there as I could be spared off of the farm." Hefner later recalled that he had "never attended a grade school nor a high school." Instead he "studied at home in the evenings after I had worked all day."¹⁷ Yet, he had a great interest in reading the Bible and the books which his cousin, Maude Gilliland, gave him. Maude's father was financially able to send her to school, and when she finished reading a book she would send it to Robert. David Copperfield, The Honorable Peter Sterling, and John

Hallifax, Gentleman were among his favorite books. But his treasured tome was Barnes' History of the United States. His love for this book stemmed from the fact "that the biographies at the bottom of the pages . . . fired his imagination."¹⁸ His ambition was so stirred as he planned his life that he decided to become a lawyer. Some may have said that this was a foolish thought, but to Robert the idea was a challenge. He firmly "believed that a boy's life was in his own hands and it was whatever he made out of it." He decided that he would "live such a life and accomplish such things that his community would be proud of him."¹⁹

Robert felt that "any one who has good ordinary ability can succeed because if he has ordinary ability he can develop it into wonderful power by applying the necessary energy." Hence Hefner argued that "energy is the thing that makes a man or a woman stand out as great in life's work."²⁰ However, it took more than mere ability and energy to overcome the obstacles that stood in his way. It also took strong faith; this he derived from his belief in Christianity. While he was herding his father's sheep, he read the entire Bible, and "it was through this reading that I was convinced that I should accept the Christian religion." He joined the Missionary Baptist Church in 1887 and "tried to live by Romans 8:28, which tells that 'all things work together for the good to them that love God'."²¹ Hefner maintained that "taking Christ into your life and

getting an education is a great life." And he felt that "boys and girls who start out in life with a high purpose can be largely what they want to be, if they go out . . . to minister unto others." Robert lived by the slogan that it was "impossible to be a strong man morally without overriding obstacles and disappointments that must necessarily come to every man." Such beliefs remained with Hefner his entire life and were reflected in his personal, political, and judicial dealings with others.²²

Obstacles and disappointments were a part of Robert's early life, but they prevented him from attending college for only a short time. His father "died almost the day I was twenty-one years old, but just before his death the old home place was sold to pay debts." Since the farm did not sell for a sufficient amount to pay the debts, Robert agreed "to work on the farm all of the following year, for which I was to receive \$15.00 a month to be credited on the indebtedness."²³ While he worked out the family debt he continued to pursue his studies. Much of this study was directed at passing the entrance exams which would allow him to go to college. He studied on his own at night by the light of a kerosene lamp his father had given him, and his work proved profitable. At the age of twenty-one--with only nine months of schooling behind him--Hefner was able to pass the entrance examination to North Texas Baptist College.²⁴

In 1896 Robert left home for Jacksboro, Texas, taking

with him "an old trunk with a few clothes in it and a few books."²⁵ The only money he had in his pocket was a "shining quarter and a slick dime."²⁶ Even before he reached Jacksboro he had made arrangements to work for his board. He lived in the home of D. H. Foreman "who was a well-to-do man and had a farm two or three miles from Jacksboro."²⁷ Foreman had a great number of chores around his farm which he had Robert perform in return for his room and board. In order to earn sufficient funds to pay for his books, supplies, and tuition, Robert worked on another farm not far from Jacksboro. The owner of this farm, a Mr. Jenkins, gave him "the dead post oak trees on his farm on condition that I would grub them out by their roots."²⁸ Hefner was an enterprising young man; instead of discarding this wood, he sold it to citizens of Jacksboro for firewood. In this fashion he was able to pay for his schooling, "keep out a nickel each Sunday for Church," and have "a little spending money" left over.²⁹

Robert's days at North Texas Baptist College were filled with pleasures as well as hardships. Like most students he took time to play baseball for recreation. One fine sunny day he was playing outfield when "one of those Graham boys knocked a long fly ball to center field." Robert ran back as far as he could and "caught it with one hand." This play by Hefner "retired the side for Graham and won the game for Jacksboro." For his effort the team "ran on the field and carried me into the home plate on

their shoulders." Another favorite sport among the male students was looking at pretty girls. Robert engaged in this activity, and after a few weeks of college he chose the girl he was going to marry. He decided he would "marry Eva Johnson" although she "did not know very much about it at the time."³⁰

Hefner first met Miss Eva when she "came in one day in her recitation in geometry." As she was at the "blackboard demonstrating a geometrical proposition," she looked straight at Robert and gave him a gentle smile. Robert was attracted to this young lady whose red hair matched the flame for achievement that burned within her. As far as Hefner was concerned, "it was love at first sight . . . but it wasn't with her."³¹ As time passed, however, Eva "showed no tendency to disagree" with his love, and they soon were courting steadily.³² The couple fell in love and decided to be wed in the future. However, both agreed to wait until they had finished their education. At a dinner one evening a group of students were telling of their plans for the future. Each student revealed his plan; some were determined to become doctors or lawyers or teachers. When it came Eva's turn, "she said she didn't plan a professional life but she hoped to marry and settle down and have a family." When it came Robert's turn, he said that he planned "to help Eva with her plans, if I can, and I think I can."³³ Eva already had received two important degrees from North Texas Baptist College, including her Bachelor of

Arts and her Master of Language. She would go on to Baylor University and earn a Bachelor of Philosophy degree there.³⁴

Misfortune came to North Texas Baptist College in 1898; the doors to the campus were closed when the college went bankrupt. Robert wanted to attend the University of Texas to study law, but he was without sufficient funds. Therefore he decided to go to work and earn enough money to begin his education in Austin.³⁵ Hefner "took the state examination for a teacher's certificate, and was granted a life certificate by the State Superintendent of Education of Texas."³⁶ He then taught high school in Jacksboro during the spring semester of 1899. That summer he "went back to my good old home County, Stephens, and taught school during the summer." Hefner struggled "to fire his students with ambition to accomplish something." He was a good teacher and he enjoyed teaching. Nonetheless, he wanted to be a lawyer, so with the money he saved he departed for the University of Texas that fall.³⁷

Robert was twenty-five when he left for the University of Texas. At that time he "had seen a train, but could declare "I had never ridden on one." He was a bit embarrassed by this fact and was determined that no one should ever know. When it was time to begin his trip to Austin, he rode an old mule to Breckenridge, where he conferred with W.P. Sebastian, the State Representative to the Texas Legislature. Together they decided on a route which would take Hefner from Ranger, Texas, to Fort Worth and then south

to the capital city. Sebastian told this ambitious student to take the Katy from Fort Worth to Austin. The proud young man would not admit to Sebastian that he "didn't know a thing on earth about what the 'Katy' was." So young Hefner went to Ranger and purchased a train ticket to Fort Worth. He got aboard the iron monster and bought a newspaper which he began to read. A few miles north of Ranger there was a high tressel over a deep canyon, and when the train began to cross the bridge, Hefner "stuck my head out of the window to see what the trouble was." Just then "I went past the upright steel frame bridge, and . . . it looked . . . as if the steel frame would hit me squarely in the face." The frame did not hit him, but the wind firmly forced him backwards on the seat. Robert was extremely embarrassed but "quick as a flash I grabbed my paper and went to reading." When the train pulled into Fort Worth, Robert "looked down Main Street from the north entrance to the Texas Pacific depot" and saw the first street car he had ever seen. That evening, as he walked through the streets of the big city, he saw "an abundance of electric lights . . . all over the city." These were "wonderful sights for a twenty-five year old" who had never seen such things before.³⁸

Hefner was able to board the train in Fort Worth "without mishap or disgrace to himself and make the journey to Austin in subdued dignity."³⁹ When he arrived at the University of Texas, he immediately enrolled and became the second man from the "south Prarie" section of Texas to

enter that institution. Not long after his arrival at the University, Hefner began an association with a few young men who, like himself, had very little money. Together they rented a house on 14th Street and hired a cook. Each week one of the fellows would purchase the groceries and another would wait on the table. Thereby he held his expenses to approximately ten dollars per month. Hefner recalled that the "organization was formed purely for economy," but the Capital Club had its social aspects. For example, at the dinner table one fall evening, Hefner announced to the group that "Mrs. Kirby, the Dean of the Women's Department, asked me to . . . bring a young lady to a reception for the new students." When the others learned this they teased Robert about "going out into society."⁴⁰

At this time Hefner admitted to knowing "nothing of the ways of society" for he was "as clean as a virtuous young lady." The members of Capital Club were full of information and advice as to squiring the young maiden. Robert rode a street car for the first time when he went to meet his date. He was very conservative in his actions with her, but nervously did manage to hold her arm. As the couple walked to the street car, Robert told a cute joke. The young lady laughed and "pressed my arm against her body." Robert retold this story to the members of the Capital Club the next evening, and when W. W. Woodson asked what he did then, Robert reported that he just "kept telling

jokes."⁴¹

The young man, who was known for "wearing a swallow tailed coat," made a good record for himself at the University of Texas.⁴² He not only was an excellent student, but also served as president of the Rusk Literary Club and president of the Oratorical Association, and was Senior Representative to the Executive Committee of the Student Body.⁴³ In 1899, while enrolled in his academic program, Hefner took a history class from Eugene C. Barker. Robert enjoyed his work in the academic program, but as he wanted to be a lawyer he transferred to the department of law in 1900.⁴⁴ He studied under such prominent professors as Judge Robert S. Gould, Governor O. M. Roberts, and Judge W. S. Simkins. Judge Gould took a great interest in Hefner and extended to him "the courtesy of his law library." This is where Robert read most of his cases.⁴⁵

Hefner's favorite teacher was Judge Simkins, who accidentally helped to originate the mascot of the law school at the University of Texas. Robert was taking a course in contracts from Simkins when one morning the judge "spat out something about peregrinus."⁴⁶ A peregrinus was a Roman magistrate who acted "something like a justice of the peace." One student, not at his intellectual best after the professor had finished his explanation of a peregrinus, asked the judge, "What is a peregrinus?" The professor "merely grunted in disgust." After the class ended, one of the students remained in the classroom and drew a picture of

his conception of a peregrinus. The object had the tail and body of a fox, while its head was that of a bird with a long sharp beak. The peregrinus wore brogans (heavy work shoes that reached the ankles) on its front paws and boxing gloves on its rear paws. This creation became the mascot of the law school during the intramural football games.⁴⁷

Hefner's hard work in his studies was rewarded when he graduated near the top of his law class in 1902.⁴⁸ During his education in the Department of Law, he had maintained an average grade of 93½% and was graduated with an LL.B. degree.⁴⁹ His graduation did not end his academic career, however, for the Board of Regents and the Department of Law elected him the recipient of a graduation fellowship. His job as "quizz-master" entitled him to develop "the subjects under consideration by quizzing the members of the class." In addition he met "the classes at regular hours" and acted as an assistant professor. For his work he was paid a salary of five hundred dollars for the school year of 1902-1903.⁵⁰ His years at Austin as a student and teacher broadened his ideas of life. Robert later said that it was there at the University of Texas that he received a "true insight to what Americanism really is."⁵¹

In 1903 Hefner left the university and bought a ticket to Beaumont, Texas. He knew only "one man in that entire country" but decided nevertheless that this "was the place to go."⁵² He left for Beaumont hoping to strike it rich in the boom town that had grown as a result of the discovery of

black gold. At the age of thirty he arrived in Beaumont during the excitement of the great Spindletop Oil Field discovery. Hefner struggled as a young lawyer; it took him several years to save a sufficient amount of money to purchase a home for his college sweetheart. During all his years at the University of Texas, he had never forgotten the girl with the flaming red hair from Jacksboro. Robert still felt that Eva Johnson was the girl for him, so he sent for her.⁵³ Eva had continued her education at Baylor University where she graduated as the valedictorian of the class of 1905.⁵⁴ Neither Robert nor Eva had forgotten the promise which they had made to each other while students at North Texas Baptist College. On the warm summer evening of July 18, 1906, they joined hands in marriage. After the wedding Hefner returned to Beaumont with his bride to resume his law practice.⁵⁵

When Robert had first moved to Beaumont, he "formed a partnership with Oswald S. Parker under the firm name of Parker and Hefner." Not long afterwards the firm became the division attorneys for the Southern Pacific Railroad. There were fifteen counties in their division, and they had several local lawyers working under their supervision. The work became so demanding for the two men that they had to add another partner; they chose William E. Organ and the firm was renamed Parker, Hefner and Organ.⁵⁶ Hefner had a promising position and was now making a comfortable living for himself. Indeed, he had taken his life into his own

hands and had molded a career for himself. He had struggled as a boy to help his family survive on a rugged frontier, and he had sacrificed a year of his life to pay for his family's debts. Yet he never lost sight of his dream of becoming a lawyer, so he went to school and worked his way through. Now he was a successful young attorney in Beaumont, but when greater opportunities presented themselves he did not hesitate to take advantage of them.

NOTES

¹Golf and Country Club (Oklahoma City) Rambler, October, 1959, pp. 13, 25.

²Hefner to Tom Cunningham, August 22, 1966, Robert A. Hefner Collection, Hefner-Frates Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited as HC.

³Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, Oklahoma Living Legends, Oklahoma Christian College, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited as OCC; Family Bible of William L. Hefner, HC.

⁴See the geneology file on the Hefner family found in the Hefner Collection. William L. Hefner was born in 1839 in the state of Alabama.

⁵Robert A. Hefner, Typed Ms., "Early Life of Robert A. Hefner," May 11, 1955, HC. Hereafter cited as Hefner, Typed Ms.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Hefner to Tom Cunningham, May 7, 1958, HC.

⁹Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

¹⁰Ibid.; Hefner, Typed Ms.

¹¹Lewis Johnson to Louis Currie, June 20, 1934, HC.

¹²Ibid.; Hefner, Typed Ms.

¹³Fox Wood to Hefner, February 6, 1965, HC.

¹⁴Breckenridge Democrat, May 20, 1915.

¹⁵Hefner to Tom Cunningham, June 8, 1957, HC.

¹⁶Lewis Johnson to Louise Currie, May 20, 1934, HC.

¹⁷Hefner to Henry C. Rogers, February 18, 1943, HC.

¹⁸Rex Harlow, "A Plan Plus Determination Equals Success," Harlow's Weekly (January 4, 1930), p. 4.

¹⁹Hefner, Typed Ms.

²⁰"Little Stories of Success," Grit Magazine (March 20, 1932), p. 3.

²¹Hefner to Norman Vincent Peale, May 7, 1961, HC.

²²Hefner, Typed Ms.

²³Ibid.; "The Hefner Story: Ninety-five Percent of Success is Hard Work," First National Bank News (May, 1949). pp. 8-9.

²⁴Hefner, Typed Ms.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Lewis Johnson to Louise Currie, May 20, 1934, HC; Daily Ardmoreite, April 29, 1923.

²⁷Hefner, Typed Ms.

²⁸Rex Harlow, "Judge Hefner Making Sacrifice in Offering Services to Oklahoma City," Harlow's Weekly (March 18, 1939).

²⁹Hefner to Ida Huckaby, June 30, 1942, HC.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Hefner, Typed Ms.

³²Rex Harlow, "A Plan Plus Determination Equals Success," Harlow's Weekly (January 4, 1930), p. 4.

³³Robert A. Hefner, Jr., to Odie B. Faulk, May 30, 1973, HC. Enclosed in this letter was a typed manuscript by Robert A. Hefner, Jr., regarding the life of his father.

³⁴Hefner, Typed Ms.

³⁵Hefner to Norman Vincent Peale, March 22, 1961, HC.

³⁶Ibid.; Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

³⁷Hefner, Typed Ms.

³⁸Ibid.

39Rex Harlow, "A Plan Plus Determination Equal Success," Harlow's Weekly (March 4, 1930), p. 4.

40Hefner to Thomas P. Gore, June 14, 1933, HC; Hefner Typed Ms.

41Hefner, Typed Ms.

42Miley B. Wesson to Hefner, January 21, 1960, HC.

43Hefner to Pat Neff, January 3, 1929, HC; Ardmore Statesman, September 9, 1911.

44Hefner to Eugene C. Barker, June 26, 1950, HC.

45Hefner made several notations beside a photograph of his law professors. The photograph and the notations can be found in the Hefner Collection. Also see, Hefner to J. C. Thompson, October 28, 1959, HC.

46See the yearbook for 1922 of the University of Texas entitled The Alcalde.

47Oklahoma City Times, February 28, 1940.

48See Hefner's Diploma from the University of Texas in the Hefner Collection dated June 11, 1902.

49Golf and Country Club (Oklahoma City) Rambler, October, 1959, pp. 13, 25.

50Chickasha Daily Express, October 18, 1926; Hefner to Volney M. Brown, February 19, 1960, HC.

51Breckenridge Democrat, May 20, 1915.

52Hefner, Typed Ms.; The Graham Leader, May 24, 1923.

53Hefner to Eva Johnson, June 15, 1905, HC.

54Eva Hefner was a well-educated woman. Not only did she hold several degrees, but she was an instructor at North Texas Baptist College and Baylor University.

55Jacksboro Gazette, July 29, 1906.

56Beaumont Daily, March 3, 1905.

CHAPTER II

DAYS IN ARDMORE

By 1906 Robert A. Hefner had a successful law practice in Beaumont, Texas. Instead of staying there, however, he decided to move to Ardmore, Oklahoma, where he "saw the wonderful opportunities in this country." He was drawn to Oklahoma by important litigation which involved getting the names of several Mississippi-Choctaw Indians on the rolls and procuring their allotments for them. Once there he became more than a successful lawyer and businessman; he also became a devoted public servant. He was city attorney of Ardmore for two years (1911-1913) and president of the board of education for ten years (1910-1920). In addition, Hefner was mayor of the city between 1920 and 1926, and he was president of the chamber of commerce for one year. He also was active in the Rotary Club and attempted to help the youth of Ardmore through this organization. And in addition to all these activities, Robert raised a close family with his wife Eva.¹

Hefner's move to Oklahoma came appropriately from a case involving Indians. While he was still practicing law in Beaumont, a man named McPhail happened into Robert's office and explained that inasmuch as he and his wife were

part Choctaw, he felt that they had a legal right to be placed on the tribal rolls. McPhail stated that there were three other families, besides his, who were Indians and that all of these families would like to employ Hefner as their attorney. Robert candidly admitted that he had no experience in such matters, for most of his work had been in matters dealing with the Southern Pacific Railroad. Nonetheless, he agreed to "look into their cases." After some preliminary research, he felt that their case had merit and decided to get them on the rolls. Like in all of his cases, Hefner worked vigorously with the four families, which included the McPhails, the Dees, the Marxes, and the Wiltshires, to represent them properly. For his services the Indians agreed to pay the firm of Parker and Hefner one half of the money which he recovered for them and one third of the land that was allotted. Hefner later learned that legally "they could not make a conveyance of their land that would be valid." Therefore he agreed to pursue the case for one half the money received by the Indians. If Robert lost the case he would receive nothing for his efforts. It was a gamble, but he accepted the risk.²

Hefner undertook an extensive investigation into the laws governing the Five Civilized Tribes and was successful in getting all thirty-six of the Indians on the rolls. The four Indian families moved to Stephens and Carter Counties in southern Oklahoma where they made their home. Unfortunately for Hefner, the Indians "never paid us a penny."

Robert had spent many hours preparing his case and thus was entitled to a just compensation. In fact, he had such difficulties that he was forced to go to Ardmore to take care of this matter. Hefner negotiated with the Indians for several months, but much to his dismay, "they would not live up to their contracts with us."³ Hence, this business transaction did not make Hefner rich, but it did expose him to the beautiful rolling plains of Ardmore, Oklahoma. And because of his association with the people of Oklahoma and the advantages that he saw in this territory, he decided to move his family to Ardmore. Members of the Hefner family, which now included Robert A. Hefner, Jr., became "citizens of Ardmore on January 1, 1908."⁴

Robert Hefner was a good husband and a fine father, and he wove the Hefner family into a close unit. Understanding Hefner's relationship with his children makes it easier to comprehend his personal philosophy of children, work, religion, education, individualism, and success. Robert and Eva had three children including Robert, Jr., Evelyn, and William. Hefner raised each with the same wisdom that had guided his life. He worked hard to be a good father and commented often that he wanted to "succeed in business and be a success as a father, but if I must fail in one, let me fail in business and be a success as a father."⁵ He strongly felt that his life was his children and that his "chief ambition now is to live for my family."⁶ Hefner had suffered hardship and struggle in his youth and

was determined that his "children should have a better opportunity than I had."⁷ Yet he did not allow his children to live sheltered lives, for he warned them that "along the highway of life there will be many steep grades to climb." He tried to prepare each of them to meet these steep grades and "to go right on over them almost as if they were not there."⁸

In order to overcome all barriers he told his children to have strong personalities and to maintain a "fighting spirit."⁹ Like an athletic coach he urged them to "hit the line hard" and "to carry the ball over the goal line."¹⁰ He knew that "they would occasionally fumble the ball," but he knew also that this "would not mean that they lost the game." Robert encouraged his children "to pick up the ball with that same old fight spirit and carry it on down across the goal line." Moreover he coached them then to "kick the ball squarely between the goal posts" and "to make ready for the kick off." Robert believed that people must "carve out their own destiny" because their lives were in their own hands. Hence his children were drilled that they "must not die on third base" but that they "must make it to home plate" even if it meant "sliding into the . . . plate."¹¹

Despite his athletic metaphors, Hefner believed that a good education was the best foundation a person could have in order to be a success. He told his children that "it is a lot better to star in your studies than in athletics" because it was "the mind that really counts." Hefner felt

that "the world is run on brains."¹² Robert Hefner, Jr., and William Hefner went to Culver Military Academy and both did well in their schooling. While they were in school and later in college, their father continually wrote them letters of encouragement and advice about how they should tackle their education. This was no less true with Evelyn Hefner, for her father was very interested in her education. He sent the three to school "in order that you may be better prepared to accomplish great things."¹³ He considered education an investment in his children, and he considered "it the best investment I can make with my money."¹⁴ And when they reached school, Hefner kept in constant contact with them, firmly suggesting that they "had best settle down to real hard and consistent work."¹⁵

Like all children there were times when they disappointed their father and times when their father scolded them for their wrong doings. Nevertheless, Robert said to his children that he was "always for you 100%."¹⁶ And the children believed that he "was the greatest inspiration" that a youngster could have, because he was "the one great motivating power" in their lives.¹⁷ Hefner asked his children consciously to attempt to improve themselves each day because "their success means more to me than anything."¹⁸ Robert argued that "honesty, good ordinary ability, or good horse sense, and energy will carry you to success in any undertaking all through your life." His children did not disappoint their father, for all of them received a univer-

sity degree and Robert, Jr., received his doctor of juris degree.¹⁹

Religion played an important part in the thinking of Robert Hefner. He was influenced greatly by the belief that "through hard work all things are possible," and he lived by this belief. He felt that no man should "neglect your duty to God for that is your first duty." Hefner felt that "so long as you are true to Him no danger can come to you, but if you should begin to neglect this all important duty, you will begin to slip and danger lurks ahead." Hence, in order to do well in life and to remain safe from harm, one "first must be true to Him." Religion was a driving force behind Hefner. It gave him faith and determination in his work, and it guided his relationship with others. Robert always felt that he had been blessed because his family and his businesses had prospered so well.²⁰

Robert was an active member of the Broadway Baptist Church in Ardmore, Oklahoma. He even preached occasionally when the minister was not available. On one cold Sunday evening in November he gave a sermon on the relationship of father and son. In this sermon he drew upon his own experiences as a father to tell his congregation that such a relationship should be open and forthright.²¹ Because of Hefner's dedicated efforts on behalf of the Baptist Church and the Young Men's Bible Class, his church elected to name one of the buildings Hefner Hall, after him. Robert felt that his purpose in life was "to minister unto others"

because "Jesus taught us that he who would be greatest shall be servant of all." Hefner's greatness was a result of his educational and political service to others.²²

Hefner's idea of service was "the good you can do; the happiness you can bring to others."²³ When Robert first moved to Ardmore, he served a term as city attorney between 1911 and 1913. This gave him "the closest possible contact with municipal affairs."²⁴ His contact with the people of Ardmore and the surrounding area led him to believe that "one should not run from the responsibilities that may be placed upon him." In political affairs Hefner was "thoroughly committed to the doctrine that a public official should always consider service above self."²⁵ During those days in Ardmore, he once told Robert S. Kerr, later to be Governor and United States Senator from Oklahoma that "the service a man performs is just the rent he pays for the space he occupies."²⁶ In order to be wealthy, according to Hefner, a man had to be rich in service, because "money without service is like . . . a tinkling symbol."²⁷ Hefner became a rich man as a result of his service to the people of Ardmore. Not only did he serve the city as a municipal attorney, he also served Ardmore by advancing the educational welfare of the young people.²⁸

Robert believed "that the one most important service which an individual can render his community is as a member of the Board of Education of his local schools."²⁹ In 1911 Hefner ran for and was elected as the president of the

board of education for Ardmore's public schools. He was elected to this post in April, 1911 and served in that capacity until December, 1918. He served for this lengthy period so that he could "make available to the youth of the community the greatest opportunities possible." Hefner was known for his generosity to students, often giving financial and moral support to students whom he felt wanted an education.³⁰

When he first was elected president of the school board, "a young man by the name of Orba Greenwood came to my office and wanted a place where he could work his way through school." The boy wanted to do odd jobs to earn his way through school so "Mrs. Hefner and I took him in and gave him board and lodging for the work he did." Like many of the students Hefner helped, Orba became a success; he graduated from Selvedge Business College and "became an outstanding accountant and later was the tax man for the Erschel Slick Oil Company."³¹ Robert was interested in the students, and every chance he got he would "urge the students to do their best." Regardless of what the students participated in, Hefner was an active supporter of the local school children. Even during football games "when the Ardmore gridsters battle with the 'pig pushers' from other schools," Hefner was "up and down the lines cheering the boys on."³²

During those years as president of the school board, Ardmore saw great growth in the city's educational system

and facilities. Hefner and the Board of Education worked diligently and "placed sanitary drinking fountains as well as installed a modern heating system in every school building." Hefner personally saw to it that courses were added to the curriculum as domestic sciences, manual training, business, and teacher training. Moreover, he had "added a great deal of equipment to the department of science, the library, etc." Hefner's most important contribution to the people of Ardmore while he was president of the board of education, however, was to oversee and to direct the passage of a bond issue of one hundred thousand dollars. This money was used to build Ardmore High School. Hefner watched over the construction of the high school each day until the building was completed.³³

Politics is a word that usually carries a negative meaning. It is sometimes thought that politicians are cunning manipulators who rule in secretive, dirty, and unethical ways. If such is the case, Robert Hefner was no politician, for he always "remained true to the principles of honesty and fairness." It was said years later that "never in his long life has there been one word of scandal attached to the name of Robert Hefner." Hefner's greatest ambition while in public office was "to be honorable and upright in all things."³⁴ Robert was a conservative Democrat, and "a great lover of the common people." He attributed much of his success in politics to the fact that he could get along with most people and because he did his

"job just a little better than the other fellow."³⁵ Hefner often maintained that the best way to deal with people was to realize that "there are three sides to every question: Your side, my side, and the right side." With these ideas about politics, Hefner ran for mayor of Ardmore in 1921.³⁶

Hefner always remembered that it was in Ardmore that he got his start in politics and business. He served Ardmore as mayor for three terms between 1921 and 1927.³⁷ In 1920 Hefner had helped write a charter for the city of Ardmore which provided for a managerial form of government. Under the provisions of this charter, the city elected five commissioners--Hefner thus first was elected as a commissioner. Then the five commissioners met and elected one among themselves to serve as mayor.³⁸ Robert was chosen mayor in this manner on three different occasions. His first term as mayor was a challenge because Hefner had to launch the newly adopted managerial form of government. This made the work of the mayor much easier.³⁹ In fact, his duties as mayor "required but very little of my time," for he principally served "in an advisory capacity."

However, Hefner performed a number of duties as mayor that were ticklish. When he was first chosen mayor, he decided that in order for Ardmore to grow and progress, better cooperation had to be established between the municipal officials and the civic leaders. Hefner called a caucus of the several city employees and the various leaders of the civic clubs of the city. At this meeting the city

manager, the mayor, and the board of commissioners came together "to talk over the plans which might be formulated to lead to the ultimate development of Ardmore." The city officials were in a position at this meeting to discuss how they planned to make Ardmore "into one of the leading communities, financially and morally." Likewise the laymen could express their views. This type of cooperation and openness was to characterize Hefner's years in political office.⁴⁰

The Mayor had other duties that were on the lighter side of political life, including issuing Mother's Day proclamations, making speeches, riding in parades, and supporting the local athletic teams.⁴¹ Of these many duties, Hefner enjoyed the last one most. While on the school board, he was known for pacing up and down the football field of the Ardmore Tigers, rooting his team on to victory. This practice did not end when he resigned from the board, for he continued to do this throughout his terms as mayor. One Friday afternoon in 1923, "the Ardmore lads fought a fierce battle on the Chickasha gridiron." The folks from Chickasha and Ardmore saw the Mayor get out on the field and lead the Ardmore fans in a yell "which he believed better expressed true sportsmanship" than the one the fans were yelling.⁴² The Mayor, Hefner was asked to throw the first ball at the opening game of the season for the Ardmore Boomers. In 1922 at one such game "Hefner was like a kid again when he mounted the mound, wound up a

couple of times and heaved over the first ball."⁴³

Another of his duties as mayor was to make personal appearances at public meetings and talk to the citizens about municipal affairs. One such speech he made at the Broadway First Baptist Church. In November of 1924 he addressed the congregation on the need for a better and closer relationship between parents and their children. His message in this speech was that many of the problems of juvenile delinquency were caused by parents as well as by children. He argued that if the parents raised their children to be responsible citizens, then the children would become good citizens. He also maintained that the children had an obligation to themselves and to their parents to try and be worthy citizens.⁴⁴

Hefner performed his duties well as mayor of Ardmore, and as a result made many accomplishments in the city between 1921 and 1927. Through his progressive leadership, "the General Fund levy, which meets every expense of city government except Interest and Sinking Fund, in 1920 was 8.75 mills--in 1925, 2.43 mills." Under Hefner's direction the city's financial posture changed from a deficit of \$9000.00 in 1919 to a surplus of \$193,000.00. In 1922 bonds were issued in the amount of \$300,000.00 for the construction of the Hickory Creek Reservoir. From this amount the city purchased the lands and water right as well as a sixteen inch gravity line to bring water to the city. During his years in office a great deal of building was accom-

plished. A tourist park, a farm market, and a park in the second ward were constructed. Needed improvements were made at the fair grounds, and a number of additional buildings were established.⁴⁵

The old two-story Carnegie Library was rebuilt and a little park was added to beautify the grounds. A new jail building was purchased; new lands were acquired for the future needs of the Rose Hill Cemetery; a deep sewer line was built to care for the needs of the southwest section of the city; water mains were extended throughout the city for water service and fire protection; and nine miles of pavement were laid. When Hefner took office, he also realized the need for a better and larger police force. Therefore he channeled more money to the police department and increased the number of policemen on the force. The same was true of the fire department, for about \$8000.00 was added to the expense of this department per year. New water pumping units were built at the pump station at the cost of \$13,000.00. Before Hefner took office "the credit of the city was in disrepute" for "bills were unpaid and suits pending." During Robert's terms as mayor, "every obligation was promptly met." By the time Hefner left office, most of the people of Ardmore agreed that "no town of the state ever has had a better chief executive."⁴⁶

Throughout his years in Ardmore, Hefner was interested in the progress and development of the city other than in the political arena.⁴⁷ He was one of several interested

citizens of Ardmore who worked to have a railroad built from Ardmore to Waurika. Hefner urged the construction of this railway so that drilling supplies and oil could be shipped from the Healdton and later the Hewitt Oil Fields. Through the efforts of Jake Hamon of Lawton and John Ringling, of circus fame, a railroad was built which connected with the Rock Island line at Waurika. Hefner was helpful in other ways in the affairs of the city. He was an active member of the Chamber of Commerce in Ardmore and in 1922 was elected president of this progressive organization.⁴⁸ He also was president of the chamber of commerce while he was mayor of the city, and he used both offices to complement each other. Through both offices he worked for better cooperation between city officials and the citizens to make Ardmore a better place to live.⁴⁹

During his presidency of the chamber of commerce, Hefner accomplished many positive things. When he took office, there were no major highways located near Ardmore. By the end of his term the Lee Highway running east and west and the Winnipeg and Gulf Highway running north and south had been completed through Ardmore. New industries came to the city while Mayor Hefner was in office; a creamery, a cold storage plant, and a paint plant were added to the economy of Ardmore during his year's service. When Hefner left office "the finances were in good shape and there was a gradual growth in the deposits." In addition, the Mayor was active in reorganizing the Farm Congress, a branch

organization of the chamber of commerce so that farmers in the area could benefit from the growth of the city.⁵⁰

Hefner always spoke highly of his town, and he promoted it whenever the opportunity arose. On one occasion he went on the radio and gave "the first message ever sent out from Ardmore over the radio." In this message, he told all listeners of "the virtues of Ardmore and Carter County." He told of "its growth and development, the vast extent of the oil fields, and the amount of production" in the area. He nicknamed the city "the home of the derricks" which became "a slogan for advertising and designating Ardmore" for many years.⁵¹ The Mayor also was active in producing promotional pamphlets that emphasized the natural resources and industries of Ardmore. One such pamphlet was written by Hefner, and it colorfully told of Ardmore's oil fields, industries, schools, airport, parks, water supply, population, and government. Literature such as this was designed by the Mayor and the city fathers to entice additional manufacturers as well as laymen to move to the booming town of Ardmore.⁵²

Hefner was active in other organizations besides the chamber of commerce. He was a deacon of the Baptist Church, a trustee of the Baptist Church, president of the Rotary Club, and a member of the Executive Council of the Boy Scouts. He was on the state and local boards of the Young Men's Christian Association. Moreover, he was a member of the National Economic League and the World Alliance for

International Friendship through the Churches. Of all the secular groups to which he belonged, however, he enjoyed the Rotary Club the most. He served a term as president of the club and was active in the planning, organizing, and executing of the Rotary Club Convention held in Ardmore in 1923. The Mayor delivered the welcoming speech to fifteen hundred Rotarians and their wives "in a brief but humprous speech." Robert wisely used all of these organizations to his advantage in order to form a bond between each group so that all could work collectively for a better city. He likewise used such opportunities as the Rotarian Convention to promote the city of Ardmore.⁵³

Between 1909, when he moved to Ardmore, and 1927, when he moved to Oklahoma City, Robert Hefner was an honest public servant. He was devoted to the betterment of his city and served as the city attorney between 1911 and 1913. Hefner wisely realized the benefits of a fine education and vigorously worked as president of the school board to upgrade the quality of education in Ardmore. He was president of the school board from 1911 to 1918, and he accomplished many worthwhile projects during his terms of office. Robert then served the city of Ardmore as mayor and as president of the chamber of commerce. His association with both offices proved to be of great benefit to the people of the city, for much progress and growth was realized during his years in public office.

In addition to all of these things, Hefner raised his

family in Ardmore and consciously attempted to transplant his philosophy of life to his children. Hefner's days in Ardmore were fruitful ones for the rugged individualist from West Texas. He got his start in Ardmore and was grateful to the people of this city. He not only became widely known as a public servant, but also he became respected as a good businessman. Indeed his days in Ardmore made him a wealthy man.

NOTES

¹Hefner, Typed Ms.; Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC. Fozie Rahal, "The Romantic Life of Mayor Robert A. Hefner," Tomorrow, I (July, 1939), pp. 35-36. Many of the letters to and from Hefner written while he was in Ardmore were lost in his move from there to Oklahoma City. For verification of this fact see Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., March 30, 1935, HC.

²Hefner, Memorandum, "In the matter of getting the Mississippi Choctaw Indians on the Indian Rolls and procuring allotments for them." March 30, 1962, HC.

³Ibid.

⁴Hefner, Typed Ms.

