

The Philanthropy of  
Karl Hoblitzelle  
and the first

75

years of

Hoblitzelle  
FOUNDATION



***HOBLITZELLE FOUNDATION***



*Karl Hoblitzelle*

# The Philanthropy of Karl Hoblitzelle & the First 75 years of Hoblitzelle Foundation

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## PREFACE

It has been a privilege for me to work for Hoblitzelle Foundation for more than 30 years. I had the good fortune to have been born the son of one of Karl Hoblitzelle's closest associates – Lynn Harris. My father was Karl Hoblitzelle's personal secretary, traveling companion, staff manager, collections curator, and confidant.

This book is an attempt to satisfy anyone's curiosity about Karl Hoblitzelle – his life and outlook and personal philosophy. I was encouraged by the Foundation's Board of Directors to assemble biographies, writings of Mr. Hoblitzelle's, the historical record of his interests and accomplishments, the many anecdotes and stories that I have heard and learned over the years, and gather them all into one place. Hopefully, this project will help the Foundation inform and maintain "donor intent" in the future and provide benchmarks for new Directors and employees. The culture, reputation, and identity of the Foundation are essential elements of the Foundation's continuing philanthropy.

Paul W. Harris  
Foundation President and CEO  
September 22, 2017

## CHAPTER ONE



During the mid-1950s, a young Boy Scout went door-to-door in his neighborhood selling Scout Circus tickets to help generate support for the Circle Ten Council. He rang the bell at a large, two-story white house with dark green shutters. The door was opened by a member of the household staff, and the Scout asked if the owner of the home would be interested in buying some of the tickets he had for sale. The man who opened the door asked the Scout to wait outside and said that he would be back soon. When the door opened again, the Scout was presented with a \$20 bill, and he began to reach into his pocket

for the tickets only to be stopped by the man who had initially greeted him. He said that the owner of the house was interested in helping Scouting, and that he did not need or want any circus tickets in return.

The Scout returned to his home a bit confused. He had never encountered a situation where money was not linked to paying for services or merchandise, and he told his parents about this neighbor who had given him money simply because he was interested in supporting the Boy Scouts. His folks explained to him that there were men and women who did provide funding for causes in which they had an interest without expecting anything in return. That event was the young Scout's first encounter with philanthropy. The home he visited belonged to Karl Hoblitzelle,

and that Scout was Bill Solomon, who would eventually become a Hoblitzelle Foundation Board Member for over twenty years and serve as its Chairman for eight.



The first formal meeting of Hoblitzelle Foundation was held on December 29, 1942, in Downtown Dallas' Baker Hotel. The Foundation was initially established as a Trust at Republic National Bank, where Mr. Hoblitzelle was Chairman of the Board of Directors. Mrs. Esther Hoblitzelle was a member of the initial Foundation trustee group, along with Sarah T. Hughes, a friend and colleague of the Hoblitzelles, Fred Florence, civic leader and President of Republic Bank, and Umphrey Lee, President of Southern Methodist University. For the early 1940s, this was a relatively diverse mix – three men, one of which was of the Jewish faith, and two women.

President Lee was elected Chairman, and an executive from Mr. Hoblitzelle's Interstate Circuit theater company, John Adams, was appointed Secretary. Several oil paintings from the Hoblitzelle's collection were given to the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Foundation received a \$1,000 check from Mr. Hoblitzelle. Many of the paintings in the Hoblitzelle Collection were purchased by Mr. Hoblitzelle's brother, Clarence, in the early years of the 1900s. For a more detailed story about Clarence Hoblitzelle's interest in these and other oil paintings, both the Foundation and the Dallas Museum of Art have a copy of the results of Dallas resident Schatzie Lee's investigation of Clarence's unusual life and interest in the visual arts.

Prior to the second meeting of the Foundation in September of 1943, Mrs. Hoblitzelle passed away due to cancer, and after some small bequests were made, the balance of her estate came to the Foundation. A copy of her will is bound in the first Minute Book of the Foundation. Mrs. E. H. Sara Hulsey was elected to fill the vacancy created by Esther Hoblitzelle's death. The Minutes of a meeting held in December of that year included a memorial to Mrs. Hoblitzelle's generosity and her understanding of how financial and other forms of support should be conveyed.





*Esther Hoblitzelle*



*Her anticipation of the work of the Foundation was only an expression of her own interest in people and of her native generosity. She had the rare quality of entering into the joys and sorrows of all types of people. There was nothing forced or artificial in her sympathies. Her benefactions never held the slightest sense of “cold charity”, for the recipients knew that what she did was out of genuine friendship. She had one of the rarest of human gifts, the intuitive knowledge of how to do what is needed without sacrificing the self-respect of those who received her gifts.*



The Foundation's Trustees did not meet again until December of 1944, and the first direct grant to Southwestern Medical Foundation was approved at that meeting – \$5,000 for penicillin research facilities. A \$10,000 grant to SMU was also approved at that meeting.

At the Board's June meeting in 1945, the Minutes record a report from Sarah Hulseley and Judge Hughes on “the needs of the Negro race in Dallas”, and a \$4,500 grant to the Y.M.C.A. to help establish a “camp for Negro children”. These two women continued to work on behalf of programs that focused on the needs of the community's most prominent minority. Karl Hoblitzelle and his Foundation were mindful of the challenges facing that portion of the Dallas population and would address those concerns on many occasions over the next seven decades.

*In a portion of his will, Mr. Hoblitzelle stated: The Donors (recognizing a moral responsibility of our people to the Negro race, in the light of our historical background) express the desire that, as part of the program herein provided, the Trustees give sympathetic consideration to measures in aid of the Negro race.*

Two more major initiatives of the Foundation were launched in 1946: acquisition of land on which to build a new medical school campus; and the development of an independently funded agriculture research initiative – the Texas State Research Foundation, led by Dr. C. L. Lundell. At the January, 1950 meeting, the Foundation approved an annual \$5,000 prize and gold medal to be awarded to the “scientist or layman who makes each year the most significant contribution to the advancement of any or every form of agriculture in Texas”. Two additional awards were added a few years later.

One of the themes of Karl Hoblitzelle’s interests was the health of this region’s food and fiber production resources. He believed that nothing in the towns and cities could flourish without an economically sustainable farming and ranching sector of the economy that would support the essential needs of those who made their living in the developing Texas economy within its urban centers. In addition to his support of the Texas Research Foundation and Texas A&M, Karl Hoblitzelle was a member of the Board of Directors at Texas Technical College in Lubbock during the mid-1940s. Grants have been made over the years to Tech’s libraries, agriculture and business schools, and the Ranching Heritage Center.



Other grant-making interests of the Foundation during its first decade of service to the community included daycare for children with an African-American heritage, YMCA projects, a donation for the creation of the Dallas Health Museum at Fair Park, further support of SMU’s administrative costs, and opportunities to develop the role of Southwestern Medical Foundation in Dallas’ health care network. Hoblitzelle also re-employed former Interstate Theater employees who left to serve in the military, supported veteran memorials, and was instrumental in bringing the *U.S.S Texas* to the San Jacinto Monument site in 1948, where it is still on display. In 1964, the Foundation began publishing an Annual Report listing each grant made during that fiscal year. Prior to that, each action of the Foundation’s Trustees was recorded in the Minute Books which are stored in the Foundation’s safe.



*Memorial plaque located at the current Preston Road YMCA.*

In the late 1940s, the YMCA began a campaign to bring a family-activity center to the Park Cities. Mr. Hoblitzelle owned the property west of his home that fronted on Preston Road, and the Y wanted to build on a lot one block to the north, which was owned by the First Unitarian Church. Mr. Hoblitzelle arranged a trade, and his St. Andrew's lot, where the First Unitarian Church's building is today, was swapped for the property on which the Y planned to build their facility. In the conveyance of this property to the YMCA, there was a stipulation that if the Y were ever to abandon its mission of services for children, the title to the property would revert to Hoblitzelle Foundation. That provision still exists. This YMCA complex was dedicated to the memory of his wife, Esther, and a carved stone memorial was at the front entrance to that building for over 60 years. A recent reconstruction of this Y's facilities still features an exhibit honoring that gesture of devotion.

During the early 1950s, grants were made toward projects at the Hockaday School, the Texas Heritage Foundation, Jarvis, Bishop, and Prairie View colleges for vocational programs, and to Ranch-O-Hills, a citrus fruit research station in the Rio Grande Valley near Mercedes. Mr. Hoblitzelle continued to grow the Foundation's endowment with gifts of Republic National Bank stock and other resources.



*Early view of the Dallas Medical District.*



The Hoblitzelles were active in many charitable and civic enterprises before the establishment of the Foundation. He participated in troop entertainment and war bond programs during World Wars I and II, and they were both active in supporting the Dallas Museum of Art. Karl Hoblitzelle's efforts, influence, and financial support were essential in bringing the Texas Centennial Celebration to Fair Park in the 1930s.

One of the most lasting and pivotal engagements that Mr. Hoblitzelle made was his partnership with Dr. E. H. Cary and other regional civic leaders to form Southwestern Medical Foundation in January of 1939. With the assistance of influential members of the community including Nathan Adams, Herbert Marcus, Fred Florence, R. L. Thornton, and Houston's Honorable Jesse Jones, who was the Secretary of Commerce of the United States of America from 1940 through 1945, Southwestern Medical College was created in 1943. An excellent review of this piece of history can be found in the Spring, 2004, issue of Southwestern Medical

Foundation's *Perspectives* magazine. The success of what is now known as UT-Southwestern Medical Center is one of the greatest examples of the influence, judgment, and an early, meaningful investment in a promising opportunity that were among the hallmarks of Hoblitzelle-style philanthropy. This Medical Center and its sister health care institutions remain the number one recipient of Hoblitzelle Foundation support.

## CHAPTER TWO

Three separate, brief biographies of Karl Hoblitzelle are included here. Each version has its own set of facts and events, and shuffling them together like three decks of cards would not adequately recognize the research and authorship of each writer. Proper attribution would become challenging and a distraction from the reader's understanding of the life, interests, and vision of Karl Hoblitzelle. These three bio's may seem redundant, and some segments are duplicated, but the Foundation intends this book to create a lasting and easily available resource for those who want to know more about Karl Hoblitzelle and his background, experiences, and outlook.

First is a two-chapter rough draft of a biography authored by Lynn Harris. His double spaced, manually-typed document begins with a look into the Hoblitzelle ancestry as a descendent of the "Hablützel Family" in Switzerland, beginning in the 1400s. Chapter II – "The Early Days" – traces Karl Hoblitzelle's life up through the St. Louis World's Fair, which marked the beginning of his interest in the entertainment business.

From: Lynn Harris' *"The Story of Karl Hoblitzelle"*

### Chapter I *The Family Trees*

## The Hoblitzelles

On July 27, 1494, Hablützel of Karensburg was elevated to the nobility. His first name as well as the deeds which entitled him to his new station in life are lost in medieval mists. From





*Hablützel coat of arms, first recorded in 1494.*

him is derived the Hablützel coat of arms, a description of which is preserved in the official records of now-forgotten Karensburg, which later became the Kingdom of Wurttemberg and which today is a State in the southern part of Germany. Prominent among the devices on the coat of arms is an azure horseshoe on a field of gold; the crest consists of an arm in silver armor, the hand in natural color brandishing a sword with gold decorations – all indicating that the early Hablützel was a military man.

Whether he left the Karensburg, or Wurttemberg, region for Switzerland during his lifetime or whether it remained for his descendants to do so is not known; but it is a fact that in

succeeding centuries the Hablützels achieved fame in Switzerland as governors of cantons, jurists, army officers and writers. To this day a large mountain near Zurich is known as Mount Hablützel. It was probably in Schaffhaus, Switzerland, that Adrian Hablützel was born in 1745 – and he is the immediate point of interest in this story. For Adrian left the Swiss Hablützels to carry on their distinguished traditions in their own way, choosing for himself the adventurous life of a British colonist in North America. Later he joined George Washington's ragged army of revolutionaries and fought throughout the war for independence as a soldier in the line. In this new nation he helped create, he firmly established the Hablützel family name – a name whose spelling Adrian himself modified to Hoblitzell and which later was refined to the present Hoblitzelle. Adrian Hablützel, who landed on these shores in 1768, was the great, great grandfather of Karl Hoblitzelle of Dallas.

Adrian was a youngster of 22 when he boarded Captain Patrick Brown's passenger ship "Sally" at Rotterdam, Holland, on November 10, 1767. The ship put in briefly at Cowes, England, to take on another contingent of emigrants, bringing the number aboard to 35. During the voyage all passengers were required to take an oath of allegiance to the English King, and Adrian is listed in the ship's log as the 26th to do so. Apparently to drive home the significance of this gesture—for already lusty advocates of rebellion were disturbing London—all males over 16 entering the colonies were forced to repeat the loyalty pledge before a magistrate as soon as possible after arriving, and this Adrian did.