⁵Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., November 16, 1924, HC.

⁶Hefner to William McCurdy, November 15, 1928, HC; Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., September 19, 1922, HC.

⁷Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., June 2, 1928, HC.

⁸Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., June 4, 1928, HC.

⁹Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., April 12, 1928, HC.

¹⁰Hefner to William Hefner, November 14, 1923, HC.

¹¹Hefner to William Hefner, January 22, 1933, HC; Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., October 26, 1922, HC.

¹²Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., October 21, 1922, HC.

¹³Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., October 4, 1922, HC.

¹⁴Hefner to Evelyn Hefner, November 1, 1928, HC.

¹⁵Hefner to Evelyn Hefner, April 19, 1932, HC.

¹⁶Hefner to William Hefner, March 16, 1933, HC.

¹⁷Robert A. Hefner, Jr., to Hefner, November 9, 1928,
HC.

¹⁸Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., September 29, 1922,
HC.

¹⁹Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., January 21, 1927,
HC. Robert A. Hefner, Jr., received his bachelor's degree
from Stanford University. He studied law at Harvard Univer-
sity and Oklahoma University, receiving his law degree from
the latter institution. Evelyn Hefner received her bache-
lor's degree from the University of Southern California.
William Hefner received his bachelor's degree from Stanford
University.

²⁰Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., November 20, 1922,
HC; Dallas Morning Press, April 29, 1924.

²¹Daily Ardmoreite, November 22, 1924.

²²Ibid., April 5, 1920.

²³Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., September 27, 1922,
HC.

²⁴Rex Harlow, "Judge Hefner Making Sacrifice in
Offering Services to Oklahoma City," Harlow's Weekly
(March 18, 1939).

²⁵Hefner to Roy Johnson, November 26, 1928, HC.

²⁶Hefner to Robert S. Kerr, December 15, 1948, HC.

²⁷Hefner to L. S. Warren, May 19, 1939, HC. The same
ideas expressed in the text are apparent also in an article
entitled "Bob Believes in Service" which appeared in the
Ardmore Rotary Club's Arch Light on January 17, 1923.

²⁸Daily Ardmoreite, December 19, 1920.

²⁹George D. Hann to Hefner, June 22, 1948, HC.

³⁰George D. Hann to Hefner, April 16, 1958, HC; Daily
Ardmoreite, April 29, 1923. The Directory of Ardmore High
School, found in the administration office of the school in
Ardmore, Oklahoma, shows that Hefner served on the school
board with A. C. Young, G. H. Bruce, C. W. Richards, C. L.
Anderson, J. N. Shinholser, T. L. Smith, C. L. Byrne, and
C. E. Fraley.

³¹Hefner to Oscar Greenwood, August 1, 1962, HC.

³²Daily Ardmoreite, November 28, 1923.

33Ibid., December 23, 1918; Hefner, "Report of the President of the Board of Education, 1912-1918," HC. Also see the yearbook for 1913 of Ardmore High School entitled The Criterion.

34Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., July 11, 1927, HC. The statement was made by an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation who was appointed by the state to investigate charges of corruption levied against some of the justices of the Oklahoma Supreme Court while Hefner was a member of that body.

35Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., March 17, 1928, HC; Hefner to William Hefner, June 23, 1942, HC.

36Board of Commissioners of Ardmore, Oklahoma, Resolution Number 1779, January 25, 1971, HC; Hefner to Thomas P. Gore, July 14, 1933, HC.

37Hefner to Clarence Harris, January 25, 1943, HC.

38Daily Ardmoreite, November 28, 1923.

39Ibid., May 23, 1921; Ibid., June 5, 1921; Ardmore Statesman, June 9, 1921.

40Daily Ardmoreite, June 20, 1921; Hefner, Typed Ms., No Date, HC.

41Daily Ardmoreite, May 11, 1924.

42Ibid., November 28, 1923.

43Ibid., April 19, 1922, Ibid., April 30, 1924.

44Ibid., November 24, 1924.

45Ibid., November 28, 1923; Kirk Dyer to Hefner, August 27, 1926, HC.

46Ibid.

47Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., October 12, 1922, HC.

48Daily Ardmoreite, March 27, 1922.

49Ibid., February 12, 1923.

50Ibid., April 1, 1923.

51Ibid., January 14, 1923.

⁵²Robert A. Hefner and Guy M. Harris, Ardmore Oklahoma
(Ardmore, 1923).

⁵³Daily Ardmoreite, May 7, 1923; Ardmore Daily Press,
March 18, 1923.

CHAPTER III

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

The idea that a person can go from rags to riches has been questioned in recent years by scholars who study the history of the Gilded Age. Too often they argue that such an idea is a myth and that few men can become rich simply by hard work, especially in the twentieth century. Perhaps not all men do become wealthy through their own drive and determination, but that is not to say that no one can become rich through this means. Indeed, some men did work and go from rags to riches. Such was the case of Robert A. Hefner.

He came to Ardmore, Oklahoma, from Beaumont, Texas, and established a law practice in southern Oklahoma after years of struggling. He used all funds not necessary for food and lodging to purchase land which he felt someday would yield "black gold." He leased his lands to oil and gas companies, and he rented his properties to the stalwart farmers of the Sooner State. From these business dealings, Hefner proved himself a smart entrepreneur, eventually becoming a multi-millionaire. But Robert Hefner was more than a businessman, for he never steered far from his duties as a public servant. And when his community needed his services most, he was there to help and guide Ardmore in the

tragic disaster of 1915. Hence Hefner was both a public servant and a businessman.¹

When Hefner was not involved in politics, he worked as an attorney and as a businessman. As a struggling young attorney, he represented many companies that played a significant part in the development and growth of southern Oklahoma. Some of the more important companies which he represented included the Magnolia Petroleum Company, the Gypsy Oil Company, the Carter Oil Company, the Southwestern Petroleum Company, the Gilmer Oil Company, and the Gates Oil Company.² Unfortunately, all of Hefner's personal business legal records regarding his duties as a corporation lawyer with these various companies either were lost in his move to Oklahoma City in 1927 or else were destroyed by water when stored in the basement of the Hefner Home on 14th Street in Oklahoma City.³ Hefner handled the daily business of these many oil companies, for he had specialized in oil and gas leases in college. During those early years of the oil industry, money began to flow through the office of Robert Hefner. At one time this struggling young lawyer paid out \$350,000.00 in interest within sixty days to investors with stock in the oil fields. Robert was excited to see "the greater portion of this money . . . go into the hands of Carter county people."⁴

Robert also served as a court lawyer for the oil companies. On one occasion he argued a case before the state Supreme Court which involved a large acreage of leases. In

this particular case, W. R. Ingram sought "to cancel leases on about 2000 acres of land which he leased to the Crystal Oil Company." Ingram had leased his property at a very low price to the Crystal Oil Company, and, when oil was discovered on the lands adjacent to his land, he tried to cancel his contract. Ingram wanted to lease his land for a higher price once he learned there was oil in the area and went to court in order to break the contract. Hefner represented the Crystal Oil Company and saw to it that Ingram had to abide by his original contract.⁵

As a corporation lawyer, Hefner represented a number of different oil firms on many occasions and dealt in a variety of matters. The year 1916 was very busy for him, as he represented several corporations and entrepreneurs. He represented the Texas Oil Company in trying to secure the "privilege of passing along and across public highways of the county with a pipe line and a telephone line." Hefner effectively represented the Texas Oil Company in this matter and took the petition for this pipe line to the commissioners of Carter County. They granted Hefner and the Texas Oil Company the right to construct the pipe line, and work was begun immediately.⁶

Hefner represented the Gilmer Oil Company and wrote the contract which conveyed three large tanks that held 55,000 barrels of crude oil from the Healdton Oil Fields to R. M. McFarlin of the McMann Oil Company. Robert wrote the contract on this deal and made certain that both parties were

satisfied with his work. The same was true when Hefner handled the lease of sixty acres of land belonging to Paul Smith. He drew the contract which leased Smith's land and to T. F. Maloney so that the latter individual could drill a test well. Like all parties that sunk test wells, both Smith and Maloney hoped for a producing well and a profitable find.⁷ Another large transaction in which Hefner's expertise as a lawyer was used occurred in July of 1919. At that time the Gates Oil Company of Ardmore sold out to Guggenhiems of New York. The Guggenhiems were a major force in the copper business, but began investing their money in oil. They searched the Ardmore area and found that one of the leading attorneys in the city was Robert Hefner. Hefner soon became an attorney for the Guggenhiem Company in order to administer their legal affairs in Oklahoma.⁸

As a lawyer for these various corporations, Hefner not only represented them but also developed a legal innovation which changed the entire perspective of the oil industry. The old English common law provided for mineral deeds that conveyed mineral rights to a buyer, but those minerals were always solid ones. Hefner used this precedent to originate a mineral deed which conveyed the oil and gas rights to a buyer. He wrote this deed "about 1912, or shortly after the opening of the Healdton and Cushing oil fields." The first form used to convey oil and gas rights to a piece of property "was known as the Hefner Form, published at Ardmore."⁹

Under the provisions of the Hefner Form, the purchaser

of the mineral rights could enter the sellers property "at all times for the purpose of mining, drilling and exploring said lands for said minerals and removing the same therefrom." In order for the oil companies to exploit the minerals, they had to have equipment on the land to be drilled. Therefore within the Hefner Form appeared a clause which gave to the buyer "the rights of way, easements, and servitudes for pipe lines, telephone, and telegraph lines for tanks, power houses, stations, gasoline plants and fixtures." This mineral grant was of benefit to the grantee who surrendered only the mineral and not the surface rights to his land; it was of equal benefit to the buyer who might, with luck, discover oil on the property. The Hefner Form was used in oil transactions throughout the United States after 1912, and the deed that Hefner originally wrote became a guideline which is followed by businessmen to this day.¹⁰

Hefner had a business philosophy that usually has been connected with the nineteenth century. Indeed, Hefner was a product of that era, and he reflected those beliefs commonly associated with John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and John P. Morgan. Like these individuals, Hefner felt that "opportunity knocks at the door of every American boy and girl some time during their lifetime." Robert regretted however that "so few of them recognize Mr. Opportunity when he comes by."¹¹ Hefner saw few opportunities that he did not recognize and put to his own advantage. But he always maintained that "there are three things that are necessary

and essential to a successful career in any undertaking." Hefner felt that a person should first be honest in his business endeavors. "No one," he once remarked, "can succeed, nor should they be permitted to succeed if they are not altogether honest in everything." Hence Hefner argued that "any career or character that is built on any principle other than honesty cannot long endure" for "it will fail." The second thing that a person needed to succeed, according to Hefner, was "good average horse sense" and "an average physical body;" as long as he had these, "there is no reason why he should not succeed." And the last requirement for success in all business endeavors was "pep, energy, and the old fight spirit." He believed that "the greater the fight spirit, the greater the success will be." Hefner exemplified all these qualities for he was impeccably honest and extremely energetic. He applied this philosophy to his life and became a success in business.¹²

With dedicated belief in this philosophy of business, Robert Hefner rose from a struggling country lawyer from Beaumont to a respected corporation attorney and businessman in Ardmore.¹³ When Robert first came to Oklahoma in December of 1907, he made "a careful scrutiny of the lands" around Ardmore and decided that there were great "oil prospects in Carter County."¹⁴ He was a hard working individual, but he had little money when he first came to Oklahoma. Nonetheless, from the very beginning of his life in Ardmore "he initiated the practice of investing all funds

not necessary for living purposes in land."¹⁵ Hefner "bought select tracts of land in sections I thought would produce." Hefner admitted that "all of them did not produce but I would say about half of them did."¹⁶

Many of those lands that did produce were in Healdton, Hewitt, and Fox Oil Fields, and although Hefner was never "an oil man, he became rich through oil." Robert made extensive purchases of land in the areas that proved to be rich in oil. He made his money by leasing his land to major oil companies and by collecting the lucrative royalties that these companies paid him for leases. For example, one of the greatest oil fields in southern Oklahoma was the Hewitt Field, and section 22 of this field was known as the Hefner Farm. After the Hewitt Field was discovered, it was reported that "some of the richest producing sands have been drilled into on this farm by the Carter Oil Company."¹⁷ The Hewitt Field, like the other oil fields in the area, was profitable, and by January 1, 1920 it was reported that "his income from Hewitt alone will mount well above \$1,000 a day." Moreover, some people speculated that soon "it would not be unreasonable to believe that his income will double that figure."¹⁸

Hefner's first business as well as his first legal dealing in the Ardmore area came as a result of his association with Oswald S. Parker of Beaumont, Texas. Robert had come to southern Oklahoma in 1907 to settle an agreement with the Choctaw Indians whom he got enrolled on the rolls

of the five civilized tribes. His business relations with Oswald Parker did not end when he withdrew from the law firm of Parker and Hefner; on the contrary, the two attorneys continued their business association for many years. Neither Hefner nor Parker ever received a cent for their dealings with the Choctaws. They even took the families involved to court to receive their earnings but to no avail. In the case entitled Marx et al., v. Hefner, the Supreme Court of the state of Oklahoma held that the Indians could not be forced to pay Parker or Hefner any money for their services.¹⁹

Once this matter was cleared with the court, the Indians proceeded to sell their land. Oscar, Willie, and Fannie Dees, all Choctaw Indians, promptly had guardians appointed for them because they were minors. Then they "sold all of their lands through the Probate Court and ignored Parker and me." Hefner was interested greatly in this land because of the possibility that oil was under it. He had worked a sufficient amount of time around the oil fields of Beaumont to recognize an area that looked as though oil might be deposited there. Robert strongly believed that the lands the Indians held would someday be oil producing areas, and for this reason he wanted to own them. Since he was not given any of these lands as his legal fee, he wanted to purchase some lands from the Choctaws. However, the Indians began their sale of lands through the Probate Court and "they didn't even tell us

anything about it." A. P. Blackwell of Durant, Oklahoma, "bought most of this land at Guardian's Sale."²⁰

Once Hefner learned that this land had been bought by Blackwell, he went to Durant and negotiated with him. Eventually Hefner "bought a portion of it from him and had to pay cash for it, and more than he paid for it at the Guardian's Sale." Hefner's investment in this land proved to be a good one, for oil was soon after discovered on this property. Willie Dees and the guardians of the other Choctaws who had sold their land, "brought suit against Blackwell, Eva, and me, and all others who owned any of the land, to recover it, claiming that the probate proceedings were all void." It was later brought out that since the Indians were minors, Blackwell "persuaded the allottees not to comply with their contracts with us Hefner and Parker." Without Hefner's knowledge, Blackwell "had a guardian appointed for Oscar Dees, Fannie Dees and Willie W. Dees, and had the land sold at public sale." After all this had taken place, Hefner had bought some of these lands from Blackwell, and therefore had nothing to do with the skuldugery of Blackwell. The Indians lost the case, but decided to file another suit against Hefner in 1922. In April of that year, J. T. Fotte, Guardian of Willie W. Dees, employed Porter Newman, Joe W. Bailey, and Joe W. Bailey, Jr., and R. L. Disney to recover his lands that had been sold at the guardian sale.²¹ In this case as in the first, the plaintiff lost the case when Judge F. E. Kennamer*accepted the

motion by the defendents to dismiss the case.²²

Although Hefner and Parker did not hold the Dees property jointly, they did own the Wiltshire land together. Of the four families that these two attorneys had originally represented in order to get the Choctaws on the rolls, only one family complied with its agreement, "Mrs. Wiltshire who deeded to Parker and me the land in Carter County." Hefner and Parker not only owned the Wiltshire land together, but they also owned other tracts of land in Stephens and Carter Counties. In 1919 Parker and Hefner made an agreement regarding their joint holdings. Hefner "took all of the property that had been conveyed . . . in Carter County." And Robert also "was to have all the surface rights to all the land of the allotments in Stephens County." He agreed "to pay all the taxes, and to look after the property at my own expence." Parker "was to have an undivided one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) interest in all of the minerals." Much of the land that they held in common once had belonged to Choctaw Indians who sold their land to Hefner and Parker. Sometimes the ownership of these lands became the object of legal dispute, and at times Hefner was drawn into the courts to settle the matter. Robert "wished many times that I had never heard of those Mississippi Choctaws" because of the time, expense, and trouble they had brought him. He rationalized that perhaps "it is best, however, because my removal to this country has probably been a good thing for me in a way in that I have gotten into a good law practice and have done well."²³

Indeed Hefner had done well in Ardmore with his numerous business investments, and by 1919 he felt it was time to consolidate his interests.

By 1919 Hefner's business dealings had grown to such an extent that he formed the Hefner Company. On December 31 of that year he entered into "a partnership or trust agreement . . . whereby all property owned by either member of the Hefner family was from and after that date to be owned jointly." Under the terms of the agreement "the five members of the family owned all property whether real, personal or mixed . . . in equal parts."²⁴ Hefner intended that "the business of the partnership shall be that of general investments." The Hefner Company expected in the future to be "buying and selling real estate, or interests therein, oil and gas business, bonds, stocks." Moreover, the company planned to "engage in any business that a partnership is allowed to carry on under the laws of the State of Oklahoma." Inasmuch as the members of the partnership planned to buy and sell property in the future, it was agreed that "for the convenience in transferring the title . . . it is understood that the title may be taken in the name of any one, or more of the partners." Nevertheless, this property "belonged to the company, and when the same is sold, the proceeds, as well as all other monies belonging to the company, shall be deposited . . . to the credit of the Hefner Company." All five members of the Hefner Company shared in the profits of this business agreement and "all expenses of

every kind or character made by any one of the five individuals shall be divided into five equal parts." Finally it was agreed that "the supervision and control of the estate shall be under the joint management of R. A. Hefner and Eva Hefner." The Hefner Company remained unchanged until 1934 when their joint ownership was changed to tenants in common for legal purposes.²⁵

Hefner's business dealings through the Hefner Company were extensive and profitable. After many years of hard work and good investment, Hefner became a multi-millionaire. Some of this money he earned from land leases and oil royalties. One example of land that was leased for drilling was the Hefner-Mills Farm. This was land located in Carter County and was leased to the Magnolia Petroleum Company of Dallas, Texas. The Magnolia Company was extremely interested in this land because of its location in the Fox Oil Fields. Hefner and Mills purchased the land from the Chichasaw and Choctaw Nations in December of 1915 for \$524.50, and each owner held 1/16th interest in the royalties procured from this land. By 1925 the Magnolia Petroleum Company had drilled nine wells that proved successful, four of them gas wells. Hefner and Mills together made a total of \$67,120.40 from their gas royalties between 1921 and 1924. It was speculated by the Magnolia Company that production from these gas wells would continue until 1935. On the Hefner-Mills Farm were five oil wells that produced handsomely for all parties concerned. Between 1922 and 1924

these five oil wells produced in royalties a total of \$89,789 for the two owners. Records of this oil and gas lease are available only for those few years, but obviously the royalties were quite profitable for Hefner and Mills in subsequent years. Nonetheless, Robert owned other property that paid as well or better than the Hefner-Mills Farm.²⁶

Two of the pieces of land that Hefner purchased from A. P. Blackwell on September 2, 1911 were located in what became known as the Hewitt Oil Field. On November 23, 1916, Hefner leased both portions of this land to the Carter Oil Company for \$7.00 per acre. He also received a guarantee of 1/8 of the royalties from the oil and gas produced on this land. When Robert acquired the land, "nothing was known of the oil reserved of the Hewitt Zone underlying these lands, nor was anything known until 1919 when the field was discovered." Development of the Hewitt Oil Field was rapid "though in general the operators have put down no more wells than are necessary to economically drain the oil lands." Hefner's land was interesting from a geological standpoint because the surface rocks exposed in the entire Hewitt Field were of the "Permian age, consisting chiefly of soft red clay, shales and sandstones of the 'Red Bed' type." Before the Carter Oil Company began drilling, however, Hefner maintained that oil probably would be discovered "between 1400 feet and 220 feet below the surface. Geologists later found "seven sands, all capable of producing oil in commercial quantities" in the Hewitt Zone. On November 25, 1919, the

first well was completed on a sixty-acre portion of Hefner's land (known as the R. A. Hefner Tract), and it was drilled to a sand laying at a depth of 1674 feet." This well "had an initial daily production of 900 barrels and produced in excess of 30,000 barrels during the first thirty days." Another well was drilled on April 2, 1920, "on land outside the proved area." This demonstrated that the remaining land on the property had the same type of sand. Yet another well "was drilled to a deeper sand and was completed August 10th, 1920." This was an important well because it was drilled "to a depth of 2296 feet and is 640 feet below the top Hewitt sand." The initial "production of this well from the deep sand was 125 barrels." Eleven other wells were brought in on this sixty-acre plot.²⁷

The other sixty-acre tract, known as the Eva Hefner Tract, produced oil; the first well "was completed on July 19th 1920 with an initial daily production of 500 barrels." This same "well produced over 12,000 barrels during the first thirty days." Four other wells were completed on this property not long after the first one came in, and it was then "estimated that these new wells will each produce an average of 7,800 barrels during the first month of their life." Moreover, it was speculated that they will, on the average, continue to produce this amount for some time." Both sixty-acre tracts of land on the Hewitt Oil Field made Hefner a large sum of money. From the first tract, known as the R. A. Hefner Tract, a total of 429,540.53 barrels of oil

would be produced between November of 1919 and December of 1920. These barrels sold at an average price of \$3.43 per barrel and the total value of these barrels from sales was \$168,072.45. The second sixty-acre tract, known as Eva Hefner Tract, produced a total of 51,878.46 barrels of oil between July of 1920 and December of that same year. The average price per barrel in 1920 was \$3.50, and the total value of oil sales was \$22,209.17.²⁸ The R. A. Hefner Tract (also known as the R. A. Hefner Farm) was one of the biggest producing areas in the Hewitt Field, and Hefner made a great sum of money from this property. In 1948 Hefner reported to a friend that "I have one sixty acre tract in Hewitt Field on which oil was discovered in 1919 and it has produced more than a half million dollars in royalty and is still producing."²⁹

Hefner acquired other properties that proved profitable to the Hefner Company. In 1924 he "purchased from Hal M. Cannon, Trustee of Estate of J. S. Mullen, Bankrupt, the . . . SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of SW $\frac{1}{4}$ & W $\frac{1}{2}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 9, & E $\frac{1}{2}$ of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ & W $\frac{1}{2}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 16, T2S, R2W." At the time that he bought this land Humble Oil and Refining Company of Houston, Texas, had an oil and gas lease on the property. Therefore Robert informed the Humble Oil Company immediately that "any rentals on oil and gas lease held by you due after said date October 27, 1924 should be paid to me."³⁰ The Humble Oil Company held the lease on a portion of this 150 acre plot for several years but never drilled a

good well. After the Humble Oil Company allowed its lease to lapse, the Carter Oil Company became interested in taking out a lease on the property and did so in January of 1930.³¹ Nonetheless, the Carter Oil Company was slow in developing this tract of land and Hefner soon became disgusted with the company's inaction. It did sink one good well, but did not continue to probe for oil. On March 18, 1930, Hefner wrote the Carter Oil Company and told its executives to "please develop the rest of the lease, or else surrender the undeveloped portion." Robert did "not believe it is right to hold such large acreage continuously without development."³²

The Carter Oil Company replied to Hefner's letter that although it could appreciate his position, the company felt it best not to drill on his land at the time. James A. Veasey, general counsel for the Carter Oil Company, argued that "frankly we cannot make up our minds that further development at this time and under existing conditions would be justified." The Carter Oil Company usually was prompt in developing its properties "when the surrounding circumstances reasonably justify that course." But in the case of Hefner's land, two dry holes already had been sunk by the Magnolia Oil Company to the east of his property. Veasey maintained that "our Geological Department reports that we find a lease condition here which means that every location made is a pure speculation in regard to finding production." This, however, was not the only reason the Carter Oil Company was slow in developing Hefner's land. Veasey told

Hefner that there was "another consideration in the matter which weighs very strongly with us and should have some influence with you." This consideration was "the overwhelming condition of overproduction in the state at this time." The oil company purposely was "refraining from drilling every unnecessary well even where the prospect of finding production is infinitely stronger than in this case, and where the wells promise a very large production." This policy of curbing production was "generally adhered to by most of the major companies" because they were "doing everything possible to balance supply and demand."³³ The Carter Oil Company did not develop Hefner's land during the early years of the Great Depression and in 1933 Robert wrote to the company asking that it "kindly send me a release of the lease on it."³⁴ The company returned a letter to Hefner stating that it had not abandoned the lease and that it planned to develop the property in the future.³⁵

Hefner encouraged the Carter Oil Company to develop his land and told the company officials "to kindly proceed to drill the property up if you consider it worth drilling." As in the year 1933, however, the Carter Oil Company balked at the idea of immediate development and told Hefner that it "had given this matter further consideration but are not in a position to definitely state at this time just what our action will be." C. C. MacKay of the Carter Oil Company did state that his firm was "inclined to start another well on the property" and believed that "we will be able to give

you something definite as to our plans within the next week or so."³⁶ Finally in December of 1933 Hefner was advised that the Carter Oil Company would "commence a well on your land" and that the well would be "complete within 40 or 50 days."³⁷

Unfortunately for Hefner and the Carter Oil Company, the well that was drilled did not prove to be a good one, and the Carter Oil Company discontinued its development of the land. Two more years passed before Robert wrote the Carter Oil Company about this 150-acre tract; in this he expressed the same disgust which he had in previous letters. Robert particularly was annoyed by the fact that oil had been discovered recently by the Skelly Oil Company on land offsetting his property. The well was known as the Jennie Baer Well No. 1, and it "pumped 107 barrels of oil in 14 hours."³⁸ When Robert wrote the Carter Oil Company about drilling again on his land he remarked that if any wells were discovered, "they will be small and you may not want to fool with them." However, he suggested that if the company did not want to drill it should drop the lease so that he could find someone who wanted to do the job. He told them "if you do not care to release it, please drill it at once and I expect the property to be drilled up." After all this time and delay, the Carter Oil Company began to drill the tract of 150 acres and discovered a few shallow wells. The continual development of this piece of property and others like it did make Hefner large sums of money, however, and

were excellent long-range investments.³⁹

Hefner not only owned land in Oklahoma but also property in some other states. His home state of Texas was a promising area for oilmen during the first half of the twentieth century, and Hefner invested some of his money there. In fact, he was involved in several undertakings with his brother-in-law, Lewis Johnson. Robert had attended the University of Texas with Johnson, who became known for co-authoring the famous fight song of the Texas Longhorns, "The Eyes of Texas."⁴⁰ In 1924 the Johnson Brothers Company and the Hefner Company purchased a lease on ten acres in northwest Texas for \$600. Robert paid this initial price for the lease. Then the two parties sold one half of the working interest to Continental Oil Company. One-sixth of the working interest went to W. R. Johnson; one-sixth interest went to Lewis Johnson; and the other one-sixth interest went to the Hefner Company. Continental Oil Company paid \$1,000 for its one-half interest--and agreed to drill a well. Within one year two producing wells were drilled, one on September 10, 1925, and another on October 21, 1925. In addition, by the end of 1926, two more wells were drilled "so there are four wells on the ten acres." This lease to the Continental Oil Company brought profits for all parties. From "1926 to 1930, exclusive, the lease produced a total of \$58,375.05 for our half interest the Johnson Brothers Company and the Hefner Company." All of this money was not profit, however, for "the expense of operation for that

period of time was \$12,460.53." Thus between 1925, when the first well was drilled, and 1930 the Hefners and the Johnsons had cleared a profit of \$45,914,52.⁴¹

Drilling oil wells on a piece of land and earning a profit from the producing property was not always an easy feat. Sometimes the parties involved in the drilling venture were forced to go to court in order to clear up important litigation. In 1925 alone the Hefners and Johnsons made \$6,676.91 from 4,949.53 barrels of crude oil produced on their ten-acre plot in Texas. During the first three months of operation they received a total of 3,040.90 barrels of crude oil which was stored by the Sinclair Crude Oil Purchasing Company. The business dealing of these three parties were proceeding smoothly until March 1, 1926, when "a suit was filed in the District Court of Montague County, Texas." J. W. Maddox and his wife, Carrie, filed suit against the Hefners, the Johnsons, and the Continental Oil Company because they argued that the first well sunk on the property was not on the land covered by the lease belonging to the Hefners and the Johnsons. When the "suit was filed the Sinclair Crude Oil Purchasing Company . . . began withholding payment for $\frac{1}{2}$ of the oil run to our account, as their protection against the value of oil from the No. 1 well." The one-half interest of the Hefner Company and the Johnson Brother Company soon totaled 18,245.33 barrels of crude oil, for which the Sinclair Crude Oil Purchasing Company withheld 7,102.31 barrels. Nonetheless, the Hefners

and the Johnsons together made \$13,875.56 from their 11,143.02 barrels of crude oil. Once the litigation was cleared and the suit dropped, the Hefner Company and the Johnson Brothers Company received the remaining 7,102.31 barrels of crude oil.⁴²

The owners of this ten-acre lease faced other difficulties besides legal suits. They did make profit from the property, but they also had many expenditures. For the year 1926, general expenditures cost the Hefners and Johnsons \$392.96, and general repairs cost them another \$492.31. That same year these parties paid people to work on the wells, and their half of the labor cost them \$2,879.54. Other expenditures included \$95.97 for insurance on the laborers, \$165.27 for chemicals used in the drilling process and \$452.26 for power, including fuel and water. Moreover, the partners had to pay \$600.43 in gross production taxes to the state of Texas and \$203.65 in county and state taxes. The total operating cost for 1926, including the cost for equipment leased from other concerns, amounted to \$5,896.58. Nonetheless, the Hefner Company and the Johnson Brothers Company cleared a profit of nearly six thousand dollars that first year.⁴²

Robert Hefner had other business associations with the Johnson Brothers. Together the Hefner Company and the Johnson Brothers Company owned land in the Jack County Oil Field of north Texas. They leased part of their land to the Seaboard Oil and Gas Company in the fall of 1926. This company

drilled a well immediately, and when the drill had "just barely penetrated the sand at 2090 feet, the hole filled with fluid." This initial bit of oil was "swabbed out and preparations were made to drill further in the hole." At that time "the well was gasing some" and the oilmen on the spot stated that "if it gets stronger the well might flow." Within a few days after this report, the well was drilled to a depth of 2400 feet and soon after it began producing 100 barrels a day. Not all of the land held by the Hefners and the Johnsons in this field was leased to the Seaboard Oil and Gas Company, however. Indeed, most of it was leased to the Continental Oil Company.⁴⁴

Renting property to hard-working Oklahoma sodbusters was another source of income for Robert Hefner. Instead of allowing his lands to lay unused, Hefner would rent the surface of his property to enterprising farmers. These individuals would pay their rent by allotting a portion of their crops to Robert. Hefner rented one such portion of land near Pernell, Oklahoma, to F. J. Barber. In 1925 Barber reported to Robert that he "just had 4 acres of cotton planted on your place and it was pretty good." Unfortunately "the hail storm destroyed about $\frac{1}{2}$ bale" and he "just received 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ct. per lb. for it." Therefore, he "got 1366 lbs. and I sold it at Lindsay for \$210.00 per ton." The way Barber figured it, "he owed Hefner \$85.30 for rent. Robert agreed to the payment, and Barber continued to farm much of the area. Hefner put this land to other good use during

the late 1920s when he sold an oil lease to the Magnolia Oil Company. Although this land did not prove to be a good oil area, Hefner nonetheless made money from his land by renting it to Barber and leasing sub-surface rights to the Magnolia Oil Company.⁴⁵

Robert rented other portions of his holdings to farmers and to home renters. In May of 1920 he rented three separate lots and one home to people in Ardmore. He rented vacant lots to T. L. Collins, B. L. Letts, A. B. Smith, and C. A. Tucker each for \$5.00 per month. At the same time he was renting a home in Ardmore to B. L. Letts for \$40.00 per month. Hefner was a keen economist who kept close watch on his business interests. He always made certain that "all parties . . . paid their rent in advance."⁴⁶ In 1923 Hefner rented land near the Hewitt Oil Field that was not producing oil. In that year he "rented the south part from the fence running east and west for the purpose of putting a boxcar house on it and using it for a garden." For the boxcar and the garden, Hefner received forty dollars a year. He also rented the land "from the fence running north to the north line of the cultivated land for sixty dollars a year." Robert rented another plot of ground in the Hewitt Field located on "the west on fourth of the land north of the cultivated line north to the section line . . . for thirty-six dollars a month." Hefner did not make a quantity of money on any one of these deals immediately, but over the years he accumulated a substantial profit from his rent

lands. He was a smart businessman who made his lands work for him, and in the long run they paid off well for him.⁴⁷

Robert Hefner was a farsighted man who benefitted from his long-range investments. Some of the land that he had purchased during his early years in Ardmore did not prove to be profitable until decades later. Late in 1935 oil was discovered again near the old Fox Oil Field where little oil had been discovered before. The test wells in this area "indicated that the strike is going to help a lot of fellows get well" and one of those fellows was Hefner. It was reported that "R. A. Hefner is due for a 'killing' because he owns about 28,000 acres of fee land and royalty in southern Oklahoma."⁴⁸ He not only owned land in Oklahoma which became profitable, but he also had made shrewd investments in land in Texas and Louisiana which would enrich the Hefner Company. Robert purchased land in Stephens County, Texas, shortly after his move to Oklahoma, and this proved to be a good investment for the young lawyer. By 1920 the land he owned in Stephens County produced a well that "came in at a pace of 2,500 barrels a day."⁴⁹ Hefner also owned land in Louisiana which became a good investment years after it was purchased. While he was still living in Ardmore, he bought 2,100 acres of land in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. In the mid-1960s "the Placid Oil Company discovered oil on our tract as well as several other tracts in the immediate vicinity, now known as the Black Lake Field." A portion of Hefner's land was covered by Black Lake, and "570.37 acres

of our land have been proven good." Robert had paid a mere \$10.00 per acre for some 4,000 acres in the tract. He had held this land for more than forty years and had "sold enough timber off of it to pay us back all the money we had in it and have a lot left." Indeed Hefner had a great deal of foresight which made him a wealthy entrepreneur.⁵⁰

Moreover, Hefner was an innovative businessman who could create a business environment in which he could make a profit. On one occasion he consummated "an unusual oil field deal" with W. L. Hernstadt of New York. The deal began in October of 1935 when "Hefner and Hernstadt incidentally met in Hotel Ardmore." Hernstadt indicated to Hefner at this time that he had a great "faith in deep oil in Carter County." Hefner was doubtful that much oil existed in southern Oklahoma below four thousand feet, but when Hernstadt persisted in his belief, the two entrepreneurs came to a business agreement. Hefner was quick to accept an offer by Hernstadt that the latter gentleman give Hefner "\$10.00 per acre for the oil rights below 4000 feet." This transaction was unusual because "they conveyed oil rights below the 4000 feet level" and because it opened "a new line of oil field trading in the county." Hefner was an astute businessman who had the ability and foresight to benefit himself and the Hefner Company.⁵¹

The years following the formation of the Hefner Company in 1919 were good because of the leadership and direction of Robert Hefner. Although the business records are not com-

plete for those years after the creation of the Hefner Company, there are records which reflect the earnings of the company for the years of 1929 and 1930. The greatest amount received in 1929 was from the lease of lands; this amounted to \$94,563.21. The net oil royalties received that same year amounted to \$21,072.48. Moreover, the company made \$2,274.06 from the working interest of the Hefner-Mills oil lease.⁵² The next year was just as profitable for the Hefner Company in many respects. Although the members of the Hefner Company only received \$460.00 from their rentals, they secured \$64,276.12 from oil royalties. Payments from the Slick Lease amounted to \$39,396.72, and dividends from stock holdings amounted to \$28,701.10. In addition, the company earned \$15,533.00 for various oil runs and \$13,912.24 from the sale of oil and gas leases. All this money was not clear profit, however; much of it went for payment of taxes, employees, equipment, etc.⁵³

Although Hefner was a businessman, the people of Ardmore considered him "one of the real men that are to be found in his and other professions." He was "unselfish in his wealth" as well as "kind and generous and big-hearted."⁵⁴ Cynics might scoff at such words to describe a businessman who worked hard and became a multi-millionaire, but Robert Hefner was indeed a friend of the people. The incident that perhaps best exemplifies his concern as a businessman for the community, was the tragedy that struck Ardmore on September 27, 1915. At 2:15 P.M. on that date, "a tank car con-

taining thousands of gallons of wild casing-head gasoline blew up, killing some sixty people."⁵⁵ After most of the gasoline had escaped from the tank car to the ground, it exploded and turned "a quiet, muggy day in the town into a grim and horrible sequence of disaster and tragedy." In the wake of the blast the business district of Ardmore was left in ruin. The terrific explosion caused "scores of people" to be "cut in remote parts of town by flying glass." As walls around Ardmore tumbled, "many were buried under wrecked buildings." Some of the citizens were crushed to death, while others were trapped and perished in the fires that followed.⁵⁶

Robert Hefner was instrumental in bringing financial aid to the stricken city by convincing wealthy oil men to contribute to a relief fund. Robert persuaded R. M. McFarlin to be "the first oil man to come to the relief of the stricken city with financial aid." On September 29 he gave "Hefner \$1,000.00 to be used by him in relieving the necessities of the people as his judgment directed. Hefner knew McFarlin from a business standpoint, and when the oil man called him by long distance telephone, Robert told him what the damage was and the cause of it." The next day McFarlin drove to Ardmore "and looked the situation over and called me and asked me to draw on the McMann Oil Company for one thousand dollars as a relief fund." At the time McFarlin made his contribution, there was no relief organization of any kind; therefore, Hefner "immediately appointed a

relief committee to handle this fund." Robert headed the committee, which "went to distributing the money in cases that had come to their attention up to that time." As a result of Hefner's efforts, a number of needy people were relieved.⁵⁷ Hefner was proud of the fact that "four of my clients gave a thousand dollars each for relief work caused by the disaster." Through his business contacts, Hefner was able to raise a total of four thousand dollars from the Corsicana Petroleum Company, the Magnolia Pipe Line Company, the McMann Oil Company, and the Ardmore Refinery. In addition he raised two thousand dollars from McFarlin and the Producers Refining Company.⁵⁸

As a young lawyer, Robert Hefner was drawn to southern Oklahoma by the lure of making himself a wealthy man. He arrived not as a rich man but as a struggling young attorney who was willing to work hard and make something of his life. Robert did just that, and indeed fought his way up from rags to riches. He was an astute businessman who invested his money wisely in land he felt someday would yield oil. Much of the land that he bought became tracts where the Hewitt, the Healdton, and the Fox Oil Fields were discovered. He sold oil and gas leases to major oil companies and reaped good profits from these leases. He also rented surface rights on his land to enterprising Oklahomans who were willing to exploit the ground and share their earnings with their landlord. He was farsighted enough that even when his investments did not pay off for him immediately, he kept his

property to allow it to work for him at some future date. Hefner endeavored to be a good businessman, and after hard work, he became a multi-millionaire. Yet, even when a successful businessman, Robert Hefner never lost his concern for the common people of his community and his state. And when the time came when they needed him most, he was there to help. Hefner's true significance in the development of Oklahoma was not as a businessman but as a public servant. Even when he was involved in business dealings, he was involved continually in some form of political activity. In the 1920s and 1930s, Hefner actively entered into state and national politics. It thus was during this same era that Hefner became a political man.

NOTES

¹Daily Ardmoreite, January 23, 1916.

²Hefner, Typed Ms.

³Ibid.; Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., January 14, 1928; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Colonel John Sokolosky and Paul F. Lambert, April 23, 1973, HC.

⁴Daily Ardmoreite, October 28, 1915.

⁵Ibid., October 31, 1915.

⁶Ibid., March 23, 1916.

⁷Daily Oklahoman, March 20, 1916.

⁸Daily Ardmoreite, July 3, 1919.

⁹Samuel H. Glassmire, Law of Oil and Gas Leases and Royalties (St. Louis, 1938), p. 74.

¹⁰Hefner, Mineral Grant: R. A. Hefner Form, November 28, 1924, HC; Daily Oklahoman, April 14, 1923.

¹¹Hefner to Jack T. Conn, November 15, 1966, HC

¹²Hefner to Joyce B. Reeves, December 12, 1941, HC; Hefner to William Hefner, October 24, 1939, HC; Patrick Hurley to Hefner, May 20, 1952, HC.

¹³Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Senator Fred Chapman, July 18, 1973, HC.

¹⁴Rex Harlow, "A Plan Plus Determination Equals Success," Harlow's Weekly (January 4, 1930), p. 4.

¹⁵History of Oklahoma, III (New York, 1957), p. 349.

¹⁶Hefner to Edward Galt, November 20, 1968, Galt Collection, 238 West Craig, San Antonio, Texas. Hereafter cited as GC.

¹⁷Daily Ardmoreite, December 19, 1920.

¹⁸Northwest Texas Oil Journal, January 20, 1920.

¹⁹Pacific Reporter, XLIX (St. Paul, 1921), p. 207.

²⁰Hefner, Memorandum, "In the matter of getting the Mississippi-Choctaw Indians on the Indian Rolls and procuring their allotments for them," March 30, 1962, HC.

²¹Ibid.

²²Hefner, Release of Contract, April 29, 1922, HC.

²³Hefner to Oswald S. Parker, June 2, 1919, HC.

²⁴Robert A. Hefner, Eva Hefner, Robert A. Hefner, Jr., Evelyn Hefner, and William Hefner, Partnership Agreement, December 31, 1919, HC. The Hefner Company is an operating concern even today; for this reason access into the business files was impossible. Information in this chapter, provides examples of Hefner's business dealings only during the early years of his life in Oklahoma.

²⁵Ibid.; Hefner, Quit Claim Deed to O. C. Sparks, June 26, 1934, HC.

²⁶John T. Steed, Depletion Schedules for the Hefner-Mills Lease, December 10, 1925, HC.

²⁷James L. Darnell and Arthur Eaton, Valuation Report and Depletion Schedules for 1919 and 1920, December 14, 1925, HC.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Daily Ardmoreite, February 17, 1920; Hefner to H. R. Alexander, November 9, 1948, HC.

³⁰Hefner to N. K. Robb, March 30, 1925, HC.

³¹O. L. Doyle to Hefner, January 23, 1930, HC.

³²Hefner to O. L. Doyle, March 18, 1930, HC.

³³James A. Veasey to Hefner, April 1, 1930, HC.

³⁴Hefner to Carter Oil Company, August 31, 1933, HC.

³⁵K. E. Rodgers to Hefner, September 7, 1933, HC.

³⁶C. C. MacKay to Hefner, November 9, 1933, HC.

³⁷L. G. Owen to Hefner December 13, 1933, HC.

38J. S. Freeman to Hefner, July 10, 1935, HC.

39Hefner to Carter Oil Company, August 24, 1935, HC;
C. C. MacKay to Hefner, November 8, 1935, HC.

40Fort Worth Star Telegram, February 23, 1936. Lewis Johnson never received credit for co-authoring "The Eyes of Texas" until the 1930s. Johnson helped compose and arrange the famous fight song with John Lang Sinclair while a student at the University of Texas.

41Hefner to the Hefner Company, March 24, 1950, HC;
Hefner to Mrs. W. R. Johnson, March 23, 1950, HC.

42Statement of Producing Oil and Gas Lease for ten acres belonging to the Continental Oil Company, the Hefner Company, and the Johnson Brothers Company, January, 1927, HC.

43Ibid.

44Weekly Reports of the Jack County Oil Field, Jacksboro, Texas, September 3, 1926 and September 7, 1926, HC.

45H. A. Fairchild to Hefner, April 24, 1928, HC; Jack A. Heenan to Hefner, May 1, 1928, HC.

46W. R. Ramsey to Hefner, February 11, 1920, HC.

47N. B. Ragland to Hefner, March 1, 1923, HC.

48Daily Oklahoman, October 27, 1935, HC.

49Northwest Texas Oil Journal, January 20, 1920.

50Hefner to R. G. Miller, December 2, 1965; Hefner to Edward Galt, November 20, 1968, GC.

51Daily Ardmoreite, March 3, 1935; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Robert A. Hefner, III, April 30, 1973, HC. It is interesting to note that Hefner's grandson, Robert Alexander III, has become one of the leading businessmen in the nation involved in the drilling of deep oil and gas wells.

52Hefner, Income Report for the Hefner Company, 1929, HC.

53Hefner, Income Report for the Hefner Company, 1930, HC.

54Daily Ardmoreite, December 19, 1920.

55 Roy M. Johnson to Hefner, November 19, 1956, HC.

56 Daily Ardmoreite, September 27, 1951.

57 Ibid., September 29, 1915.

58 Ibid., November 1, 1915.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL MAN

Although Hefner spent much of his time in business pursuits, he never withdrew completely from public life. Indeed, even when an entrepreneur in Ardmore and Oklahoma City, Hefner engaged in politics. In 1928 this loyal Democrat supported his party's nominee for the presidency. The Judge was busy during the campaign making speeches throughout his district for Alfred E. Smith. He not only stumped for this candidate, but also he contributed financially to his campaign fund. In 1930 Hefner supported Democrats in Oklahoma and helped campaign for the entire Democratic ticket. By 1932 the Great Depression hung over the United States like a threatening black cloud, and most citizens in the country were searching for a ray of sunlight. Most people wanted a change in the political climate, and the country overwhelmingly voted Democratic. Judge Hefner was one of many individuals who supported the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President of the United States. During the depression, Hefner did his part to help bring order to the businesses of the nation by accepting a post as chairman of the local compliance board of the National Recovery Administration. His concern for the political environ-

ment of the United States led him to write politicians in important public positions and to voice his opinions. There can be little doubt that the Judge was a political man, but all the time he was involved in political affairs, he remained an active public servant and devoted father.

Hefner abided by the "Canons of Judicial Ethics," and therefore adhered to the belief that even as a justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, he was "entitled to entertain his personal views of political questions." Under this code of ethics, the Judge was not required to "surrender his rights or opinions as a citizen."¹ Robert believed in these principles, and as a justice he continued to support the Democratic Party both on the state and national levels. He never allowed his partisanship to interfere with his duties on the Supreme Court, but this did not prohibit him from participating in partisan politics. Indeed, Hefner was concerned about the men and policies directing the United States and entered into politics in order to participate in a system of government that he believed to be the best ever established.²

Hence Hefner was a political man who always was "interested in the welfare of the Democratic party." During his life in Oklahoma he "wanted to do everything I can to assist in bringing the Democrats together, to pave the way to success." In 1928 Robert Hefner supported Alfred E. Smith, the Democratic nominee for President of the United States and his running mate, Joseph T. Robinson. Hefner was a conser-

vative Baptist whose political beliefs did not always coincide with those of Governor Smith. Yet Hefner supported the liberal Governor in spite of their differences probably because of his staunch partisanship. Smith was the standard-bearer for the Democratic Party in 1928, and for this reason Hefner backed him fully in his bid for the Presidency. He not only favored Smith but was vitally "interested in seeing that harmony prevails in our party so that those who are our standard bearers will succeed in the general election."³

The Judge was an important Democrat, and his support of any candidate was important in the state of Oklahoma. For this reason the Democratic National and State Headquarters invited Hefner to all executive meetings. In September of 1928 the Judge attended one such meeting at the request of George D. Key, the state chairman. At this meeting the Judge and other Democrats discussed their ideas and plans for the election of Smith.⁴ Officials of the Democratic National Committee sought the Judge's advice regarding "the essentials of the National campaign in Oklahoma." These officials expressed fear that Oklahoma would vote Republican but they consoled themselves "that with diligent efforts we can put this state over." They argued that "if our ticket is elected and Oklahoma goes Democratic, the State will be in a fine position politically." However, they further argued that "if the ticket is elected and Oklahome votes wrong, our position will not be very pretty." These offi-

cials asked Robert for "all the help and advice we can get from you."⁵ In Hefner's "judgement, this state will go Democratic by the usual majority." Nevertheless, he felt that "there will be some deflections from the Democratic ranks but this will be made up by deflections from the Republicans." The Judge reported to Democratic headquarters that "any time I can serve . . . the Democratic Party I shall be happy to do so." He not only supported the Democratic ticket with his ideas, but also gave generously of his money. In September he wrote a "check in the sum of \$200.00 payable to Frank P. Johnson, Director of Finance, National Democratic Committee."⁶

During the election of 1928, Hefner did not visit the National Democratic Headquarters in Oklahoma City "because I have been very busy with my duties on the Supreme Court." But he had "not neglected an opportunity to do everything possible for the Democratic ticket." The Judge was convinced thoroughly that the Democratic Party "represented the best interest for the common people in America" and was "for it from the top to the bottom." He vowed to "do everything I can to see that it is elected." He campaigned for Smith through Oklahoma and promised "to cover my entire district and do everything possible to see that it carries the usual Democratic majority."⁷ The Judge made many appearances in the nine counties of the fifth district, and in each county he stumped for the Democratic Party.⁸ In October of 1928 he was asked by Jacob B. Moore, a prominent at-

torney from Ardmore, to "come down and make us a democratic speech."⁹ The day he received word from Moore, the Judge made immediate arrangements for the trip. In addition, he planned "to make a trip over my entire district." Hefner decided to "start in Norman, go right down the road and stop at all the smaller towns." He made the trip to southern Oklahoma the first week in November and visited a number of other cities. He spoke at "Purcell, Pauls Valley, Wynnewood, Davis, Sulphur, Ardmore, Marietta, Terral, Ryan, Waurika, Addington, Comanche, Duncan, Marlow, Rush Springs, and Chickasha." Moreover, he stopped at many of the smaller towns as he went through them. One reason the Judge did such campaigning was that he felt "that the Democratic Party has honored me and that I am one of its servants." He pledged to do everything for the party and its nominees."¹⁰

Although Judge Hefner made a tour of his district and stumped for the Democratic ticket, he stated that "as a member of the Supreme Court . . . I feel a delicacy in making a partisan speech."¹¹ He also argued that "being a member of the Supreme Court of this state, I do not feel that I can consistently solicit money for political campaign purposes."¹² But at the same time the Judge wanted his "friends to know my position on the ticket." It was his wish "to line up any votes any where in any way."¹³ Despite his efforts and the efforts of other Democrats in the state, Al Smith lost Oklahoma. The Judge dismally reported a day after the election that "this state went for Herbert Hoover

by about 150,000 votes." Smith made a poor showing in the critical election of 1928, for he "only carried eight or ten counties in the entire state." Even "Carter county went for Hoover." The Judge pointed out that all "counties west of the Santa Fe railroad went for Hoover." Smith received most of his votes in the counties "in the southeast corner of the state" known as "Little Dixie." After the election Hefner still was proud to say that "I am a Democrat." Nonetheless, the Judge believed "in majority rule," and it was apparent to him that "the majority has spoken in no uncertain terms that it wants Herbert Hoover for the next president." Therefore "he is . . . my president and I am for him in every way possible."¹⁴

Because of Hoover's smashing victory, the Republicans in Oklahoma were "revelling in the victory and daily preaching the funeral ode of the Democratic Party."¹⁵ The Republicans were wrong, for the election of 1928 was a turning point in the history of the Democratic Party in the United States. For the first time in the twentieth century, large number of urban laborers and minority peoples began shifting their party identity from the Republican to the Democratic Party. In addition, the election of 1928 set the stage for the Democratic majority which would rule the United States after 1932.¹⁶ Oklahoma went Republican in 1928, but within a few years, it would merge into the mainstream of American politics and vote Democratic. While most Democrats deviated and voted Republican in 1928, Judge Hefner remained a loyal

Democrat. He continued to be "interested in the welfare of the Democratic Party in Oklahoma" and worked "to bring about a better understanding of the Democrats." He worked with Democratic organizations during the 1930s in order to "pave the way for success."¹⁷

Hefner helped his party in many ways. First he supported his party financially. In the congressional election of 1930, the Judge gave \$100.00 to the Oklahoma Democratic State Central Committee. This contribution was not large by some standards, but those were the lean years of the Depression.¹⁸ Moreover, the Judge was a member of the Supreme Court at this time and could not contribute excessive funds to any campaign. But Judge Hefner supported his party by campaigning actively for Democratic politicians in Oklahoma. In 1930 he supported the reelection of Senator Charles S. Storms as state Senator from the fifth district. Hefner informed Storms that he was going "out through portions of the state and especially down through my district in the next few days" and that he was going to actively campaign for him. "I want you to know" the Judge told Storms, "that I consider it a privilege to give you my support." Robert asked the Senator "to send me some of your literature so I can scatter it around as I go over the state."¹⁹ On November 2, 1930, Hefner went "down through my district" and did a "little work for the Democratic ticket" before the election.²⁰ Between November 2 and November 6, the Judge campaigned for the Democrats running for political office from

his district. And no sooner had he arrived in Oklahoma City on November 6 than he decided to go "back down through Chickasha, Duncan and Waurika and over to Ardmore."²¹

Judge Hefner helped politicians get the public exposure necessary for those seeking and holding political offices. In 1934 the Hefners encouraged Senator and Mrs. Thomas P. Gore to attend a football game with them. In this fashion the Senator could make a public appearance at one of the most loved sports in the Sooner State. Moreover, the Judge helped arrange parties in honor of Senator Gore so that he could patch "up all the political fences we can for him at this time." Hefner wanted to smooth over any ill feelings other politicians might have toward Gore "so when he comes up for reelection two years from now, all the state offices will be for him." Judge Hefner felt that it was crucial to do this "at this time, because of his enemies."²²

Not only did Hefner support Senator Gore, but he also backed Senator Elmer Thomas in the same manner. Robert wrote Thomas once regarding his political image. It was-- and still is--important for politicians in Oklahoma to portray the image of being a man of the common people. Thomas had portrayed himself in this manner, and Hefner highly approved of the Senator's tactics. He contacted Thomas and told him that "your picture in the torn overalls appeared in the Oklahoman yesterday morning." The Judge suggested that by the looks of the photograph, "maybe you look more like a laboring man than a United States Senator?" Hefner

further commented that "I heard some of the boys who work with their hands say so any way."²³

The crash of 1929 brought a depression to the economy and spirit of the United States. And, by the election year of 1932, the country was still suffering from this national calamity. Franklin D. Roosevelt became the Democratic nominee for the Presidency in 1932, and supporters of the Democratic ticket mobilized their political muscle to defeat Herbert Hoover. Judge Hefner was one of many Democrats in the United States who supported the election of Roosevelt. He worked diligently to see that all Democrats and some Republicans in Oklahoma went to the polls and "knocked the feathers off the old rooster."²⁴ He contributed sixty dollars to Roosevelt's campaign fund in early September of 1932, and actively enlisted the financial support of others to "share in the cost of electing Governor Roosevelt to the Presidency."²⁵ In October of that election year, Hefner sent an additional five-dollar contribution to the Democrat National Campaign Committee to help finance the campaign. Thus, with this contribution he joined "class 1, which is a group of 50,000 Roosevelt Reserves who give \$5.00 each."²⁶ By November 3 the chairman of the Democratic National Campaign Committee reported to the Judge that "it looks as if we will rejoice in a great Democratic victory." Nonetheless the chairman of this committee, James A. Farley, told Robert that "we at headquarters are putting forth every proper effort to make sure of it." It soon became apparent that the

Democrats had put forth sufficient effort to win the election, and Franklin Roosevelt became the thirty-second President of the United States.²⁷

Judge Hefner and his family were friends of President Roosevelt, and for this reason they visited the President many times at the White House. In November of 1934, Robert and William Hefner, the sons of the Judge, called on Roosevelt and "had a swim in the President's private pool."²⁸ The Judge was "certainly glad to know how close" his children were "getting to the President and Mrs. Roosevelt." Hefner felt that "when you can make a private call and have a private conversation with a President of the United States it is doing a lot." Robert told his children that their experiences with President Roosevelt should be treasured, for not everyone becomes acquainted with a President. In fact, Robert reported, "when I was your age I would have been afraid to even look into the office of a County Judge." The closest that Hefner had been to a dignitary from Texas was when he "walked by the home of Governor Hogg and looked over the fence into his lawn," and that was after Hogg was out of office. Once as a young man Hefner had met William Jennings Bryan. The Judge had "met him out on the sidewalk" in Austin, Texas, while a student at the university. Hefner had stopped him and introduced himself to him. This was the only important man of national stature that Robert had met as a young man. And Bryan was a three-time loser. Therefore, he impressed upon his children that visiting with

President Roosevelt was quite an honor.²⁹

Like her brothers, Evelyn Hefner had an opportunity during the 1930s to visit the Roosevelts in company with her brother Robert, Jr. On February 15, 1935, Evelyn reported to her parents that "I guess I had the time of my life yesterday at the White House." Before she went to the White House, she "started worrying about . . . what if I should turn my water over." Nevertheless, she and Robert, Jr., left for the White House in their Ford, and when they "drew up in front of the White House" they were amazed to see "two men with gold buttons and brass and braid all down their front and tails on the back let us out of the car." And when Evelyn "walked in, I nearly fell down over the Coat of Arms in the floor." When Evelyn met the President she was "pretty shakey." But because of Roosevelt's manner "everyone was certainly at ease in at least five minutes." The President, Evelyn reported, "was simply charming." Eating with President Roosevelt "was like having dinner at home or at a friend's house." Everyone enjoyed the stories that Roosevelt told because he was "one of the best story tellers I've ever listened to." Evelyn told her parents that she wished "you all could have been with us for I know you would have just loved it." Evelyn especially liked President Roosevelt and told her mother and father that "you would have just fallen in love with him, just like we did."³⁰

The Judge liked President Roosevelt, and continued to support him with contributions through all his years in the

White House. In 1940, for example, Hefner gave the Democratic National Committee five-hundred dollars for the re-election of the President. Judge Hefner personally handed this money to a young Congressman from Texas and asked him to take it to the Democratic National Committee. Over twenty years later this same Congressman would become President of the United States and would employ similar methods and policies used by Franklin Roosevelt. This man, of course, was Lyndon Baines Johnson.³¹ Hefner always supported Roosevelt, and when the President died in 1945, both Robert and Eva Hefner led the memorial services in Oklahoma City and commemorated the passing of a great leader.³²

Judge Hefner officially resigned from politics in 1933 when his term ended as associate justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. But never in his long life was he totally out of politics. In 1933 he accepted an appointment as chairman of the compliance board of the National Recovery Administration. The government program was known as the NRA, and it was established at the request of hard-pressed businessmen who sought stabilization of the economy. In order to prime the economic pump of the United States, Congress passed a recovery act which provided for large-scale spending on public works. The National Industrial Recovery Act was passed in June of 1933, and a code was established by the administration for the NRA. This code provided for a minimum wage of forty cents an hour, maximum working hours of thirty-five or forty per week, and the abolition of child

labor. The NRA Blue Eagle Symbol was to be displayed by all employers who agreed to the code. And consumers who agreed with the policies of the NRA were asked to sign pledges that they would buy only from Blue Eagle establishments. By September of 1933, specific codes were provided for big industries throughout the United States. The local NRA compliance board in Oklahoma City was established in September and the members of the board were not paid for their services. These boards were established to secure and maintain compliance with the codes, policies, and principles of the National Recovery Administration.

Judge Hefner was appointed chairman of the NRA compliance board in Oklahoma City.³³ As chairman of this board, Hefner "assisted thousands of employers and employees to a fuller understanding of their obligations."³⁴ The compliance board in Oklahoma City consisted of two employers, two employees, one consumer, and one lawyer. The seventh member of the board was chosen as chairman by the other six members as a neutral member. When asked to serve on this board for the good of his city, state, and country, Hefner accepted. Soon after taking the post as chairman of the board, Hefner reported that businesses which displayed the Blue Eagle had to abide by the agreements they made with the federal government. He wanted it "known that the Blue Eagle agreement is no joke." The Judge promised to enforce the agreement by keeping "the eagle's wings clean and the talons sharp." Stacks of complaints were presented to the board, but Hefner

promised that "every complaint will be investigated thoroughly." And if "a real violation is shown" and "the employer is not willing to make the proper adjustments, we will take his case to Washington." Complaints that came before the board were submitted "in writing, signed before a notary public."³⁵

The first official hearing of the compliance board handled about one hundred complaints. This first meeting was held quietly and the proceedings of the meeting were not made public. Hefner made the meetings secret in order "to protect the employee who makes a complaint." In this fashion, Hefner hoped "to keep the employer from firing him or discriminating against him in any way." At the conclusion of the first meeting of the compliance board all of the offending businesses except one had "undergone a change in heart." Soon even this firm, which had given the board trouble, began "acting in a spirit of co-operation."³⁶

Nevertheless, as time passed other firms were "defying the board's power to enforce provisions of the agreements." Judge Hefner firmly told all concerned that "if they think we won't have that eagle taken up, they're just off." He informed the public that "we're going right down the line if they don't come across." "Some of them" Hefner reported, "are violating the agreement because they think they can get by with it." The Judge prophesized that "all of that will be ended when one or two eagles are taken away." The major problem facing the board was that some employers were making

"agreements among themselves on hours and wages in violation of the agreement and expecting exemptions." When employers attempted to do this they were "given a hearing before the board." Then "if he agrees to make certain adjustments, is exonerated by the board and later violates the agreement a second time, no second hearing will be granted." At that point then, Hefner would order the Blue Eagle to be taken away.³⁷

Complaints continued to flow into the office of the NRA compliance board, and Hefner probed into each case. In early November investigations were launched regarding "two cases in which it appears employees have been discharged for complaining that their employers violated the 'Blue Eagle' agreement." Judge Hefner argued that "discharge of employees for making complaints would not be tolerated." He promised "that the board would do everything in its power to protect the complaining employee." Besides protecting laborers, listening to complaints, and correcting transgressions, Hefner explained to the public the details of the policies regarding the National Recovery Administration. He attempted to keep the people of Oklahoma City informed about the rules, regulations, and decisions governing Blue Eagle agreements.³⁸ Between September and December of 1933, Hefner and the other members of the compliance board handled hundreds of complaints. In mid-December Hefner maintained that "the board had found no serious trouble in adjusting any" of these complaints. He reported that "here, as in

other cities, . . . the great majority of violations resulted from misunderstanding of the agreement." On December 31, 1933, the local compliance board of Oklahoma City was replaced with a "permanent organization of the city retailer's committee." In the year ahead this retailer's committee enforced the code of the National Recovery Administration.³⁹

Hefner was well qualified for many political offices, and as a loyal supporter of the Roosevelt administration he was considered once for a high diplomatic position. This was not the Judge's idea originally, for the two United States Senators from Oklahoma, Thomas P. Gore and Elmer Thomas, suggested to administration officials that Hefner be considered for the diplomatic corps. In July of 1933, there was "only one vacancy . . . and that is in Riga, which is the headquarters for three countries--Esthonia, Lithuania, and Latvia."⁴⁰ When Robert heard that he was being considered for a diplomatic position, he contacted the two Senators to tell them that he "greatly appreciated the confidence shown in me."⁴¹ Political considerations stood in the way of allowing Hefner to become a diplomat. Although he was qualified without a doubt, he was from the wrong region of the country. Oklahoma was not permitted at this time to have an ambassador or minister. Officials in Washington were looking for a man from a larger, more populated region that was not so decisively Democratic.⁴²

The Judge was unable to secure the diplomatic post for

himself, but he continued his interest in other important appointments. Robert Hefner, Jr., like the other children in the Hefner family, received a good education. Judge Hefner was concerned about the education of his offspring, and he sent them to schools throughout the United States so that they could reap the benefits of having contact with the various regions of the country.⁴³ After attending law school at Harvard University for one year, Robert Hefner, Jr., returned to Oklahoma where he attended law school at the University of Oklahoma. He received his law degree in 1930 and began practicing law that same year. In 1933 Robert Hefner, Jr., and his father worked jointly in an attempt to get the younger Hefner a position as Assistant United States Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma.⁴⁴ Robert was "extremely anxious to secure this appointment" and so was his father.⁴⁵ Judge Hefner used his influence to see that his son received the appointment. He confessed that his son "hardly had sufficient experience to ask for that place," but he wrote several political officials asking them to support his son's application. Unfortunately, the Judge was not able to secure this position for Robert. Nonetheless, the two lawyers continued to work for some type of appointment for Robert Hefner, Jr.⁴⁶

Hefner never lost interest in finding a good position for his son. He wanted Robert to work for the federal government in a position dealing with law, for he was "anxious to make him a great lawyer." Senator Gore forwarded

the interest of the Hefners and kept "exploring around to see if I could secure a position for you either with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation or with the General Counsel, Bureau of Internal Revenue."⁴⁷ On April 4, 1934, Robert, Hefner, Jr., received a telegram from Senator Gore which stated that he had "been appointed attorney in legal section of RFC at thirty-five hundred gross salary." He was to begin work as soon as he could reach Washington.⁴⁸ The next day, Robert notified the Senator that he accepted the position and would be in Washington as soon as possible.⁴⁹ The Reconstruction Finance Corporation had been created by an act of Congress in January of 1932. It was established by the Hoover administration to loan billions of dollars to banks, railroads, corporations, and other large business concerns. Under the policies of the New Deal, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation continued to function as a key governmental agency that loaned money to various businesses, including small ones. During the era of the New Deal, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation was managed conservatively by Jesse Jones, a shrewd politician from Texas.⁵⁰ Robert worked for the Reconstruction Finance for several years before returning to Oklahoma where he and his father practiced law together as Hefner and Hefner. Judge Hefner had been instrumental in getting the position for his son, and he continued to influence important politicians on the local, state, and national levels.⁵¹

During the years of the Great Depression, Judge Hefner

remained in close contact with several politicians. He was the type of man to offer his congratulations to every Democratic candidate nominated or elected to a particular political post. Hefner would assure the candidate that "you will be elected in the fall and that there is no chance for the Republican nominee to defeat you."⁵² He wrote such letters to Governor William H. Murray, Senator Thomas F. Gore, and Secretary of War, Patrick Hurley. To each he would "pledge my loyal support."⁵³ Such letters kept Hefner in touch with these politicians so that when a time arose when the Judge needed these men, he could call on them and know that they would listen. In 1934 Judge Hefner wrote to Senator Thomas P. Gore in order that the Senator might know Hefner's feelings about a bill that had passed the House of Representative and was about to be introduced in the Senate. It was "a bill relating to ticks and cattle that have died from the tick bite." Hefner thought it was a good bill which "would be of great benefit for the cattle men of our state." Robert was not a cattle man, but he was concerned about this important industry. He wrote the letter not from self interest, but to help the many Oklahomans associated with the cattle industry. Hefner did not tell the Senator merely to vote on the bill, but to investigate it. The Judge informed Senator Gore that "as similar law exist in both Kansas and Texas." Hence, Hefner wanted the law to apply also to the state of Oklahoma and he asked Gore to support the bill.⁵⁴

Robert Hefner was in contact with other prominent politicians during the 1930s and 1940s. He once wrote to Congressman Mike Monroney to let him know that "I am one of your boosters and good wishers." Hefner told the Congressman that "I always have been and always hope to be." Then the Judge went on to comment that "now since I have said those things, I want you to do something for me." The favor he asked was nothing more than a request for a copy of the current Congressional Directory and a copy of the Constitution of the United States. Such items were routinely sent to any of the Congressman's constituents at no charge; however, the important fact is that Hefner was in contact with this politician so that he could write him at any time and be recognized by him.⁵⁵

Judge Hefner wrote Senator Elmer Thomas and Senator Josh Lee to inform them of his opinion as to who should be nominated for the position of federal judge for the Western District of Oklahoma. Hefner asked the Senators to consider Judge Walter L. Gray because he felt that Judge Gray was extremely qualified. But although the two Senators acknowledged receipt of Hefner's letters, they disagreed with him and supported Stephen Chandler of Oklahoma City.⁵⁶ The Judge likewise wrote letters of encouragement to key political officials during World War II, including Patrick Hurley who was then the American Ambassador to China.⁵⁷ He wrote similar letters to Cordell Hull and Edward R. Stettinius during the war. In this fashion the Judge kept in con-

tact with several significant public servants.⁵⁸

Hefner was not only a practical politician who would work to remain in continual close contact with important politicians, but he also was an intellectual who was politically minded. He often would enter into political discussions with his friends regarding current and past events. Hefner was an historical buff and particularly was knowledgeable about the political history of the United States and the state of Oklahoma.⁵⁹ On November 7, 1940, Judge Hefner and Waite Phillips "started to discuss a subject which lack of time did not permit my finishing properly." These were the words of Phillips who wrote Hefner in order to present his opinion of the recent campaign. Judge Hefner was a conservative Democrat who supported the reelection of President Roosevelt; Phillips was a "liberal" Republican who supported Wendell Wilkie for the presidency. They had discussed the New Deal and the past two terms of Franklin Roosevelt while they listened to the election returns. Hefner was able to give his positive views of the New Deal and of the President, but Phillips felt he had to write the Judge regarding his negative views of both of these topics. Their discussion and Phillips' subsequent letter were deep and well thought out. Both men listened and responded in a gentlemanly fashion, and both respected the views of the other. Hefner was interested in the thoughts, beliefs, and ideas of others, and responded to the letter from Phillips. He told the prominent oil man that he and Eva had read his

letter and that they had benefitted from studying the thoughts contained in it.⁶⁰

While Judge Hefner was interested in politics during the era between 1920 and 1940, at the same time he also was a family man and a concerned citizen. The Judge had a good family life and was interested in the members of his family. He demonstrated this many times by encouraging, guiding, and helping his children through their formal education. And when they had completed several years of schooling in the classroom, Judge Hefner sent each of his children on a trip around the world. In 1930 he sent Robert and Evelyn on such a journey and in 1938 he sent William. He did this so that his children could study "the different nations of the world, their people, their history, and to get their viewpoints." He felt that only by traveling to far-off places could his children complete their "course in education."⁶¹

Hefner considered these trips as much a part of education as "book learning."⁶² When Robert and Evelyn made their trip in 1930, Robert kept a daily diary on the people, places, and things that he saw. In addition, "he took a moving picture camera and brought the trip home in moving pictures."⁶³ The Judge considered the trips for his children an investment in their education. He told each that he could "take the money which it costs to send you on this trip and invest it in property," but instead he suggested investing it in education.⁶⁴

Not only was he concerned about the well-being of his

own children, but he took an active interest in other children as well. Hefner was a thirty-second degree Mason, and he acted as deputy for the Grand Council for the district of Oklahoma. In this capacity he delivered many speeches about the better relationship that was needed in the home between a father and his children. Moreover, he worked to establish profitable programs that would help the boys in DeMolay. Judge Hefner contributed considerable time and money to worthwhile projects such as Boy Scouts, Christian churches, Young Mens Christian Associations, and Indian Consistory Building Fund, and the community chest of several cities in Oklahoma.⁶⁵

Hefner was active also in the Dad's Association of the University of Oklahoma. He "was elected president of the Dad's association in 1926" and "was the second president" of the organization.⁶⁶ As the president and as a member of the Dad's Association, the Judge aided the university by moral leadership and by raising financial support for the students, clubs, and athletics of the University of Oklahoma. Each year that Robert belonged to the association, he supported all moves to fund money into these causes that would benefit the faculty, staff, and students of the university.⁶⁷

Moreover, Judge Hefner was interested in the political environment of his state and his nation. Even while he was an active businessman, he participated in politics. In 1928 he fully supported the election of Governor Alfred E. Smith

for the presidency of the United States. But although he stumped for Smith and contributed money to his campaign, he pledged his support of Herbert Hoover once the election was over. The Judge was a strong Democrat and a loyal supporter of many of the Democratic nominees in Oklahoma. Hefner served the people of Oklahoma during those dark years of the depression as chairman of the compliance board of the National Recovery Administration. He was not paid for these labors, but he served the citizens of Oklahoma City by enforcing the agreements made by the employers with the NRA officials. Judge Hefner was an astute politician who knew the important value of writing prominent politicians. And it was through this means that he secured a job for his son with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

The Judge was more than a practical politician; he also was an intellectual. Often he would engage in political discussions with his friends and colleagues, and he would learn from their thoughts. Yet at the same time he was engaged in political affairs, he likewise was involved with family and community affairs. In 1932 Hefner decided not to seek a second term as associate justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. Nonetheless, throughout the 1930s, he was involved in politics. Indeed it was through his activities as a political man that he had become an associate justice of the state Supreme Court.