He settled in Allegheny County, Maryland. Very soon he became a merchant of considerable means. One reason for this was that he had an exceptionally level business head on his shoulders – a trait that has persisted in most of the Hoblitzelle men. But even the ablest business man cannot prosper in an economic vacuum.

Adrian found himself in no such vacuum, but in the midst of an undreamed-of abundance, and in a land where the institutions of a new civilization, including those of capitalism and democracy, were slowly being put together by men who felt free to fashion them as they saw fit.

No such conditions and no such freedoms prevailed in

the Old World Adrian left behind. Prior to 1500 England and the Continent were over-populated with half-starved, poorly-clothed people who labored for small pay or for bare subsistence in a stratified society which offered the individual little or no hope of bettering himself. Then the great explorers started bringing back not only tales of fabulous treasure, but shiploads of it – gold and silver, huge supplies of foodstuffs, cotton and furs for clothing, and a host of other natural resources which were there for the taking in the vast, rich lands of North and South America, Australia and other areas never before heard of. In brief, Adrian and his contemporaries were, without knowing it, among the principal actors in what probably was the greatest drama the world has known, before or since – the drama of the opening of what Dr. Walter Prescott Webb has defined as the Great Frontier.

The unlimited opportunities, economic, political, religious and social, offered by this frontier caused a great population drift from the Old World to the mysterious and fabled new lands. This alarmed some governments, which feared for their national preservation in the event of enemy attack. By the middle of the 18th Century several of the more apprehensive European powers forbade all emigration and put guards at their borders to enforce the decrees. This alone provoked many among the daring to cut loose from their old moorings. High rates of taxation – Switzerland at this time imposed a 20 per cent tax – caused others to slip past the border guards. The appeals of religious leaders had little or no effect. Martin Luther read into the 37th Psalm of David – “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed” – a mandate to the people to remain in the Fatherland. But the promise of being fed in the undefined future held no allure for thousands who knew they could eat at once, and thereafter regularly, when they had escaped to the abundant foodbins and storehouses of gold across the waters.

Adrian could not have picked a better time to join this historic drift, nor could he have chosen as his future home a more dynamic fragment of the Great Frontier.

He was 30 years of age when the Revolutionary War ushered in the dawn of a new political freedom. At Lexington and Concord and at Bunker Hill embattled New England farmers shook

the faith and confidence of the British, penning them up in Boston in a virtual stage of siege. General George Washington arrived at nearby Cambridge July 2, 1775 to take over as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental forces. These he found to be long on patriotism and zeal, but inadequate in numbers and almost completely lacking in discipline and gunpowder (the army was down to nine rounds of ammunition per man). With little courage the British could have broken out of the trap. In this uneasy situation Washington bent to the task of building up his powder supply, training his army and increasing its numerical strength.

Meanwhile, the Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, had authorized the organization of a minimum of ten companies of “expert riflemen” to bolster Washington’s forces. The ranks of these companies were quickly filled by eager volunteers in Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland.

On July 1, 1775, Adrian enlisted in one of two such companies organized in Maryland. It is described simply as a “Company of Riflemen in the Service of the United Colonies.” Adrian is listed in the muster roll as Adrian Hoblitzell. This is the first mention of a change in spelling of the family name.

The rifle companies played a significant part in the winning of the war. Colonel Richard Henry Lee, one of Washington’s closest friends, marveled at the riflemen’s “amazing hardihood, the exceeding quickness with which they can march to distant parts and above all, the dexterity to which they have arrived in the use of the rifle gun... There is not one of these men who wish a distance of less than 200 yards or a larger object than an orange – Every shot is fatal.”

Washington himself was astonished to see the riflemen reporting for duty so soon after they had organized, and after marches of hundreds of miles.

The outfit Adrian joined was commanded by Captain Michael Cresap. Cresap was no great friend of Washington’s, the two having had unpleasant words in connection with certain land rights. But personal animosities vanished in the face of a common danger. Shortly after the company was mustered in Cresap and his men marched from Frederick, Md., to Washington’s Cambridge headquarters, a distance of 550 miles, in 22 days.

As the intimidated British continued to stall, Washington fashioned his troops into a well-disciplined unit which drove the enemy out of Boston and the Bay Colony the following Spring.

There is every indication that Adrian remained in the ranks for the duration of the long war. It is known that he was with Washington's main army which crushed the Hessians in the Battle of Trenton the day after Christmas, 1776. He probably spent the winter of 1777 at Valley Forge, for there is no record of his returning to Maryland until early the next year. An old document in the court archives of Washington County, Maryland, lists him among those who took the "Patriot's Oath of Fidelity and Support" in March, 1778. Then back to the ranks. Official records show him again with the main army when the Americans and French under Washington and Rochambeau, assisted by the French fleet under De Grasse, besieged and finally conquered Cornwallis at Yorktown. The victory of course ended British resistance, and the Treaty of Paris two years later signaled the birth of the United States of America.

As a veteran, Adrian later became eligible for a pension or a grant of land – and veterans' land grants were large. But he would accept neither.

Meanwhile, in 1774, a year before Lexington and Concord, Adrian had married Martha Barton, who came from an old Maryland family. Her father was Colonel Jacob Barton, a veteran of the French and Indian War. Thus with hostilities at an end Adrian could return not only to a prosperous business, but to a home and family.

Adrian and Martha were the parents of eight boys and two girls. Most of them spent their lives in Maryland. But with the arrival and maturity of grandchildren – twenty in all – the family began to scatter, and soon, as time is judged with respect to human life, the prolific Hoblitzelle line was represented not only in Maryland, but in Missouri, Ohio, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Virginia, New Jersey, West Virginia, New York, and possibly other states. And somewhere in this later period the family name acquired its present spelling – Hoblitzelle.

The great grandfather of Karl Hoblitzelle was Jacob, seventh child of Adrian and Martha. Karl's grandfather was Jacob's second son, William T. Hoblitzelle.

Little is known of either, but they raised large families and it is presumed they continued the active business life for which Adrian had set a pattern. Frontier businesses leave few records of personal adventure; wars leave many. Perhaps it was their good fortune that Jacob was too young to participate in the War of 1812, and William too old to fight in the Civil War.

William, who lived out his life in Frederick County, Maryland, in 1843 married Loretta Ogle, a direct descendant of Sir Robert de Ogle of County Northumberland, England. Sir Robert in 1314 displayed exceptional bravery in border warfare with the Scots led by the famous Robert Bruce. As a reward he was granted permission by King Edward III to adorn his manor house with towers, a customary way of bestowing a royal favor in those days and regarded by the recipient as a most significant one. The remains of Sir Robert's castle are still standing about eight miles southwest of Morpeth, near Newcastle.

Five children were born to William and Loretta, three boys and two girls. Their first born was Clarence Linden Hoblitzelle, the father of Karl.

When Clarence was a youth of 17, the Civil War burst upon the land. Like many other Marylanders, the Hoblitzelle family could take no course other than loyalty to the South. Withdrawing from school, Clarence organized a company of Confederate volunteers largely from among friends of about his own age. But his military career was short-lived. A band of raiding Union troops captured him in the early months of the war. At this stage of hostilities there were few facilities for the confinement of military prisoners, so Clarence was routed to the now-legendary Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis, Mo., where he was paroled, probably on the day of his arrival, because of his youth.

It is hardly possible that the fiery young man who waited around the prison stockade for his parole papers could have escaped noticing, just across the street at No. 818 Gratiot Street, a large and even imposing residence. There dwelt Colonel George Knapp, co-publisher of the Missouri Republican, the first North American newspaper west of the Mississippi River, a man of great weight in his community and State, whose name even today is inevitably mentioned in any discussion of the great days of



Missouri journalism.

The Colonel had a large family, and when the prison scene was being enacted a quiet spectator of life on the Mississippi in those turbulent times was one of his daughters, soft-spoken, brown-eyed Ida Adelaide Knapp, then 17 years old. The frustrated war prisoner Clarence Linden Hoblitzelle one day was to marry the beautiful Ida in that large mansion at 818 Gratiot.

Without indulging in exhaustive, and usually exhausting, genealogical treatment of the subject, an attempt has been made in the foregoing to convey an impression of some of the men and women, predominately of Swiss and English extraction, whose predilections and characters are embodied in the paternal ancestry of Karl Hoblitzelle. It has been seen that on this side of the family were Old War figures prominent in war, politics, law and scholarship; and that in the New World the Hoblitzelles were successful in business in times of peace, proficient with a rifle when freedom was threatened, and, in the case of Clarence, impatient to the point of willingness to fight when justice as he conceived it had been violated.

Another remarkable group of men and women now mix their talents and their humility, their impatience and their forbearance, their searchings and their wisdom, with those of the Hoblitzelles.

## The Knapps

When Clarence Hoblitzelle found himself footloose in St. Louis, a booming river metropolis of about 100,000 population, he naturally sought friends around whom he could unburden himself. Missourians were divided in their war sympathies. There were several outbreaks of armed violence between opposing factions in St. Louis. Missouri soon was placed under military rule. In these tense circumstances there could be no doubt where the Knapps stood. For above 818 Gratiot, diagonally across the street from the Federal military prison and in clear view of regiments of Union forces billeted adjacent to it, there waved proudly atop a tall flagpole the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy!

Naturally Clarence gravitated toward the Knapp family

circle and their innumerable friends. Clarence, tall, handsome, blue-eyed, standing straight as an arrow, with impeccable manners and an alert, inquisitive mind, had only to knock to discover and become part of an institution long since vanished—the civilized frontier family.

A charming paragraph describing one aspect of life in the Knapp household is included in a privately printed book of family documents prepared by Mrs. John S. Tritle, of St. Louis, a sister of Karl Hoblitzelle. Though the passage deals with the family in later years, during Mrs. Tritle's girlhood, it could very well apply to events in which young Clarence participated during and after the war years.

"There was much sitting around the dining table," Mrs. Tritle writes, "and every subject known to man, except sex and the breeding of animals (taboo at that time) was discussed from every angle, and oh the vast diversity of opinions! And the arguments! One sitting was a liberal education. It was a busy household and life was never dull. Grandmother was the center of it all. She was an inveterate reader of novels and history. She had all the romance of her Irish heritage and with it an abiding sweetness and serenity, and a very loving understanding of human frailties. What golden years they were to me, that life always so close to hers." That Grandmother was the center of things in her home, as mentioned in passing by Mrs. Tritle, is attested with more force in the outcome of an incident involving the Confederate flag waving above the house.

Mrs. Tritle tells the story:

"Federal authorities went to Grandfather's office at the Missouri Republican and told him that the Confederate flag flying atop his house must be taken down. Grandfather explained that his house was his wife's house, that flag was her flag and they would have to see her about taking it down. So the officers went to see Grandmother. They went up the marble stairs to the 'parlor' on the second floor, where Grandmother received them most formally. After learning of their errand, she refused to take the flag down, so one of the officers said he would be obliged to shoot it down. To this Grandmother replied: 'Every time my flag is shot down, another flag will be run up to take its place.' With that she said 'good afternoon' and left the room. The Confederate flag waved over '818'



*Knapp family coat of arms, family of Clarence Hoblitzelle's future wife, Ida.*

all through the war, and never a worn nor a tattered one either." Mrs. Knapp did more for the Confederacy than fly its flag. Many times she sent quinine through the lines to suffering soldiers. She raised funds for the cause. Above all, she concealed prisoners who had escaped from the Gratiot Street Prison and helped them reach friendly territory.

Quoting again from Mrs. Tritle:

"Once when the Commanding Officer (of the Prison) appeared with several aides, he demanded to be allowed to search the house, as an escaped prisoner had been seen running into Grandmother's garden. When the officers reached Grandmother's own bedroom, they insisted upon both doors of her wardrobe

being opened. One side of the wardrobe had shelves, the other hooks for dresses. The officer told one of his men to run his sword through the garments. Grandmother quickly stepped in front of the open door, saying 'No man will run his sword through my dresses!' The hidden Confederate eventually reached Southern lines."

For many years, Mrs. Knapp received presents of various kinds from men she had so befriended. In 1889, 24 years after the Civil War ended, a barrel of apples arrived, addressed to her by an Oklahoman who in his flight from prison had found safety in her home. She was a wholehearted rebel and forever remained "unreconstructed", contending to the last that the South was not defeated, but only outnumbered.