NOTES

- ¹Hefner to John Saxe, March 2, 1928, HC.
- ²Hefner to Sam Blackburn, July 25, 1950, HC.
- ³Hefner to Oklahoma League of Young Democrats, October 5, 1929, HC.
- ⁴George D. Key to Hefner, September 22, 1928, HC.
- ⁵Frank P. Johnson to Hefner, September 24, 1928, HC.
- ⁶Hefner to Everett Dunlap, September 28, 1928, HC.
- ⁷Hefner to George D. Key, September 28, 1928, HC.
- ⁸Hefner to Oscar J. Payne, October 1, 1928, HC; Frank P. Johnson to Hefner, October 3, 1928, HC; Hefner to Frank P. Johnson, October 4, 1928, HC.
- ⁹Jacob B. Moore to Hefner, October 18, 1928, HC.
- ¹⁰Hefner to Jacob B. Moore, October 19, 1928, HC; John M. Thompson to Hefner, October 23, 1928, HC; Jacob B. Moore to Hefner, October 24, 1928, HC.
- ¹¹Hefner to John M. Thompson, October 24, 1928, HC.
- ¹²Hefner to James W. Gerard, November 1, 1928, HC.
- ¹³Hefner to John M. Thompson, October 24, 1928, HC.
- ¹⁴Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., November 8, 1928, HC.
- ¹⁵Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., November 19, 1928, HC.
- ¹⁶V. O. Key, "Interpreting Election Results," in Paul F. David, ed., The Presidential Election and Transition, 1960-1961 (Washington, 1961).
- ¹⁷Ben R. F. Wood to Hefner, November 4, 1929, HC.

¹⁸S. W. Harner to Hefner, October 3, 1930, HC; Receipt, Oklahoma Democratic State Central Committee to Hefner, No Date, HC. Hefner's contribution on this occasion was one hundred dollars.

¹⁹Hefner to Charles S. Storms, July 14, 1930, HC.

²⁰Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., November 3, 1930, HC.

²¹Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., November 6, 1930, HC.

²²Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., November 10, 1934, HC.

²³Hefner to Elmer Thomas, March 11, 1931, HC.

²⁴Hefner to R. M. McCool, September 10, 1932, HC.

²⁵John F. Droutil to Hefner, September 12, 1932, HC.

²⁶Hefner to James A. Farley, November 1, 1932, HC.

²⁷Hefner to James A. Farley, November 3, 1932, HC.

²⁸Hefner to May Milam, September 12, 1934, HC.

²⁹Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., January 23, 1935, HC. Little evidence has come to light as to the reason why President Roosevelt and Judge Hefner were so close. However the President probably knew of Hefner's importance in the Democratic Party in Oklahoma and the relationship probably was built upon this fact.

³⁰Evelyn Hefner to Hefner, February 15, 1935, HC.

³¹Victor Hunt Harding to Hefner, October 18, 1940, HC.

³²Hefner, "Memorial Services for our beloved President, Franklin D. Roosevelt," April 14, 1945, HC; Eva Hefner, "Remarks made at the Memorial Services of President Franklin D. Roosevelt," April 18, 1945, HC.

³³Oklahoma City Times, November 2, 1933.

³⁴Franklin D. Roosevelt to Hefner, December 21, 1933, HC.

³⁵Oklahoma City Times, November 2, 1933.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., November 11, 1933 and November 18, 1933.

³⁸Ibid., December 1, 1933 and November 14, 1933; Daily Oklahoman, December 1, 1933.

³⁹Franklin D. Roosevelt to Hefner, December 21, 1933, HC; Oklahoma City Times, December 15, 1933.

⁴⁰Thomas P. Gore to Hefner, July 1, 1933, HC.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Elmer Thomas to Hefner, July 5, 1933, HC; Daily Oklahoman, July 18, 1933.

⁴³Hefner to Elmer Thomas, July 6, 1933, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Evelyn Hefner Combs, April 12, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Robert A. Hefner, Jr., April 13, 1973, HC.

⁴⁴Elmer Thomas to Hefner, November 27, 1933, HC.

⁴⁵Robert A. Hefner, Jr., to Thomas P. Gore, November 4, 1933, HC.

⁴⁶Hefner to Elmer Thomas, November 30, 1932, HC; George D. Key to Hefner, December 1, 1932, HC; R. M. McCool to Hefner, December 2, 1932, HC; Thomas P. Gore to Hefner, December 20, 1932, HC.

⁴⁷Hefner to Thomas P. Gore, March 15, 1934, HC.

⁴⁸Thomas P. Gore to Hefner, April 4, 1930, HC.

⁴⁹Robert A. Hefner, Jr., to Thomas P. Gore, April 5, 1934, HC.

⁵⁰William E. Leuchtenberg provides an excellent discussion of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation as well as other facets of the New Deal in his fine work, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York, 1963).

⁵¹Daily Oklahoman, April 6, 1934; Oklahoma City Times, April 5, 1934; Hefner to Stanley Reed, November 16, 1934, HC.

⁵²Hefner to F. B. Swank, August 13, 1930, HC.

⁵³Hefner to William H. Murray, August 13, 1930, HC.

⁵⁴Hefner to Thomas P. Gore, April 24, 1934, HC.

⁵⁵Hefner to Mike Monroney, June 28, 1939, HC.

⁵⁶Hefner to Elmer Thomas, July 15, 1940, HC; Elmer Thomas to Hefner, July 23, 1940, HC; Josh Lee to Hefner, July 30, 1940, HC.

⁵⁷Hefner to Patrick Hurley, November 28, 1944, HC; Patrick Hurley to Hefner, January 4, 1944, HC.

⁵⁸Hefner to Cordell Hull, November 28, 1944, HC; Hefner to Edward R. Stettinius, November 28, 1944, HC.

⁵⁹Hefner's library was filled with books about history and political science. The Judge even subscribed to the Chronicles of Oklahoma.

⁶⁰Waite Phillips to Hefner, November 8, 1940, HC; Hefner to Waite Phillips, November 20, 1940, HC.

⁶¹Hefner to Elmer Thomas, November 28, 1933, HC.

⁶²Hefner to Elmer Thomas, November 30, 1932, HC.

⁶³Hefner to Elmer Thomas, July 1, 1933, HC.

⁶⁴Hefner to Evelyn Hefner, June 24, 1929, HC; Hefner to William Hefner, June 25, 1938, HC.

⁶⁵T. Dudley Turner to Hefner, February 1, 1932, HC; H. T. Eagle to Hefner, January 25, 1932, HC; Fred French to Hefner, January 26, 1932, HC; Hefner, "Contributions of Robert A. Hefner for the year 1930, Typed Ms., No Date, HC; Daily Oklahoman, February 15, 1931.

⁶⁶Hefner to Edward F. Eagle, June 30, 1967, HC.

⁶⁷Norman Transcript, November 24, 1926 and November 6, 1927; Edward F. Eagle to Hefner, June 9, 1967, HC.

CHAPTER V

THE JUDGE

Although Robert Hefner had been called "Judge" since he moved to Ardmore, he was elected to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma in 1926. Perhaps people had called him Judge because he had made numerous decisions as a leading lawyer in southern Oklahoma; certainly he was a man of integrity and honesty as a businessman, attorney, and public servant. What ever the reason, Hefner officially earned the title when he won his race for associate justice of the Supreme Court. It was no accident that Hefner was elected to this high post, for he and his supporters worked diligently to see that he won the Democratic primary as well as the general election. The Judge was an excellent politician as well as a devoted public servant. He was a conscientious man who wanted to serve the people in the only manner that he knew--to the best of his ability.

On the bench Hefner was true to himself and to the people who helped elect him. He worked hard on the court, studying and writing opinions that became a significant part of the constitutional history of the state of Oklahoma. He served with distinction, and there was never a question about his adherence to a sound code of legal and moral

ethics. Hefner always kept his partisan leanings separated from his opinions as a justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. And he became one of the best judges the state ever knew.

Robert Hefner lived by the slogan that "energy expended in the right direction in one's avocation or profession is the thing that makes the difference in men and women." This he felt, "is the thing that makes a man or woman stand out as great."¹ And Hefner wanted to be a great man in his chosen profession of law. In order to do this he decided to run for the office of associate justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. Robert made this decision in February of 1926 when he announced publically that he would "throw his hat into the ring for the post of Justice of the State Supreme Court." When Robert made his announcement to the voters of the fifth district, the Daily Ardmoreite announced that the people were "signally honored by having a man of the talent of Mr. Hefner" offered to them for "the altar of public duty."² The fifth district included the counties of Carter, Love, Murray, Garvin, McClain, Cleveland, Grady, Stephens, and Jefferson. The paper reported that many of the people in this district felt that Hefner was "splendidly equipped to do honor to the office and the state." Furthermore, they felt that he was "the type of attorney who will add distinction and honor to the state Supreme Court." The people of Ardmore argued that he was well qualified for the position because "he knew the laws of the state of Oklahoma, and he

was fair, honest, and a man of integrity." Hefner, they maintained, had always and would continue to be "free of the taint of possible bribery or outside influence in arriving at his decisions." They considered him "a man of large affairs, broad vision, deep thinker, wealthy of experience, and tolerant in his views."³

Hefner had a large following of voters who thought that he would "add glory to the law enforcement in the state and . . . put the fear of God into the hearts of law breakers."⁴ Most important, Robert had the support of John F. Easley, the editor of the Daily Ardmoreite, in his campaign for a position on the Supreme Court. During the election Easley not only supported Hefner in the local newspaper, but he also used his skill as a writer to compose political literature which aided Hefner in his campaign.⁵

The literature that was written about Hefner during the campaign emphasized the fact that he had worked his way up from the bottom and had become a success. Most of this literature told of the back ground of a poor farm boy in West Texas who underwent tremendous hardships, but who weathered these trials and was a better man because of them. Moreover, the pamphlets correctly related Hefner's strenuous struggle to get an education and to employ what he had learned. Hefner and his campaign managers desired to let the people know who the man was rather than what his platform was. He "had just one platform and that was "that I am for everything that is right and against everything that is wrong."⁶

Few Oklahomans could argue with this platform.

Robert received the endorsement of several individuals as well as many organizations. The Bar Association of Ardmore endorsed him as soon as he announced publically that he would seek election. On July 7, 1926, at a meeting of the Carter County Bar Association, the members adopted a resolution stating that "it is incumbent upon us who have known him for many years . . . to set forth our reasons for believing that he should receive the support of the voters of this district." They resolved that "we unqualifiedly endorse Robert A. Hefner for Justice of the Supreme Court." The members supported him because he had been "a practitioner of this Bar for the past twenty years and has so conducted himself as to win the confidence and esteem of the Courts and members of the Bar." Moreover, they argued that "his Christian life has been such as to deserve the emulation of all." Hefner, they maintained, was a well-educated man, and "his legal ability has been acquired by painstaking work and close attention to his profession." They further stated that "his opinion as a member of the Supreme Court would be invaluable" because he was so familiar with "the intricate laws and decisions of the higher courts." If elected, Hefner, they remarked, would "adorn the Bench with ripe knowledge and experience and reflect great credit on his people."⁷

The Farm Congress of Ardmore also endorsed Hefner, as did the press and several private citizens. On July 16,

1926, it was "the opinion of the Ardmore Farm Congress that the said Robert A. Hefner is eminently fitted by training and experience for the said office." The Farm Congress therefore chose to "endorse and recommend the candidacy of . . . Hefner for Justice of the Supreme Court." This congress urged the voters of the fifth district to elect this man who was "a lover of clean government." Several newspapers also endorsed Hefner, including the Daily Ardmoreite. This newspaper's head editor was John Easley who was a personal friend of Hefner. According to the staff and management of the Daily Ardmoreite, "the same fidelity of purpose that has marked every step of his life will accompany him in official life." The Wynnewood News Era informed the electorate that voters "will make no mistake in voting for a man with such a record as Judge Hefner." The Sulphur Democrat likewise endorsed Hefner, arguing that at one time he had been "a barefoot country boy who, with one gallus [/suspensers/] and a hickory shirt, knocked at the school house door." This newspaper emphasized the fact that Robert received a good education because of his own hard work and determination. And the Chickasha Express stated that the "voters knowing his unquestioned qualifications for office of Justice of the Supreme Court can readily appreciate and support Judge Hefner."⁸

Prominent private individuals also supported Robert Hefner for a position on the state Supreme Court. Mrs. G. F. Smith of Norman, Oklahoma, wrote to the people of Ardmore

to "congratulate you on being fortunate enough to have such a man offer his services to the public." She felt that Robert was "worthy of your greatest confidence." Another person that supported Hefner was the presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Mr. R. E. L. Morgan. This man sent many letters to the people of the fifth district asking them to support Hefner. Morgan maintained that Robert was "a splendid Christian gentleman, and worthy of the confidence and esteem of his fellow citizens." Hefner, he argued "is held in the highest favor by the entire citizenship of this city /Ardmore/." ⁹ Morgan informed the electorate that "on August 3rd, you will have an opportunity to help select officers to serve in some of the highest positions of government." He told the people that their "vote will be just as important, in the final count, as the President of the United States." He asked them to "vote for Judge Hefner and thereby give Oklahoma the service she needs" when they go "to vote for a man to serve as Justice of the Supreme Court." ¹⁰

Those citizens of southern Oklahoma supporting Hefner were so enthused about his candidacy that they formed the Hefner Club. This was a volunteer political organization that worked to raise money and votes for Hefner. They paid for many of the pamphlets that were mailed to the people of the fifth district, and they wrote a number of letters that were sent to the electorate. The president of the Hefner Club was W. I. Cruce, who personally composed and signed the

letters mailed to the voters. In his letters to the people of the fifth district he informed the voters of Hefner's poor background, excellent education, legal experience, and governmental leadership. Cruce wrote that "the office of Justice of the Supreme Court . . . is a big office and we know it requires a good and learned man to fill it properly." He suggested that "if the courts are to be held in high esteem we must elect men who are honorable, capable, and just." Bob Hefner, he maintained, was such a man.¹¹

Hefner definitely desired the office of associate justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. Robert was a public servant who was "thoroughly committed to the doctrine that a public official should always consider service above self." However, Hefner was "much more interested in the success and welfare of the court and of the state" than he was "in himself as a member of the court." He hoped to be elected to the Supreme Court, and he promised never "to run from the responsibilities that may be placed upon him." Hefner had "the idea that a member of the Supreme Court occupied the highest, most exalted and most reserved position possible to any lawyer within the state."¹² He worked hard during the election and visited every county in his district many times. He "met thousands of voters on the streets, on the farms, and in the workshops of this district." He told the people that he had "deep appreciation for the friendships I have made and for the cheerfulness and cordiality of the people."¹³ By expending his energy "in the right direc-

rection," Robert campaigned "a little better than the other fellow" so that the voters would "be looking to him for his services."¹⁴

The Democratic Party was the majority party in the state of Oklahoma in 1926, and Hefner was a die-hard Democrat. Hence, winning the primary election was crucial, because the man who won the Democratic primary usually won the election. In this primary election for the Democratic nomination for associate justice of the Supreme Court, "there were two good men running against me and I received more votes . . . than both of my opponents." He ran against Cham Jones of Duncan and Charles Thompson of Pauls Valley.¹⁵

Hefner received a total of 1124 votes and carried seven of the nine counties in his district. Jones received a total of 508 votes, while Thompson secured 337.¹⁶ C. G. Moore of Purcell won the Republican nomination in the fifth district for associate justice of the Supreme Court in Oklahoma, and ran against Hefner in the general election. In a district that was "normally very democratic" Moore had little chance to win the election.¹⁷ And when the final votes were tallied, Moore was defeated decisively. Robert Hefner had become the Judge.¹⁸

After Robert won this election, it was reported in the Daily Oklahoman that "the Supreme Court after the January inauguration will have a new member whose interest in the state's welfare is as broad as the doctrines of the scriptures."¹⁹ The Daily Ardmoreite reported that when the citi-

zens of Ardmore "loaned him to the whole state to serve as associate Justice of the Supreme Court," everyone in that fine city knew they were "sending to the high court one of the finest combinations of ability and character that ever has graced the supreme tribunal of this or any other state."²⁰ Hefner's election was no accident, however, for he had worked very diligently to win a seat on the bench of Oklahoma's high court. Hefner had used his party label well and had stressed to the voters of southern Oklahoma after the primary to "forget any differences that may have arisen during the campaign and get solidly behind the nominees of the Party." Several people were "active in the interest of Judge Hefner and had charge of his campaign." These politically minded individuals were "busy from early morn until late at night enthusiastically looking after the interests of Judge Hefner."²¹

Indeed, Hefner was more than "an old country boy" who just happened to "reach the Supreme Court." He was an excellent politician who wanted to perform a service to the public of this state. Robert Hefner was inaugurated as justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma in January of 1927, thus launching his career as a judge.²²

When the Judge came to the court, the law provided for nine justices on the Supreme Court. These men had been paid \$6000 a year in 1926, but in 1927 their pay was increased to \$7500. Hefner's term of office was for six years, so he would serve until January of 1933. The justices handled an

average of one thousand cases a year most of which were "appealed from the district courts of this state." Many of the cases that came before the Supreme Court between 1927 and 1933 were complicated "on account of the fact that land titles of the state have not been settled and from the fact that many portions of the state are covered by oil fields." This situation required the high court to cope with "lots of litigation, not only in number of suits filed but millions of dollars in money are involved in these suits." For these reasons the court did "not get out a large number of opinions."²³ Nevertheless, Hefner was able to write a total of five hundred and four opinions between 1927 and 1933. All these opinions were significant when they were given, and some have remained important in the legal history of Oklahoma.²⁴

The most important duty of Justice Hefner while a member of the Supreme Court was to hear arguments for the defense and the prosecution and to judge fairly when he made a decision. The nine judges all heard the case before them, and the chief justice would then appoint one of the associate justices or himself to write an opinion on that particular case. Once the opinion had been written, the judges would file into a closed chamber and sit around a long wooden table. Then the justice who had written the opinion would read his decision, and the other judges would comment on it. After a discussion of the opinion and after all the justices were satisfied with any additions, corrections, or

deletions, they would vote to accept the opinion. This procedure was followed by Judge Hefner over five hundred times as he sat before his colleagues and read his opinions. He struggled to be objective in all cases and to live up to the high ideals that he had set for himself.²⁵ He was a religious man whose religion he employed in judicial affairs. He wanted always to "hear the causes between your bretheren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother." Hefner gathered several such sayings about objectivity, fairness, and justice, and he tried to abide by them while he sat on the bench of the highest court in Oklahoma.²⁶

Not long after Hefner left the Supreme Court, he sat down at his large oak desk and reflected on some of the most important cases in which he had rendered opinions. At that time he wrote that the most significant case that he had handled was Wentz vs Thomas. Lew Wentz was a wealthy oilman from Ponca City, Oklahoma, and a Republican who had been appointed chairman of the state highway commission by Governor William Holloway. In years prior to this appointment, there had been a state commission of five individuals to head the highway commission. While Henry S. Johnston was governor, the legislature of the state of Oklahoma changed the law relating to this five-member commission, instituting a new law calling for a three-member commission. This commission of three was to be filled with two members from one political party and one from the other party. Wentz was chosen the Republican member of the state highway commis-

sion. The law which established this commission stipulated that the "terms of the commissioners should be six years and that they should be removed only for cause and then by a court order." This was the setting for the political and judicial struggle which developed between Governor William Murray and Lew Wentz.²⁷

Murray was a staunch Democrat who thought very little of Republicans--especially a Republican who was functioning as a highway commissioner. Murray's blatant dislike for Wentz began during the gubernatorial primary in 1930 when "Alfalfa Bill" pledged to remove Wentz and Republicans like him if he was elected. After Murray's election his first move against Wentz was to go before the Oklahoma legislature and ask for a repeal of the state law which had established the three-man highway commission. The governor asked that the old law "under which members of the Commission served at the pleasure of the Governor" be reinstated. He went so far as to initiate a bill and have Representative Nat Henderson sponsor the legislation. Of course, the administration supported this legislation and worked diligently to rally its forces in the legislature behind the proposal." Not long after this first bill was defeated, the administration sent a similar bill through the state assembly again sponsored by Nat Henderson.²⁸

S. C. Boswell of Durant, Oklahoma, and L. C. Hutson of Chickasha, Oklahoma, were the two Democrats serving on the highway commission with Wentz. When it became apparent that

the governor wanted a highway commission composed of his own appointees, these two old loyal Democrats found it politically expedient to resign. Murray naturally hoped that the Republican on the commission would follow the example set by the Democrats. However, Wentz disappointed the governor and remained at his post. Moreover, Wentz added to the political tension by frequently being "at cross purposes with his two Democratic colleagues." He "opposed practically every suggestion made by Governor Murray concerning Highway Department policies and administration." Wentz committed other acts that were designed to defy the governor, many of these of a nature destructive to the growth and development of the state highway commission. In February and March of 1932 Wentz "refused to sign the department payroll." He opposed a plan made by Governor Murray to construct a sound system of highways that would link the rural areas with market centers. This program would have been of benefit to Oklahoma farmers. Wentz also opposed the administration's suggestion for the state to purchase cement to be used in the construction of bridges and highways. In retaliation, the two Democrats began working against Wentz and would ignore the Republican in departmental matters. Governor Murray had "contended all along that the act of Legislature under which Wentz was appointed was unconstitutional." He believed this "for the reason that it provided that terms of Commissioners should overlap succeeding administrations." He argued "that members of the Commission as well as all other appointive

officers should have terms coterminous with that of the Governor and should serve at his pleasure."²⁹

On April 1, 1932, Governor Murray attempted "to remove Wentz permanently from the Commission by Executive Order of Removal." He replaced Wentz with Miss Maude Thomas of Beaver, Oklahoma. Then he ordered officers from "the State Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification" to be "stationed at the door of the office, formerly occupied by Wentz." These officers prevented Wentz from entering the office but allowed Miss Thomas to occupy the room. The situation remained unchanged until "the guards were withdrawn when a court order was issued, restraining Wentz from interfering with Miss Thomas in her discharge of the duties of the office." Wentz did not attempt to enter the office; instead he decided to fight the matter in a lawful manner. Litigation regarding the case, which culminated in Hefner's landmark decision, began when Miss Thomas asked the district court of Oklahoma County to grant her a restraining order against Wentz. She asked the court to prohibit "Wentz from interfering with her in the performance of her duties." This application for a restraining order "opened up the entire question of the Constitutionality of the present highway law and the right of the Governor to remove Wentz by Executive Order." Also involved in the case was the question as to whether the governor had the constitutional right to appoint Miss Thomas to succeed Wentz.³⁰

After Miss Thomas initially was granted the restraining

order, Wentz appealed the decision in the district court of Oklahoma County. Eventually the case was appealed to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, and the majority opinion was written by Judge Robert A. Hefner. Like Murray, the Judge was an ardent Democrat. However, he did not allow his partisanship to influence his decision in this case. In accordance with the opinion of the Judge, the court decided to vest "title to the office and right of possession thereto in Lew H. Wentz," and Maude O. Thomas was "restrained from interfering with defendant's possession of the office."³¹ The decision by Hefner was supported by Chief Justice E. F. Lester and Justices James B. Cullison, Charles Swindall, Edwin R. McNeill, Fletcher Riley and W. H. Kornegay. The only dissenting vote came from J. W. Clark; Justice Thomas G. Andrew was absent from the court on September 23 and did not cast a vote. This decision by the Supreme Court "denied the power of the governor to remove a member of the commission and upheld the law of 1929 to prevent the governor from removing a member." The decision also ousted Maude Thomas from the chairmanship of the state highway commission. The decision by the justices was explosive, for as soon as Governor Murray heard the decision he exclaimed that "Lew Wentz is not chairman and never will be." At the time of this statement, "Alfalfa Bill" was preparing a political speech in Stillwell, Oklahoma. He proclaimed to his audience that "God Almighty would not forgive me if I had not removed Lew Wentz."³²

Governor Murray felt that as the chief executive of Oklahoma he had the constitutional right to appoint and to remove whomever he wanted from the state highway commission. He based his argument on a case entitled Myers v. United States, where by the Supreme Court of the United States decided that the President had "power and control over all of the executive branches of government and the heads of all executive departments." Hence the President could remove one of his cabinet members if he so desired. But Hefner pointed out that "there is a fundamental difference between the executive powers of the President of the United States under the Federal Constitution, and the executive powers of the governor under the state Constitution." In the state of Oklahoma "the executive authority is vested in a Governor, Lieutenant Governor, secretary of the state, . . . and other officers provided by law." Therefore, the executive authority in Oklahoma was composed of more than one executive. Moreover, the constitution of the state directed "the Legislature to establish a department of highways." In addition, the constitution "grants to it the legislature the power to provide how the commissioners thereof shall be appointed, and how and upon what conditions they may be removed from office." Under the provisions of the constitution the governor did not have the right to appoint or remove commissioners from the state highway commission. The legislature of Oklahoma had established a highway commission in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. The law of

1929 relating to the highway commission "provided that any commissioner appointed should hold his office for the term . . . and that he could be removed from office only by a court of competent jurisdiction." Hefner argued that Wentz was never legally removed from his office because he had been replaced without a hearing and without his day in court." Wentz, Hefner maintained, had been removed without just cause by a governor who had no constitutional right to do so. Therefore Hefner ruled against Maude Thomas and reversed the decision of the lower court. Wentz was reinstated as the chairman of the state highway commission of Oklahoma.³³

Judge Hefner's opinion was extremely newsworthy in Oklahoma; most of the newspapers in the state carried a report of the decision. The Daily Oklahoman gave a full account of the development of the case, Governor Murray's opinion, and the opinion written by Judge Hefner. The Tulsa Tribune stated that three achievements were accomplished by Hefner's opinion. First, the decision would "end forever the uncertainty as to the legislature's right to restrict the governor's arbitrary right to discharge appointees." Second, the case would show whether governor was going "to administer his office according to the law, or . . . seek to override the law and govern the state by arbitrary force." And, finally, the Tulsa Tribune speculated that the decision would "permit the highway commission . . . to end the long quarrel with the federal bureau of public roads." In addi-

tion, the highway commission could "secure \$6,000,000 now available in federal aid funds, and begin a big construction program that will give work to thousands of unemployed."³⁴

The Oklahoma City Times reported that the governor felt that the Supreme Court was wrong, and the reason for his belief was that Murray thought of himself as "the state, the executive, legislative and judicial branches." This newspaper speculated that since the court of final appeal had ruled against the governor, he would "campaign for the defeat of the judges and the election of a court that will do his bidding." However, "the people" the Tribune reported, "are satisfied with the status of the Supreme Court and its legal authority under our state constitution."³⁵

Most of the newspapers in the state supported the decision of the Supreme Court, and most of them praised Judge Hefner for writing such an excellently reasoned opinion. The Norman Transcript reported that the Wentz decision was "of tremendous importance in upholding the cause of orderly, constitutional government in Oklahoma." The decision, the Transcript stated, "will help restore the faith of the citizenship of Oklahoma in the effectiveness of our form of government."³⁶ The Frederick Leader's head editor had been appointed by Governor Murray to the state board of education, and his opinion of the decision reflects this fact. He reported that "the opinion undoubtedly strips the Governor of much political power and prestige." He added that the decision would "enhance the prestige of the legisla-

ture." The Chickasha Express emphasized the high points of the decision and remarked that inasmuch as the Supreme Court was the highest judicial authority in Oklahoma, the decision should be obeyed.³⁷

The Tulsa World maintained that because of the Wentz decision there will be a restoration "of sound public policy in highway progress and distinct rebuke for dictatorial government." The Judge's opinion, the Tulsa World stated, was "vital, not only for its rescue of the highway department and the public service generally from interference, but it carries an implied rebuke or warning against any usurpation of power." In other words, the decision implied that other branches of government should beware not to make "any attempt to tell the Supreme Court what to do."³⁸

The Ponca City News, the Shawnee News, and the Holdenville News all voiced their approval of Judge Hefner's opinion. Other newspapers approving of Hefner's decision included the Altus Times Democrat, the Nowata Star, the McAlester News Capital, and the Sapulpa Herald. The Blackwell Tribune disapproved the decision and supported Governor Murray in his campaign against Wentz. Nonetheless, the press in most Oklahoma towns generally supported the decision of the Judge. And for the most part the Wentz decision was a popular one. Some citizens argued that "Wentz made a good highway commissioner and there was no reason, other than personal spleen, for his removal." Indeed some suggested that "the governor made a mistake in making an issue

of the Ponca City man's removal." Others argued that "the best thing the governor can do now is to let Wentz serve out his term without interference."³⁹

Another opinion which the Judge wrote, and which he felt was of significance to the constitutional history of the state, was one entitled Bank of Commerce and Trust Company v. Trigg et al. This case was appealed from the district court in McCurtain County and involved the passing of an estate from a man to his wife after his death. The plaintiff in the case was the wife of Jerome B. York, deceased; her name was Elizabeth York. Before the case came to the Supreme Court, however, Elizabeth York died. The Bank of Commerce and Trust Company was appointed executor of her estate. Mary York Trigg and Robert York became the defendants in this case; they were the daughter and son of Jerome and Elizabeth York. According to the last will and testament of Jerome York, the defendants were appointed the trustees of \$70,000. They were instructed to invest this sum "in a safe way for his wife's benefit." His wife was to receive \$300 per month from the money earned from the invested.

Problems arose when Elizabeth contended that as Jerome York's wife she was entitled to the money granted to her in his will as well as the amount of the estate that was legally granted to her under the statutes of the state of Oklahoma. If this was the case she would receive much more than \$300 per month. But "the defendants contended that the set-

ting aside of the \$70,000 in trust for the support of the widow was in lieu of her right to take one third of the estate under the statute." Therefore the defendants argued that Elizabeth York could not take both the amount designated in the will as well as one third of the estate as granted by her husband's will. It became the duty of the Supreme Court "to determine whether or not the widow under this will had the right to take both under it and under the statute of the state."⁴⁰

On November 15, 1927, Judge Hefner read his opinion of the case to the other justices. Hefner decided that "Jerome B. York intended to dispose of all of the property owned or held by him at the time of his death." In his will, Hefner pointed out, York clearly showed "how and to whom all of said property should go." Moreover, the Judge found it very apparent that Jerome York definitely intended "that his widow, Elizabeth York, should take under the will of \$70,000 bequeathed in trust for her estate support during her life as her distributive share of the estate, and no more." Hefner further pointed out that Jerome York never intended that she should receive one third of the estate as well as the trust fund. And since she could not take both, she had to elect one or the other. The case was complicated by the fact that on January 7, 1926, Elizabeth York died without having elected between one or the other. The question was then raised as to whether or not the election should pass to her heirs.⁴¹

Basing his opinion of this question on a prior case in Indiana, Judge Hefner maintained that "the right to elect is a personal right, and does not pass to heirs." Since the widow did not affirmatively elect to accept the amount set aside for her in the will, "it follows that one third of the estate of Jerome B. York was inherited by her as a forced heir, and on her death the same passed to her heirs."

This case was significant because it set a precedent in Oklahoma. For the first time in the state the law held that "when the widow is put to an election between accepting the provisions of a will or taking as an heir under the statute of descent" she must elect between one or the other. And in those cases where the widow does not make a positive choice between the two options she is "forced to take as an heir under the law of descent."⁴²

Judge Hefner wrote other opinions for the Supreme Court which were not as detailed or as important as the cases of Wentz v. Thomas and Bank of Commerce and Trust Company v. Trigg et al., but which were significant. One such case involved the financial status of a man and his wife. It was reported that "for the first time in history the Oklahoma Supreme Court has passed upon the financial status of a married couple." The ruling by Judge Hefner was "a precedent, at least in this state for lower courts to follow in settling the many squabbles between couples arising over money matters." Hefner held "that when the husband has not separate estate and the wife has one, and the husband is infirm,

it is the duty of the wife to take care of her mate out of her estate." However, a wife always was entitled to sufficient food to maintain her, and more than sufficient clothes to enable her to appear decently clad. Moreover, a wife was "entitled to those other comforts and luxuries befitting her husband's station in life." He pointed out that "what would be luxuries for the wife of a man with a salary of \$2,000 a year would become necessities for the wife of a man with a salary of \$50,000 a year." One newspaper reporter ridiculously remarked, "now, if the learned justice can only discover a method by which the wife of the man with \$2,000 a year can be persuaded to keep her budget within that figure, instead of stretching it to \$5,000 or \$10,000 a year." The reporter cleverly commented that if Judge Hefner could do this then "he will have completed the cycle of a most wise and just decision."⁴³

In November of 1927 Judge Hefner wrote the majority opinion for a case entitled Myer v. Garland. The case involved a partnership between two oilmen from Tulsa, F. S. Myer and R. F. Garland. Myer was "a former partner of Garland, who is known as the discover of the famous Seminole pool." This oil pool was one of the best ever discovered in the state of Oklahoma, and Garland made many millions of dollars from the wells that were sunk on this property. At one time Myer "and Garland jointly owned leases in the Seminole area and in Harper county, Kansas." These two partners began to sink a well in the Seminole region and drilled it

to a depth of approximately 1,000 feet.

At that time Myer and Garland decided to dissolve their partnership, Garland to receive the Seminole property and Myer to receive the Kansas tracts. Trouble arose, after the partnership had been dissolved, when the well in the Seminole region began flowing oil. The well came in at a rate of seven thousand barrels a day. Within a month after the discovery was made, Myer filed suit against Garland in order to get a portion of the money earned from the Seminole lease. Myer based his legal suit on his contention that "at the time the partnership division was made he was told the Seminole well did not look good." He charged that he had "agreed to the division after misrepresentations had been made." In the original case brought before the district court, Judge R. D. Hudson "held that no misrepresentations had been made and at the time the division was made it was fair to both sides." Hence Hudson ruled against Myer. When the appeal case came before the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, Judge Hefner wrote the opinion that upheld each detail of Judge Hudson's ruling.⁴⁴

While Judge Hefner was on the Supreme Court he wrote a total of 504 opinions, and at the time that his "term expired I had on my docket four cases that I had written." Because there was not sufficient time remaining in his term, Hefner "returned them to Chief Justice E. F. Lester without having had the privilege of reading them." The cases described above demonstrated the workings and writings of Judge

Hefner while he was a member of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. Hefner was proud of the fact that he had served on the court, and upon completion of his term he wrote his son informing him that "it was my privilege to work as hard or harder than I ever had during any six years of my life." Indeed Hefner had worked hard and had compiled an average of eighty-four opinions per year. This was a commendable achievement for a man who wanted to "let the Hefner name go down in history in a creditable manner." The Judge's actions always were legal, and there was never a taint of scandal associated with his name. Such was not the case with all the justices who served with him.⁴⁵

In 1929 "the Supreme Court was investigated by the Legislature and impeachment proceedings were voted by the Legislature against three of the Justices."⁴⁶ The three Judges were Chief Justice Charles W. Mason, Justice Fletcher Riley, and Justice J. W. Clark. A total of "thirty-one impeachment charges against three Supreme Court justices were . . . presented to the senate for ouster action." The House of Representatives charged these judges with gross actions against the people of the state. Some of the charges included bribery, coercion, misquotation of facts from other cases, incompetency, interference with criminal proceedings, conspiracy, and corruption. Once the impeachment proceedings were initiated in the House, the Senate was obligated to try the three judges. The Senate chose "a presiding judge from its membership as all court members /of

the state Supreme Court⁷ are disqualified by law."⁴⁷ The trial for the three justices began on April 15, 1929, and continued into June.