Colonel Knapp shared his wife's deep feelings for the South. But sympathy for the Confederates was one thing and permitting his newspaper to adopt a policy of secession was quite another. The Missouri Republican fought Lincoln in the presidential campaign of 1860, enabling Douglas to carry the State by a close vote; but at the same time it opposed secession and was successful in aligning Missouri against it. Before the outbreak of hostilities, the newspaper deplored the growing friction between the Republican Party and the secessionists and advocated a course intended to avert the shedding of blood in the streets of St. Louis. It never wavered in its support of the National government. All this largely at the instigation of the same Colonel Knapp over whose home the Confederate flag waved for four war years, and whose place of residence on his wife's motion, was a hideout for fleeing Johnny Rebs! The word tolerance had meaning in the home for the Knapps.

Managing a newspaper in any war period is difficult; the task in Missouri during the Civil War was particularly arduous due to the grating division of opinion among the people, the severe rules of censorship enforced by Federal troops, and restricted economic conditions. A short time before the war, St. Louis alone supported 21 newspapers. Now the number was sharply reduced. In its immediate circulation territory, however, the Missouri Republican (it was "republican" in the Jeffersonian sense only) still faced able competition from contemporaries on both sides of the political fence. Its brother conservatives included the

Missouri Statesman (Whig), the St. Louis News (Democratic) and the Jefferson Inquirer (Democratic), while the Jefferson Examiner, the St. Louis Bulletin, the St. Louis Missouri State Journal and the Troy States Rights Gazette were among the more radical Southern papers. But this competition served only to toughen the Missouri Republican, whose life span of 111 years has yet to be equaled by any newspaper in Missouri, and by few papers in the entire United States.

George Knapp had a proprietary interest in the Missouri Republican for 49 of those 111 years. In all he was associated with it 56 years. In 1919 the paper was sold to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, which today (1955) has been in existence only 103 years. When the last issue of the Missouri Republican, then called the Republic, rolled off the press December 4, 1919, a Knapp still was its general manager — Charles W. Knapp, the Colonel's nephew.

George Knapp was a colonel by virtue of military service in the Mexican War of 1846, in which he was wounded. He was of a noble English family which traces its origins to the Knapps of Sussex County, who were people of wealth and position as early as the 15th Century. Roger Knapp was granted the family coat of arms by King Henry V in recognition of his prowess in unhorsing three knights of great skill and bravery in a tournament at Norfolk in 1400. In 1415, Roger Knapp became Sir Roger when he was knighted for bravery on the field at the Battle of Agincourt, one of the turning points in the Hundred Years War between England and France in which the English under Henry V defeated the French under D'Albret, greatly weakening the French nobility and bringing discredit upon the French feudal system.

A much later Knapp, George, was an 18th Century Dean of the Church of England. One of his sons, George Knapp, Jr., joined the English army and was sent to Ireland. There he fell in love with and married Mary Costello, an orphan niece of a Roman Catholic bishop.

The frosty Anglican dean frowned on the marriage of his son to a Catholic and never forgave him, but the bishop befriended the young couple. When children arrived (there were seven) and grew up he arranged for them to be taught various trades and then sent them to America when the eldest reached 21 years of age. It

is believed they sailed in 1794. During the voyage one of the sons, Edward, met an Irish lass by the name of Frances Flood, of County Donegal. The shipboard romance blossomed into marriage shortly after their arrival in New York. They settled in Montgomery, Orange County, New York, when more little Knapps came, eight of them, among whom was the George Knapp who was to become the legendary St. Louis newspaper figure.

Edward and Frances Knapp sought their fortune in St. Louis in 1820, bringing their brood with them. When Edward died, George Knapp, then only nine years old, was placed under the guardianship of Elihu Shepard, schoolmaster of sterling traits to two generations of young St. Louisians.

When George was 12, Shepard apprenticed him to Edward Charless, owner of the Missouri Republican, which had been founded in 1808 by Charless' father, Joseph.

The terms of the apprenticeship constitute a valuable addition to American economic folklore.

They were:

In return for boarding and lodging young George was to be taught the "art and mystery" of printing, and receive three months day schooling or nine months night schooling per year. He was to serve for eight years, or until he was 20 years old. Then he was to receive a new suit of clothes and a Bible.

The apprenticeship ended in 1834, when George struck out on his own, though remaining with the Republican. For nearly two years he worked as a journeyman printer, at pay ranging from \$9 to \$10 per week. George saved his money and in August, 1836, bought an interest in the paper. Thus began his long career in the management of the enterprise.

One day when he was about 15 years old, young Knapp walked out of the composing room of the Republican, probably to get a breath of air and a little relaxation in the sunshine. He was black almost from head to foot with printer's ink. While loitering he saw something that in later life he confided was to him a "vision of loveliness." It was a girl, probably seven years old, dark-haired, dark-eyed, attended, as was the custom, by her Negro Mammy. George was so entranced by the beauty of the little girl that he followed her, watching her every gesture. At which the protective Negro



Mammy, alert to her responsibilities, turned fiercely on him with: “Git away, you dirty little debbil” And the girl echoed the command: “Yes, go away, you dirty little devil.”

They were married some years later, when Eleanor McCartan – for that was the name of the saucy young miss – was 18 years old and George was 26. The first words ever spoken to George by his future wife had been essentially true: he was dirty, and he was a devil – a printer’s devil.

The origins of Eleanor McCartan Knapp’s loving yet strong-willed temperament are exceedingly easy to discern. Her father, Thomas McCartan, fled from Ireland in the late 1790’s after participating in a rebellion against the British government, which placed a sizeable price on his head; and Eleanor’s mother, Judith Smith McCartan, was the daughter of Reuben Smith, who served as a private in the Virginia militia during the Revolutionary War.

The immediate cause of Thomas McCartan’s hasty flight from Ireland – he got out just in time by hiding in a large barrel aboard ship – was his refusal to obey an order from London requiring every Irish landlord to force his tenants to embrace the Protestant faith. Tenants who objected were to be evicted. Thomas, a Protestant himself, refused to force religious compliance on his tenants, nor would he evict them, holding that every man had the right to worship God as he saw fit. So he gave his farms to his tenants. He asked only that they smuggle him out of reach of the British, and send him marketable goods such as linen from time to time after he reached the United States. The grateful tenants for many years sent over large supplies of the promised linen and other merchandise.

Intolerance, especially as it affects religious preferences, is repugnant to Thomas McCartan’s great-grandson who lives in Dallas today. Many inherited forces have shaped this attitude; but in the light of the incident just related, it is evident that the McCartan influence is strong in the heart and mind of Karl Hoblitzelle.

The years that followed George Knapp’s marriage were busy ones at the office of the expanding Missouri Republican. It had become the first permanent daily west of the big river shortly after George bought into the business in 1836. Now, four years later, he was beginning a series of modernizations that were to

revolutionize newspaper practices in the West. Under his guidance the Republican was the first newspaper in the State to equip its composing room with modern machinery. Soon it became the first Missouri newspaper to publish a Sunday edition.

It became a habit with people to ask George Knapp's advice and counsel on many matters. He was a civic leader in the real meaning of the term. And he came to enjoy the little deferences that to a man who has worked long and hard are more rewarding than hours of praise. One that he cherished was the privilege accorded his dog, Tan, the only canine that could, and often did, walk past the doorman and down the aisle of the old Olympic Theater in search of its master.

George also became wealthy. His fortune could have grown even larger had he adopted a mercenary attitude in his dealings with the loyal merchants and tradesmen who supported the energetic paper.

The story is told of a merchant who fell upon bad business days, until he no longer was able to pay for newspaper advertisements. The Colonel sent a reporter to find out the trouble. When he had the facts at hand, Colonel Knapp instructed the newspaper's business office to run free advertisements of his friend's store indefinitely. In time the merchant again became prosperous.

Meanwhile the parade of offspring began – eventually there were twelve children. At first the family lived at Mrs. Knapp's mother's at 39 North Fourth Street, the corner of Fourth and Market, a historic spot in St. Louis. On the site had once stood the Fort over which the Stars and Stripes of the United States were hoisted in 1804 to mark the actual transfer of land acquired the year before by the Louisiana Purchase. Thomas McCartan, who had become rich as a store proprietor, had built a spacious home there.

The McCartan household soon became too crowded, and the Knapps moved to "818", which the Colonel bought in 1850. The mansion was located in what was then considered a fashionable residential district, quite removed from the center of town. It was down by the river and the levees, where the whistles of great river steamboats sang out in the fog and the night.

The atmosphere there has been touched upon; the house



*818 Gratiot Street, St. Louis, hereditary home of the Knapps and home of Ida and Clarence Hoblitzelle.*

and its surroundings deserve some mention because they reflect the self-contained nature of physical existence among one part of the frontier population in a now forever bygone day. Fortunately, Mrs. Tritle has preserved these facts:

“The house at 818 Gratiot Street was built in chalet style, about a hundred feet back from the street, the entrance facing east, not north to the street. A double porch was across the east or entrance side. The sitting room was downstairs but the parlor was upstairs across the north front of the house, with a marble stairway leading up to it. The upstairs parlor was large and very beautiful.

Artists were brought in from Paris to decorate the walls and ceilings. The woodwork was white with gold moulding. Two double doors were opposite the two white marble fireplaces, which were surmounted by ceiling-high mirrors with broad gold frames of cupids and flowers. In the angle of the walls were figures about two feet tall, representing the various arts. The carved rosewood furniture was upholstered in rose-colored satin brocade, and the cream-colored rug with its border of pinkish-red roses made a charming Old World setting for the many gala events that took

place there. Each of the 18 bedrooms had what then was called a stationary washstand, with hot and cold water. On the west side was the gun room, located between the first and second floors. The only entrance to it was a small window reached by a ladder from the outside.”

Near the big house were a number of smaller buildings – a two-story icehouse, a cow house, woodshed and chicken house under one roof, a carriage house, a stable with coachmen’s quarters above, and a two-story brick house for the servants. (The Negro servants were treated kindly and their dignity as human beings was always respected. When the slaves were freed, most of those at the Knapp household chose to remain there. “Aunt Patience”, the most trusted and beloved of them all, is buried in the Knapp family lot in St. Louis’ Bellefontaine Cemetery. Karl Hoblitzelle many years later, in 1955, on the occasion of his gift of \$100,000 to the building fund of St. Peter’s Academy, a Catholic school for Negro boys and girls in Dallas, described the donation as his “down payment on the debt we owe the Negro race”).

Around the many buildings at “818” there were large gardens, well fenced, and an abundance of “play room” for the Colonel’s three daughters and nine sons. The place was like a small plantation, sufficient unto itself.

There Colonel Knapp was the loving father and proud provider. And there his wife could share her wisdom with her daughters and later her granddaughters, telling them: “When it comes time for you to think about marriage, just remember, my darling, you will be much happier with a smart devil than with a good fool!”

It was among such people that a lonely ex-prisoner of war by the name of Clarence Linden Hoblitzelle sought and found warm and understanding friends in the strife-torn year of 1861. Above all, it was at “818” that he found Ida Adelaide Knapp.

The courtship lasted several years. When the two finally became engaged after the war, it was agreed that the matter was to be kept secret for the time being. But Clarence’s fondness for little children gave the whole thing away.

One day at “dinner”, as the noon meal was called, Clarence set about teasing Ida’s little sister, Eleanor, then five years old.

Finally the child exclaimed: "If you don't stop teasing me, I'll tell everyone I saw you kissing my sister Ida back of the parlor door!"

Meanwhile Maria Louise Knapp, Ida's older sister, had become engaged to Colonel Napoleon Mullikin. So it was decided to have a double wedding in the famous parlor on the second floor of "818".

The Knapps had been hosts at social events for distinguished St. Louis families and guests from other cities and lands; but the double wedding of Ida and Lou, as Maria Louise was called, is described as the most notable of them all. It occurred on the evening of January 22, 1867. Scores of relatives and friends were guests at an elaborate wedding feast. The Bill of Fare for the occasion might well be the envy of the best dining places in the world today. At the beginning it listed appetizers, proceeding to hot wild game, cold dishes of many kinds, pastry, "ornamentals" such as pyramids of candied oranges, and finally desserts. Drinks included French coffee, English breakfast tea, and an assortment of wines, including champagne, from the Colonel's commodious cellar.

The couples were married at opposite ends of the parlor. A relative who was present wrote Mrs. Tritle years later: "Your Mother was a beautiful bride. Her dress was of heavy corded white silk, with rare lace on the bodice. Your Father was one of the handsomest young men ever in St. Louis. The bridesmaids wore white tarleton skirts ruffled to the knee, with silvery blue grosgrain overskirts trimmed in crystal beads, and carried pink roses. The bridesmaids also had blue silk handkerchief bags (to match the overskirts) trimmed in crystal beads and real Valenciennes lace."

The newlyweds Maria Louise and Colonel Millikin soon left for Paris, France, where for a time they made their home. The question of where Clarence and Ida were to live probably never was discussed. It was taken for granted they would live at "818", just as George Knapp had moved in with his in-laws when he married Eleanor McCartan.