During the trial and investigation, Hefner remained calm and confident. He had done nothing illegal and did not fear an investigation. "After the Legislature had adjourned," Hefner recalled a few years later that, "Mr. Patterson of Wewoka, who was the Chairman of the Investigating Committee, wrote me a letter . . . in which he stated that out of the entire investigation there was not a scintilla of evidence that anywhere reflected upon my conduct."⁴⁸

Judge Robert A. Hefner had served with distinction, honor, and integrity during his six years on the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. His race for this high office had been fair, and he had worked hard to win the opportunity to sit on the bench. Hefner's election to the court was no accident, for the Judge and his political associates spent time and money to win the office. Once he was elected, Hefner studied hard to learn the intricate workings of the court, and he expended many hours writing opinions. The Wentz case, the Garland case, and the Trigg case were examples of the 504 cases for which the Judge wrote opinions, more "than any Justice has ever written during a six year period before or since Statehood." And during the six years that he served on the court, even when a dark shadow hovered over the Supreme Court in 1929, no scandal ever was associated with the name of Judge Hefner.⁴⁹

Robert was proud of the fact that "the Hefner name is written into the Legal History of this state and will necessarily stand there so long as the books are printed." He had conducted himself at all times so that "the Hefner name" would be recalled "in history in a creditable manner."⁵⁰ It was through politics that the Judge came to office, but as a member of the Supreme Court he attempted to separate his personal partisanship from his official position. The Wentz case best exemplifies this fact, for though Judge Hefner was a Democrat and Lew Wentz was a Republican, and though the Democratic governor brought verbal pressure on the court, Hefner decided against the governor. He did this because the constitution was clear, and he could not in good conscience rule in favor of Governor Murray on the grounds of partisanship. Hefner always kept his politics separate from the business of the court. However, the Judge was interested in politics, for Hefner was a political man. However, as a justice of the Supreme Court, Hefner had not yet performed his most significant service to the citizens of Oklahoma City, the state of Oklahoma, and the United States. The Judge was about to embark on a new political career which would make him the Mayor of the capital city.

NOTES

¹Hefner, Typed Ms.

²Daily Ardmoreite, February 24, 1926.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Pamphlet, "Robert A. Hefner of Ardmore: Democratic Candidate for Justice of the Supreme Court," 1926, HC.

⁶Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., March 8, 1928, HC.

⁷Pamphlet, "Robert A. Hefner of Ardmore: Democratic Candidate for Justice of the Supreme Court," 1926, HC.

⁸Ibid.

⁹R. E. L. Morgan to Hefner, March 2, 1926, HC.

¹⁰Mrs. R. E. L. Morgan to Hefner, March 2, 1926, HC.

¹¹W. I. Cruce to Dear Friend, June 16, 1926, HC; W. I. Cruce to the Voters of the Fifth Judicial District, July 27, 1926, HC.

¹²Hefner to Roy M. Johnson, September 26, 1926, HC.

¹³Pamphlet, "Robert A. Hefner of Ardmore: Democratic Candidate for Justice of the Supreme Court," 1926, HC.

¹⁴Hefner, Typed Ms.

¹⁵Hefner to Thomas P. Gore, June 14, 1933, HC. Also see the tally sheet for the primary election in the fifth district for the justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, HC. While Hefner was a member of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, he trusted his business to Earl Brown, a fine lawyer in Ardmore. The Judge attempted to separate his business and judicial responsibilities in this manner so there would never be any question about a conflict of interest.

¹⁶Daily Ardmoreite, August 5, 1926.

¹⁷Ibid., August 12, 1926.

¹⁸Ibid., November 28, 1926.

¹⁹Daily Oklahoman, December 3, 1926.

²⁰Daily Ardmoreite, December 14, 1926.

²¹Ibid., August 12, 1926.

²²Hefner to C. S. Potts, November 14, 1930, HC;
Hefner to Sarah J. Hefner, January 19, 1927, HC.

²³H. K. Warren to Hefner, January 21, 1931; Hefner
to H. K. Warren, January 29, 1931, HC.

²⁴Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., May 26, 1933, HC.
The first case the Hefner wrote as a member of the state
Supreme Court was Ponca City Milling Company vs. John Dean
Estate.

²⁵Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with
Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

²⁶Hefner, Typed Ms.

²⁷Rex Harlow, "Editorial Comment on Highway Decision,"
Harlow's Weekly (October 1, 1932), pp. 8-11.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Pacific Reporter, XV (St. Paul, 1933), p. 72.

³²Daily Oklahoman, September 24, 1932; Tulsa World,
September 24, 1932; Tulsa Tribune, September 24, 1932; Daily
Ardmoreite, September 24, 1932.

³³Pacific Reporter, XV (St. Paul, 1933), pp. 65-66, 70.

³⁴Tulsa Tribune, September 24, 1932.

³⁵Oklahoma City Times, September 24, 1932.

³⁶Norman Transcript, September 24, 1932.

³⁷Chickasha Express, September 24, 1932.

³⁸Tulsa World, September 24, 1932.

³⁹Lawton Constitution, September 24, 1932; Daily Oklahoman, September 24, 1932; Ponca City News, September 24, 1932.

⁴⁰Pacific Reporter, CCLXXX (St. Paul, 1929), pp. 563-564..

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., May 26, 1933, HC.

⁴³Tulsa World, September 14, 1928.

⁴⁴Ibid., November 23, 1927.

⁴⁵Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., May 26, 1933, HC.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Daily Oklahoman, March 27, 1929.

⁴⁸Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., May 26, 1933, HC; Hefner to William Hefner, January 14, 1931, HC; Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., April 3, 1929, HC.

⁴⁹Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., May 26, 1933, HC.

⁵⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

THE JUDGE BECOMES THE MAYOR

In 1932 Judge Robert A. Hefner deliberately chose not to seek another term as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, but he continued to be involved in the political affairs of his state and nation during the remaining years of the depression. Then in 1939 he re-entered public life because several citizens urged him to run for the office of mayor of Oklahoma City. In this campaign the Judge actively stumped for himself and even stated his platform and ideas before the citizens of the community on radio. He won both the primary and general elections, and he took the oath of office in April of 1939. The drive and determination that had made Hefner a success in life, the same ingredients that were found in the pioneers that had tamed the American frontier, won him the election.

As mayor Hefner helped celebrate the golden anniversary of Oklahoma City, and his personality best exemplified the spirit of the Oklahoma frontier. Indeed, it was with this same personality that Hefner launched his first term as mayor of the capital city, and with this spirit of individualism, he was able to initiate and execute many policies that he felt would benefit Oklahoma City. But Hefner could

have accomplished little by himself. For this reason he worked with individuals and organizations so that the city would be a better place to live. He spent a year struggling to end the factionalism that had hurt Oklahoma City during the depression, and he was successful in his efforts.

Moreover, he worked cooperatively with individuals and organizations in support of programs that would aid the public. The Mayor was concerned especially about the well-being of the children of the community, and he gave of his time and money to help these young people. Before Judge Hefner could accomplish the goals that he had, however, he first had to be elected mayor.

During most of the decade of the 1930s, Oklahoma City was plagued by poor city government. The city council usually was split and city government was at a standstill. Few bond elections were passed, and few improvements were made.¹ In the early months of 1939, Frank Martin, who then was mayor of the city, announced publically that he would not seek reelection. When this occurred the city fathers, composed primarily of prominent business, social, and political leaders, began their search for a good candidate to run for mayor. These urban leaders selected "a committee of fifteen (15) of our most prominent citizens" and told this select group "to agree upon a candidate to succeed Mayor Martin." Judge Edgar S. Vaught was chairman of the committee; other members included Frank Martin, Fred Jones, B. D. Eddy, and Dr. W. R. White. The committee held

meetings for about two weeks, but "when a name was mentioned somebody always objected." The group continued to meet but unable to decide on a candidate.²

One cool evening in February of 1939, Frank Martin went to the home of his father-in-law, Judge Thomas H. Doyle of the Court of Criminal Appeals, to have dinner. During the course of the evening, Martin told Doyle the the committee could not decide upon a candidate for mayor. To this Judge Doyle declared that he knew of a good man for the job. He suggested that the committee approach Judge Robert A. Hefner and ask him to run for mayor. The next day Martin met with his group; when they were asked to raise their hands if they were in favor of approaching Hefner, "every hand went up." Judge Vaught then telephoned Hefner and told him that a committee wanted to see him, and Hefner agreed to see them. At that time the Judge "had never thought about being mayor." The committee tried to make him believe that he was "the only man in town who did fit the picture." Hefner, "of course, did not believe them." The Judge had little time to make his decision, however, for the next day was the last on which a candidate could file for office. At ten o'clock the next day, Hefner filed for the office of mayor. Not long afterward, he reported to his friend, Waite Phillips that he "was just as surprised at entering the race as you, or many of my other friends were, but when a group of your friends say you fit the picture and insist that you should undertake the job, it is rather dif-

ficult to decline."3

A few hours after Judge Hefner agreed to run, the campaign began. E. K. Gaylord supported Hefner in this election, and the publisher worked to see that the Judge got good press coverage. The Oklahoma City Times carried a picture of Hefner on its front page just two hours after he had made his decision. He then had only ten days in which to launch his campaign before the primary election, and he and the committee of concerned citizens immediately went to work. Once he entered the race, the Judge was determined to win; he never expected any outcome but victory.⁴ A few days after announcing his candidacy, Hefner stated that "it looks like the campaign is coming along in fine shape but you cannot tell." He felt that "the better class of people, of course, are for me, but there may be more of the other class, I do not know, so, we can't tell how the election will come out until it is over."⁵

A cross section of all types of people were reported to have supported the election of Judge Hefner. In fact, more than one hundred people wrote the Judge informing him of their decision to support him in the election. One gentleman wrote that he had "long felt that eventually the voters of this city would turn their support to the right sort of man, a Christian gentleman, in whom they would invest the honors of this important office."⁶ Another man said he would support the Judge because he would administer city affairs "with an eye . . . to the welfare of all the

people of Oklahoma City."7 E. E. Barbee, who had a case come before the Supreme Court in which Hefner wrote the majority opinion against Barbee--and which cost Barbee a great deal of money--nonetheless wrote over 125 business executives in Oklahoma City that "the Judge decided against me because he honestly thought I was wrong (Maybe I was)." For this reason Barbee told the businessmen that "we need that sort of man as mayor."8

Hefner was not a man to sit back and watch during a political campaign. Instead, he actively sought the office and worked diligently to see that he won the primary election. On March 13 a large rally was held at Slaughter Hall by the supporters of Robert Hefner. The committee to elect Judge Hefner made this meeting of supporters an old-fashioned political rally. They served free Coca Cola, free beer, and free hot dogs. Before Hefner's supporters were allowed to indulge in this savory delight, however, they listened to several fiery speeches about the virtues, the honesty, and the character of Robert Hefner.9

Hefner also sought the support of the churches in Oklahoma City, and eventually he received the endorsement of many ministers and from all denominations (Protestant, Catholic and Jewish). He was supported openly by the Oklahoma City Star, at that time a newspaper sponsored by several churches in the city.10 The Daily Oklahoman and the Oklahoma City Times both backed his election. These newspapers even printed letters to the editor which were

favorable to the Judge. Most statements in the press were similar to the one which stated that Judge Hefner was the "cleanest man who has ever been in public life." One declared that if Hefner was elected "the grafters, bribers, squanderers, and lawless elements will receive no protection from him." W. J. Milburn suggested that "all good citizens, men, women, white, and colored; Democrats, Republicans, and Socialist, who wish to see bribery . . . bootlegging, gambling, drunken driving, and vices of other kinds, banned" should "roll up their sleeves and get in the fight to elect Judge Hefner."¹¹

Women as well as men worked in the campaign to elect Judge Hefner as mayor of Oklahoma City. One woman, Ruth Spencer, wrote a poem about the election of the Judge which circulated through the city. She entitled this "The Man for Mayor." The basic theme of the poem was that "ole Judge Hefner" was an honest and upright man.¹² Some businessmen supported Hefner to the extent that they sent bulletins to their employees informing their workers that "we very strongly urge your support and votes for Judge R. A. Hefner, candidate for mayor."¹³ Such followers were sought out by the Judge. Indeed, he and the committee that had drafted him organized their forces so well that the election machinery ran very smoothly. Several people called and asked if they could help Hefner win the election. Each person that made such a request was put on a list, as was any work preference they voiced. In this fashion Hefner

compiled a list of more than five hundred names. Some of these people asked the Judge to make an appearance before their civic, social, or honorary organization. And Hefner agreed to do a great deal of public speaking, for it was to his advantage to get as much public exposure as possible.¹⁴

Most of his speeches before these groups were impromptu, but a few of his speeches were written before delivery. In one of these speeches, made before the primary election, he told his audience that he had decided to run for the office of mayor only after he had made "a mature consideration of the needs of that office, my own experience and qualifications, and the temper of the people." He told one crowd of concerned Oklahomans that he would consider it an honor, privilege, and an opportunity to serve the people of Oklahoma City. He reminded the voters of his practical political experience as mayor of Ardmore, as president of the school board in Ardmore, and as associate justice of the state Supreme Court. He promised "to work in agreement with those who were chosen to serve with me." He was confident that he could "work harmoniously, for the development of our community." The Judge continued to stress the fact that he would "avoid factional strife, and confusion of petty politics."

Hefner's sentiments about the New Deal were apparent in this speech, for he guaranteed "a program of useful work" for all and said he would cooperate "with certain agencies of the Federal Government." Because "unemployment remains

one of our major problems," Hefner pledged "to see that every man and woman, who is willing to work, and is able to do so, shall have a part, in a federal-municipal work program." He proposed "to relieve the unemployment distress of our people" by solving "the problem of an adequate water supply." The Judge concluded this speech by stating that "together we can make this a better city in which to live, and worship . . . , to rear and educate our children . . . , to work and to play."¹⁵

The primary election was held on March 21, 1939. The top contenders in the race were Robert Hefner and Edward Hall. The Judge received a plurality of votes cast in the election with 15,038; Hall came in second with a total of 11,149. Merely because he led the primary election, Hefner did not sit back and allow the campaign to run itself. Rather in the run-off election Judge Hefner campaigned with more vigor than he had during the primary. At this time he was sixty-five years old, but his age did not dampen his spirit, drive, and determination to win. Enthusiastically he spoke to the Jeffersonian Club, the Ministerial Alliance, and the Methodist Church, campaigning as he had done many times in his life. He spent many hours contacting people and talking with each of them. Not only did he visit the white citizens of the city, but he also campaigned among the black citizens. Among the latter were John Dinwiddy, a black who had worked as a janitor for many years at Capitol High School. Moreover, he asked and

received the support of Reverend C. K. Brown, who also was black. The Judge campaigned among working men as well. One such individual was Clarence (Steve) Stephenson, an iron worker in Oklahoma City. Stephenson had worked for the Judge on many occasions and felt that "Hefner was a good, honest man with a fine Christian background." Stephenson, like many men in Oklahoma City who were tradesmen, supported the election of Robert Hefner.¹⁵

During the campaign Hefner was criticized by those who supported Ed Hall. They argued that Hefner's forces had spent hundreds of dollars as compared to the small amount spent by Hall's forces. Judge Hefner disagreed, declaring that after analysing the amount each contender spent for radio time, Hall had used 125 minutes as compared to Hefner's 40 minutes. Robert argued that "in other words the opposition has used more than three times as much radio time as has been used by me and my friends." However, Hefner failed to compare the other expenses incurred during the campaign, such as newspaper advertisements, posters, pamphlets, dinners, and transportation. Some opponents also charged that the rich people supported Hefner and that Hefner himself was a plutocrat. To this Robert replied that several of the ministers from the many denominations throughout Oklahoma City supported him; he maintained that "if such men as these are plutocrats, then I am a plutocrat and I am glad to have their support." Besides, as the Judge explained to a radio audience, "not only these men, but

thousands of you who are listening in, are rich, maybe not in the material things of this life but you are rich in the services you have performed for your community." He maintained that service was "the greatest thing in a man's life" and he asked his audience to give him the opportunity to serve them.¹⁷

On April 4, 1939, the general election was held in Oklahoma City, and by the time the afternoon paper was out that day the election had been decided. Judge Robert A. Hefner became the twenty-second mayor of the capital city of Oklahoma. However, Hefner had not won by a large majority, for he had received 17,758 votes to Hall's 16,425.¹⁸ Nonetheless, he had won and was extremely happy. He was proud to be the mayor of Oklahoma City and felt a part of the great tradition of Oklahoma City. Yet the Judge looked forward to his new position and prepared himself for its arduous duties. He studied the form of government in the city and attempted to learn as much as possible about the managerial form of government that operated in Oklahoma City.¹⁹

At that time the capital city had "a city manager who was elected by the members of the Council." The City Manager was "the direct head of the City," and he worked closely with the "eight members of the Council." City council members were chosen from the four wards located in the city, each ward electing two council people. Each member of the council, as well as the mayor, served a four-year

term.²⁰ Council members were paid ten dollars per meeting; the city manager was paid eight thousand dollars per year; and the mayor was paid one thousand dollars per year.

Needless to say, Judge Hefner did not become mayor of the city in order to make money; rather he became mayor in order to serve his community in the most prestigious manner possible, and at the same time to move his city forward in the way that he believed best for his fellow citizens. He equated progress with population and industrial growth, and by these standards Oklahoma City did progress during his administration.²¹

Immediately after his election as mayor, Hefner was involved in "celebrating the Golden Anniversary of the opening of this country to white settlement." Oklahoma City had a grand celebration on this occasion, and Mayor Hefner helped organize, plan, and execute the golden jubilee of April 22, 1939. The celebration was initiated in order to pay "homage to those who made the run of '89." Hefner, like other Oklahomans, felt that this was "one of the most dramatic episodes in all of American History," for it was "the beginning of a great city and the forerunner of a great commonwealth." Mayor Hefner issued a proclamation which called for a minute of silence in tribute to the '89ers. Moreover, he delivered an address to the people of Oklahoma, and gave his ideas about the significance of these hardy pioneers and the government which they established.²² In

his speech, entitled "The Government of Oklahoma City--Past and Present," the Judge argued that on April 22, 1889, "thousand of boomers were stretched out as far as the eye could see." And when "the guns were fired . . . the run was on." They rushed forward, for "the land beckoned" and "hope was in their hearts." Not long after the run began, he maintained, "tent cities sprang up on the ground on which we now stand." At that time "there was no government, there was no water system, nothing but a wild prairie which had recently been covered with wild buffalo." Nonetheless, "there were leaders who had determination and foresight who were willing to make the sacrifice for the establishing of a great city and the founding of a great state."

Local governments soon began to emerge, and eventually the pioneers organized into a formal territory. "As a result of the determination and leadership of the '89ers," Hefner stated, Oklahomans could "look around us today and . . . see a magnificent city." The Mayor not only looked to the past and present, but he cast his eye toward the future. Mayor Hefner suggested that a new run was beginning on April 22, 1939, and he stated that it was "the desire, hope and ambition of the present city administration that we may be able to carry on in the same spirit and with the same zeal and determination that actuated the '89ers." Robert A. Hefner attempted exactly this after his election as mayor in 1939 and his reelection four years later.²³

Inasmuch as the city manager actually ran the affairs of the city, Hefner had other duties as mayor. For instance, he represented the municipality at meetings, luncheons, and dinners. He was asked to speak on many occasions throughout the city. Once he addressed a meeting of the Daughters of the Confederacy and told them about the role of the Confederacy in the state of Texas.²⁴ Likewise he spoke to the Daughters of the American Revolution and gave a short talk about the need to perpetuate the ideals of the Patriots who had won American independence.²⁵ Judge Hefner had been interested in the Boy Scouts of America since his days in Ardmore, and as mayor of Oklahoma City, he continued to aid this organization. He was called upon many times during his years as mayor to help the Scouts and to speak to members of the Last Frontier Council. Unless the mayor had pressing business elsewhere, he responded affirmatively to such requests from the Boy Scouts as well as other youth groups.²⁶

Mayor Hefner also represented the city when people of national or local importance came to Oklahoma City. Robert and Eva were invited to such functions as the reception for Frank C. Walker and his wife. Walker was the Postmaster General of the United States, and when he came through Oklahoma City on the train he was greeted at the station by Judge and Mrs. Hefner. Mayor Hefner took Walker and his wife on a tour of the capital city, the surrounding oil fields, and Will Rogers Air Base.²⁷ Mayor Hefner performed

a similar duty when representatives of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce came to Oklahoma City. These men from Tulsa came to the capital city to gather information from municipal leaders and the chamber of commerce about highway developments around Oklahoma City.²⁸ On another occasion Hefner entertained "the distinguished novelist and playwright, Channing Pollock." Pollock came to Oklahoma City to address the Four Arts Forum, and it became the duty of Hefner and E. K. Gaylord to welcome this famous individual.²⁹

The Mayor also addressed and welcomed many convention groups that held meetings in Oklahoma City. In the course of his eight years as mayor of the capital city he spoke to many conventions including the Southwestern Regional Conference of the American Title Association, the Salvation Army Young People's Conference, and the Aviation Conference.³⁰ Hefner was asked to perform other duties as the official head of the municipal government, such as riding in parades, presenting awards, and visiting other cities. In performing each of these duties, the mayor represented Oklahoma City.³¹

During World War II, Edgar Bergan and Charlie McCarthy came to Oklahoma City on a fund raising tour. During their stay in the capital city, Judge Hefner acted as their host. When the Bergan Company arrived in the city, Judge Hefner told them that they "had certainly honored us in coming this way and we greatly appreciated it." After Bergan left Oklahoma City, Mayor Hefner wrote, asking him not to "forget

that both you and Carlie are Ambassadors of Good Will for us and for our people."³² Hefner "conceived the idea of issuing Ambassador of Good Will of Oklahoma City certificate . . . soon after I was elected in 1939." Roy Christian of the Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor Hefner "worked out the form for the commissions." The first commission was not given to Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergan but to Stanley C. Draper of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce. And throughout the years, Judge Hefner always credited Draper as "being the best ambassador the City has ever had."³³

The commission for the "Ambassador of Good Will" certified that a particular person would spread good will wherever he went in the name of Oklahoma City. When Arthur H. Motley, president and publisher of the American Magazine spoke in Oklahoma City, the Mayor commissioned him an ambassador of good will for the city. At the time Motley spoke in Oklahoma City, he reported to Mayor Hefner that he "was much impressed with our City, our Chamber of Commerce and the people in general." In the years that followed Motley's visit to Oklahoma City, he continued to "plug" the city. This was important to the business-minded city fathers, for Motley talked "to large groups of manufacturers and others."³⁴ Hefner gave commissions as ambassadors of good will to such people as Bob Dean, president of Kiwanis International; Ben Keith, secretary of the Sulphur chamber of commerce; and Frank Phillips, prominent oil man from

Bartlesville, Oklahoma. The idea behind giving commissions as ambassadors of good will was sound because it aided in the progress and development of Oklahoma City. Hefner handed many ambassadorships to individuals who later spoke highly of the city and its people. Indeed, it was a public relations scheme that cost little and benefited the city greatly.³⁵

There was nothing in the statutes of the city that compelled Hefner to bother with the execution of such certificates, but the Mayor performed this and other duties for the betterment of his community. Judge Hefner also helped the citizens of Oklahoma City and the city itself by writing letters of recommendations and letters of introduction. When D. D. Brown of the John A. Brown Company went to Mexico to establish business relations with citizens in that Latin American country, Mayor Hefner wrote the president of Mexico a letter of introduction for this noted businessman from Oklahoma city; Hefner not only wrote this introduction in English but in Spanish as well. These letters proved of great benefit to Brown, for they helped "in the Mexican markets and also in expending shipments of merchandise across the border." The time involved in composing and sending such letters was spent, for Brown did "everything possible to convey to the people of Mexico the feeling of good will which we in the States and also in Oklahoma feel for them."³⁶

Hefner wrote a similar introduction for Major Hal Ingoe, who had worked in Oklahoma City with the Salvation Army. When Ingoe went to Miami, Florida, the Mayor wrote a very complimentary letter of introduction for this gentleman who was attempting to establish a business in Miami.³⁷ Mayor Hefner also recommended people for particular posts with the federal government. In May of 1944 he wrote the Surgeon General of the United States and requested that Dr. John Paul Price, Jr., be appointed a commissioner in the United States Public Health Service.³⁸ Likewise, he wrote a letter of recommendation for Harvey Everest of Oklahoma City, who in 1942 had applied for a commission as Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy. Judge Hefner wrote other letters to Congressmen, Governors, and Senators for the citizens of his city as a courtesy, not as a forced obligation.³⁹

As mayor of Oklahoma City, Hefner was concerned about and interested in the many organizations and societies in his great city. He was an active member of the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Men's Dinner Club, and the Oklahoma State Symphony Society. After the Oklahoma State Symphony Society had sparked "war bond rallies and other patriotic campaigns," the Mayor wrote to the president of the organization and thanked her for the fine work that the society had done. Mayor Hefner commented that the symphony society "brings to Oklahoma City the world's greatest artists." Moreover, the society, Robert reported, provided

educational "training as understudies in the orchestra for exceptionally talented young players aspiring to symphony positions." He remarked that the society also made "available to the public schools and other educational groups an advisory service for the purpose of promoting a greater musical development of Oklahoma City and the State." Hefner added that the society solved a problem in Oklahoma City during World War II; it had provided a "desirable entertainment for military personnel spending weekend leaves here."⁴⁰ Hefner personally believed that the Oklahoma State Symphony Society performed an excellent service to the community, and therefore he supported the society financially. In fact, he not only donated one hundred dollars a year to the society, but he also encouraged individuals and organizations to do the same. In 1945 he worked hard to see that members of some of the local unions donated money to the symphony.⁴¹

Judge Hefner always had enjoyed sports activities, and during his years as mayor he continued to appreciate them. The first week after his election as mayor of Oklahoma City, Hefner greeted the ladies then participating in the Women's International Bowling Congress Tournament. He took it upon himself "to extend Oklahoma City's welcome to the girl bowlers of the world."⁴² Moreover, that same week Mayor Robert Hefner and Governor Leon Phillips met at the field of the local minor league baseball team for a pitching duel. They had a baseball burnout from the pitcher's mound to home

plate in the presence of many fans of this popular game in order to advertise the opening game of the season for the Oklahoma City Tribe. The newspaper account stated that "Bullet Bob Hefner, new mayor, and Larruping Leon Phillips, redheaded manager of the Statehouse Stingarees, were matched" evenly in the spectacular event.⁴³ Mayor Hefner tossed the "first pellet" many times as mayor of the capital city and hence opened many seasons. In April of 1940 he made "the first pitch at the Wheeler municipal lot" and thereby opened "Oklahoma City's softball season."⁴⁴

In addition to throwing out the first pitch during several seasons, the Judge worked with the Oklahoma Publishing Company in planning, organizing, and executing a city-wide softball league sponsored by that company. The league was designed to help the young newspaper carriers "as a means of occupying their time during summer vacation in healthful and elevating recreation." Hefner became involved with the program because of his "keen interest in the sport, and the love for the boys themselves." In 1944 and 1945 Mayor Hefner threw out the first ball to open the season, and both times he pitched he was able to "put the ball across the plate."⁴⁵ As mayor, he attempted to foster a city-wide interest in games that he felt helped develop responsible characters. Hefner believed that a sporting spirit of drive and determination was the stuff from which good citizens were made, and he did everything possible in his official capacity to support sports that produced such in-

dividuals.⁴⁶

Mayor Hefner's interest in the children of Oklahoma City extended far beyond the baseball diamond. He was a strong supporter of the schools and colleges in the area, and he contributed financially to organizations that aided young people.⁴⁷ Hefner cared for children so much that he established a new tradition in Oklahoma City--he gave the first annual Christmas party for underprivileged children, sponsored by the Mayor. On December 12, 1941, the Judge decided to host such a party. He invited all children regardless of their race to a Christmas party, one which "cost me quite a good deal of money."⁴⁸ A few days before Christmas, "the Mayor's First Annual Christmas Party" was held, and it was reported afterwards that "it was a jolly good time."⁴⁹ In fact, the event was such a success that plans immediately were made for the Christmas Party in 1942. Black parents as well as white wrote to Mayor Hefner to voice their approval of the event. They even asked that he do it again the following year.⁵⁰

Hefner's spirit of giving extended the year around as he gave of his time and money to help needy children. He supported a city-wide effort to buy milk and food for hungry children; he supported efforts to buy shoes for school children who had none; and he supported efforts to purchase beds and hospital supplies for the crippled children in the convalescent home in Bethany, Oklahoma.⁵¹ For his effort to help the children of the city, he became a local hero whom

the children respected. Indeed, he even found himself in a comic strip in the Daily Oklahoman entitled "Captain Marvel." But perhaps the best tribute paid him was when Lawrence Neal a sixth grader in Horace Mann School, chose Mayor Hefner as the man he would most wish to be like. Hefner sincerely cared about and was interested in the well-being of all children, and this was reflected by his actions as Mayor of the capital city.⁵²

Throughout his life Judge Hefner showed a great ability to work with people and get these people to work for the best interests of the community as a whole. He believed in progress and growth, and he continually struggled to obtain practical and realistic results as a public servant. When he became Mayor of Oklahoma City, the community "was rocked with dissension and distrust." "It was not an easy matter to get the various groups to work together," he said, but "I succeeded in cementing the various groups to such an extent that thereafter it was not too difficult to carry out the plans that seemed to be for the best interest of the city."⁵³

The election of 1939 brought new councilmen into the city government, and these men and the new Mayor pledged to cooperate as "the chief means of restoring public confidence in the city hall." Nonetheless, factions immediately emerged over the city civil service program. Some members of the city council felt that the program of public works formerly sponsored by the city should be restored. Others felt that the program should remain dormant. Neither fac-

tion triumphed in this matter, and the city's civil service program suffered as a result.⁵⁴ Hefner's "program of harmony and restoration of public confidence" struck snags intermittently in 1939. He explained that conflicts arose because "as a rule there were four commissioners who were 'for' and four who were 'against'." He felt that "each member of the Council thoroughly believed that what he was doing was for the best interest of the City." Therefore Mayor Hefner "never aligned myself with either group." because he "knew if I did, I could never get all of them to pull together."⁵⁵

The Judge always believed it was "wise to look very carefully to see whether or not we are wrong in the position we are taking."⁵⁶ For this reason he fully believed there were three sides to every question. There was "your side, my side, and the right side."⁵⁷ Judge Hefner's first year as Mayor of Oklahoma City was the "hardest and most discouraging work I ever did." By the end of 1939 "all of us realized that none of us could always be right all of the time." And when they realized that, "we began to pull together."⁵⁸ Mayor Hefner sought compromise in municipal affairs and unity on the city council so that improvements could be made for the city. Without cooperation, little improvement could be made in the capital city.⁵⁹

By 1940 "a palm leaf of peace sprouted out of the city council's garden of cynicism." This was largely due to the fact that "Mayor Hefner declared war against dilly-dalling

with personal differences at the expense of progressive action." More than once Mayor Hefner gave "a spirited pep talk" to the councilmen and told them "to put aside their differences on personal questions, bow their necks and go ahead with plans to build a greater Oklahoma City."⁶⁰ Because of his concerted effort to work cooperatively with the councilmen, Mayor Hefner became the "Great Compromiser" of Oklahoma City. After his first year as Mayor, he found it "a joy to work with them and the rest of my administration was a pleasure." One of Hefner's greatest contributions as Mayor was to heal the factionalism that had halted progress during the depression.⁶¹

In 1939, when Hefner became Mayor, W. A. Quinn was city manager. The eight city councilmen included L. I. Baker and A. P. VanMeter from ward one, Percy Jones and Salty Fullerton from ward two, Leonard H. Dickerson and Joe C. Campbell from ward three, and G. A. Stark and Harlow Gers from ward four.⁶² As Mayor, Hefner sought to bind this group of councilmen together so that the city could unify under their leadership. His ambition was "to work harmony into the administration with fairness to every person concerned." Moreover, his "greatest desire has been to do those things that would promote the greatest good for the people of our City." When he could not "promote a spirit of cooperation and harmony at the City Hall," he tried to rid himself and the city of the cancer causing the problem.⁶³ This was the case in February of 1941 when W. A. Quinn, the city manager,

became involved in an automobile accident. Some residents argued that Quinn was driving while intoxicated and as a result had caused the accident. No one was hurt in the wreck, for the city manager merely collided with a parked car. Some citizens also maintained that Quinn was not active enough in pushing the city's participation in the national defense program."⁶⁴

For these reasons, Quinn resigned his post, and it became the duty of the Mayor and the council to select a new city manager. Quinn was not bitter about resigning; he reported that "I am glad to step out if that will promote harmony." Such indeed was the case. The city council was able immediately to select a new city manager who would prove to be an excellent choice--Harry E. Bailey. At that time Bailey was state highway commissioner, and Hefner stated that "investigations of Bailey's record indicated that he would be a good choice."⁶⁵ In an eight-to-zero decision, the "city councilmen unanimously elected H. E. Bailey . . . to succeed W. A. Quinn as city manager."⁶⁶ Bailey remained as city manager until 1944 when he resigned to become the State Highway Engineer. In February of 1944, Bailey was replaced by C. F. Aurand as city manager.⁶⁷

After Hefner's first year as Mayor of the capital city, and after H. E. Bailey became the city manager, city hall became "a united family."⁶⁸ As a result, the Mayor and the council were able to move ahead with city development. However, they were not alone in this effort; for they worked

with many organizations that desired economic and industrial progress. The leading organization in Oklahoma City that worked with the municipal government to achieve the desired result was the Chamber of Commerce. The man heading this organization was Stanley C. Draper.⁶⁹ Hefner and Draper worked together many times to bring positive change to the city, because they believed that industrial progress and growth were in the best interest of all residents of the capital city.⁷⁰

Although many things were accomplished during his years as Mayor, Hefner always maintained "that the big job was not done by me, but by the business group in Oklahoma City working through the Chamber of Commerce which Draper headed. In Hefner's view, Draper was the man who "was working when the rest of us were sleeping." Hefner further felt that Draper did the "useful things that most people say cannot be done." For example, before Hefner took office most of the members of the city council opposed the Chamber of Commerce. But after Draper and Hefner "talked the matter over," they were able to win the council's confidence by encouraging "each of them to come to the weekly meetings of the Chamber." Once the members of the city council became involved in the affairs of the Chamber of Commerce, "we had no further trouble in getting full co-operation from the Council."⁷¹ Thereafter, "the relationship between the municipal government and the business group . . . was very remarkable."⁷² Indeed, the keynote of Hefner's years as Mayor of Oklahoma

City was his ability to compromise and to work with other people. In so doing, he was able to accomplish several of his goals as mayor of the city.⁷³

When Hefner took office, several vices plagued the capital city. As mayor, Hefner fought against the illegal sale of liquor and tobacco; he likewise struggled against prostitution in his attempt to clean up the "Honky Tonks." To help him in his endeavors, Hefner appointed a new police chief--Frank Smith. This lawman was a former agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation who did an outstanding job in Oklahoma City. The Judge was a religious man of the Baptist faith who was repulsed by the evils of his society. Therefore with the help of Frank Smith he worked to make Oklahoma City a better place to live. But despite his efforts, the problems that he faced never were solved and continued to be problems faced by preceding mayors.⁷⁴

When Hefner made his decision not to seek reelection as an associate justice on the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, he vowed then that he would retire from public life and never run for political office again. However, when several civic leaders in Oklahoma City asked him to run for the office of mayor of the city, he could not refuse. Hefner made the race, and he worked actively to win this high office. Judge Hefner won both the primary election and the general election, becoming the twenty-second mayor of Oklahoma City in April of 1939. Immediately after he took the oath of office Hefner became involved in the celebration of Oklahoma's

fiftieth anniversary. He gave a significant speech to the people of the capital city in which he argued that the fiery spirit of individualism, determination, and desire again would be lighted in the hearts and minds of the citizens of that city. And during the Second World War such a spirit was ignited not only in Oklahoma City but in the other cities of the nation. Hefner exemplified the rugged individualism of the pioneers, and he applied his attitude to practical affairs in the municipal government. However, he applied his beliefs to the everyday duties of the mayor. He gave freely of his time to inform citizens of Oklahoma about city government, state history, and national affairs. He supported local groups who were dedicated to the cause of better education. He represented the people of the city, and acted as a figure head when dignitaries came to visit Oklahoma City. And he promoted better relations with other cities, states, and countries by issuing commissions for ambassadors of good will.