The Colonel long since had realized the need for an expansion of "818", so the long gallery along the back of the house had been converted into four additional bedrooms, two more halls, and another bathroom. For the time being at any rate, there was ample room for all. But not for long.

Clarence and Ida loved children, and with the passing of the years there appeared twelve little Hoblitzelles. Though she “had a baby in her arms for twenty years” Ida could never pass a mother and child on the street without first asking the age-old questions of the mother: “How old is the baby? How many teeth does it have?...”

In time Clarence took a three-story brick house at 928 Ninth Street, just around the corner from “818”. There was constant traffic between the two houses, through a small gate on the west side of the Colonel’s home. It was at the Ninth Street residence that Karl St. John Hoblitzelle, the seventh child of Clarence and Ida, was born, on October 22, 1879.

## Chapter II *Early Days*

### The Peach Tree Switch

**A**s a young boy Karl Hoblitzelle was frail, sensitive and afraid of unfamiliar people. If a stranger entered the house, he would run upstairs to his room and crawl under the bed.

He was awkward and shy during the four years he spent in grammar school. He had no trouble with his studies, and particularly relished the great stories of English literature. But classroom performance was misery to him. He was almost speechless when asked to recite, though he knew his subject well. Written examinations he dreaded so much he could scarcely steady his hand. Generally his papers were illegible.

The distressing situation at school was alleviated somewhat by the humanity of his classroom teacher. It was only through his intervention that Karl was able to graduate. Hoblitzelle will never forget that day.

The last of the written examinations had been turned in when the school principal entered the room. This officious bumpkin started going through the papers. He came to Karl Hoblitzelle’s.

“This boy can’t pass,” the principal said with finality.

“Why?” the teacher inquired.

“Because I can’t read a single word of his examination



paper,” said the principal.

“But,” protested the teacher, “I know that boy; he has shown he knows his subjects. I don’t think bad handwriting alone should bar him.”

The principal gave in. Karl was now eligible to enter high school. But for reasons that will shortly appear, he never did it. His school days were over.

Since there was nothing organically wrong with Karl, his school experiences, no matter how frightening, were good for him. They brought him face to face for the first time with a world peopled by boys and girls and men and women who were not related to him and felt no obligation to shelter him. By the time he graduated he had forgotten to run when a stranger opened the door.

His home environment was almost ideally happy. It probably was most fortunate that he was not an only child, for in the first years of boyhood, before time and experience had partially shielded his sensitive nature, he was protected by his mother. But Ida Hoblitzelle had always fostered a strong love and devotion in her children for each other, their parents and their grandparents, and she was wise in giving to each child the love and attention it needed. So no serious mother-and-child problems developed from the special treatment sometimes reserved for Karl.

This is not to imply, however, that an idyllic serenity hovered over the Hoblitzelle household. Not with those spirited kids around. They were up to as much mischief as they would get into. Mother Hoblitzelle was kept busy spanking little legs with a peach tree switch. Often Karl and his two older sisters, Eleanor and Frances Virginia, would “run away” to the French Market on Fourth Street, south of Chouteau Avenue, to look at the toys, dolls, cakes, candles and other wonders in the little shops clustered in the area. This territory was off limits and the girls knew what they would get on returning home. They also wryly and correctly surmised what would happen to Karl. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. His Mother would send him to the orchard to get the switch! He always came back with the biggest one he could find.

One day Frances Virginia (the present Mrs. John B. Denvir of Miami Beach, Fla.) tearfully decided that she must be an adopted child, she was abused so much, while Karl was never punished. Mrs.

Hoblitzelle sensed that there really was a terrible doubt in the little girl's heart.

“Adopted?” Mrs. Hoblitzelle said cheerfully. “Why, you are the very image of your Papa's sister!” That dispelled the doubt and ended in less than a minute the closest thing approaching a crisis among the children.

Eleanor (the present Mrs. John S. Tritle of St. Louis) seems to have developed the philosophy that the whippings were bearable so long as she could have exciting times chasing off with her little brother. But this is a broad generalization.

“Karl was not all that delicate,” she jovially protests even today. “He was favored. He had such big, beautiful eyes and pretty hair that he looked like an angel and his Mother couldn't stand to switch him. Yes, he was an angel – the kind whose wings I wanted to pick off!”

The younger of the sisters, Judith (the present Mrs. Arthur Clifford of Pasadena, Calif.) was too tender in years to participate in much of this youthful barnstorming.

Mother Hoblitzelle and her husband stood at the graves of two sons who died in infancy, and at that of another, Francis McCartan Hoblitzelle, who died when only 15 months old.

To the task of bringing up her three daughters and six sons – George, Clarence L., Jr., William, Karl, Henry and Phillip – Mrs. Hoblitzelle brought an amiable and gay disposition. At the same time, she was a determined, resourceful woman who raised her large family with infinite care and attention to moral and social values. She made her children practice the Christian principle of dividing equally with one another what little they had. The family's income was modest. She taught her brood unselfishness and self-denial by practicing these virtues. Her example of self-control, sacrifice and charity toward all with whom she came in contact made a deep and lasting impression on her children, and it was the most significant single factor in the life of her son Karl.

Mother Hoblitzelle was a well-educated woman. She attended a private school in New York City in her 'teens, and like her mother was a reader of good books. She played the piano quite well and also sang. Often she would give impromptu performances for the children. One sustained theme characterized life at the

Hoblitzelle household and at “818” across the way, and that was pleasantness. Neither Mother Hoblitzelle nor Grandmother Knapp would tolerate unpleasant conduct. A youngster who lost his temper would be reminded of this inflexible rule, sometimes privately and in a very painful manner. The way the reminders were administered may bear some relation to the remarkably few violations of the rule.

Contributing share for share with his wife to the successful upbringing of the large, and, as it turned out, talented house full of youngsters was Father Hoblitzelle. He loved and adored his children, and if Mother Hoblitzelle occasionally grew weary of the endless drudgery of motherhood, Clarence was miserable when there wasn't a new tot on the premises. One day at a time when there already were seven children in the family but no evidence there would be another, he suggested to his wife that they adopt a child. His wife put her foot down hard!

Clarence Hoblitzelle was of the giving type. As he loved and treated his wife and children at home, so did he love and treat his associates down town, and never was the request of a friend ignored if he had the means to fulfill it. Women were attracted to him, and so were men seeking his conversation and companionship. Though he was popular and attractive, his habits and morals were beyond civil. His goodness and kindness were legendary in St. Louis. Why do such men have a hard time making a living?

Clarence did. He finally went completely broke – the only Hoblitzelle since Adrian touched American soil in the 18th Century to find that business was not his line. Perhaps one contributing factor was that he had been uprooted from his native Maryland early in life. Perhaps (and this is more likely) the kindness of the Knapps in extending their bounteous hospitality tended to develop and strengthen his intellectual and social qualities without subjecting him to the discipline of the market place. For whatever reason, Clarence, after holding various odd jobs during the Civil War, finally got into the harness and saddlery business, was moderately successful at first, and then not successful at all.

Karl Hoblitzelle tells this story as probably typical of his father's way of doing business:

“In those days it was fashionable to use expensive buggy whips. Their handles were beautifully carved and inlaid with gold or silver. Only the wealthy could afford them, but as my Father’s shop was patronized by a number of people with means, he stocked quite a few of these whips. They sold for around \$125 each.

“One day a friend bought one and told my Father to send him a bill for it. The weeks went by and the end of the month came, but no bill was sent. Another month, probably two, passed before Father remembered that he had sold one of the expensive whips. But he couldn’t recall the name of the buyer.

“By a process of elimination, figuring the recent needs of his various friends with respect to buggy whips, he decided that three particular men might have bought the article. But since he couldn’t decide which one, he sent a bill to each of them, reasoning that only the man who bought the whip would pay the bill.

“To his great surprise, all three men sent payments by return mail. Maybe one of the three actually bought the whip. If so, the other two, knowing Father’s bookkeeping technique, did not wish to hurt his feelings, so they paid also.

“My Father would never have thus imposed on his friends. So he sent all three payments back, and took over a hundred dollar loss on the transaction.”

There was only one place for a man so gifted at winning and holding friends, and that was politics. At their urging he entered it and found it good. If it provided only small financial rewards, it was richly rewarding in opportunities to do for others. As a result he spent virtually the rest of his life in Democratic Party politics in St. Louis. He worked for many years as an attaché in the office of Recorder of Voters, and when the Board of Election Commissioners was organized became its secretary. Later he was deputy assessor and collector of water rates. Both positions were, and still are, important ones in the big river city. During Clarence Hoblitzelle’s many years of political life he was respected and admired for his ability to conduct public affairs, as well as for his charming personal traits. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, in referring to him, frequently used the phrase, “prominent St. Louis Democratic leader” – and the Post-Dispatch, in those days of the first Joseph Pulitzer, did not use lightly such words as “prominent” and “leader”.

Near his office was a combination bakery and coffee shop called Gerardi's Coffee House. Hoblitzelle was accustomed to leave his desk daily at 4 p.m. for what in this standardized age is known everywhere as a "coffee break". Usually he joined a group of friends, but one day he went alone to Gerardi's. No one was in the place except Mrs. Gerardi. She told Hoblitzelle that business had been falling off and she was afraid she would go under financially. Hoblitzelle had never been in the establishment before, but it was clean and the coffee excellent, as was the service.

The next day at 4 p.m. Hoblitzelle showed up with two friends. The next day with three. He let it be known gradually that the afternoon coffee session was to be held at Gerardi's and nowhere else. Some of the customers liked cakes or pie with their coffee. Some bought pastries to take home.

It was not long before Gerardi's Coffee House was doing a thriving business.

Mild-mannered as Clarence was, he could be as resolute as his wife when any of the children got out of hand. Karl Hoblitzelle will never forget a stern lecture his father once delivered.

It occurred sometime after Karl had graduated from grammar school, and in the intervening years his wit and reasoning powers had been sharpened by the conversations and arguments that went on for hours around the dinner table. These conversations were a vital part of the young man's education, and he had worthy professors. Clarence as a politician kindled discussions of public issues and political maneuverings. Others discussed art, music, history, literature. Grandmother Knapp occasionally re-fought the Civil war, making it end "right". No one had inhibitions about expressing his point of view. Karl was always in the midst of these melees, shrewd in defending his position. His older brother George once told his sister Eleanor: "Karl has the most logical mind of any man I have ever known."

But one day Karl led off with the wrong premise, then wandered into various erroneous deductions. Still worse, he allowed personalities to enter the discussion. He said things he should not have said about a friend who was not present.

Father Hoblitzelle interrupted Karl and beckoned him to an adjoining room.

“Young man,” said the father when they were alone, “I will appreciate it if you pay strict attention to what I am to say. First, I want you to realize the importance of telling the truth. The truth! And second, do not ever again let me hear you pass judgment on any man!”

That was all. They returned to the dining room. To this day the father’s words ring clearly in the mind of the son.

## Farmer Hoblitzelle

**A**s harsh as his grammar school days had been, Karl wanted to continue through his high school and enter some university. He had become fascinated with law, possibly because of his father’s discussions of political and legal questions at home.

But the family by now had become a large one indeed for his father to support on the small salary he received. Karl’s older brothers, George, Clarence L., Jr., and William, already were working and contributing to the family’s support. Should he remain in school or himself lend a helping hand? Karl quit school and went to work.

The spur of necessity revived in Clarence Hoblitzelle’s sons the family’s once-potent business sagacity and acumen. Karl Hoblitzelle has of course done well. His older brothers likewise achieved business success. George Hoblitzelle at his death in 1922 was Vice President and Treasurer of the Commonwealth Steel Company of St. Louis. William Hoblitzelle became President of the Smith and Davis Manufacturing Company, also of St. Louis. He died in 1944. Clarence L. Hoblitzelle, Jr., despite limited formal education, became one of the leading art critics and collectors in the nation. In his St. Louis days, he contributed articles on painting and allied subjects to Reedy’s Mirror, the Bible of the Missouri intellectuals, and later served for years on the staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. He traveled over the world collecting rare paintings and art objects, and for many years resided in Italy. He died in 1951 at the age of 82. Karl’s younger brothers died while quite young. Henry in 1909 at the age of 25 and Philip in 1912 at the age of 26. Of the original 12 children, Karl Hoblitzelle and his three



sisters, mentioned earlier, are alive – and very much so – today.)

It was in his very first job that Karl Hoblitzelle discovered that working for other people was not for him. His employer was an uncle engaged in the real estate business, and Karl's duties consisted of running errands and performing whatever office chores needed to be done. Probably because he lacked enthusiasm for the business, he saw no future in it. He changed jobs, going to work for the Bell Manufacturing Company, producers of soap. The soap factory was even more monotonous than the real estate office. So, the conditions being right for it, he became a farmer and his own boss. As we shall see later, he never again worked for another man, save one, the one who inadvertently opened the door to his future successful career.

In the 1880's the wonderful residential district along Gratiot Street began to deteriorate. Many of the lovely old homes were torn down and replaced with factories. Others became boarding houses for workers. Smoke soared from the factory chimneys and then settled, killing all grass and many stately trees. Old "818", home of the Knapp family for 41 years, where the Colonel and his family provided bed and board for Charles Dickens when the famous author stopped over in St. Louis while on tour in 1880, where Mother Hoblitzelle had spent most of her life and where she was married, and where the Hoblitzelle children felt as much at home as if they were in their own dwelling, was abandoned in 1891 when Mrs. Knapp reluctantly agreed to move to 4030 Lindell Boulevard. At about the same time the Hoblitzelles left the neighborhood. They took a place "out in the country," the present 2622 North Kings Highway. The house was in the midst of about 15 acres of land and was some six or seven miles from the city proper.

(There still is a building at 818 Gratiot Street in St. Louis. It is marked with large numerals. It houses the grain storage and processing plant of the Ralston Purina Company! The ground once occupied by the Gratiot Street prison, where Clarence Hoblitzelle was paroled during the Civil War, is now a part of the Terminal Railroad freight yards. And just around the corner, at 928 Ninth Street, on the site of Karl Hoblitzelle's birthplace, there stands a dull red brick building occupied by the Grocers Warehouse Company! The guttural monotone of modern-day train whistles, the clatter

of boxcars and the shrieks of nearby industrial machines noisily producing progress, at times render conversation impossible in a place where people once walked leisurely in the cool evenings, discussing their personal problems or the issues of the day.)

Father Hoblitzelle chose the “country” place on North Kings Highway not only because the house was sufficiently large, but also because rents in the outskirts were cheaper than those in town. He didn’t realize his selection also would result in additional family revenue.

Karl asked permission of his father to cultivate two or three acres of land. His request of course was granted, the father thinking only of the physical benefits his son would reap by working out of doors. At this stage in his mid-‘teens Karl had entered the “bean-pole” stage of growth and more than ever needed the stamina he so admired in his father and older brothers. For some reason the land Karl worked came to be known as “The Black Diamond Farm.” Adjoining it was the birthplace and early home of General William Tecumseh Sherman, of Union Army fame. Grandmother Knapp, on visiting the Hoblitzelles, spoke well of the farm and the progress of its young operator, but frequently protested at the Black Diamond’s location next to “Yankee territory.” (General Ulysses S. Grant’s early home also is near St. Louis, but the family doesn’t recall Mrs. Knapp’s ever making a patriotic pilgrimage to the place.)

Karl had never had a hoe in his hands before. But he liked the smell of the fresh earth, the heartening companionship with Nature. This was the beginning of his love of the soil and of the people who work with it and belong to it. Often as he gathered his produce for market he had long thoughts about the relationship of the soil to man. He is still preoccupied with the subject. Today his is one of the strongest voices in Texas exhorting the farmer to realize the dignity of his calling, and to benefit from research and development in the agricultural fields. Hoblitzelle has done more than talk about this; he has provided leadership and money to help the farmers help themselves – but we are far ahead of our story.

Down the road leading from the Black Diamond to St. Louis lived many friendly neighbors, and Farmer Hoblitzelle went among them, telling them of his project and what he would have to sell. It was his first venture into practical public relations, a field that was

to occupy most of his later life. When he made the rounds for the first time in an old wagon drawn by a lazy horse, he had plenty of buyers for his vegetables. Later he raised and sold chickens and other fowl. There were few idle moments. He expanded his sales by personal contact and by making early-morning trips with his poultry and produce to the city market, where farmers brought their products daily and displayed them for the housewives. Ingenuities here and there increased his income. His father took an interest, and one day while discussing the poultry situation remarked that the guinea hen was a delicious fowl, but most people objected to boning them. Karl investigated and discovered he could buy guineas at 10 cents each. He paid a butcher \$5 to teach him how to bone them. Then he started selling the boned guineas for \$1/.50 each and had more customers than he could supply.

Eventually Farmer Hoblitzelle was such a success that his own farm could not meet the demand of an increasing number of customers and he was forced to augment his supplies by purchasing farm produce and poultry at wholesale on the St. Louis market. An emotion that had been largely denied him through the years lightened his heart. It was pride of accomplishment, the first taste of victory. Thus fortified, he was not too greatly disappointed when the successful farm operation had to be shut down when it was making good money. Probably because of overwork, he contracted malaria and after weeks of chills and fever he let the farm go to weeds. But the Black Diamond already had done its part. From its soil there walked a young man going somewhere.

The purpose of the preceding paragraphs has been to convey the essence, nothing more, of the young boy Karl Hoblitzelle and the early environmental factors which influenced his development. Grammar school, the play days with his sisters and brothers and other relatives, the wholesomeness of his mother and father, the brilliant conversations around the dining table, the first stirrings of confidence in himself as he worked the Black Diamond farm – these experiences and people, and the moods, sensations and discernment which they evoked, formed the bridge which the young boy crossed to become a young man, and finally a man.

By this time he was beginning to realize that for sensitivity there are many compensations. The supreme one is a sharper appetite than most men possess for the deliciousness of life. It is as if Nature, having handed out a raw deal, seeks to make up for it by granting her victim a more penetrating insight into what really matters. This already had kindled in young Karl's skinny frame a determination to destroy the fears that kept him from full enjoyment of the delights of the living. It was purely a matter of luck that he was born in an environment that nourished this determination.

## Young Man at the Fair

**K**arl Hoblitzelle was in his early twenties when he recovered sufficiently from malaria to again join the ranks of the unemployed.

At this time, near the turn of the century, there were various and discordant demands for a celebration in St. Louis. The 100th anniversary of Thomas Jefferson's neat little real estate deal with Napoleon was approaching. The deadline was April 30, 1903. This left only about six years in which to plan and develop a suitable commemoration of the Louisiana Purchase.

Pierre Chouteau, descendant of one of the founders of St. Louis, was the most persistent advocate of a celebration, but when pinned down he had no concrete suggestions to offer as to its nature and scope. Should it be a purely local show? Should it include all the states and territories then comprising the 885,000 square miles of land bought from France? Or should the people go the route and put on a world-wide exposition?

Soon it was apparent that opposition to a big celebration was gaining strength. This galvanized Chouteau and his followers in the Missouri Historical Society into more specific action, and they proposed a World's Fair, following this up immediately with whirlwind missionary activity. Committee meetings were held for months and years. Poor Chouteau, as the price for having disturbed the town's tranquility, was given the chairmanship of most of the groups charged with the hard work.



*The 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.*

They did it well, indeed, turning public apathy into civic zeal. Responding to a proposal to raise \$5,000,000 locally, residents and business firms over-subscribed the amount by the winter of 1901. Then the state and federal governments were prevailed upon to appropriate \$5,000,000 each to the cause.

There was considerable exposition weariness abroad. Many nations had sent exhibits and representatives to the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 and to the Paris Exposition of 1900. But the smooth-functioning St. Louis operators prevailed upon President McKinley to invite all the nations of the world to the new extravaganza. His prestige in the growing importance of the United States as a world power brought to St. Louis more foreign representation than had been present at either Chicago or Paris. All states and territories of the United States entered the Exposition except three, South Carolina, Delaware and Hawaii.

The fair was organized, built and operated by the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Company, of which David R. Francis was president. Francis was a celebrity in those days, having served as Secretary of the Interior under President Cleveland and as governor of Missouri. The official title of the celebration was "The Universal Exposition of 1904" – it opened a year late – but

most people called it the St. Louis World's Fair, or, infrequently, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

By whatever name, in its 184 days of operation it attracted 20,000,000 visitors, including 32,706 writers for the daily, weekly and monthly press of this and other nations. St. Louis was put on the map for good.

The Fair was held in beautiful Forest Park, a 1,380-acre tract which the city bought in 1875. If put up for sale today the park would bring many millions. But Colonel George Knapp, during his early days with the Missouri Republican, turned down a deed to this property which had been offered him in settlement of a \$300 debt. The land was five miles from his office, he said, and therefore never would be good for anything except maybe wild animals.

The construction of the Fair was an enormous project, costing approximately \$17,000,000. Over 500 structures were erected, including 15 huge exhibition buildings, eight of which were laid out in the form of a fan whose apex to the southwest consisted of four great art palaces. Winding around a number of these buildings were man-made lakes and lagoons. The area seemed like a fairyland when brilliant lights played over the white-walled buildings and the calm waters at night.

Never before had the world seen a celebration of such magnitude, and it is doubtful if any World's Fair held since has equaled it in intellectual content, artistry of design and effectiveness of presentation and administration.

The origin and development of the St. Louis World's Fair have been summarized briefly above because of their influence on the origin and development of Karl Hoblitzelle's future career. For three years, from 1902 through most of 1904, Hoblitzelle was in the midst of all activities concerned with the planning, construction, maintenance and operation of the great Fair, and when it was over he was chosen to supervise its demolition, a task that required the greater part of another year. A young man destined to become one of the nation's leading showmen could not have asked for a better vantage point from which to observe and study public amusements operations on a grand scale, nor could he have hoped for a better opportunity to obtain a well-rounded, liberal and practical education.



Early in 1902, Hoblitzelle, then 23, had no intention whatever of entering the show business. But he did need a job, preferably one less physically exacting than farming. And he was caught up in the general enthusiasm about the Fair. It appealed to his vivid imagination and artistic feelings, and he longed to be an intimate part of it.

It was through Seth Cobb, one of his best customers on his old fresh vegetable and poultry route, that he came in contact with Governor Francis. Cobb, a former congressman from the St. Louis district, was himself a vice president of the Exposition company. So he obtained for his young friend a letter of recommendation from Francis, and Karl was offered a job in the auditing department of the fair at \$125 per month, a tidy sum in those days.

Meanwhile, however, Hoblitzelle had heard much about Isaac S. Taylor, a 300-pound, heavily mustached, six-foot, four-inch giant of a man who was one of the greatest architects of his time. He had been selected by the Exposition company as Director of Works. Taylor's job, briefly put, was to build the Fair. He headed an enormous staff of experts in civil engineering, architecture, electrical and mechanical engineering, sculpture, landscaping and mural decoration.

Hoblitzelle wanted to be around these men, to feel the vitality of their creative thinking, to learn. Luckily, he heard that Taylor needed an office boy. The salary was \$5 per week. So Hoblitzelle turned down the \$125 per month auditing department job, and, armed with his letter of introduction, applied in person to Taylor.

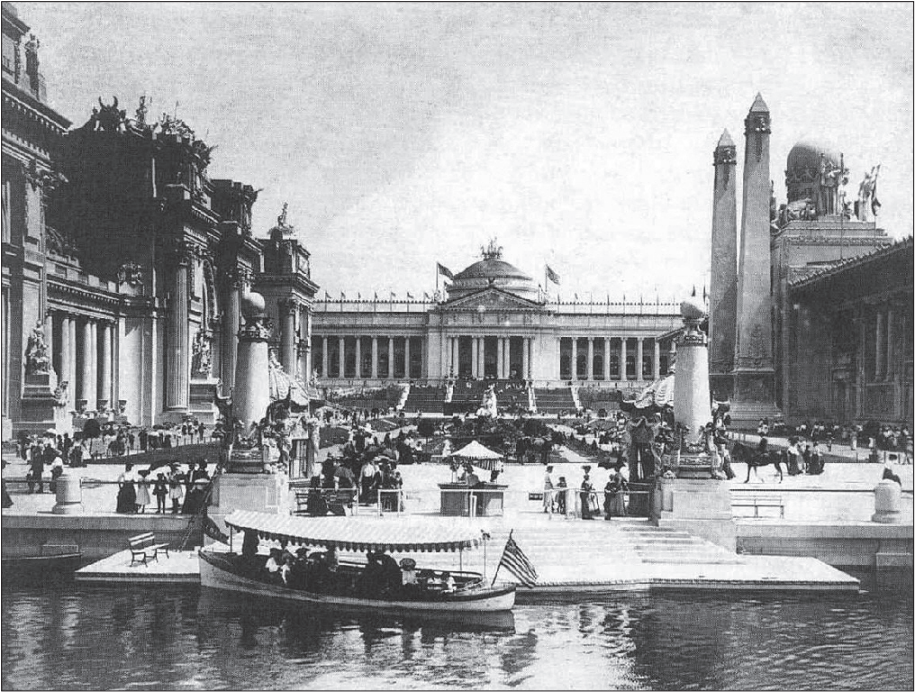
Taylor had heard of the young man's unusual action, but Hoblitzelle didn't know this. Arriving at Taylor's office he was detained for a while in an anteroom. Suddenly a great, booming voice roared from Taylor's inner sanctum: "Is that the young man who wants to make \$5 a week instead of \$125 per month? If so, send him in!"