Mayor Hefner performed these duties not because he was compelled to do so, but because he wanted his city to establish better relations with individuals and organizations that could help the capital city grow and prosper. As mayor of the city, Hefner supported many organizations that performed a service to the community. He gave generously of his time and money to help these organizations, and he was interested particularly in the well-being of the children of the city. His success as mayor of the city was due largely

to his ability to work with people. When he took office, the city was plagued by a city council that could not work together, but after one year on the job, Mayor Hefner had been able to bind the factions together. Indeed, by the end of his first term as mayor, Hefner had weathered many political storms and had accomplished many good deeds. Nonetheless, Hefner made greater positive achievements as head of the city government, not the least of which was the building of the Bluff Creek Reservoir.

NOTES

¹Albert McRill, And Satan Came Also: An Inside Story of a City's Social and Political History (Oklahoma City, 1955), pp. 217-232.

²Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., May 21, 1964, HC.

³Ibid.; Hefner to Robert A. Sowder, January 11, 1940, HC; Hefner to Waite Phillips, April 26, 1939, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Evelyn Hefner Combs, April 12, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

⁴Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., March 7, 1939, HC; Oklahoma City Times, March 7, 1939; Daily Oklahoman, March 7, 1939.

⁵Hefner to Lee and Evelyn Combs, March 15, 1939, HC.

⁶Howard J. Holt to Hefner, March 25, 1939, HC.

⁷Harold Bradburn to Hefner, March 27, 1939, HC.

⁸E. E. Barbee to Hefner, March 16, 1939, HC.

⁹W. L. Overholser to John R. Butler, March 15, 1939, HC. Hefner was a quiet worker much in the vein of a Calvin Coolidge. He was never a colorful or dynamic politician, whose rhetoric was meaningless oratory.

¹⁰Oklahoma City Star, March 17, 1939.

¹¹Oklahoma City Times, March 8, 1939; Daily Oklahoman, March 8, 1939.

¹²Ruth Spencer to Hefner, March 14, 1939, HC.

¹³Bulletin of C. H. Russell to Our Employees, No Date, HC.

¹⁴Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

¹⁵Speech of Hefner to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Oklahoma City, March, 1939, HC.

¹⁶Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Clarence Stephenson, May 9, 1973, HC. Within the Hefner Collection are several pages of names of people who supported Hefner in his race for mayor. The papers reveal who these individuals were and how they helped the Judge get elected. Included in this list of names are people from various occupations.

¹⁷Speech of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, April 3, 1939, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Robert A. Hefner III, April 30, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, HC.

¹⁸Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Robert A. Hefner, Jr., April 13, 1973, HC; Daily Oklahoman, April 4, 1939; Oklahoma City Times, April 4, 1939; Daily Ardmoreite, April 5, 1939.

¹⁹Hefner to Grant Foreman, June 26, 1942, HC.

²⁰Hefner to Barbara Horn, April 25, 1945. HC.

²¹Ibid.

²²J. Wilson Swan to Hefner, April 15, 1939, HC; Stanley Draper to Hefner, April 18, 1939, HC.

²³Speech of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, entitled, "The Government of Oklahoma City--Past and Present," April 22, 1929, HC. Hefner was reelected as mayor in 1943 after his sole opponent, Earnest Albright, withdrew from the race. In this election the Judge was supported by the business and labor groups as well as people of all religions and races.

²⁴Daily Oklahoman, April 23, 1939 and April 26, 1939.

²⁵Anna McNiell to Hefner, March 18, 1944, HC.

²⁶Alfred P. Murrah to Hefner, January 12, 1942, HC.

²⁷Joe S. Morris to Hefner, November 9, 1941, HC.

²⁸Joseph D. Morse to Hefner, September 16, 1946, HC.

²⁹E. K. Gaylord to Hefner, December 27, 1944, HC.

³⁰C. J. Hickey to Hefner, March 9, 1940, HC; William Gill to Hefner, February 11, 1940, HC.

³¹R. L. Billington to Hefner, May 3, 1945, HC; Hosea Vinyard to Hefner, April 11, 1946, HC; Harold Boyd to Hefner, October 17, 1946, HC.

³²Hefner to Edgar Bergan, November 7, 1945, HC; Hefner to Edgar Bergan, November 14, 1945, HC; Hefner to Charley McCarthy, November 8, 1945, HC; Charley McCarthy to Hefner, November 20, 1945, HC.

³³Hefner to Stanley Draper, December 8, 1959, HC.

³⁴Lance I. Fitschen to Hefner, May 8, 1944, HC.

³⁵Ben Dean to Hefner, April 17, 1945, HC; Sulphur Daily News, November 7, 1939; Bartlesville Examiner, December 2, Daily Oklahoman, November 18, 1944.

³⁶D. D. Brown to Hefner, December 29, 1943, HC; D. D. Brown to Hefner, January 25, 1944, HC.

³⁷Hefner to To Whom It May Concern, January 10, 1945, HC.

³⁸Hefner to the Surgeon General of the United States, May 20, 1944, HC.

³⁹Hefner to Director of Naval Officer Procurement, July 10, 1942, HC.

⁴⁰Hefner to Mrs. Roland Wright, April 4, 1944, HC.

⁴¹Hefner to Joe Federhen, July 20, 1945, HC.

⁴²Oklahoma City Times, April 11, 1939.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Daily Oklahoman, April 29, 1940.

⁴⁵J. M. Black to Hefner, May 7, 1945, HC; J. M. Black to Hefner, May 25, 1945, HC.

⁴⁶Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1945, OCC; J. B. Davis to Hefner, November 27, 1944, HC; Hefner to J. B. Davis, December 5, 1944, HC.

⁴⁷Hefner, Typed Ms.

⁴⁸Robert H. Eacock to Hefner, December 12, 1941, HC.

⁴⁹Bonnie McAntire to Hefner, December 26, 1941, HC.

⁵⁰J. W. Sanford to Hefner, December 26, 1941, HC; J. Steve Anderson to Hefner, December 28, 1941, HC.

⁵¹Hefner to Joe Cooper, December 3, 1941, HC.

⁵²Lawrence Neal to Hefner, December 14, 1941, HC.

- 53Hefner to Stanley Draper, November 19, 1959, HC.
- 54Oklahoma City Times, April 17, 1939, April 18, 1939, and April 19, 1939.
- 55Hefner to Stanley Draper, November 19, 1959, HC.
- 56Ibid.
- 57Hefner to Stanley Draper, September 8, 1945, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Robert A. Hefner, III, April 30, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Robert A. Hefner, Jr., April 13, 1973, HC.
- 58Hefner to Stanley Draper, November 19, 1959, HC.
- 59Oklahoma City Times, October 26, 1940.
- 60Ibid., September 27, 1945.
- 61Hefner to Stanley Draper, November 19, 1959, HC.
- 62Hefner to William Hefner, May 7, 1939, HC.
- 63Hefner, Typed Ms. entitled, "Mayor's Position Unchanged," No Date, HC.
- 64Oklahoma City Times, February 5, 1941.
- 65Daily Oklahoman, February 5, 1941.
- 66Oklahoma City Times, February 5, 1941.
- 67Ollie J. Black to H. E. Bailey, January 28, 1944, H. E. Bailey Collection, First National Center Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited as BC.
- 68Hefner to Leonard Dickerson, January 8, 1942, HC.
- 69Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC; Hefner to Stanley Draper, July 15, 1964, HC.
- 70Hefner to Stanley Draper, August 11, 1961, HC.
- 71Hefner to Stanley Draper, July 15, 1964, HC.
- 72Hefner to Stanley Draper, August 11, 1961, HC.
- 73Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

⁷⁴Walter M. Harrison to Hefner, September 12, 1939, HC; Hefner to H. Parr Armstrong, June 20, 1944, HC; Oklahoma City Times, March 26, 1941, November 11, 1941, May 22, 1941, and July 8, 1942. Also see McRill, And Satan Came Also: An Inside Story of a City's Social and Political History, pp. 130-140.

CHAPTER VII

LAKE HEFNER

Men are remembered for many things after their death, most often for the wrongs which they committed and not for the good which they performed. Fortunately such has not been the case with Robert Hefner, for his contemporaries recognized his positive accomplishments. One of Hefner's greatest contributions to the historical growth and development of Oklahoma City was his planning, organizing, and building of the Upper Bluff Creek Water Supply Project. When Hefner took office in 1939, it was his conviction that Oklahoma City needed more industry if it was to grow. He realized that without a large water supply, industries would not come to the capital city. Therefore, he and other prominent citizens in the area organized to initiate and pass a water bond issue. Mayor Hefner worked and campaigned for the bond issue, and he mobilized what forces he could so that the voters would pass the bond when it was put before them.

His efforts were not in vain, for the bond issue did pass. However, construction on the Bluff Creek Project did not commence immediately because of the stiff opposition against the bond. For nearly one year, the opponents of the

new water supply project delayed the building of the reservoir by filing legal suits against the municipal government. Through the efforts of Mayor Hefner, the litigation against the bond proposal was dropped, and construction soon began. Hefner's administration saved the city approximately \$700,000 by building the water supply system without the use of a professional construction company. Hefner wisely hired an excellent engineer as city manager to oversee the construction of the project. This man was H. E. Bailey of road-building fame. Together they overcame all obstacles and built a reservoir fittingly named Lake Hefner. He and others worked hard to build the lake which the Mayor believed was vital to the city's growth.

The need for such a water supply existed because Lake Overholser was not large enough to supply the city's needs. In 1939 Lake Overholser was the largest lake in the city with a capacity of 17,000 acre feet of water. On the average, Oklahoma City received 14,500,000 gallons of water from Lake Overholser, not as much as the city needed for industrial development. Moreover, the city fathers felt that a larger supply of drinking water would be needed in the future. They argued that if Oklahoma City was to grow, it was crucial that an adequate water supply be secured. Mayor Hefner worked hard to see that the city got this new water supply.¹ A year before the Judge became Mayor of Oklahoma City "there had been two water bond issues voted down." Yet the need for "an adequate water supply . . . was every-

where acknowledged as Oklahoma City's number 1 necessity."² Therefore, as soon as he was elected mayor of the capital city, Hefner and others began their campaign to educate the voters to the need for a new water supply.³

In order to get the new water supply, a bond issue had to be passed. For this reason, it was necessary for the Mayor to work with such prominent citizens as E. K. Gaylord, Virgil Browne, and Stanley Draper. These men contended that they could never "carry the water election until we get people conscious of the necessity for water." They felt that "the future of Oklahoma City is involved in the creation of industries . . . which will furnish employment for our people, and will convert our raw materials into merchantable products."⁴ Hefner and Gaylord worked together to organize a "splendid body of active and public spirited young men." Moreover, they were fortunate in receiving the aid of many service organizations that "would gladly volunteer to carry on a house to house campaign for the bond issue." Hefner and Gaylord agreed that "it would be the duty of these workers to ring door bells and go in and sit down and talk the proposition over with each householder." The volunteer workers were to "explain the pamphlet and answer any questions in the minds of the voters." They also suggested that a speaker's bureau be organized so that citizens "could appear at theaters, at many public meetings, at the luncheon clubs, at Parent-Teacher Association meetings and could talk over the radio." They wanted no one to think

"that the bonds will carry without such a thoroughly organized effort." In short, they wanted the campaign for the water bonds to be "as complete and thorough as is possible to educate every single voter within the city limits."⁵

Draper, Gaylord, and Hefner were among the significant figures in Oklahoma City who initiated the campaign to see that the water bond election passed, but they soon had help. In January of 1940 a committee of seventeen people organized "an informal and unofficial meeting" where they conferred with one another regarding the ground work needed to launch the campaign for the water bonds. Included in this group was Virgil Browne, Mrs. J. D. Armor, Owen Chaffin, Victor Harlow, and C. C. Day. These people urged the Mayor, the city council, and the chamber of commerce to select one hundred citizens to canvass the city and to educate the people of Oklahoma City about the proposed water bond.⁶ These one hundred people were to make up the speaker's bureau, and Mayor Hefner was one of the leading citizens who made a number of appearances before different groups in the capital city. Hefner and this group of concerned citizens met with barbers, grocers, salesmen, ministers, and others to promote the bond election. Hefner helped publish pamphlets organize displays, and print cards. He aided in the effort to inform the citizens by these and other means about the importance of the bond election. He knew the importance of organization if the bond issue was to carry.⁷

The bond election for the Bluff Creek Water Supply Pro-

ject occurred on February 20, 1940. It involved a total of \$6,911,000 for the construction of the dam, canal, pump plant, filter plant, and related works. The vote for the bond was very close: 7,578 people voted in favor of it, and 7,182 voted against it. The bond issue had passed. However, construction did not begin immediately because legal action was taken by a few citizens to halt any action. The first legal action was initiated on March 4, 1940; it was taken by J. L. Henry, an opponent of the bond issue. He filed a suit in the district court against the Mayor, the city councilmen, the city manager, and the other municipal officials associated with the Bluff Creek Project. Henry argued that the bond election should be ruled invalid, illegal, and void. After a week of testimony, however, the district court dismissed the case because Henry and other opponents of the water bond had failed to prove that the election was illegal or invalid. Nevertheless, Henry appealed his case to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. On November 26, 1940, the state Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision and ruled against the opponents of the bond issue. After nine months of litigation, Hefner prepared to build the reservoir--only to be stifled by yet other obstacles.⁸

The Mayor and the city council quickly prepared to begin construction after the Supreme Court's decision "upholding the validity of the water bond election." Their next step was to have the bonds approved by the state attorney general; this they anticipated would take at least forty-

nine days. Once the bonds were approved, the city officials stated that they would buy and clear the land around Bluff Creek. City Manager, William A. Quinn promised that with the money from the bond issue the city would hire three of the top water engineers in the United States. Moreover, he planned to hire "a corps of the most competent and honest inspectors that can be found." However, before any of this could be undertaken, it was necessary to find someone to purchase the city bonds. Hefner, Quinn and the city council members feared that although the high court had declared the bonds legal there still was the possibility that opponents of the project would attempt to block their sale. This fear seemed justified when those who did not favor the building of Bluff Creek vowed publically that they would "continue plans to file a new attack." For this reason, municipal officials decided not to make any concrete engineering plans until they had sold the bonds and had the money in hand.⁹

At the end of November, 1940, city officials made ready to ask for bids on the bonds. They expected the Supreme Court to issue its final mandate on the case on December 11, 1940, and soon after the court issued this final mandate, they planned "to advertise for bids to sell the bonds for funds with which to start construction work on the Upper Bluff Creek reservoir project."¹⁰ Further delay seemed eminent on the water bond question in early December when the city council began to split over the issue of the engineers to be hired. Some councilmen wanted to hire local

engineers, others to hire engineers from outside Oklahoma City. Those who favored hiring engineers from the capital city argued that the job and the money should go to local citizens. Those who favored hiring engineers from outside the city said they desired "competent engineers with no local political axes to sharpen."¹¹

Most newspaper editors argued that the "choice of engineers should be made without delay" because defense plants were not being placed in Oklahoma City as a result of an inadequate water supply.¹² One local editor argued that "it may now be said with clarity that Oklahoma City has come up almost empty handed in the first big national grab for defense industries." This editor maintained that the squabble over the choice of an engineer was petty when so many jobs were at stake. He stated that the "selection of an engineer or engineers for the job should be made by or shortly after the first of the year."¹³

Before the end of 1940, however, fresh attacks were levied at the proposal to build Bluff Creek Reservoir. This attack came from R. E. McDonald who filed a petition with the city clerk. McDonald declared in an initiative petition that the water bond issue should be revoked and a substitute proposal should be considered. He said a better idea would be to spend two million dollars to dredge Lake Overholser, drill ten water wells, and improve the sewage system. McDonald was one of the members of the group that had opposed a reservoir at Bluff Creek from the start. Nonethe-

less, the Mayor, city councilmen, and the city manager promised to surge ahead with the construction of the Bluff Creek project.¹⁴

No sooner had the municipal officials made known their position than another attack was levied at the proposed water project. This time it was in the form of another lawsuit which was filed by Foster Cunningham. He was a city real estate man who, like McDonald, had been an opponent of the Bluff Creek Project from the beginning. His purpose in filing a suit was to delay the "issuance of bonds and the start of construction of the dam." In the face of this new lawsuit, Hefner and the other officials of Oklahoma City decided "to advertise for bids."¹⁵

On Christmas day, 1940, E. K. Gaylord ran a pointed commentary in the Oklahoma City Times directed at the organized opponents of the Bluff Creek Reservoir. No doubt he was reflecting the sentiments of Mayor Hefner, for both men agreed that the city needed the new water supply.¹⁶ Gaylord and Hefner believed that the "people of Oklahoma City have become tired of the nearly year-old tie up of the Bluff Creek Water Reservoir Project." Gaylord declared that "we believe they citizens of Oklahoma City are almost unanimously in back of the city council in preparing to go ahead with the plans to sell the bonds and build the dam." Since "the bonds were approved by a vote of the people last February." Hefner felt that the project should be allowed to continue without further delay.¹⁷

Although Hefner and Gaylord felt this way, they had no proof, other than intuition, that the people still wanted the reservoir. A few prominent citizens definitely wanted the new water supply because it would bring more industry, jobs, population, and money to the capital city. However, this did not indicate that a majority of the people were behind the city fathers in their struggle to build the dam. The bond issue had passed by only 396 votes. However, it was legal for Judge Hefner and his followers to proceed with the building of the lake once the Supreme Court of Oklahoma ruled that the bond election was valid.¹⁸ They won another victory in December of 1940 when at the end of that month District Court Judge Lucius Babcock again ruled in favor of the Hefner faction. The District Judge "ruled that the new case, filed in the name of Foster Cunningham . . . had no merit." Judge Babcock stated that the case "had already been decided." Therefore, he dismissed the case.¹⁹

The year of 1941 opened with promise for those who supported the construction of the Bluff Creek Reservoir. The city moved forward in its efforts to purchase the lands around Bluff Creek where a large lake was about to be built. Moreover, Hefner and the other municipal officials prepared to condemn the "land which cannot be purchased by the city at appraised prices." Hefner also took steps to see that the city obtained financial aid from the Works Project Administration (WPA) of the federal government. He asked the WPA to provide \$250,000 worth of beautification around the

lake site to make it a recreation ground."²⁰ On January 9, 1941, "the city's \$6,911,000 Upper Bluff Creek water reservoir bond issue was sold by the city council . . . to a syndicate managed locally by C. Edgar Honnold." He represented the Halsey-Stewart Company of Chicago. Hefner and the city council ordered the bonds to be "prepared for submission to the state attorney general who must approve them before they can be delivered." Honnold, the company's bond dealer in Oklahoma City, made a bid at "a rate of 2.1148 per cent."²¹

However, Halsey-Stewart and Company of Chicago, the syndicate that had promised to purchase the bonds, failed to deliver the money to Hefner and the city councilmen. In March of 1941, Hefner still was waiting for the check. The reason for the delay was that the old opponents of the city's proposal for a new water supply again had filed a suit in the district court to halt the construction of the Bluff Creek Reservoir. Because of the pending litigation involved in this new suit, the syndicate refused to accept delivery of the bonds. C. Edgar Honnold maintained that his company would "pay for the bonds in five minutes if the Jones J. Edward Jones suit is dismissed."²² Hefner and the other municipal officials, anxious to sell the bonds so that construction could begin, there upon began searching for a new purchaser of the bonds. Hefner showed his pragmatic tendencies when he inquired into the possibility of selling the bonds to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Mayor Hefner was "favorably impressed with the possibility

selling the bonds to the RFC."²³ When Hefner made the first suggestion to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation that they buy the bonds, governmental officials were intrigued and interested in the idea. But almost as immediately as they had shown interest, they reversed themselves and decided to postpone a decision on the purchase of the bonds. Again, the delay in selling the bonds, even to the federal government, was due to Jones' suit.²⁴

The deadlock in the sale of the bonds finally was broken on March 14, 1941, as a result of the work of Mayor Hefner. After a long meeting with Robert Hefner, Jones agreed to withdraw his case before the district court. The dismissal of the case "was scored as a triumph for Hefner, who had been conferring the last three days with bond opponents." Hefner was known for this great ability to work with others and to compromise with his opponents. Hefner believed that Jones and the other opponents of the Bluff Creek Project sincerely felt that "their efforts were in the best interest of the community." Although Hefner disagreed, he respected their sincerity in the matter. He decided that if the question was ever to be resolved, there needed to be more communication between himself and the opponents.²⁵

Hefner met with these men "in an earnest effort to get the litigation settled and out of the way." Hefner "held numerous conferences with them," and he found the opponents "most responsive" to his suggestion that the suit be dropped. On the morning of March 14, 1941, Hefner and Jones met

at the Mayor's office at city hall and discussed "the future welfare of Oklahoma City." After this conference, Jones went to the district court and withdrew his case against the bonds. Then he went to city hall and informed the Mayor of his decision. Furthermore, he told Hefner "that he was ready to get in behind and join our team and help them carry the ball for the best interest of the community in the future." After a year's delay, Mayor Hefner had ended the bitter conflict between municipal officials of Oklahoma City and opponents of the water bond issue. He now could proceed to the business of building the reservoir.²⁶

Scandal was one word that was never associated with the name of Robert Hefner. He not only was an honest man of integrity, but also he was an astute politician who protected himself against any possible accusations of skulduggery. After he settled the struggle between those who favored and those who opposed the building of Bluff Creek Reservoir, Hefner immediately took action to see that the dam and lake were built without question as to the spending of funds for the project. He wanted to keep the citizenry of Oklahoma City well informed on the progress of the new water system, and he wanted them to be aware of how their tax dollars were being spent. For these reasons he appointed "a citizen's committee to assist in overseeing the handling of bond money."²⁷

He wanted this committee "to keep vigilance over the manner in which the project is handled and any details any city officials might not be qualified for or have time to check." Hefner proposed that the citizen's committee "confer with city officials as the job progresses and advise before any major step is taken." He wanted the committee members to be reputable citizens who could not be touched with graft or corruption. Moreover, he desired to have committee members who were knowledgeable in the fields of law and engineering so that they would detect any fraud or use of inferior building materials. Through the use of a Citizen's Committee, Hefner hoped there would never be any question about the methods used to build the Bluff Creek Reservoir.²⁸

Once the litigation was cleared and the citizens committee formed, the government of the city started the Bluff Creek Project. The man in charge of the overall building of the reservoir was H. E. Bailey, the city manager. Bailey had been selected city manager in February of 1941 when William A. Quinn resigned the post. By training Bailey was an engineer, and at the time of his appointment he "was a member of the Oklahoma State Highway Commission." After Quinn resigned, Hefner asked the engineer to visit with him at his home. Bailey stated that he met with the Judge that "evening at his request and had quite a long visit with him." Mayor Hefner asked Bailey if he would be interested in becoming city manager of the

capital city. Moreover, he asked the engineer if he "would take the responsibility of building the Bluff Creek Reservoir." To both of these questions, Bailey responded affirmatively. Soon afterward, the job was tendered Bailey by the Mayor and the city council, and the engineer quickly accepted. Bailey told Judge Hefner that he "would do the job for him in a manner that would be entirely satisfactory." The building of Bluff Creek was very important to the Mayor, and he wanted to be certain that Bailey would do his best on the construction. In working on the project, Bailey became "very close to Judge Hefner . . . because it was of number one importance to him." Bailey "gave special attention to that job" and proved himself a good man for the task.²⁹

Because Hefner placed Bailey at the helm of the construction of the water project, Oklahoma City had no need to seek out and pay a head engineer. Hefner also decided that, instead of hiring contractors to build the water works the city would build the dam and lake itself, thereby saving the taxpayers a considerable amount of money.³⁰ However, the city did not have any heavy construction machinery. Therefore "the city wound up by renting the equipment."³¹ The equipment was was rented from a man named Carlack who was a dealer in Omaha, Nebraska. Hefner and Bailey actually "cut the cost" of the project and saved the citizens of Oklahoma City "at least \$1,280,000 on the Bluff Creek water project."³²

Hefner and Bailey also worked together in selecting a supervising engineer and the several minor engineers who worked under his direction. On March 23, 1941, they chose V. V. Long, who had been a civil engineer for thirty years, as their supervising engineer. Long was a resident of Oklahoma City and had worked in the capital city since 1917.³³ This engineer began preliminary work on the project soon after his appointment. He first made a rough survey of the land, as well as sketched a map of the contour of the land. It took him approximately sixty days to do this preliminary work which gave the city sufficient time to complete its purchase of all the lands around the project area.³⁴

Problems arose again, but this time the trouble was over the purchase of lands around the proposed Bluff Creek Reservoir. Several citizens insisted on higher prices for their land. They argued that the appraisals made on their land by the Oklahoma City Real Estate Board had been too low. When this occurred, Hefner and the city councilmen moved "to file a blanket condemnation suit covering the entire area as soon as the construction engineers and consultants determined the exact location of the dam line and canal route."³⁵ By mid-July of 1941, Hefner and the other officials of the municipal government had to file the suit for blanket condemnation. The condemnation suits were "against 130 owners of tracts in the Bluff creek reservoir and canal sites." Because of the suit initiated by Hefner

in the name of Oklahoma City, the district court was required to make a new appraisal of the lands. The first appraisal by the Real Estate Board of Oklahoma City had been made at the request of Judge Hefner in 1940. Under this appraisal, the city would have paid "the low average of less than \$90 an acre." During the campaign against those opposed to the Bluff Creek project, Mayor Hefner had refused to make the appraisal public. After the litigation against the bond issue was dropped, the Mayor made the appraisal public. The news media argued later that Hefner's refusal to make the valuation public "was based solely upon knowledge that the appraisal averaged at least \$20 to \$30 an acre less than its actual worth based on voluntary private sales in the area." Hefner knew that by filing a suit of blanket condemnation, the district court would send "three disinterested freeholders . . . ~~to~~ the site and examine each tract separately." Then "if the property owners object to the court appraisal, an appeal may be taken." In this manner, the people would receive a better price for their lands. After the court reappraised the land, the landowners agreed to sell their tracts.³⁶

Construction finally began on the Bluff Creek Reservoir in September of 1941. The celebration that marked the beginning of this event was not "the stale practice of having some big shot turn the first shovel of dirt." Instead, the Mayor and the City Councilmen decided to open the construction of the dam "with a big bang." Literally,

this meant that Mayor Hefner pushed the dynamite switch and blasted out "a dozen or more big trees."³⁷ When the two hundred sticks of dynamite ignited, debris flew in every direction, and the two hundred spectators ran in every direction.³⁸ Fortunately, no one was hurt.³⁹ Soon after the ceremony, construction began as large earth-moving machines were brought into the Capital City from Omaha. These machines moved dirt and plants from the project area. Most of this dirt was reused to fill certain areas in the lake area. Some of it was dumped at the base of the dam and used as the major foundation.⁴⁰ In this manner Bailey and Long attempted to save the city the cost of moving the dirt to some designated place, while at the same time they used the dirt to build the dam.⁴¹

Hefner and Bailey desired that the dam be completed on the Bluff Creek project as soon as possible, and they utilized every means available to see the job finished without delay. They even began a program in October, 1941, to work on a schedule of twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Prior to October 10 only two shifts of men worked at the dam, but after this date Hefner and Bailey employed three shifts of workmen. This night shift worked "under floodlights from midnight until 8 A.M." Moreover, Hefner ordered that the heavy equipment be "put in almost constant operation." Some of this equipment, rented from the firm in Omaha, was paid for by the Works Project Administration (WPA) of the federal government. Through the efforts of

Mayor Hefner, City Manager H. E. Bailey, and Senator Elmer Thomas, Oklahoma City was able to secure \$526,850 from that source to rent heavy equipment. Furthermore, this money was used to employ "between 100 and 150 WPA workers."

Several other people were employed by the municipal government. Hefner was instrumental in securing employment for several citizens in the Capital City by encouraging them to visit the dam site and talk to the supervising engineer regarding employment.⁴²

Work continued on the dam even after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Of course the construction slowed for a time after this event because some of the workmen quit to enlist in the armed services. Work also was delayed because some of the needed equipment, tools and supplies could not be had immediately following the outbreak of war with Germany and Japan. However, officials from the War Production Board in Washington, D. C., "assured the city officials of their desire to assist in obtaining the necessary materials and equipment" in order that the dam be completed. The construction of Lake Hefner, as well as many such projects throughout the United States, were delayed because of World War II. But in the case of Lake Hefner, work did continue despite some temporary setbacks.⁴³ In April of 1941, Hefner had reported to the citizens of Oklahoma City that the dam was forty-three per cent completed. He had informed them that it was now known that "the reservoir will have a capacity of 75,000 Acre Feet of

water." He had explained that this amount of water was "four and a half times the capacity of Lake Overholser." Two and one half thousand acres of land surface area eventually would be found on the lake that would bear Hefner's name. In April, 1942, he proudly informed the citizens that the city had saved approximately \$8,000 by "placing the dirt into the Bluff Creek Dam" instead of moving it out of the dam area. The city was saving money also by building the project itself without a contractor. Hefner's primary reason for telling the citizens of Oklahoma City about the progress of the dam project was to reassure them that construction had not and would not stop in the Bluff Creek Reservoir until the job was completed.⁴⁴

During the spring of 1942, rain kept workmen off the job for several weeks. In addition, construction was slowed by the federal government. Hefner and Bailey had difficulties during the spring and summer of 1942 in obtaining needed materials. It seemed that every time the Mayor and the engineer got "one thing approved by one division, another division would "turn around and cancel it without knowing what it is all about." Bailey depressingly declared to Mayor Hefner that this was "slowing up our work." And he informed the Mayor that "we just can't do any better."⁴⁵ Despite such difficulties, progress did continue on the construction of the Bluff Creek Reservoir. In fact, by August of 1942, Mayor Hefner reported to the citizens of the capital city that work on the water supply project was eighty-

two per cent completed.⁴⁶

On October 23, 1942, the "giant engines of construction stopped their roar on Bluff Creek dam. On that day Mayor Hefner "had the honor of heaving the last shovel" of dirt on Bluff Creek dam. He gazed proudly at the earthen dam which was "nearly five miles long," and "more than 600 feet thick in the center," and slightly more than one hundred feet high. Hefner and Bailey were elated at being able to tell the crowd they had saved the city about \$750,000 in the construction of the dam alone.⁴⁷ Although construction on the dam was completed, the entire project would not be finished until 1943. Other facets of the Bluff Creek Water Supply Project included the building of a canal, a gravel bank, a concrete syphon, some water mains, a filter plant, and a pump station. All these things and more had to be completed before the reservoir could be used by the public. By March, 1943, most of these projects were finished, but additional problems arose because of the shortage of labor in the capital city.⁴⁸

World War II drained workmen from Oklahoma City to such an extent that few could be found to work on the water supply project. Therefore Hefner and Bailey agreed to employ prisoners of war who were imprisoned near Oklahoma City. There was an immediate negative reaction to this idea. The Women's International Union Label League of Oklahoma City protested the use of the prisoners. Mrs. D. F. Willis, the secretary of the group, wrote to Judge Hefner that the mem-

bers of her organization "protest the bringing of Prisoners of War or convicts into our city to work on the Bluff Creek Project."⁴⁹ Not only did the Mayor receive protests from organizations such as the Women's International Union Label League of Oklahoma City, but he also received protests from individual citizens. One woman told the Judge "that as an American homemaker--I protest." She stated that she had "a brother and several nephews fighting for our freedoms," and she remarked that one of those freedoms was the right of the "laboring class to live." She asked the Mayor if he would "treat a German better than our own people--in order that a few might make money?" Another citizen of the capital city argued that as the father of a young man about "to combat the Nazis and Japs" he protested the employment of prisoners of war on the Bluff Creek Reservoir. He was "in favor of shutting this project down completely before" seeing any prisoner used on the project. He concluded his protest by stating that he was "positively against any Nazie that had been SHOOTING, SUB-MARINING, AND BOMBING OUR BOYS FROM WORKING ON THIS DAM." Despite such protests, Mayor Hefner and the city councilmen continued to use the prisoners of war because of the labor shortage in Oklahoma City.⁵⁰

In January, 1944, the Bluff Creek Water Supply Project was completed. A few months later the North Canadian River started to flow into the new reservoir.⁵¹ Hefner was extremely happy over the completion of the project, calling it

the "first major accomplishment of my administration." He maintained that the "construction of Lake Hefner, its intake canal, water pumping and filtration station and water mains removed permanently a long-standing water shortage problem." By building the reservoir, Hefner felt that he and the city had removed the barrier "which had hindered the city development for years."⁵² The citizens of the capital city likewise were excited about the completion of the reservoir. Several wrote to the Judge informing him of their approval. But the Mayor was not satisfied merely to complete the original project, for soon after the ceremony marking the first flow of water into the reservoir, Mayor Hefner began planning to make the lake a pleasurable recreational area.⁵³

Hefner and the city councilmen agreed on the need "of having a complete plan of development before acting." Municipal officials formed a committee which made plans "upon the manner in which Bluff Creek shores will be used." Moreover, Hefner and the city councilmen suggested that the committee purchase "several million fish, mostly of the game varieties." Thus Mayor Hefner not only was instrumental in the planning, funding, and building of Bluff Creek Reservoir but also he played a significant role in developing the lake so that the citizens of the city could use it for recreational purposes.⁵⁴

When Hefner took office in 1939, one of his primary goals was to build a reservoir which would supply the capital city with sufficient water to attract new industries to

the area. He worked hard to achieve his goal, which was realized in 1944. A year later the city council honored the Mayor for his fine work, changing the name of Bluff Creek Reservoir to Lake Hefner. On October 18, 1945, members of the city council unanimously voted to name the reservoir Lake Hefner; in so doing, they were saying "Thank you" for Hefner's efforts in planning and completing the water project.⁵⁵ The people of Oklahoma City were "grateful for your leadership in the construction of one of the finest water supplies in the southwestern part of the United States." Many citizens felt that "this water supply has been made possible by your vision."⁵⁶ Hefner felt "very humble and unworthy of the honor," but was appreciative of "the confidence, esteem, and respect shown me."⁵⁷ The councilmen did not end their attempt to show appreciation for Judge Hefner, for they also named the filtration plant and the pump station after the Mayor.⁵⁸ He never took total credit for the construction of Lake Hefner, however. He always acknowledged that many people were responsible for the completion of the project, especially H. E. Bailey. Yet Hefner was the most significant leader in the planning, funding, organizing and building of the lake that bears his name.⁵⁹

In 1939 when he first took office, Mayor Hefner believed that if Oklahoma City was to grow and prosper, the city had to have an adequate water supply. At that time the city received its water from Lake Overholser, but this lake no longer was sufficient. Therefore Mayor Hefner and other

concerned citizens initiated a movement to pass a water bond issue. They felt that the city would receive more industry and population if it could pass the bond issue, and they worked for the fulfillment of their convictions. In addition, the growing city needed a larger water supply. For these reasons, Hefner worked diligently and campaigned vigorously for the passage of the bond issue. He mobilized his forces and after much organizing and planning, he and fellow citizens were able to muster the votes to pass the bond. But construction of the Upper Bluff Creek Water Supply Project did not begin immediately, for Hefner and other city officials had to fight many legal battles before work could begin. In 1941 Hefner ended the struggle between those who favored building Bluff Creek Reservoir and those who opposed its construction. Through the efforts of Mayor Hefner, the legal battles that had delayed progress on the project for more than a year finally ended.