Hoblitzelle crept in.

Inside, he looked up into a massive face crinkled in a warm smile, and felt a little more at ease.

"Just why do you want a \$5 a week job?" Taylor demanded.

"Because I want to be where they are actually building the



*The United States Government Building at the St. Louis World's Fair.*

Fair,” was Hoblitzelle’s candid answer.

“You’re hired!”

Then Taylor, no man to waste words or motion, put Hoblitzelle to work.

All was confusion at that time. The Fair was only in the planning stage. Contractors, promoters, seekers of advice, information, favors – all swarmed into Taylor’s office. Personnel from other divisions of the Fair – the Divisions of Exhibits, Exploitation, and Concessions and Admissions – also knocked on the door, adding to the bedlam. Taylor, the chief planner, had to have a chance to think. Most of the time he bolted himself into his private office and left Hoblitzelle and one other person, Taylor’s secretary, to handle the crowd. If they didn’t know the answer to a caller’s problem they had to find it out, and quickly. As the months passed, Hoblitzelle became familiar with every major problem and feature of a great exposition in the making.

As plans for the Fair started moving off the drafting boards, there were many technicalities to be mastered. Hoblitzelle had never read a blueprint in his life. Now, under pressure, he learned

how. Soon he was talking the contractors' language and the big words of the engineers meant something to him. When time came to check the contractors' bids against the plans and specifications drawn up by the various divisions, it was Hoblitzelle who did most of the checking, not Taylor. Administrative details by the score would pile up on Taylor's desk. He would glance at them, then pass them to Hoblitzelle for action.

Taylor was not unmindful of the fact that he relied heavily on the judgment of his slender, brown-haired young assistant. On the other hand, the man who held the job as Taylor's secretary became the victim of unfortunate habits and was discharged. Taylor filled the vacancy by promoting his office boy, at a considerable raise in pay.

Big names and big titles meant nothing to Taylor. And he was an ear-splitter with words one would hesitate to classify as refined.

One day, Governor Francis called on the telephone. He told Hoblitzelle, who answered, that he wanted Taylor to meet him downtown to discuss an important problem. After all, Francis was the president of the Exposition company, so Hoblitzelle relayed the message to Taylor in some haste.

"Why that old unprintable," barked Taylor. "How in Hell does he think I can get any work done! Tell the old unprintable that if he wants to see me he can damn well come out here. I'm damned if I'm going down there!"

History does not record whether Governor Francis overheard this outburst. It is known, however, that Francis came out to see Taylor.

Allocation of space was one of the biggest headaches confronting Fair officials. Many foreign governments, thinking the St. Louis celebration would be like all the others, reserved the minimum amount of space consistent with their world importance. When their representatives arrived on site, however, they realized the high potential of the quality show taking shape before them, and requested much larger areas for their exhibits. Thus the battle for concession space was bitter.

One aggressive promoter obtained a concession permit for a Vienna Restaurant. He spent a small fortune importing the

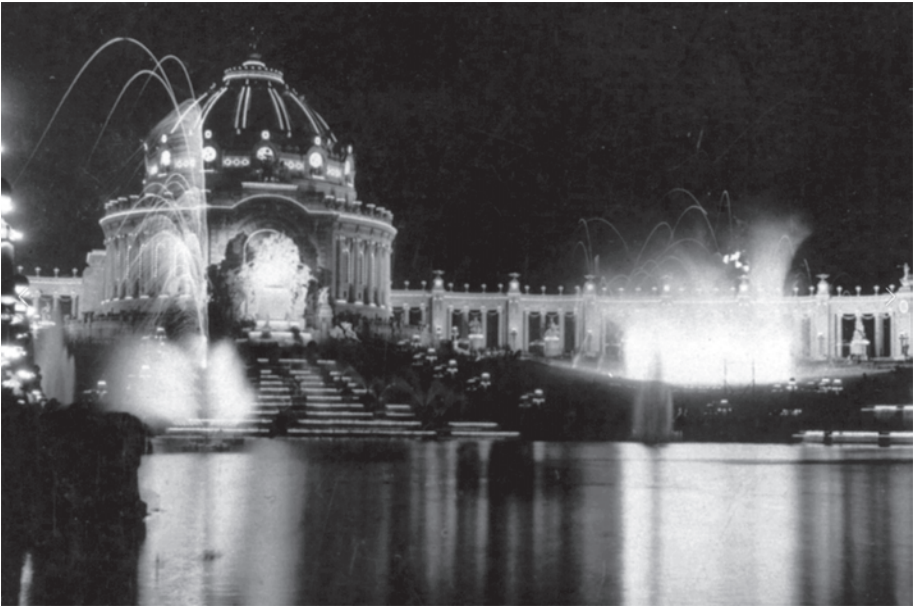
real articles from the famed European city – a complete native restaurant staff attired in costumes of old Vienna. All of them were experts in preparing and serving Viennese dishes. But when the promoter arrived in St. Louis with his entourage, the Division of Concessions and Admissions, acting on a technicality, denied him the space he had been promised.

The promoter was desperate. The daily expense of providing for his restaurant staff was endangering his pocketbook. He appealed to Taylor and Hoblitzelle. They recognized the injustice that had been done and overruled the concessions people. Hoblitzelle did most of the contacting, arguing, pacifying, entreating and demanding in this case and handled it with such suavity that neither side at any time wanted to eat the other one up. The promoter was everlastingly grateful to his young benefactor. For the duration, Hoblitzelle was never allowed to pay for meals or drinks in the Vienna Restaurant. Further, the promoter took a personal, even a fatherly interest in Hoblitzelle.

During one of the Fair's most crushing days, when all hands were frantically busy, the promoter called by telephone, insisting that he must see Taylor at once and that when he arrived he didn't want Hoblitzelle anywhere near the premises. It was such an odd request that Taylor agreed to see him. Hoblitzelle left his office for a time, but returned when he felt the promoter had entered Taylor's private room. Finally the conference was over. Out burst the promoter, waving his hands. Unable to conceal his secret, he turned to Hoblitzelle and exclaimed: "I just told Taylor you're working too hard and need a vacation!"

Taylor and Hoblitzelle worked for months and years side by side. Taylor as the mastermind, Hoblitzelle as the person who had to be constantly alert to what went on in that mind. Their feeling of mutual trust was endangered only once.

On a particular Saturday there was cause for rejoicing in Taylor's office. After a year's work and more, a tabulation had at last been completed for all construction cost estimates. The material had been prepared by Taylor's various departments, and then had been subjected by Taylor himself to endless revisions. Now the document was on the table in finished form. It was to serve as a basis for the awarding of contracts for the construction of the



*Nighttime view of The Festival Hall at the St. Louis World's Fair.*

entire Fair. It was an immensely valuable manuscript. If it should fall into the hands of an unscrupulous contractor, he would have the advantage over all others in the bidding.

Taylor told Hoblitzelle to put the papers in the inside pocket of his double-breasted coat, which Hoblitzelle did. It was late afternoon now and Taylor called for his victoria for the drive down to the city. Upon arriving, he was invited into a bar by a number of friends. He didn't mind taking a drink, but the presence of that manuscript in his pocket bothered him. It must not be lost. Automatically, he reached into the right-hand inside coat pocket to feel it. It wasn't there.

Oaths rang out like the clanging of battle-axes. It is entirely reasonable to assume that one or two of them could have been in reference to his young secretary. It is easy to imagine what probably ran through the mind of the great architect whose months of labor apparently had been thrown away.

Taylor sent a man in a victoria to Hoblitzelle's home. The man delivered this message: that if Hoblitzelle didn't know where the manuscript was, then be at the fair grounds the first thing Monday morning prepared to assist him, Taylor, in reconstructing every move that was made the previous Saturday afternoon; a



search of all grounds, office space, paper disposal units and every other possible repository of the missing document would be made.

On Monday morning every hand joined in the search. Men rummaged through the garbage. Taylor, thinking the papers might have fallen from his coat as he leaned over to get in the victoria the previous Saturday, examined every inch of the roadway in front of the administration building. No papers. Taylor was almost in a froth. Every desk in the division's office was gone through, every foot of floor space combed many times. No papers. Taylor began to look askance at Hoblitzelle.

"Did you really put those papers in my inside coat pocket?" Taylor demanded.

"Yes, I did," answered Hoblitzelle, and as if to demonstrate what had happened, he walked from his desk to Taylor's coat, which was hanging in the customary place. He ran his fingers into an inside pocket. The papers were there!

Taylor couldn't believe it. Amid a flurry of new oaths, oaths of joy this time, Taylor rushed over to the coat. It developed that the tailor who made it had put inside pockets on both the right and left sides. Hoblitzelle had put the papers in the left-hand pocket.

So Taylor cut loose with more oaths, aimed this time at the tailor who was stupid enough to put two inside pockets in a coat!

There were many other incidents which had their serious, or almost serious moments, and which afterward were recalled with amusement and even hilarity by the participants. Hoblitzelle was the hero, or the villain, depending on which side one was on, of a little affair that occurred when President Theodore Roosevelt visited the fair grounds in 1903. It is still talked about among old-timers in St. Louis, one of whom recently asked Hoblitzelle for his side of the story. Hoblitzelle wrote the friend as follows:

"The administration force of the Fair was then located in a group of buildings erected by Washington University. Prior to the President's arrival, a Colonel in the United States Army, whose name I have forgotten, came to St. Louis to arrange with the officials of the Exposition not only for the President's entertainment, but for his protection.

"The administrative buildings above referred to were connected underground by a passageway or tunnel which made it



possible to get from one building to another without going out of doors. These buildings also were connected with the power plant located down by the railroad tracks. At this time the Exposition was all fenced in and we had guards at the gates to keep the general public out and admit the workmen who had proper passes. At this time the Fair had not opened.

“In my capacity as assistant to Mr. Taylor it was my duty to work out arrangements for our working force to get in and out of the administrative building during the President’s visit, and this particularly was true of the men employed in operating the power plant, which was on a twenty-four-hour schedule.

“Arrangements were made for a dinner to be given the President in one of the buildings in this group which later housed Queen Victoria’s Jubilee presents. The upshot of many meetings with this Colonel was that we got up a special pass which was signed by the Colonel and Mr. Taylor. These passes were given to those persons who had the obligation of operating the power plant, and to those administrative people who had night work to do.

“I happened to be sitting in my office in the early evening of the day of the President’s visit when the telephone rang. It was the head of our electrical department advising me that instructions had been issued at the gates that no passes were to be honored that evening and until the President had left unless they were special passes issued by this Colonel.

“This, of course, came as a great surprise to me, especially as the Colonel had made no mention to me that he was intending to disregard the arrangement we had previously made.

“Naturally, I got him on the telephone, finding him at the office of the Jefferson Guard, and asked him if he was remanding our previous agreement. He advised me that he was, and said I would have to get these new passes to all of our people who had to get into the building during the evening.

“I explained to him that if I had been advised of this during the afternoon it would have been a very simple matter to get the new passes into the hands of our people, but that they were now scattered and it would be impossible to reach them.

“He said that he was very sorry but that this was his decision and that it was up to us to get the passes to our people on

the night shift.

“I told him that the day shift would go off within twenty minutes, and that if he did not rescind the order, or if he failed to instruct his people to honor the passes we had originally agreed upon, that the day shift would close down the plant. This statement seemed to have little or no effect of him and he hung up. I called the power plant and told the men there that unless the order was issued to admit the night shift on the special passes which this man had personally signed along with Mr. Taylor, that they were to simply pull the master switch and let the men go home.

“Quite naturally, these were tense moments, and I sat at my desk counting the minutes as they ticked away. In about twenty minutes the lights in my office went off. Meanwhile, the President and his party and the honored guests had assembled in Governor Francis’ office in the Administration Building. A few minutes after the lights went out the telephone rang and the governor’s secretary, Collins Thompson, asked what in the world had happened, saying they were in total darkness.

“I explained that the Colonel had refused to honor passes which we had previously agreed upon, and which he as well as Mr. Taylor had signed, to get our night shift through the gates. In not more than two or three minutes the telephone rang again and it was the Colonel, and he wanted to know what in God’s name had happened. I told him that he was as much in possession of the facts as I, since he had rescinded his order covering our agreed arrangement to get our people in through the gates, and that it was entirely his responsibility that the buildings were in darkness.

“He said that if we would turn the lights back on that he would immediately call the two gates and instruct the guards there to honor the passes we had agreed upon. Meanwhile, Smith in the electrical department had waited to hear from me, and I told him to throw the switch back on. This was probably the only time the lights have been turned out on a President of the United States.”