In mid-March 1941, the bonds were sold to the Halsey-Stewart Company of Chicago. Construction on the dam began soon afterwards. Hefner was a cautious politician who wanted to protect himself and the councilmen from any charges regarding the spending of funds appropriated for the project. Therefore he appointed a citizen's committee to act as a watchdog on the entire project. Mayor Hefner also was concerned about getting the maximum return on the money voted for the construction of Bluff Creek. For this reason he hired the most efficient, hard-working, and reliable per-

son he could obtain to oversee the construction of the water supply project. This man, H. E. Bailey, was a civil engineer. Moreover, the city built the Bluff Creek Project itself, and did not hire a construction company. Thus Hefner and the city fathers saved the taxpayers of the capital city much money. Hefner's administration overcame the problems resulting from both war and weather, and consequently the dam and other projects associated with the Bluff Creek Project were completed in January of 1944. While mayor of Oklahoma City, Robert Hefner made two very significant contributions to the history of the capital city. In 1944 he completed his first great accomplishment when the water began to flow into the reservoir that properly was named Lake Hefner. This water supply system has served Oklahoma City since its completion, and it has symbolized the contribution made by Judge Hefner to the growth and development of the city. Hefner's other great contribution to the city was his municipal leadership during the years following the tragedy at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

NOTES

¹Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Stanley Draper, June 17, 1973, HC.

²Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with E. K. Gaylord, May 4, 1973, HC.

³Hefner to H. E. Bailey, May 5, 1964, BC.

⁴Victor E. Harlow to the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, No Date, Stanley Draper Library, Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited as CC.

⁵E. K. Gaylord to Hefner, December 13, 1939, CC.

⁶C. C. Day to John Smith, January 10, 1940, HC.

⁷"Report of the Chamber of Commerce," February 20, 1940, CC.

⁸Daily Oklahoman, November 27, 1940 and November 27, 1940; Oklahoma City Times, November 26, 1940; Oklahoma City East Side News, November 26, 1940.

⁹Daily Oklahoman, November 27, 1940.

¹⁰Oklahoma City Times, November 29, 1940.

¹¹Ibid., December 5, 1940.

¹²Ibid.; East Side News, December 19, 1940.

¹³Oklahoma City Times, December 6, 1940; East Side News, December 19, 1940.

¹⁴Oklahoma City Times, December 19, 1940 and December 20, 1940.

¹⁵Daily Oklahoman, December 24, 1940.

¹⁶Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with E. K. Gaylord, May 4, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Virgil Browne, May 4, 1973, HC.

- 17Oklahoma City Times, December 25, 1940.
- 18Ibid., October 26, 1940.
- 19Ibid., December 30, 1940; Daily Oklahoman, December 31, 1940.
- 20Oklahoma City Times, January 6, 1941.
- 21Ibid., January 9, 1941.
- 22Daily Oklahoman, March 4, 1941.
- 23Ibid.
- 24Ibid., March 9, 1941; Oklahoma City Times, March 11, 1941.
- 25Ibid.
- 26Daily Oklahoman, March 14, 1941; Ira Mitchell to Hefner, March 14, 1941, HC; Hefner to Ira Mitchell, March 14, 1941, HC.
- 27Oklahoma City Times, February 25, 1941.
- 28Ibid.; Daily Oklahoman, January 21, 1941; Oklahoma City Times, January 14, 1941.
- 29Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with H. E. Bailey, May 7, 1974, HC.
- 30Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, HC.
- 31Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with H. E. Bailey, May 7, 1973, HC.
- 32Oklahoma City Times, November 12, 1941.
- 33Ibid., March 31, 1941; Daily Oklahoman, March 23, 1941.
- 34Daily Oklahoman, April 6, 1941.
- 35Oklahoma City Times, May 28, 1941.
- 36Ibid., July 15, 1941.
- 37Daily Oklahoman, September 9, 1941.
- 38Ibid., September 9, 1941.

- 39H. E. Bailey to Hefner, September 12, 1941, BC.
- 40Oklahoma City Times, September 23, 1941
- 41H. E. Bailey, "Report to the City of Oklahoma City on the Dirt Excavation and Fill," October 31, 1941, BC.
- 42Hefner to Jeff Estes, October 11, 1941, BC; Daily Oklahoman, October 10, 1941.
- 43Hefner and H. E. Bailey, "Report of Progress on the Bluff Creek Water Supply Project," April, 1942, BC. Hereafter cited as "Report of Progress." Also see Daily Oklahoman, November 27, 1941; Oklahoma City Times, December 12, 1941.
- 44"Report of Progress," April, 1942; Daily Oklahoman, January 1, 1942.
- 45H. E. Bailey to Hefner, April 23, 1942, BC.
- 46"Report of Progress," August, 1942.
- 47Oklahoma City Times, October 23, 1942; Hefner to E. K. Gaylord, November 27, 1942, HC.
- 48"Report of Progress," March, 1943.
- 49Mrs. D. F. Willis to Hefner, July 27, 1943, HC.
- 50Eva Mathews to Hefner, August 8, 1943 HC; Lyle Hughart to Hefner, July 30, 1943, HC.
- 51John Brett to H. E. Bailey, January 22, 1944, BC; Daily Oklahoman, March 26, 1944.
- 52Jack Hull to Hefner, April 4, 1947, HC.
- 53Oklahoma City Times, April 14, 1944.
- 54Ibid.; Dan W. Hogan to Hefner, May 1, 1944, HC.
- 55Oklahoma City Times, November 20, 1945.
- 56M. B. Cunningham to Hefner, November 18, 1945, HC.
- 57Hefner to W. M. Cain, October 22, 1945, HC.
- 58D. A. Harmon to Hefner, September 5, 1946, HC; A. C. Scott to Hefner, November 19, 1945, HC; J. F. Harbour to Hefner, December 10, 1945, HC; Daily Oklahoman, October 19, 1945.

⁵⁹Hefner to H. E. Bailey, May 5, 1964, HC; Hefner to H. E. Bailey, January 12, 1967, HC.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAYOR AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The most significant thing that Robert Hefner did in his long life as a politician was to lead Oklahoma City through the Second World War. This was an important time in the history of the American people, for the Japanese and the Germans were a formidable threat to the United States. Mayor Hefner instituted many programs which aided the state and the nation in its fight on the home-front to win the war. He was instrumental in selling defense bonds that helped pay for war installations. Hefner also worked closely with other individuals who wanted the United States government to locate new defence industries around Oklahoma City. Because of his efforts and those of other interested individuals, Hefner witnessed the establishment of Tinker Air Force Base near the capital city.

The Mayor played an important role in planning, organizing, and directing a drive to raise sufficient funds so that the city could purchase a light cruiser for the United States Navy. The money was raised, and with it, the people purchased the U. S. S. Oklahoma City. Hefner helped all branches of the armed services by encouraging men to enlist in the American military. However, he particularly worked

with the Navy League--the civilian arm of the United States Navy--in urging young people to join the Navy. In addition, he aided in collecting thousands of dollars that were used to support the fighting men of all the Allied powers.

Throughout the war Hefner served as a leader in Oklahoma City, and as such he struggled on the home-front to see that the Axis powers were defeated. And during the war Mayor Hefner supported the servicemen as well as their commander-in-chief.

Hefner had backed President Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression, and he continued to support the President's domestic policies during the latter years of his administration. However, such was not the case with Roosevelt's foreign policy, for while the President favored the involvement of the United States in world problems, Hefner feared that the United States would be led into war as it had in 1917. He felt that the First World War had harmed the American economy because the war created a large national debt. The Mayor felt that if the United States became involved in another war, the debt would grow even greater and that taxes would become too great. He maintained that "immediately following the war, . . . we thought we had made the world safe for democracy." This was not the case, according to the Judge, for although the allies had won there was still war and a threat to democracy. He remarked that the "results of the last great war" were staggering, because "there were 350,000 killed and maimed, which . . . brought

lifelong loss and sorrow to hundreds of thousands of families." Hence Hefner was against the involvement of the United States in World War II before the bombing of Pearl Harbor.¹

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and soon afterwards the United States declared war on Japan. When Hefner heard the news of the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, he immediately began to organize municipal officials so that they could cope with the crisis. Not long after the President and the Congress of the United States declared war on Japan, Hefner received word from the Federal Bureau of Investigation to guard the city against possible sabotage. There was a nationwide scare about spies in the United States awaiting word of the outbreak of war so that they could kill millions of Americans by poisoning their water supply. Some municipal officials "anticipated that the Japanese were scattered throughout the country and that they would destroy all the water supplies of . . . the major cities." Hefner and H. E. Bailey mobilized their forces in order to protect Lake Overholser and Lake Hefner. They used policemen, firemen, and "everybody else that was off duty" to protect the water and electrical supplies of the city. Hefner and Bailey also cooperated with federal officials in rounding up the Japanese gardeners who resided along the North Canadian River. Most of these Japanese "were taken somewhere in Colorado" where they were interned.²

Six months after the fatal strike by the Japanese,

Hefner made a speech to the people of the capital city. He argued that on December 7, 1941, "the treacherous Japanese, inspired by the deadly design of Hitler and his Axis associates, like ambushing assassins, made a peace-time attack on Pearl Harbor." Hefner maintained that the Japanese flyers had successfully "slaughtered our soldiers, sailors, and men and women like you and me." And that "among the victims of the yellow bombs were the officers and men of the Battleship that proudly bore the name of Oklahoma." He asked the citizens of the capital city to join in the effort "to preserve democratic liberty and to avenge the tragedy of Pearl Harbor." Hefner especially asked the young men who were in the military or those who were about to join the service "to avenge the loss of the U. S. S. Oklahoma by those treacherous yellow devils." In addition, he pledged that "we who remain on the home front" would provide the fighting men with "guns, planes and all other military equipment necessary to wipe from the face of the earth those totalitarian forces." He swore to help rid the world of all those who "seek to destroy our liberty, and who seek to make slaves of all liberty loving people." Mayor Hefner, once the war commenced, was behind President Roosevelt and the other leaders of the United States who wanted to defeat the Axis powers.³

Hefner and other civilians did a great deal to help win the war against the Japanese and the Germans. Patriotism was apparent in Oklahoma City, as Hefner and the residents of the city continually expressed their fierce determination

to defeat the enemy. In the capital city there was a general hatred for "men who by the use of hot machine guns and bombs snapped out the lives of our loved ones." And there was a city-wide feeling for American soldiers who were about to fight in the Western or Eastern theaters of action. As Mayor of Oklahoma City, Hefner did his part to help these soldiers in any way that he could. He even proclaimed an annual day of prayer.⁴ Moreover, he encouraged the citizens of his city to display their flags. Hefner felt that it was a sincere "thrill to see the flag of our country being unfurled," and for this reason, the Mayor displaced the Stars and Stipes every day at his own home. Hefner's interest in defeating the enemies of the United States and his growing patriotism for his country continued throughout the years that America was involved in the Second World War.⁵

In order to help finance the war, the Treasury Department sold "to each and every American Defense Savings Bonds and Stamps and at prices ranging from \$10.00 a piece up to \$10,000 each." Hefner was instrumental in organizing, planning, and administering a program to encourage more people to purchase defense bonds. He often told the people of his city that their money was needed "to mobilize men, materials and machines so that our nation may be safe from attack." Hefner argued that citizens should buy defense bonds in order "to lighten the load of taxes" for "the government has decided to borrow, because the more it raises by borrowing, the less it needs to raise by taxes." Instead of borrowing

the necessary money from the banks, the Mayor maintained that the government was going "directly to the people--men, women and even children--and give them an opportunity to lend the defense funds out of their savings." Mayor Hefner maintained that all citizens regardless of their age, race, or sex could help in the effort to win the war by purchasing defense savings bonds.⁶

There were many good reasons for the people of Oklahoma City to follow the advice of their mayor and purchase defense bonds. Hefner argued that one reason the government asked the people to purchase the bonds, was because it wanted "as many people as possible to have a personal share in the defense task." The government, Hefner stated, reasoned that "the more our people pull together, the stronger is our nation." Another reason why Hefner encouraged the citizens of Oklahoma City to buy defense bonds was that he hated to see the people "spend their money recklessly for things they do not need." He warned the people to save their money for defense bonds so that at the conclusion of the war, they would have their savings for any emergency. Hefner knew that "the present emergency will not last forever," and he felt that once the war drew to a close the "factories would stop making things for defense." Many of the factories would "lessen their output or shut down altogether" and "many workers will have lower wages." Indeed, some individuals would "be out of jobs," and the only workers who would be protected from a faltering economy

would be those people who had "saved their money." Hefner asked the citizens of Oklahoma City to "set aside, every day or every week, a dime, a quarter, a dollar, five dollars--as much as you can afford." He urged them to buy defense savings bonds with this money. By purchasing these bonds, he stated that they would "be helping the country defend itself, to keep prices down, and helping to prevent hard times."⁷

During World War II Hefner assisted his city in adjusting "its situation to the demands and opportunities of the time." Soon after the outbreak of the war, Mayor Hefner began organizing "the manpower and womanpower of the city."⁸ He did this in many ways. He not only encouraged the citizens of Oklahoma City to buy defense savings bonds, but he also urged them to buy war bonds. Hefner set an example for the citizens of his city when he purchased a war bond worth one thousand dollars in November of 1943.⁹ The Judge did this many times during the war and often would purchase these war bond in the name of a soldier from Oklahoma.¹⁰

Hefner also was active in helping various organizations earn money for use in the effort to win the war. In 1944 Mayor Hefner was instrumental in aiding the newspaper boys of the Daily Oklahoman and the Oklahoma City Times sell war bonds worth \$125,000. The carrier boys wanted to earn this amount in war bonds so they could buy a C-47 Douglas Transport plane for the United States Air Force.¹¹ Hefner supported the work of "nearly 500 patriotic and enterprising young men whose efforts during the past five weeks have re-

sulted in the sale of \$203,000 in war bonds, which is far in excess of the goal set for their campaign."¹² In addition to raising money in the form of war bonds, Hefner also initiated several victory dinners while he was mayor of the capital city; this money went toward the purchase of war and defense bonds.¹³

Hefner cooperated with many people during the 1940s in order to aid the United States in its war effort. And in the process of aiding the American people as a whole, he also helped the citizens of his own city. Hefner was one of several significant figures in Oklahoma City who played an important role in seeing that the large military air depot was established in the capital city. The Judge worked with a group of concerned businessmen and women known as the Industries Foundation; together they were able to locate an air base in the capital city. The Industries Foundation was established "by the businessmen of the community under sponsorship of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce." Mayor Hefner considered the activities of the Industries Foundation "a perfect example of excellent cooperation between the City Administration, our citizens, and the business interests of the community." The Industries Foundation was the action arm of those who favored the establishment of industries in Oklahoma City. One of the most significant things that Hefner and the Industries Foundation did during the war was to convince the government of the United States and the people of Oklahoma City of the expediency of placing

a military air depot in the area.¹⁴

The Air Force did not decide simply to put the proposed air depot in Oklahoma City. Officials in Washington knew that there was need for such a depot, but they did not know where they were going to locate the base. A few individuals in the capital city were active in seeing the the depot was located in their community. Mayor Hefner was one of these citizens. Stanley Draper, of the city's Chamber of Commerce, laid the groundwork for obtaining the base. Draper did "a lot of missionary work up there /Washington D. C.7 to get them to consider Oklahoma City for this Air Force installation. As a result of his efforts and those of such men as Robert Hefner, E. K. Gaylord, Virgil Browne, and H. E. Bailey, the Army sent two officials to the capital city to scout the area. There were five locations under consideration, including Oklahoma City and Wichita. The "top brass" in Washington considered the capital city of Oklahoma their number one location, and "sent two young officers, a captain and a lieutenant . . . down here from headquarters of the Air Force."¹⁵ When these two representatives of the Air Force came to Oklahoma City, they contacted the Mayor and the leaders of the Chamber of Commerce and told them that they would not meet with a committee of city representatives. Rather they wanted to deal with one man.¹⁶

Draper and Hefner decided that Draper's assistant would be the best man for the job. This representative of the

city spent a week with the military men and provided them with all the information they desired concerning the location of an air depot in the area around Oklahoma City. After these officials of the government had surveyed the lands around the capital city, they met with Hefner and other city officials. The two soldiers had "a long list of things that they needed" before they would decide definitely on locating an air depot there. One thing they requested was a water main to run from the city's water supply to the proposed site for the base. To build this water line, the city would have to lay more than six miles of pipe. Also the soldiers wanted six miles of paved highway running from Capital Hill to the site. Moreover, they wanted a guaranteed contract with the city's electrical division for several thousand watts of power.

The military officials also told Hefner and the city fathers that they needed forty miles of roads around the proposed installation. Some of these roads were to be paved, some of them graveled. Many of these roads involved problems because some of them would be built on city lands, some on county lands, and some on state lands. The governmental officials demanded that a rail spur be built into the site area so that they could receive large shipments of equipment, materials, and supplies. And there were additional problems that arose; for example, there was a need to remove all the different pipe lines that went through the area.¹⁷

It was nine o'clock in the morning when Hefner and the

other city officials learned of these needs by the military men. The two soldiers told Hefner and the others that if they could assure the military by that evening at four o'clock that all their demands would be met, then the depot would be located in Oklahoma City. This was a big chore for any city, but Hefner, Draper, Browne, Gaylord, Bailey and others were not afraid to tackle the situation. Hefner played a most significant part in making certain that the city council voted in favor of all changes which had to be guaranteed by the municipal government. Some of the councilmen were deathly afraid that they would be violating the law if they agreed to all of the things that the military wanted. But Hefner and Gaylord assured the councilmen that if they were arrested, the Mayor and the newspaperman would "get in the same cell with them." Because of the efforts of these two men, the city council signed a document which guaranteed the Army that all the pavement and water mains would be laid. Moreover, they also secured assurances from Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company that the air depot could have all the electrical power that it wanted. Hefner and Stanley Draper headed the operation of acquiring Tinker Air Force Base, and they did it successfully.¹⁸

At four o'clock that Friday afternoon, Hefner, Draper, Gaylord, and several other concerned citizens were gathered together when the two soldiers representing the United States government came to see if the city fathers had been able to meet all of their demands. Of course, these mili-

tary men never expected that Hefner, Draper, and the rest of the men could have possibly done all that they had asked. However, Draper handed them a guarantee for each and every item that they had demanded. On April 8, 1941, Robert Patterson, the assistance secretary of war, signed the order which located a large air depot near the capital city.¹⁹ Not long afterwards, Hefner became engaged in an effort to sell defense bonds which would pay for the many things that the military had demanded. Likewise, the Mayor called a bond issue in order to pay for the land upon which the base would be built. On April 29, 1941, the bond issue passed and thus provided money for the building of Tinker Air Force Base.²⁰

The city bought 960 acres of land from the Industries Foundation with bond money, and gave this land to the Department of War. The city purchased the land at exactly the same price which the foundation had paid for it. The Department of War also received an option to purchase 480 additional acres of land. In May of 1941 the chief of engineers of the United States Army named the base the Midwest Air Depot.²¹ Two months later construction began on the new military installation. Mayor Hefner was at the ground-breaking ceremony when the city fathers operated a large diesel tractor to turn the first soil. Within a few years the base grew to be one of the largest in the nation.²² Hefner and the city fathers who turned that first bit of dirt with a tractor instead of a shovel thought in big terms.

The base eventually fulfilled their dreams of having a large military installation near the capital city. Indeed the base did grow rapidly, for the original cost of the air depot rose from fourteen million dollars to thirty million dollars in just a short time. Several people were employed at the air depot during its construction, and many more were hired after its completion. In fact, by June 15, 1942, the military had hired some 2,600 to 2,800 civilians. By January 15, 1943, there were 9,000 civilians working at the air depot.²³ By the end of January of that same year, the military employed 13,000 civilians, a figure that continued to rise during the war.²⁴

Mayor Hefner was involved also in the decision by the municipal officials to turn over Will Roger's Airport to the United States Army in the months prior to the outbreak of World War II. On June 28, 1941, the Army Air Corps officially dedicated Will Rogers Field as a military installation. Hefner and other city officials allowed the Army to acquire the base so that the government would pay for the maintenance and expansion of the installation. The Mayor was correct in his assumption that the Army would enlarge the air field, for by September of 1941, the army had spent a total of \$2,000,000 at the airport for the construction of new buildings, roads, and hangars. Moreover, the Army Air Corps spent an additional \$750,000 for the repair and expansion of the municipal airport. Will Rogers Field became a light bombardment base in 1941; pilots, bombardiers, and

machine gunners trained there for combat. At Will Rogers Field these men were "welded into hardhitting tactical units ready to go into actual combat at a moment's notice."²⁵ Hefner was one of many individuals in Oklahoma City who desired that the Army Air Corps use, maintain, and expand Will Rogers Airport. He favored the use of the field by the Army not only because he knew that the military would improve and expand the installation, but also because he was certain that such a base would grow in the months to come. He was correct; the base did expand, and in the process the military employed a number of civilians as well as servicemen who came to the capital city. These individuals spent their money in the city, and after the war many of them returned to Oklahoma City to reside and work.²⁶

During the war Mayor Hefner not only was engaged in war activities involving Tinker Air Force Base and Will Rogers Field, but also he was involved with helping the United States Navy. One of the most significant things he did to help the Navy was to lead a campaign in the capital city to raise forty million dollars in war bonds. This money was used to purchase a naval cruiser, appropriately named the U.S.S. Oklahoma City. This ship was built in the Cramp Shipyards in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the United States Navy. However, the people of Oklahoma City paid for the ship by buying war bonds.²⁷ Judge Hefner led the campaign to sell the war bonds for the purchase of the cruiser for many reasons. He wanted the fighting men of the

Navy to know that "we on the home front here in Oklahoma City are doing our level best to do our part." Furthermore, he wanted the sailors to know that American civilians, especially those in the capital city of Oklahoma, were "going to stay behind you until the last gun is fired and our forces march into Berlin and Tokyo."²⁸ Hefner felt it was his duty as a patriotic citizen to aid the Navy in its campaign to raise all the money it could in order to build its forces. Therefore it was a great day in Hefner's life when the U.S.S. Oklahoma City was christened on February 20, 1944.²⁹

The U.S.S. Oklahoma City was commissioned on December 22, 1944, off the coast of Pennsylvania. The ten-thousand-ton light cruiser was six hundred feet long and nearly sixty-two feet wide. It carried twelve-inch guns, several smaller guns, and twelve five-inch guns. The Cleveland-class light cruiser had a speed of more than thirty-three knots. The first commander of the ship was Captain Charles B. Hunt of Pasadena, California, who graduated from the Naval Academy in 1918. He was a seasoned seaman, having served on battleships and submarines during the First World War. During the early months of the Second World War, Hunt was the commanding officer of the U.S.S. Alhena, a cargo ship that sailed the North Atlantic and the South Pacific. In 1942 he took part in the original landing on Guadalcanal.³⁰ Mayor Hefner was confident that Hunt was a good captain and that he was worthy of the honor of

commanding the ship which bore the name of the capital city of Oklahoma. The Mayor wrote to Hunt that "Oklahoma City is tremendously proud of this good ship." Hefner prayed that "God bless the officers and men who man her in the service of our country." This ship never saw any dangerous action while a part of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet. However, the U.S.S. Oklahoma City was employed off the coast of Honshu (Japan's main island) at the end of World War II. Since the war the U.S.S. Oklahoma City was used during the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam Conflict. Today it is the flagship of the Seventh Fleet.³¹

Besides helping the United States Navy by raising sufficient money in one day to purchase the U.S.S. Oklahoma City, Mayor Hefner aided the Navy in other ways. Hefner was an active member of the Navy League of the United States (the non-partisan civilian arm of the United States Navy). The purpose or object of the Navy League was "to acquire and spread before the citizens of the United States, information as to the conditions of the naval forces and equipment of the United States." In addition, it was organized "to awaken interest and co-operation in all matters tending to aid, improve or develop their efficiency."³² On October 16, 1942, Mayor Hefner was appointed the vice president of the Navy League for the state of Oklahoma.³³ One of the first things that the Judge did in this capacity was to arouse "the interest of the American youth in the merchant marine." He used many means of communication to encourage young men

to enlist in the merchant marine and to consider this branch of the service as a possible career.³⁴

As Vice President of the Navy League in Oklahoma, Hefner was busy each year with the celebration of Navy Day. This annual affair was sponsored by the Navy League, and in 1942 its theme was to express the public's gratitude to the fighting men of the United States Navy for "so valiantly carrying the fight to our enemies." During the Navy Day celebration Mayor Hefner asked the civilians to continue their support of the Navy. At this time he encouraged the Merchant Marines.³⁵ Not only did the Mayor support the celebration of Navy Day in 1942, but he also continued to help commemorate the day throughout World War II. In 1944 he reported to the president of the Navy League, Sheldon Clark, that the celebration that year would be the best ever held because Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal was going to be in Oklahoma City. The Secretary made an inspiring speech. And Mayor Hefner informed the Secretary that Oklahomans were "for the Navy . . . in a great way." He told Forrestal that the Navy was doing "a great job in training our boys" at the "fine Navy Base within eighteen miles of Oklahoma City." The Mayor expressed his wishes to the Secretary that the Navy should continue to "grow in power with each succeeding year."³⁶ Hefner served as vice president of the Navy League in Oklahoma until May 25, 1945, when he resigned.³⁷ Through this service he contributed to winning the war on the homefront.³⁸

In 1942 Franklin D. Roosevelt appealed to the American people to organize local war chest. The money collected would be used to support the soldiers and sailors of the allies of the United States. The city council chose Mayor Hefner as the commander-in-chief of the war chest drive in Oklahoma City. The Mayor selected J. T. Griffin as his chief-of-staff. Hefner organized the campaign with the efficiency of a military unit. He created divisions which were led by generals and their aides. Moreover, he had the generals appoint colonels, captains, and lieutenants who were responsible for coordinating the war chest campaign on the local levels. The Mayor did not take such duties lightly; he told the officers working under him the "this is a war time obligation that stretches beyond our own community to our boys wherever they are fighting."³⁹ Hefner worked diligently in the war chest campaign, and he used every opportunity to encourage the voters of Oklahoma City to cooperate in the campaign to raise money for the nation's allies.⁴⁰

On October 5, 1942, Hefner officially began the fundraising drive for the war chest in Oklahoma City. He did this by speaking by radio to the citizens of his city one cool autumn evening. Hefner had two minutes following a short speech by President Roosevelt, who spoke about community mobilization. Hefner's topic centered around the war chest campaign. He told his listeners that their dollars would go to the needy allies of the United States.

He argued that citizens of the capital city, as well as throughout the country, should be glad to give generously of their earnings to help those people who were "fighting for us and with us." He explained that the funds raised would go to such allied powers as Russia, Britain, Greece, China, Poland, and the Netherlands. In addition, he remarked that some of the money would go to help American prisoners of war.

Hefner later was proud to relate to President Roosevelt that "we are all Americans and we shall fight this home-town battle as you would want us to fight it." Moreover, he told the chief executive that "you can count on us to do whatever may be required of us to win this war."⁴¹ Hefner even had the famous comedian Bob Hope appear in Oklahoma City to help "kick off" the war chest campaign, he would have persuaded Bing Crosby to accompany Hope if the salty singer had not been making a movie at the time.⁴² Hefner and Hope did initiate the war chest campaign on November 9, and because of the effective leadership of the mayor the citizens of the city contributed more than \$549,825, which was Hefner's original goal.⁴³

As mayor of Oklahoma City during World War II, Hefner did more than sell war bonds, buy the U.S.S. Oklahoma City, and raise money for the war chest. One of the things he did to help the nation was to initiate a campaign to collect waste paper in the capital city. He felt that by saving paper that usually was burned, citizens of the city could

"help meet the needs of the war economy."⁴⁴ In August and September, 1944, Hefner had the city participate in a nationwide drive to collect waste paper. He even had various groups compete against each other in a race to see which group could collect the most paper. The Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts "alone collected over 1,100,000 pounds of waste paper."⁴⁵ For his efforts in organizing and executing the drive to collect paper, Mayor Hefner was commended highly by the officials of the War Production Board.⁴⁶ Hefner also worked in conjunction with the War Production Board to collect used household fats. Most of the fat was collected by the Girl Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls. They collected the fats for sale to willing buyers. Then they took the money which they earned and purchased defense stamps with it.⁴⁷

Shortages of all kinds arose during World War II from having to supply American fighting men with needed materials. One of the most difficult to procure was beef. In March of 1945, Hefner realized that there was "indeed a critical shortage of meat for civilian consumption . . . in Oklahoma City." He reasoned that "this situation has all been brought about by increased demands on the Government and a short stock of meat in storage." Therefore, because of the meat shortage, Mayor Hefner proclaimed meatless Wednesday every week.⁴⁸ This was not the first time during the war that there had been a shortage of meat; during much of the Second World War there was a short

supply of this precious food. However, Hefner and the other citizens of Oklahoma and the United States survived these shortages. As Mayor, Hefner tried to set an example for the people of his city. He and his wife, Eva, would prepare meals that did not include meat. The Hefners explained to the people of the city that even the Mayor and his wife ate such things as eggs, beans, pie, and vegetables in order to conserve meat. Mrs. Hefner used the newspapers to communicate various menus used by her and the Judge when meat was in short supply. In this manner, the Hefners hoped to encourage the population to conserve meat by eating other nourishing foods.⁴⁹

Other shortages existed in Oklahoma. During the war metals and gasoline were scarce, and as mayor of Oklahoma City Hefner attempted to conserve these precious materials. He worked in cooperation with the War Productions Board in their attempt to save metals. The Mayor felt that there was a definite need "to educate the public to the necessity of self deprivation of metals." During the Second World War he maintained that there was an "urgent need for war purposes that all scrap metals be converted instantly to such purposes." For this reason he worked in Oklahoma City to make the people aware of the shortage of metals and the need to conserve them.⁵⁰

Likewise, he informed the public about the need to conserve gasoline. Hefner argued that it was more important to supply American troops with gasoline and oil than it was

to take vacation trips in the family automobile. He urged the citizens of Oklahoma City to walk or ride bicycles in order to save gasoline. The Mayor cooperated with the Office of Defense Transportation in its desperate effort "to impress the people throughout the country with the fact that unnecessary travel must be eliminated." He realized that the United States was involved in a grave crisis, and he responded accordingly by urging the citizens of Oklahoma City to save both metal and gasoline.⁵¹

Hefner and the other Americans who remained at home during the Second World War did other things in order to help the soldiers and sailors win the war. The Hefners participated in a city-wide program to knit clothing for allied soldiers stationed in Great Britain. Each week Eva would spend one day knitting an article of clothing for the soldiers, and other women in the city followed her example.⁵² The Hefners not only helped American and British soldiers, but they aided Russian soldiers as well. In fact, Hefner proclaimed June 22, 1942, as "Aid to Russia Day." On this day Hefner coordinated a drive to raise money which was sent to the soldiers and civilians of the United Soviet Socialist Republic.⁵³

He also helped the troops in the American armed services by communicating with them. Hefner often would write soldiers to inform them that "our entire community is "fur you." Hefner maintained that "fur" was a better word than for, because "fur grows on a cat's tail . . . clear to

the end, and won't come off unless it is burned off." And if the fur of a cat is burned the Judge argued that "it will grow back again." Hence, Hefner argued that this is what he meant when he said he was "fur" a particular person.⁵⁴ Hefner also told the soldiers that "the thoughts of our community . . . always goes to these boys who are so proudly and honorably carrying our flag to Victory on the foreign theaters of war."⁵⁵

Mayor Hefner sent his "heartiest greetings, deep appreciation and prayers . . . to Oklahoma Cityans" many times during the course of the Second World War. Moreover, he extended the same feeling to all men and women "who are tightening the noose around Japan."⁵⁶ Hefner helped recruit soldiers during the war, serving as an unofficial recruiting officer for the Navy and the Marine Corps. He felt a special pride when he saw volunteers enlist in the services of their country. One cold afternoon in the Winter of 1942, Mayor Hefner went to the post office to mail a letter. Just as he started up the steps he saw a group of "our boys about twenty five in number . . . going into the Federal Building for the purpose of completing their preparations to enter the Armed Forces." When he saw this he "stood for a moment at attention." Hefner's thoughts were that "some mother was giving a son, some wife was giving a husband, and some sister was giving a brother." His thoughts also were with the soldier who in the future might be giving his life. The soldiers, he argued, would give "their lives, if need be,

to protect our democracy and to protect our American way of life." Furthermore, the soldiers would fight in order to protect "the right to worship God according to the dictates of ones' own conscience, as well as freedom of speech, justice, liberty, etc." Hefner had strong feelings about the fighting forces of the United States, and he was not afraid to express his feelings to the public.⁵⁷

On May 8, 1945, the German forces surrendered unconditionally, thus ending the war in Europe. And after the two fatal raids over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945, the Japanese surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. World War II had come to an end. And with the end of the war, airman, soldiers, and sailors came home from the battlefields of Europe and Asia. Hefner, like other Americans, was waiting at home for them with great feelings of gratitude. He organized municipal officials and had them welcome these men when they returned from the service. More important, however, Mayor Hefner continued to help the soldiers after he had welcomed them home to Oklahoma. He helped many ex-servicemen get information about their G.I. Bill of Rights. Hefner took the initiative and researched the question of eligibility of several soldiers; on one occasion he studied to learn if soldiers who had volunteered, had been hurt, and were honorably discharged were eligible to receive the benefits of the bill.⁵⁸ Moreover, he helped organize the veterans of World War II in Oklahoma. This organization, and others like it throughout the United States, lobbied for

various benefits for the veterans of that war. Hence during the months after the Second World War, Hefner was interested and involved in helping men and women who had fought the war.⁵⁹

Judge Hefner had served his city with a great deal of courage and foresight from 1939 and 1947. He led his city through World War II and administered many programs that helped the United States win that war. By 1947 Judge Hefner was seventy-three years old, and he was tired of public office. Early in 1947 he "asked the business group to look around and agree upon a man to succeed me." At a luncheon held at the Kirvin Hotel, however, a group of leading businessmen of Oklahoma City (Stanley Draper, E. K. Gaylord, Frank Buttram, Fred D. Jones, etc.) reported to the Judge that they had been unable to find someone to "fill his shoes." Therefore they attempted "to prevail upon me to run for a thrid term." Hefner told them that he "greatly appreciated their confidence" but that he refused to seek reelection. The next day "a committee of three from the labor organization of the city, reported to me that the labor organization had . . . appointed a committee . . . to prevail upon me to run again." Mayor Hefner "could not understand how both the labor group and the business group would be for me because of the feeling that often existed between labor and management." Perhaps Robert Ingram, a leading labor leader in Oklahoma City answered the Mayor's question best, when he said that the Judge had "always been fair, and

that is all we want."⁶⁰

Mayor Hefner departed office without seeking reelection in 1947, leaving behind a remarkable record of public service. The most significant thing that he did while mayor of Oklahoma City was to lead the capital city through the Second World War. Although he had not supported Roosevelt's internationalism prior to American involvement in the war, he was in favor of retaliating forcefully against Japan and Germany once the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Immediately after the United States declared war on the Axis powers, Robert Hefner and H. E. Bailey cooperated with the federal government in mobilizing for war. Moreover, these two municipal officials organized the local citizenry in order to protect the water and electrical supplies of the city from possible sabotage. Hefner helped increase the patriotic fervor that was sweeping the country during this era, and he aided all efforts which would help win the war.