Taylor and Hoblitzelle formed a team that functioned with precision throughout the construction and operation of the great Fair. Their admiration and respect for one another transcended their relationship in the crowded office of the workaday world. They became true and devoted friends. Even today, when

Hoblitzelle talks of the old times, it is obvious that Isaac S. Taylor still is his hero.

They were taking a stroll one evening during the waning days of the Fair when Taylor, a bachelor, said to his young assistant: "Karl, you've worked hard these last few years. Now when the Fair is over I'm going to Virginia and set up an architectural firm, and I want you to go in with me as a full partner. I've got money now – you know that – but I'm going to make more. If you'll agree to come in with me, I'll make out my will this very day and leave you my fortune when I die."

Hoblitzelle, recalling this incident recently, said: "Naturally I turned him down. I couldn't have gone through with it. It wasn't in my character."

To some people experiencing the present craze for easy security, easily arrived at, Hoblitzelle's reply may seem incredible.

Hoblitzelle's mother and father followed closely their son's career during his four hectic but fascinating years with the Fair. Father Hoblitzelle, now approaching his 60's and more than ever pinned down with political responsibilities, took pride in his son's developing talents. Mother Hoblitzelle, it is safe to conjecture, could scarcely believe that the tiny boy who once was so afraid of strangers was now a grown young man, composed and self-assured in his dealings with literally hundreds of people. The dinner table conversations were as lively as ever and the participants sometimes even more numerous than in the days of 818 Gratiot Street.

When it was bedtime, Father Hoblitzelle would go through his usual quiet routine. He would kiss his wife and daughters, saying to each one, "I bid you good night." He said the same to his sons. Never did he forego this little ceremony. It was not in his nature to utter a cryptic "Goodnight". Always it was, "I bid you goodnight."

One of the daughters, Eleanor, was being courted by the chief superintendent of construction at the Fair, John S. Tritle. But she was being courted by others too, and the serious-minded Tritle was almost distracted.

Father Hoblitzelle gently remonstrated with his daughter: "If you don't want John, why don't you tell him and let some other girl have him? I say this because I believe you are like me – you are

going to love only one person in your life. I love only Ida and it has always been that way. Will you please think this over?"

Tritle was going with Miss Hoblitzelle when his name was brought up for consideration as chief superintendent during a conference in Isaac Taylor's office. Naturally Hoblitzelle participated in the conference. He didn't know the status of Tritle's courtship with his sister, but he thought it best to deal frankly with Taylor. So when the latter asked Hoblitzelle's opinion, Hoblitzelle said candidly that he thought Tritle was the man for the job, but that he wished to make it plain that he could be prejudiced in his favor, and stated why.

Taylor had a great dislike for the practice of allowing friendships to enter into strictly business matters. Thus he appreciated it when Hoblitzelle placed the cards on the table. Tritle got the job, but on his own merits. From then on, Taylor felt assured that when he asked Hoblitzelle to size up a man, he would get a straight answer.

Incidentally, Tritle finally won the girl of his choice.

The brilliant electrical displays, the barks of the concessionaires, the laughter and merrymaking of the fun-loving crowds at the St. Louis World's Fair became things of the past early in December, 1904. All that remained of the huge pageant were the vast caverns of empty buildings. Isaac Taylor went on to Virginia. Karl Hoblitzelle was appointed Acting Director of Works in charge of tearing down all that he helped build.

In a way it was fascinating. The challenge facing a man in his position was to tear down intelligently, systematically, so as to salvage as much material and personal property as possible. The job required his constant attention until August of 1905.

Before the day arrived to strike the tent on the great celebration, various members of the Fair administration were awarded honors for their part in it. Hoblitzelle was presented a scroll by his friend Taylor on behalf of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Company, and he also received other honors, including special citations from the French and Chinese governments.

It seemed of minor importance at the time, but during the last days of the Fair he talked occasionally with a group of concessions operators interested in establishing and operating

a circuit of vaudeville theaters in the South and Southwest. The operators, impressed with Hoblitzelle's ability, wanted him to join in the enterprise. A few years before, Hoblitzelle was discussing theatrical affairs with his boyhood friend Kenneth D. Cassidy, later a business associate of Douglas Fairbanks. Hoblitzelle told Cassidy frankly he considered the theater "the gateway to Hell."

The St. Louis World's Fair had demonstrated, however, that an amusement attraction did not have to rely on morally questionable features to attract the public. Vaudeville was extremely popular in other sections of the country, and if properly presented, stood a good chance of succeeding the South and Southwest, which had no amusement facilities worthy of the name. Thus struck with the possibilities of the plan, Hoblitzelle and his brother George joined the concessions men in the organization, in the spring of 1905, of Interstate Amusement Company, a Missouri corporation. Karl and George Hoblitzelle provided a considerable portion of the capital needed to finance the company.

What Karl Hoblitzelle actually invested in the enterprise was \$2,500.

"But that was an awful lot of money then," he says.

To Karl Hoblitzelle the project seemed a good investment, nothing more. The funds he invested in had carefully saved from his earnings at the Fair. He didn't know what the future would hold after he had completed his demolition job at the Fair Grounds, but he certainly did not intend to associate himself with the actual operation of the amusement company.

But whatever his intentions, events of the next few months were to change them. He didn't know it, but already forces were at work which shortly were to start him upward to a position of pre-eminence among showmen of the nation.

## THE SECOND BIOGRAPHY

During the mid-1940s, Interstate Theatres commissioned a privately written and published biography of its founder, owner, and chief executive officer, Karl Hoblitzelle. This short book – *“Forty Years of Community Service”* – covers Karl Hoblitzelle’s life from the latter years of the 1800s through the second World War. Mr. Hinga was compensated for his work by Interstate Theatres, which no longer exists, so no formal permission was sought for the reprinting of this booklet.

From: Don Hinga’s *“Forty Years of Community Service”*

### **Forty Years of Community Service** *The Story of Karl Hoblitzelle and the Development of Interstate Theatres*

Foreword...

To know Karl Hoblitzelle is to love him.

During his lifetime, he has been interested in scores of activities outside the scope of our company, and has been associated with hundreds of people in the course of these activities.

We, who have been privileged to work side by side with him through the years and have enjoyed the inspiration of observing the myriad facets of his personality and character, feel that those who have known him more slightly than we, would like to know more about him.

Toward this end, this book was written.

Modest by nature, Karl Hoblitzelle speaks of himself and his achievements with reluctance, so that it was necessary to compile this information contained here from many sources – his business associates of earlier years, his family and his old friends.

Many incidents have come to light that even we who have known him intimately had no knowledge of. I am sure that the



reader will find among these pages references that will increase his affection and regard for Karl Hoblitzelle.

– R.J.O'Donnell  
General Manager, Interstate Theatres

Author's Note:

The author of this small volume has been in newspaper work in Texas for nearly a quarter of a century.

During these years I have had an opportunity to see Interstate Theatres grow from a small circuit to one of the major theatre firms in the nation.

And during all that time I saw the firm foundation on which it was built – clean, wholesome entertainment for entire families and unselfish public service.

And so it was when Interstate's 40th anniversary year rolled around I felt particularly honored to be approached by R. J.O'Donnell, general manager of Interstate and other executives, with the idea that I compile a brief record as a tribute to Karl Hoblitzelle.

But you cannot compile a brief record on Karl Hoblitzelle's contribution to the growth of the state. Weeks of research unearthed such a multitude of interesting information that the book, like Topsy, just grew and grew and soon I had a major volume on my hands.

It was with great difficulty that I condensed his varied life into this volume.

I feel a deep sense of pride and appreciation for having been afforded this opportunity to add my small tribute to Karl Hoblitzelle and the fine citizenship he typifies.

– Don Hinga

*“Back to the very first beginning out to the undiscovered ends there's nothing worth the wear of winning but laughter and the love of friends”*

Not so many years ago, as time is counted in the development of an industry, the mayor of Fort Worth pulled his watch from his pocket, looked at the dial and decided that it was



*The Dallas Majestic Theatre, as it stands in 2016.*

time for lunch. Putting on his hat he walked from the city hall and started down the street for home.

A few blocks away he carefully crossed the street, walked one block, crossed back and resumed his original route.

The mayor crossed the street for one lone block for a very good reason. In his original path lay the newly-opened Majestic Theatre. The mayor was a solid, upright citizen and a good politician and he knew that it would do neither his upright reputation nor his political fortunes any good to be seen around a theatre.

For the theatre in those days was regarded as a place where few of the better citizens spent any time. Ministers called it the "Gateway To Hell" and it enjoyed about the same public rating as a good saloon.

This year, as Interstate Theatres observes its Fortieth Anniversary in show business in Texas, the picture has changed vastly.

Today the theatre is the center of civic and community activity. Its doors are open to every civic enterprise. Its managers are leaders in their communities. And where forty years ago a man might hesitate to take his wife to the theatre, today he takes the whole family and his children use it as a weekly headquarters for their neighborhood activities.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

Interstate Theatres is the lengthened shadow of Karl Hoblitzelle, who in 40 years has brought the theatre in Texas out of the shadow of critical public opinion into the service of the community with the thought that he keeps foremost in the minds of hundreds of employees:

"The theatre belongs to the customers first and to we who operate it second".

The slogan of Interstate "Dedicated to Community Service" has built an organization of some 165 theatres, serving millions with the finest of entertainment, out of a little group of four theatres that were opened in 1905. Hoblitzelle explains the steady growth simply: "No institution can continue unless it is serving the public good. If there is no contribution to a community and its citizens, in

time such an institution is certain to pass out of the picture.”

Karl Hoblitzelle got into the entertainment field when, as a lad of 20, he passed up a salary of \$125 a month in the auditing department of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, better known as “The St. Louis World’s Fair” for a job as office boy in the office of Director of Works Isaac Taylor at \$5 a week.

When Hoblitzelle presented himself with a letter of introduction at the Fair building office, Taylor, a six-foot, four-inch giant of a man, roared from his inside office, “Is that the young man who wants to take \$5 a week instead of \$125 a month? Send him in.” “Just why do you want a \$5 a week job?”, Taylor asked. “I just want to be where they are actually building the fair”, the young man said.

In three years he rose from office boy to secretary to Taylor and when that architectural genius retired Hoblitzelle was named acting Director in charge of demolition of the giant project that took in some 250 acres filled with over 500 exposition buildings. Impressed with his ability, a group of concessionaires came to the young director at the close of the fair with a proposition. Vaudeville was filling the shabby theatres of that day and the Southwest was a virgin territory, untouched by the soft shoe of a tap dancer, and hungering for more entertainment than the once a year travelling troupe at the Opera House or Chatauqua could give them.

The idea was that Hoblitzelle put up the money for an investigation of the possibilities. Struck with the idea he took all his savings, \$2500 – “an awful lot of money at that time” – and with the help of his brother, George, Interstate Amusement Company opened the Majestic Theatres in Dallas, Fort Worth and Waco and the Empire in San Antonio in the fall of 1905.

When a man achieves stature in his community, state and nation – becomes a success in his chosen field, makes that success a vehicle with which to build his native land into a better place for all to live – the foundation for that stature usually can be found in his origins and the atmosphere in which his youthful years were molded.

Karl Hoblitzelle was born in St. Louis on October 22, 1879. His father, Clarence Linden Hoblitzelle, had been brought as a Confederate prisoner to St. Louis and after being paroled decided



to make his home in that booming river town.

In 1867 he married Ida A. Knapp, daughter of Col. George Knapp, founder of the "Missouri Gazette" which made journalistic history in that state and eventually through sales and mergers became the St. Louis Globe Democrat of today.

Karl was one of ten boys and three girls born to that union whose ancestral roots went back to the mountains and valleys of Switzerland, where the name Hoblitzelle was borne by governors, judges, military leaders and scholars.

His great, great grandfather, Adrian Hoblitzelle fought for freedom and democracy in the Revolutionary War and his grandfather, William T. Hoblitzelle, married Loretta Ogle, daughter of Governor Samuel Ogle of Maryland. From that union came Clarence Hoblitzelle whose military trail led him to St. Louis.

Hoblitzelle's ancestry is typical of the merging of racial strains that made America great. On the father's side it is Swiss, Austrian and English. His mother's ancestors came from England, Ireland and France. Ida Hoblitzelle exerted great influence on her son Karl. Born to a family that had more than comfortable means, she was given an excellent classical education, her family had owned slaves and she impressed on the youth that every human being, regardless of color or economic standing, deserved humane treatment. She gave to him a deep appreciation of art, literature and music – teachings that enabled him to go far beyond his high school education in appreciation of the finer things of life.

"Mother had one inflexible rule", says Mrs. John S. Tritle, of St. Louis, sister of Hoblitzelle. "That was there was no excuse for unpleasantness. None could stay in the room with her unless they were pleasant".