One of the largest projects that he undertook in Oklahoma City was a campaign to sell defense and savings bonds and stamps. More important was his efforts to see that the United States government established an air depot near Oklahoma City. Hefner worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce and the Industries Foundation of the capital city, and together the Mayor and this group of concerned citizens were able to realize their goals. Tinker Air Force Base thus was established because of the efforts of the Mayor and the interested individuals of Oklahoma City. Yet another accom-

plishment of the Mayor was his drive to raise sufficient funds in one day to purchase a light cruiser for the United States Navy. This ship was christened the U. S. S. Oklahoma City, and it has served proudly as a member of the U. S. Navy since World War II. Hefner helped the Navy in other ways, for he was an active officer of the Navy League. He encouraged young men to enlist in the Navy, the Merchant Marines, and the Marine Corps. The Mayor also supported the efforts of President Roosevelt and helped in the nation-wide drive to collect money for a war chest. The money contributed to this cause was used to help civilians and soldiers in countries that were allies of the United States. Indeed, Hefner supported the airmen, soldiers, and sailors of the American armed services throughout the war. And as mayor of Oklahoma City he did everything in his power to support the men and women in the service until the enemies of the United States were defeated. Afterward he continued to aid these men by gathering information for them regarding their benefits under the national G.I. Bill.

Hefner served with distinction during his eight years in office, and he accomplished many things while head of the municipal government of Oklahoma City. But this was not the first time in his long life that he had served the public well, for he had spent a lifetime doing this same thing. As a result Robert Hefner left a great heritage to the people of Oklahoma--a heritage that will never be forgotten.

NOTES

¹Speech of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, entitled "Why we must Stay Out of the War," No Date, HC.

²Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with H. E. Bailey, May 7, 1973, HC.

³Speech of Hefner to the Citizens of Oklahoma City, No Date, HC.

⁴Proclamation of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, February 25, 1944, HC.

⁵Hefner to Ollie R. Griffith, September 17, 1943, HC.

⁶Speech of Hefner to the Citizens of Oklahoma City, No Date, HC.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Jack Hull to Hefner, April 4, 1947, HC.

⁹William S. Key to Hefner, November 7, 1943, HC.

¹⁰Ibid.; David to Hefner, November 24, 1943, HC.

¹¹J. I. Meyersom to Hefner, September 26, 1944, HC.

¹²Speech of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, October 7, 1944, HC.

¹³Oklahoma City Times, October 7, 1944: Daily Oklahoman, October 6, 1944: Hefner to B. D. Eddie, June 14, 1943, HC: Hefner to H. E. Bailey, June 14, 1943, HC.

¹⁴Jack Hull to Hefner, April 4, 1947, HC: Hefner to L. A. Macklanburg, August 8, 1961, HC: Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Stanley Draper, June 17, 1973, HC.

¹⁵Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with E. K. Gaylord, May 4, 1973, HC.

¹⁶Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

¹⁷Ibid.; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with E. K. Gaylord, May 4, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with H. E. Bailey, May 7, 1973, HC.

¹⁸Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Stanley Draper, June 17, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Virgil Browne, May 4, 1973, HC.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Hefner to H. E. Bailey, April 4, 1941, HC; N. Earp to Heiner, April 16, 1941, HC; Hefner to Bob Ingram, April 17, 1941, HC; Hefner to J. F. Owens, April 23, 1941, HC.

²¹Daily Oklahoma, March 11, 1941 and May 30, 1941.

²²Oklahoma City Times, April 8, 1941, April 9, 1941, July 31, 1941, and August 2, 1941.

²³Ibid., June 16, 1942 and January 15, 1943.

²⁴Hefner to E. F. Webber, April 4, 1942, HC; Hefner to William Turnbull, November 12, 1942, HC; Daily Oklahoman, February 1, 1943 and Spetember 19, 1943.

²⁵Daily Oklahoman, September 21, 1941.

²⁶Hefner to Jed Johnson, June 16, 1941, HC; Y. A. Pitts to Hefner, July 10, 1941, HC; Stanley Draper to Hefner, October 11, 1945, HC; Oklahoma City Times, October 28, 1941.

²⁷Hefner to Frank Knox, April 14, 1943, HC; Oklahoma City Times, April 23, 1943.

²⁸Hefner to John E. Kirkpatrick, July 23, 1943, HC.

²⁹Hefner to Mike Monroney, February 3, 1944, HC.

³⁰Daily Oklahoman, December 16, 1944.

³¹C. O. Humphreys to Hefner, September 4, 1946, HC; Hefner to C. B. Hunt, December 18, 1944, HC; Oklahoma City Times, November 26, 1945; Daily Oklahoman, October 26, 1945.

³²Navy League of the United States: Constitution and By-Laws (Washington, 1944), p. 3.

³³Hefner to Sheldon Clark, October 16, 1942, HC.

³⁴Sheldon Clard to Hefner, November 20, 1942, HC.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Hefner to Sheldon Clark, October 3, 1944, HC; Hefner to Warren S. Miller, October 28, 1944, HC.

³⁷Hefner to Navy League, May 25, 1945, HC.

³⁸Hefner to Robert S. Kerr, October 9, 1945, HC.

³⁹Daily Oklahoman, November 5, 1942.

⁴⁰Oklahoma City Times, October 5, 1942.

⁴¹Speech of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, October 5, 1942, HC.

⁴²Hefner to Bob Hope, November 10, 1942, HC; Jim Griffin to Bing Crosby, October 16, 1942, HC.

⁴³Oklahoma City Times, November 18, 1942; Daily Oklahoman, November 19, 1942.

⁴⁴F. H. LaGuardia to Hefner, March 23, 1944, HC.

⁴⁵Daily Oklahoman, December 15, 1944.

⁴⁶H. Lawrence Eddy to Hefner, December 19, 1944, HC.

⁴⁷Daily Oklahoman, May 13, 1945.

⁴⁸Proclamation of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, March 19, 1945, HC.

⁴⁹Oklahoma City Times, April 20, 1943.

⁵⁰Hefner to War Productions Board, July 16, 1942, HC.

⁵¹J. Porter Wright to Hefner, July 8, 1944, HC; Speech of Hefner to the People of Oklahoma City, December 5, 1942, HC.

⁵²Hefner to Lee Combs, January 22, 1942, HC.

⁵³L. D. Callahan to Hefner, May 28, 1942, HC.

⁵⁴Hefner to Ray S. McLain, October 12, 1944, HC; Hefner to Henry F. Schweer, October 1, 1943, HC.

⁵⁵Hefner to Philip D Wachtel, Jr., December 8, 1944, HC.

⁵⁶Hefner to William Taylor, July 26, 1945, HC.

⁵⁷Hefner to The American War Mothers, December 4, 1942, HC.

⁵⁸Hefner to Department of War, July 21, 1945, HC.

⁵⁹Henry M. Burch to Hefner, July 25, 1945.

⁶⁰Hefner to Hefner Company, May 22, 1964, HC; Hefner to Ben Powell, February 13, 1948, HC; Daily Oklahoman, August 1, 1948.

CHAPTER IX

HEFNER'S HERITAGE

Robert Hefner remained a rugged individualist all his life, but one who wanted to live a good life. In the process, he left a fine heritage for all Oklahomans to follow. He was vitally interested in the growth and development of Oklahoma City after he retired from public office in 1947. He felt he had a stake in his city, as well as his state and his nation. For this reason he continued his involvement in political activities during the 1950s and 1960s. He remained active in several organizations during this time, and through these groups he gave of his time and his money to help society.

Hefner occupied his time in many ways after the war. He made several public appearances to entertain and educate civic groups in Oklahoma City. Moreover, he collected walking sticks and bells which he eventually donated to the Oklahoma Heritage Association. After those hectic years as mayor of the capital city, Hefner spent more time with his wife, his children, and his grandchildren.

In 1962 tragedy struck the life of Robert Hefner when his beloved Miss Eva died. Like all people who lose loved ones, Hefner was sorely grieved by his wife's death. Hefner

himself vowed to live to be one hundred or die trying. He did not make it to that age, for at the age of ninety-seven, the judge passed away. His death did not end the good which was such a part of his life. Even today Hefner's home is being used by the Oklahoma Heritage Association; it is the Heritage House of Oklahoma. Thousands of people each year visit and enjoy this monument which stands as a tribute to Judge Hefner and his family. And Hefner left a great heritage to the people of Oklahoma City as a public servant and as a private citizen.

Although Hefner retired from public office in 1947, he "maintained a keen interest in anything that would add to the growth of our city."¹ He continued his interest in the Chamber of Commerce and aided Stanley Draper in many projects that he felt would help in the development of the capital city. In 1949 Judge Hefner became an honorary member of the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce of Oklahoma City. When Hefner received his honorary membership, Draper told the Judge that it had been "a privilege working under your leadership in many community enterprises."² Hefner not only participated in community affairs through the Chamber of Commerce, but he also was active in certain municipal projects. For instance, he remained interested in the growth of the lake that bore his name. In fact, in 1950 he worked with Allen Street, the Mayor of Oklahoma City, to pass a bond issue which authorized the spending of \$3,225,000 for an extension to the filtration plant at Lake

Hefner. Through Hefner's assistance, the city was able to bring "about the realization of this important development."³

Judge Hefner also became very interested in the outcome of a city-wide campaign to permit the city council to levy a one cent sales tax in Oklahoma City. Hefner wrote to Mayor George H. Shirk in 1965 that he was "doing all I can to put over our sales tax." The Judge proudly reported that he was "wearing the little button 'Vote Yes'." Hefner realized the city's need for money in order to progress, and thus he was behind the efforts of Shirk and the city council in their drive to carry the election. Because of the efforts of individuals like Hefner, the election of November 9, 1965 passed and the tax was levied on the people of Oklahoma City.⁴

Hefner not only took an interest in the policies of the city, but also he took an interest in the municipal leaders themselves. When George H. Shirk was elected mayor of the capital city in June of 1964, Hefner contacted the new mayor and informed him that there probably would "be problems that will come before you and the Council on which there will be disagreements." The Judge assured the Mayor that such times would occur. When problems did arise between the mayor and the council, said Hefner, Shirk should overcome disagreements by diplomacy. In addition, he told the Mayor that no man was correct all the time and therefore it was wise "to always look and examine ourselves every time there is a disagreement and see whether or not this is one of the times we

might be wrong." Judge Hefner felt that public officials should represent Oklahoma City in a manner which would be "best for the city at large." These were words of wisdom from a veteran politician who had weathered many political storms with the city council while mayor of the capital city.⁵

Hefner always had been interested and concerned about the direction and policies that affected his state and his nation. Following the climax of World War II, Hefner felt that the Army should release from the service all males who had children. His feelings were so strong regarding this matter that he wrote Dwight D. Eisenhower, the chief of staff of the armed services. Eisenhower told Hefner that he was "unable to agree with your recommendation that all fathers be immediately released from the army." The famous general argued that "the services of the great numbers of fathers who have one or two children are still required by the armed forces." However, Eisenhower did inform the Judge the "authority was granted to discharge men having three or more children." Although the General would have liked to have "carried out the nation's commitments without using fathers," he felt that these men had "a sizeable stake in the future peace of the world." Hence he disagreed with the Judge, and he continued to support the policy which employed the use of fathers in the services.⁶

Judge Hefner also was interested in the tax laws that were passed by the United States government, and he was con-

cerned about equality in the taxation of individuals as well as corporations. In 1949 the Judge learned that Representative Noah Mason of the United States House of Representatives had introduced a bill "designed to compel all business conducted for profit to pay its proportional share of the tax burden." After he studied the bill, Hefner could "see no objection to it and believed it should, by all means, be passed." He wanted to see that all businesses were taxed with greater equality because he felt it was the American way of taxation. He argued that "to exempt one business from taxation makes the rest of us take over whatever burden the exempted company escapes." Hefner felt that the progressive tax system was by far the best method of taxation. He maintained that it was only fair if "every concern that conducts a business should pay its proportionate part of the taxes." No one corporation or conglomerate corporate structure "should be permitted to make a great profit and not pay its proportionate part of the taxes."⁷

Hefner wrote the representatives of Oklahoma about the "many pressure groups demanding that certain privileges be given to them." He felt that it was "certainly time that the people should awaken and let their Representatives in Congress know what their views are about matters."⁸ Robert Hefner was respected by the leaders of the state of Oklahoma, and usually whenever he contacted them they replied immediately. The Judge received numerous replies to his letters, and he continued to contact the senators and repre-

sentatives from Oklahoma. Moreover, he carried on a large correspondence with the members of the legislature of Oklahoma. Hefner felt that in this manner he could best influence the officials of the government of his state and nation. Therefore he remained interested in politics after he retired from public office. And he continued his interest in politics throughout his last years of life.⁹

Civic affairs had interested the Judge during his life, and they continued to appeal to him after the Second World War. He was a member of the state municipal league, the Dad's Association of Oklahoma University, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Oklahoma Historical Society. Furthermore, there were numerous other organizations to which he belonged, and he devoted much time to all of these groups during the 1950s and the 1960s.¹⁰ Hefner not only gave of his time to help in civic affairs, but also he gave of his money. The Judge was a generous individual who donated money to most of the institutions of higher learning in the state of Oklahoma. He gave money to such institutions as Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Baptist University, Oklahoma City University, University of Oklahoma, and Oklahoma Christian College. He gave to these educational institutions because he felt that colleges were "making men and women . . . stand on their own feet and think."¹¹ Moreover, he financially supported the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City with his money. In addition, he gave generously for certain projects of his church, such as the con-

struction of the Baptist Memorial Hospital. These are but a few of the many organizations that Judge Hefner helped to support with his time and his money during the era after World War II.¹²

In his retirement years Hefner occupied his time in many years. He enjoyed public speaking and accepted many of the invitations he received to speak to various groups. For example, in 1960 he accepted the invitation of his secretary, Evelyn Culver, who once asked her boss to speak to the Desk and Derrick Club of Oklahoma City. The Judge accepted the offer of his secretary and spoke to the group. He did the same thing many times throughout his life. The Hefners enjoyed travel, and after the Judge retired from public life, he and Eva made a number of trips in the United States and abroad. Thus travel was yet another activity of the Judge after the war.¹³

Perhaps two of the most enjoyable preoccupations that Hefner had during the post-war year was collecting walking sticks and bells. This was not a new hobby for the Judge, for he had spent much of his life collecting these items. Hefner began collecting walking sticks in 1930 as a result of the trip with Robert Hefner, Jr., and Evelyn Hefner took around the world. While his children were on their tour of the world they traveled up the Strait of Malacca. There they spotted "a beautiful Malacca walking cane" and decided to purchase it for their father. This was the start of Hefner's collection. Today the Judge's cane collection is

housed at the Oklahoma Heritage House in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Many of these canes were given to Hefner by well-known figures in the United States and the world. Patrick Hurley, who once was the Secretary of War for the United States, gave the Judge a cane, as did Roy J. Turner, the former governor of Oklahoma. John Barrymore and Lionel Barrymore also gave Hefner canes. Allie Reynolds, Judge Samuel W. Hayes, Senator Harry Byrd, Emilio Aguinaldo, and many others gave the Judge a walking stick in order that he might remember them.¹⁴

Not only did the Judge collect walking sticks as a hobby, but he likewise collected bells. By 1948 Hefner had collected more than six hundred bells of all shapes and sizes. One of Hefner's prizes was an old rusty cow bell that was given to him by Will Rogers. He also had a bell that was given to him by Anthony Eden. This bell had come from Westminster Abbey. Mrs. Clarence L. Tinker gave Hefner a bell which her husband, General Clarence L. Tinker, had purchased in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1924. Another bell which he prized was one given to him by Eugene Holman, the president of Standard Oil Company; this bell was from the J. A. Moffett, Jr., an oil tanker which had been sunk during World War II. The ship was torpedoed by a German submarine not far off the coast of Key West, Florida. The bell was taken from the bridge of the tanker and given to the Judge in September of 1945. The Judge's bell collection, like his walking stick collection, today is located and proudly dis-

played at the Oklahoma Heritage House.¹⁵

In 1906 Robert Hefner had married Eva Johnson and they had "a beautiful relationship that you rarely find."¹⁶ The couple shared many experiences, and they always had a sense of humor about them during their lives. Judge Hefner enjoyed telling stories about himself and Eva; perhaps a few of these will illustrate the good times that they had together. One day Robert and Eva were driving around "looking at the beauties surrounding Oklahoma City" when they got into a small scrap about an insignificant matter. As usual Hefner could not convince his wife that he was correct so they stopped talking to one another. Not long afterwards, the Judge spotted a "Missouri mule" in a pasture not far away. He told Eva that the mule was the most hard-headed animal in the world, and he asked her if she was related to the stubborn animal. Eva immediately replied that indeed she was related to the beast, but that her relation to it came only through her marriage to the Judge.¹⁷

On another occasion the Judge attempted to communicate to his wife his love for her. He looked seriously at her and asked if she remembered all the things that he had said to her before they were married. The quick witted woman of Irish descent replied that although she could not remember all of the things that he had said, she did remember one thing. She told the Judge that she recalled him saying that he was not good enough for her. And she exclaimed that he had "proven that statement to be true every day since we

have been married."¹⁸

Robert Hefner had a rare relationship with his wife, Eva, for they were in love for more than half a century. Hefner always said it was his good fortune to have spent those years with Eva, and to have had the opportunity of celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary together. The Hefners had a grand celebration on this anniversary occasion, and everyone, including Robert and Eva, enjoyed themselves immensely.¹⁹ They had enjoyed similar experiences throughout their lives, but both of them well knew that they would not have each other's company much longer. Both were getting old. In September, 1962, Eva's health began to fail, and Robert remained by her side, "staying home with her a good deal." The Judge reported that she was "very weak and confined to her bed most of the time."²⁰ Robert sensed that his lovely wife could not live much longer, and he felt a great deal of sorrow when he had to be away from her on her eighty-third birthday. He did send her a telegram in which he told her that he was "thankful for the day on which you were born." He told her that he was happy to have had fifty-six years of married life with such a beautiful person. He complimented his wife by stating that "if it was all to do over, and I had all the lovely women in the world from whom to chose, I would choose you." His earnest prayer was that "the Lord bless and keep you."²¹

Eva was very ill, and she was confined to her bed for many months. Then on the morning of November 3, 1962, the

Judge "saw the end was near." For this reason, Hefner remained by Eva's side the entire day. About one o'clock that afternoon, Rober "saw that she could not last but a few moments." He tenderly "leaned over and kissed her." Eva looked up into his tear-filled eyes, and "then put her arms around his neck." Robert recalled that she "drew me close to her, kissed me and said, I love you." These were the last words that the Judge heard her say, for in a very few seconds "she was gone." The death of his beloved Miss Eva was hard for Judge Hefner to take, but he consoled himself by feeling "thankful that God gave my dear Eva and me 56 years of happy married life and companionship." This woman who "had a great heart and a great soul" also had been his best friend--one that he could never replace.²²

Robert Hefner, Jr., expressed the feelings of his sister, Evelyn, and his brother, Bill, when he told his father that "when you are no longer here on this earth, I will be proud to tell men of my wonderful father." The Judge's son had a sincere "hope that I will have so lived that they may be able to see in me that fine life which he has set forth."²³ Hefner had spent his life looking to the future, for he "never expected the sun to shine on my back." Hefner fully expected "to live to be 100 years old, or die in the attempt."²⁴ Unfortunately Hefner did not reach the age of one hundred. On January 22, 1971, Judge Hefner died at his home at 201 Northwest Fourteenth Street in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hefner "was a man with dreams that came true,

whose vision, perception, wisdom and ambition took him to . . . fantastic heights." Unlike most men whose deeds are forgotten soon after they die, Hefner will long be remembered for "the heritage he left to us."²⁵

The good which Judge Robert A. Hefner performed in his life was not in the words of Shakespeare, interred with his bones, but rather the good lived after him. Hefner left footprints in the sand of time. To see the great things that the Judge left, one needs only to look about the cities of Ardmore and Oklahoma City, as well as the state of Oklahoma.²⁶ His last contribution to the citizens of the capital city and to the state as a whole was to donate his beautiful home to the Oklahoma Heritage Association. Hefner purchased this home from F. L. Mulky in 1927 and lived in this home on Fourteenth Street until his death. Robert and Eva furnished their home with the finest furniture and pieces of art which they purchased in such places as Europe, Asia, and North America. When Judge Hefner handed the home over to the Oklahoma Heritage Association, he also donated all the beautiful furnishings that are displayed there today. All the rooms of the Heritage House were left as when they were used by the Hefner family, and all of them are arranged in an elegant fashion. The public can enjoy Hefner's home today and witness for themselves one of the monuments that the Judge left to the people of Oklahoma.

Hefner faced many problems in his long life. He met each of them with the same challenge that he met all obsta-

cles that came his way. When Hefner was a young man, he faced the difficulties of obtaining an education, and then he struggled to get ahead in law, business, and public life. He came to Oklahoma with high hopes and dreams. He worked and he fought to become a great man in his chosen profession, and he struggled to serve other people as a public servant. Hefner kept faith with his dreams and he fulfilled his destiny. He helped transform the Indian Territory from a rugged frontier into an integral part of the United States. Hefner helped mold the character of his state and his nation, and he left a heritage for all to follow.

NOTES

¹Hefner to M. Johnson, January 24, 1949, HC.

²Stanley Draper to Hefner, July 2, 1949, HC.

³Allen Street to Hefner, April 20, 1945, HC.

⁴Hefner to George H. Shirk, October 19, 1965, HC; George H. Shirk to Clifford Trafzer, September 26, 1973, HC. Shirk reported in this letter that "Oklahoma City was the first city in the state to submit to its electorate the question of a municipal sales tax." If the election had failed, municipal sales taxes could have been delayed for some time. The election in Oklahoma City served as an example for the other cities of Oklahoma. Since 1965 more than 200 cities and towns in the state have municipal sales taxes. The recorded vote in Oklahoma City for the election of November 9, 1965, was 36,877 for and 17,271 against.

⁵Hefner to George Shirk, June 17, 1964, HC.

⁶Dwight D. Eisenhower to Hefner, January 29, 1946, HC; Hefner to Dwight D. Eisenhower, February 20, 1948, HC.

⁷Hefner to Robert S. Kerr, July 13, 1949, HC; Hefner to Elmer Thomas, July 13, 1949, HC.

⁸Ibid.

⁹John Jarman to Hefner, July 15, 1960, HC; Hefner to Robert S. Kerr, July 1, 1960, HC; Robert S. Kerr to Hefner, July 14, 1949, HC; Hefner to Robert S. Kerr, February 16, 1962, HC; Hefner to Mike Monroney, February 27, 1962, HC.

¹⁰Denver Davidson, "Robert A. Hefner, 1874-1971," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, XLIX (Summer, 1971), pp. 209-210.

¹¹Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.

¹²Hefner to Herschel Hobbs, September 24, 1963, HC; Hefner to Oliver S. Willham, August 25, 1966, HC; T. B. Lackey to Hefner, August 13, 1965, HC.

¹³Hefner to Krueger Travel Service, July 22, 1948, HC; Allen Street to Captain of Queen Mary, April 9, 1951, HC; Evelyn Culver to Hefner, December 3, 1960, HC.

¹⁴Hefner to Hefner Company, February 19, 1962, HC; Hefner to Harry F. Byrd, February 2, 1962, HC; Daily Oklahoman, October 15, 1961.

¹⁵Eugene Holman to Hefner, September 28, 1945, HC; Hefner to Anthony Eden, April 16, 1945, HC; Hefner to Lord Halifax, April 16, 1945, HC.

¹⁶Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Robert A. Hefner, III, April 30, 1973, HC.

¹⁷Hefner to Merle Armitage, April 28, 1960, HC.

¹⁸Hefner to Merle Armitage, February 19, 1960, HC.

¹⁹Daily Oklahoman, July 18, 1956.

²⁰Hefner to Edward Galt, September 6, 1962, GC.

²¹Hefner to Eva Hefner, October 30, 1962, HC.

²²Hefner to Tom Cunningham, April 12, 1963, HC.

²³Robert A. Hefner, Jr., to Hefner, February 15, 1927, HC.

²⁴Hefner to Tom Cunningham, July 24, 1964, HC.

²⁵Daily Oklahoman, January 22, 1971; The Oklahoma Journal, January 23, 1971; Virginia Sorrells Green to Hefner family, January 23, 1971, HC.

CHAPTER X

THE JUDGE IN RETROSPECT

Judge Hefner was one of those individuals who spent a lifetime working to get ahead. He was born in a small community named Hefner's Chapel near Lone Oak, Texas. His parents were poor sodbusters who could offer little to their children besides food and shelter. Perhaps they did instill in their son, Robert, a belief that through hard work and determination, nothing was impossible. During the 1880s, Texas was little more than a frontier state, and it was here that Robert grew up. Much of his character was molded by his experiences on that frontier, for he was forced at a young age to provide for himself and his family. Hefner's hunger for an education led him to read, so by candlelight, he read the books that his cousin sent to him. And it was then while he was yet a young man that he decided that he would someday obtain a college degree.¹

Thus, as soon as he had paid off the debt which his father had left as a result of his death, Robert moved to Jacksboro, Texas, where he attended North Texas Baptist College. He worked his way through this school for two years before transferring to the University of Texas. In Austin Hefner pursued a degree in law. He made a good scholastic

record for himself while a student at the University of Texas, and his educational endeavors were of benefit to him. He graduated near the top of his class in 1902, and as a result, he was asked to remain at the university for the next school year in order to study on the graduate level and to instruct students as well. Hefner stayed at the university for another year before moving to Beaumont, Texas, where he went into law practice with Oswald S. Parker.²

Indian Territory lured many men to its rolling prairies. Robert Hefner was no exception, for after first visiting the area because of a legal matter, he decided that he would move to the territory. In 1906 Hefner was involved in litigation which involved placing the names of several Mississippi-Choctaw Indians on the rolls and procuring their allotments for them. When he saw the area around Ardmore, Oklahoma, he felt that the region was rich in oil deposits. Therefore, he fought to see that his clients received lands in southern Oklahoma. Hefner moved to Ardmore where he established himself as a prominent lawyer. He became an active citizen who participated in the building of this small town in Carter County. Judge Hefner served as city attorney for two years, and he became president of the school board. Moreover, he served Ardmore as mayor for six years and did an outstanding job at running the city.³

Just after the turn of the twentieth century, Hefner was a young lawyer who dreamed of the day he could be a successful attorney and businessman. He gave up a promising

law practice in Beaumont, Texas, in order to migrate north to Oklahoma where he hoped to become a wealthy man. Hefner had learned about the oil business while a resident of Beaumont, and after his first visit to Oklahoma, he was convinced that "black gold" existed in the rolling prairies of southern Oklahoma. The Judge worked hard as a struggling young attorney in Ardmore, Oklahoma, and he became an astute entrepreneur. He invested all of his spare earnings into land which he felt eventually would produce oil. His speculations proved profitable, for much of the land which he purchased was in the areas that became the Hewitt, Healdton, and Fox Oil Fields. Judge Hefner made his money by leasing his land to major oil companies and to hard-working sod-busters. Hefner held on to his lands and most of these lands made money for the Judge. Therefore by investing his money wisely into land and by selling gas and oil leases, Robert Hefner became a rich man. In essence, this poor farm boy from northern Texas went from rags to riches because of his own drive and determination.⁴

The Judge's significance to the history of Oklahoma was not attained through his efforts as a businessman, but rather as a public servant. For even while he was involved in his business endeavors, he was also engaged in political activities. Hefner's concern for political matters was not confined to those political activities in his home town of Ardmore. Indeed, he had a great interest in the political affairs of his state and his nation. The Judge was a

staunch Democrat who campaigned continually for the candidate of his party. In fact, this conservative Baptist even supported a liberal Catholic in the presidential election of 1928, probably because of his poignant partisanship. Hefner fully supported Governor Alfred E. Smith and contributed his time and his money to the campaign to elect the Democratic nominee. The Judge also aided the Democratic candidates in his state, for he stumped for his party many times during the era of the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, and the Second World War. During the depression Hefner served voluntarily as the chairman of the compliance board of the National Recovery Administration. The Judge's interest in politics led him to correspond with various Congressmen, Senators, and Governors regarding policies of his state and nation. And it was this same interest as well as his concern for the people of his state, that drove Hefner to seek election as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma.⁵

Robert Hefner was elected to the state Supreme Court in 1926, and his election to this high office was no accident. The Judge and his political supporters worked diligently to campaign and elect Hefner to the Supreme Court. Hefner spent a great deal of time and money on his election, and once he was elected, he studied hard to learn the procedures and workings of the Supreme Court. Moreover, he spent much of his time examining previous cases and writing new opinions from what he had learned. While a member of the high

court, Hefner wrote a total of 504 opinions, and as a result, he became the best known judge of his time. One of the most important cases that the Judge wrote an opinion for was Wentz vs. Thomas. In this case, Hefner decided against the Democratic Governor of the state of Oklahoma and decided in favor of a Republican roadman by the name of Lew Wentz. This case exemplifies the fact that although Hefner was a political man, he did not allow his partisanship to influence his decisions as a member of the Supreme Court. Hefner kept his politics separated from his business on the Supreme Court. Hence, he was a man of integrity, for there was never any mention of scandal associated with his name.⁶

In 1933 Hefner voluntarily retired from the court when he decided not to seek reelection as an associate justice of the Supreme Court. Yet, he never fully retired from public life, for he continued his interest in the politics of his city, state, and nation. In 1939 the Judge was called upon by a number of leading citizens of the capital city of Oklahoma who urged him to seek election as mayor of Oklahoma City. Hefner could not refuse their request, so he made the race. As usual, the Judge worked hard to win the post as mayor of the capital city. After winning both the primary and the general election, Hefner became mayor of Oklahoma City in April of 1939. During the golden anniversary of Oklahoma City, Hefner participated willingly in the celebrations. Through his speeches, it is easy to understand that the Judge wanted the old frontier philosophy of rugged indi-

vidualism to be rekindled during his administration. This same spirit was once a great part of the character of pioneers, and Hefner exemplified the spirit of individualism during his administration. He applied his attitudes of hard work, self-determination, and personal drive to municipal and personal affairs. Hefner cooperated with people and organizations that were interested in making Oklahoma City a better place to live and to work. He spread good will wherever he went and with whomever he met. The Mayor initiated a program of commissioning individuals as Ambassadors of Good Will in order to establish better cooperation and relations with others. The keynote of his first term was his ability to get factions to work together for a better city.⁷

The Mayor's ability to encourage groups to cooperate with each other was most apparent during the first half of the 1940s. Judge Hefner was able to establish and to maintain a good working relationship with such diverse groups as the labor unions, the business interests, the Latin Americans, the Blacks, the Chamber of Commerce, the city council and other groups as well. Hefner worked hard to move his city progressively forward in social, municipal, and industrial development. In his effort to do so, he faced and attempted to solve such problems as coal shortages, noise pollution, and street maintenance. He faced other problems such as the establishment of a reputable police department and the curtailment of juvenile delinquency. In 1943 Judge

Hefner was reelected as mayor of Oklahoma City, thus making him the first mayor in the history of the capital city to succeed himself. During those eight years in office, Hefner accomplished many things. One of the most important accomplishments of his two terms was to build the Bluff Creek Reservoir--Lake Hefner.⁸

When Hefner took office in 1939, it was his feeling that Oklahoma City had to have an adequate water supply if the city was going to grow industrially. He believed that industrial growth was the best policy for the capital city, and he realized that without a better water supply, industry would not come to the city. Therefore, he and other active citizens in Oklahoma City organized their forces so that they could build a new reservoir. Hefner worked hard in his efforts to get the people of Oklahoma City to pass the bond election, and his efforts were not in vain. But although the bond issue passed, construction on the project did not begin immediately because of stiff opposition to the proposed dam and water works. It was Mayor Hefner who halted the litigation against the reservoir by meeting with members of the opposition and convincing them that they were preventing industrial progress from entering Oklahoma City. The Mayor chose H. E. Bailey, an excellent engineer, as his city manager and had him supervise the overall construction of Lake Hefner. Hefner and Bailey built the lake at a great savings to the taxpayers of Oklahoma City, because the city built the water works itself and did not hire a contractor

to do so. After the water project was completed, more industries moved into the area around the capital city. Hence, the building of Lake Hefner meant a great deal to the development of the city during World War II.⁹

It came as a shock to Judge Hefner--as it did to so many Americans--when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. At that time, Hefner was mayor of Oklahoma City, and therefore the responsibility of leading the people of his city through the war fell upon him. Hefner's greatest significance to the history of Oklahoma was his guidance of the capital city through the Second World War. He was instrumental in raising money to pay for defense bonds which were in turn used to pay for the cost of new defense installations in the city. He helped sell defense savings bonds and defense stamps. He encouraged defense industries to locate in Oklahoma City, and he actively sought to establish a giant air depot in the area. Hefner's energies were not wasted, for Tinker Air Force Base was located in the region during the war. Mayor Hefner played a significant role in planning, organizing, and launching a drive to raise sufficient funds in which to purchase a light cruiser for the United States Navy. The money was raised, and they purchased the U. S. S. Oklahoma City. This ship, like Tinker Air Force Base, is still in operation. Throughout the war, Hefner served as the leader of Oklahoma City, and he aided his city, state, and nation in its struggle to defeat the Axis powers on the home front.¹⁰

Hefner lived a long life, and he left a great heritage behind when he died in 1971. He rose above his humble beginnings as a poor dirt farmer, and through his own drive and determination he went to college. A strong spirit of individualism characterized his entire life as he struggled financially and went from rags to riches. But although he became a very wealthy man, his significance to the history of Oklahoma did not stem from him being an entrepreneur. Rather, his importance emerged from his efforts as a public servant. He gained political experience in Ardmore, Oklahoma, as president of the board of education and as mayor of the city. Then in 1926 he ran for and was elected to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. He served his state well as an associate justice, but he decided not to seek reelection in 1933. The Judge thought that he had retired from public life in that year, but in 1939 he was called upon to run for mayor of Oklahoma City. He was elected to that post, and he served the citizens well throughout both terms of his administration. After the war, he continued his interest in politics but found other activities in which to occupy his time. He had come to Oklahoma with his dreams and his determination, and he had fulfilled a fine destiny. He helped build the character of his state and his nation, and in doing so he left an important heritage. This was the life of a proud man of much integrity, for this was the life of the Judge.¹¹

NOTES

- ¹Hefner, Typed Ms.
- ²Oral interview by Oklahoma Christian College with Hefner, March 17, 1965, OCC.
- ³Fozie Rahal, "The Romantic Life of Mayor Robert A. Hefner," Tomorrow, I (July, 1939), pp. 35-36.
- ⁴Daily Ardmoreite, January 23, 1916; Rex Harlow, "A Plan Plus Determination Equals Success," Harlow's Weekly (January 4, 1930), p. 4.
- ⁵History of Oklahoma, III (New York, 1957), pp. 348-353.
- ⁶Hefner to Robert A. Hefner, Jr., May 26, 1933, HC.
- ⁷Daily Oklahoman, April 4, 1939; Daily Ardmoreite, April 5, 1939.
- ⁸Daily Oklahoman, April 2, 1943.
- ⁹Oklahoma City Times, October 23, 1942; Daily Oklahoman, March 26, 1944.
- ¹⁰Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with H. E. Bailey, May 7, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with E. K. Gaylord, May 4, 1973, HC.
- ¹¹Daily Oklahoman, January 22, 1971; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Stanley Draper, June 17, 1973, HC; Oral interview by Clifford Trafzer with Virgil Browne, May 4, 1973, HC.

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Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: JUDGE ROBERT A HEFNER: A BIOGRAPHY

Mayor Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Mansfield, Ohio, March 1, 1949,
the son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald W. Trafzer.

Education: Graduated from Kofa High School, Yuma, Arizona, in May, 1967; received the Bachelor of Science degree in history from Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona, in September 1970; received the Master of Arts degree in history from Northern Arizona University in May, 1972; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1973.

Professional Experience: Graduate teaching assistant, History Department, Northern Arizona University, September, 1970 to May, 1971; graduate teaching assistant, History Department, Oklahoma State University, September 1971 to May, 1973; and presently Curator of the Century House Museum, a branch museum of the Arizona Historical Society, Yuma, Arizona.