Raising a family of 13 children necessitated courage, resourcefulness and inspiration. Ida Hoblitzelle gave her children all these virtues.

She made her children practice the Christian principle of dividing with each other – a prime need in a family of 13 – and this lesson in unselfishness made a lasting impression on the youth.

The modest circumstances of the large family made self-denial a necessity and the mother's example of self-control, sacrifice and charity was the greatest single factor in molding the

character of Karl Hoblitzelle.

Clarence Hoblitzelle left the saddlery and harness business, in which he engaged when he arrived in St. Louis, to go into politics and during his lifetime held several important public offices. Young Karl was a keen student of his father's political career and acquired a first-hand knowledge of the workings of a democratic government from his father's experiences and problems.

Mother Hoblitzelle came from a family of 12 and when the Hoblitzelles sat down to a Sunday dinner there seldom were less than 20 persons gathered around the table.

These Sunday dinners were a regular forum of literature, art, politics and the problems of the day.

Grandfather Knapp brought to the table the experiences and knowledge of a newspaper publisher, two of the uncles of young Karl had graduated from Brown and Harvard, Father Hoblitzelle brought a burning interest in the political problems of those early days.

"Sometimes they would sit for hours after the table had been cleared", Mrs. Tritle recalls. "The talk would range far and wide – politics, economics, art, literature and music.

"Most of we children would drift away from the table to our own Sunday afternoon pursuits. But Karl always stayed. It seemed that he never could soak up enough knowledge of the things that were being discussed."

As the twig is bent so inclines the tree and from this family background and atmosphere, it is not surprising that Karl Hoblitzelle has brought to his adopted state of Texas a rounded knowledge of life that has made his interest spread to encompass the high and the low, the black and the white, his city, his state, and his nation.

Let's take a look at the average vaudeville lineup around the turn of the century.

A good percentage of the vaudeville acts were being put on in honky-tonk saloons, with curtained boxes along the sides and rooms back of the boxes where a man could take his drink and very likely get rolled of his purse if he wasn't careful.

The relatively few theatres that presented vaudeville were barren, shabby show houses that offered nothing to please the eye



or ear but the attraction on the stage. The bills were often full of questionable jokes and songs and the first question a customer asked at the box office was “Is this a decent show?”

“It was a heart breaking job to convince the good people of Texas in those early days that we were presenting only clean, wholesome entertainment,” Hoblitzelle recalls. “A good many of the men connected with the theatre of that day occupied questionable positions in the community. They had graduated out of the saloon or gambling business and the public looked askance at them.

“From the start we determined that Interstate Theatres would be a place where a man could bring his family without question. We checked the vaudeville bills for objectionable lines at rehearsals but even then we never could be sure that some comedian wouldn’t ad lib a double meaning into his stories.

“So we gave the orchestra leader the job of censoring the show as it went on and reporting smutty lines to the management. When a show opened at the first theatre in our circuit we sent managers of our other shows written lists of the deletions so that he could be on the lookout for the same things.

“All of our acts came from the big cities of the north and east where such lines were taken as a matter of course. The actors couldn’t understand the objections and we had a rough time for a long time.”

Keeping the show clean was not only tough on the nerves but it was hard on the pocketbook at times. Occasionally an act would be hired at a fancy price only to find that it couldn’t be cleaned up enough to go on. Then the hard and fast rule was to pay the actors off and send them back east.

“Often it meant that we’d have to stand off some creditors a few days to do it”, Hoblitzelle says, “but the policy brought families to our theatres who wouldn’t have come had we been less vigilant.” The policy of policing every phase of theatre operation to the end that the theatre would be attractive to families as a whole began to pay dividends and soon a Majestic Theatre was built in Houston and other show houses leased throughout the south and southwest for the presentation of vaudeville.

One of the biggest problems of those early days was the moral opposition to Sunday openings. There was no five day week

then and Sunday was about the only day that thousands could see a good show. The churches waged a bitter fight against “Desecration of the Sabbath” and it is interesting to note how the policy of clean entertainment brought about the dropping of that opposition.

When the beautiful new Majestic Theatre was opened in Dallas, a minister of a different denomination spoke from the stage each night of the opening week. And in 1945 the Texas legislature unanimously refused to approve state censorship of motion pictures.

It is perhaps prophetic that in the year Interstate Theatres was born – 1905 – the first motion picture in the form it is known as today was shown to mass audiences. Prior to 1905, motion pictures had been taken of sporting events and flashed on individual screens but in that year the Warner Brothers, Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack, bought a projector and started out on the road with “The Great Train Robbery”, a one reeler that laid the foundation for the careers of many of the movie greats of today.

For 15 years Interstate built public esteem on the solid basis of seven clean vaudeville acts twice daily and in 1920 motion pictures were added to the programs.

Joe Luckett, old time Interstate employee, who as manager of a vaudeville theatre in Washington in 1897, turned down the plea of Thomas Armat, inventor of the movie projector, to show his films in his theatre – and incidentally on a 50-50 basis for a patent on the machine – remembers the movie house from its beginning.

“They showed them wherever they could”, Luckett recalls.

“Sometimes it was in an old time opera house but more often a vacant store building. The exhibitor would hunt around for a vacant store, rent a bunch of folding chairs, hang up his screen and unlimber his projector.

“The theatre staff consisted more often than not of two persons – a man who sold tickets and then ran to the door to collect them and a movie operator.

“The operator ground away at his machine by hand and the film ran out of the projector into a basket on the floor. There was no protection against fire and often the “theatre” had just two exits – the way in and a door in the back to get out.

“A little later, as the exhibitors made money, they added a

piano player to heighten interest in the film. Candy butchers ran up and down the aisles and the income from candy often paid a good part of the bills.

“The crude films lasted about 30 or 40 minutes and it was a great event in the industry when the price went up from five to ten cents.

“I remember when the first organ was put in a movie theatre. People thought that was a helluva thing. Organs had been heard only in churches and it took people quite a little time to get used to them.

“Vaudeville house operators didn’t take to movies at the first. Oftentimes they signed up for a movie and used it just to clear the house at the end of a bill.”

One of the first motion pictures that Interstate exhibited was “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” and the response of the public was so terrific that others were quickly booked.

D.W.Griffith’s “Birth of a Nation” really established the motion picture as entertainment. Hoblitzelle was quick to see the possibilities and in the early 20s Interstate began its greatest period of expansion.

The theatres of that day were designed primarily for stage attractions and Interstate set out on a program of building the motion picture theatre as it is known today.

With an innate sense of beauty,heightened by the experiences of his youth at the beautiful St. Louis World’s Fair, Hoblitzelle insisted that the new theatres be places of beauty and quiet.

“It has been a source of great satisfaction to me to make our theatres beautiful, to see something come out of a barren stretch of land that is beautiful, to bring into being something beautiful that did not exist”, he says.

“To me the greatest impulse in life is to create something of beauty.A precious jewel is beautiful but its beauty is enhanced by a beautiful setting.We strive to enhance our entertainment by a setting of beauty in which to enjoy it.”

Looking back on 40 years when a man could hunt up a vacant store and open a theatre – when Interstate’s general office staff consisted of Mr. Hoblitzelle, a combination general manager-

treasurer, a booking manager, an auditor and a stenographer – let's run over, a few of the myriad complex details that must be worked out by today's general office staff of a modern theatre.

The executive department selects a site for suitability, density of population and proximity to other theatres. The legal department checks for zoning and other restrictions, passes on all legal papers and the real estate department makes the deal for the location.

The construction department is called in to confer on the type of building to be erected, the number of seats required, space needed for sound and air conditioning equipment, merchandising such as candy and popcorn counters, whether there will be commercial buildings attached to the new theatre, and lay out arrangements for parking space.

There are a thousand and one details that go into the construction of a modern theatre, but there is one detail that is a "must" in the building of all Interstate Theatres. That is: "There must be more fire exits than the city ordinances require".

The sound engineer and the air conditioning engineer – units of a theatre that were not dreamed of only a few years ago – sit in on building conferences and while the building is going up the purchasing agent is busy lining up carpets, drinking fountains, ticket machines and myriad other items that are needed in a modern playhouse.

During all this time the publicity and advertising departments are planning their campaigns for the gala opening, the booking department is arranging programs for weeks to come, and the insurance department has blanketed the new structure with policies that safeguard patrons in every way.

As the date for the opening nears, the manager for the new theatre and the staff that will operate it are chosen with greatest care and training is begun.

Training of the staff is of paramount importance. The staff is the direct contact with the public and establishes the personality of the new theatre. Here again, safety of the patron is emphasized. The staff is intensively trained in handling emergencies, each member must become familiar with every nook and corner of the building and know the location of every exit, fire extinguisher,

necessary light switches, etc.

Nothing is left to chance. Training such as this has kept Interstate's record free of any disaster.

Haven't you noticed trim young men going down the aisles in your favorite theatre once or twice during every performance with hooded flashlights? They are checking fire exits, switches, extinguishers, reading temperature gauges – making sure that you'll enjoy the program in an atmosphere of safety and comfort.

A patron of a theatre walks into the cool, dark interior, sits down in a comfortable seat and enjoys himself for a couple of hours without giving thought to the dozens of operations that go on to make him so comfortable. Here are just a few:

There is a marked change in temperature and humidity between a full house and one half full, so every hour theatre engineers check the thermometers and then walk through the house swinging a little gadget and go outside and swing it again for another reading. The gadget registers the humidity and the engineer then goes to the engine room to correct gauges for the maximum comfort.

Everyone talks about the humidity but these engineers are about the only persons who do anything about it.

In the larger theatres a sound checker sits unobtrusively on a rear seat during every performance. He holds a device with two buttons in his hand, one to raise and one to lower the volume as it is needed to make you hear distinctly.

Each night the cleaning staff and maintenance men check the house for irregularities that might cause accidents and correct them. Before each opening the service staff makes another check for burned out aisle lights, torn carpets that might trip a patron, seats that might have a protruding spring or splintered wood, slick places on uncarpeted floors. The check goes on all day.

The carpet man is another night worker. He does nothing but replace worn carpets, patch and repair carpets that have become ripped or torn. When you consider that a theatre carpet gets as much use in a week as a carpet in a home might receive in a lifetime, you can see his full time job.

Before the advent of motion pictures, a definite number of performances, usually a matinee and night show were given. Today

performances are continuous, usually six complete shows. That means twice the number of shifts of staff for each day's program.

Introduction of sound brought another department and Sound Engineer Jimmie Skinner, also an authority on television, flies his own plane around the Interstate Circuit to keep each theatre abreast of all sound developments.

The average patron takes the program for granted. He views a serious film and when it is over the seriousness is leavened with a laughable short subject. He sees a musical comedy and that is balanced by a short on some serious subject.

In the Short Subject and Booking Department, six persons see every feature, short subject and newsreel and build the programs with the greatest attention to balance and running time. Only with such strict attention to detail can a balanced program be offered.

In making up a balanced program this department occasionally comes up against short subjects on matters of great controversy. It may be that the subject deals with racial problems, or religious issues. The decision then is based upon an edict laid down by Hoblitzelle:

“Does it carry a constructive message?”

Hoblitzelle is a firm believer in the idea that every movement should have an opportunity to present its message, whether it agrees with the majority opinion or not.

“If we are to have the highest type of culture then we must encourage the widest latitude in expressing their lives as they see it”, he declares.

“I feel that we should encourage all movements that tend to the public good. They may be the whole life of the other man and it is not for me to forbid him such expression because I have it in my power to do so.

“The most important thing in life is the freedom of individual expression. We are all different. None of us fits into a collective groove.

“There is nothing more important to the preservation of our way of life than respect for the rights of others.”

An illustration of the efficiency with which the modern theatre staff must be trained occurred several years ago in Dallas.





*Photo of Dallas' Majestic Theatre, in its glory years, taken in 1937.*

The Majestic was filled with patrons one evening when a breakdown occurred in the sound projection booth that could not be repaired within several hours time. Patrons had paid to see that particular picture and the Majestic manager at the time was loath to disappoint them.

The Melba Theatre, a block away, was closed for the season.

It had not been cleaned in weeks, the power was turned off and the cooling system had not been in operation that year, yet without hesitation it was decided to "Move 'em to the Melba".

A brief announcement was made from the stage and within 22 minutes the picture was being shown on the Melba screen. In that brief time the Melba had been given a quick cleaning, missing light bulbs had been installed, the lobby was ablaze with light, the cooling system was functioning perfectly and there was ice water in the lobby fountains.

Proper maintenance of the theatre prior to its closing and efficient training of a service staff to meet any and all emergencies made the service miracle possible.

Great as have been the strides of Interstate in presenting increasingly better entertainment, these improvements have been matched in employee relations of the circuit.

"The entertainment industry, more than any other business, is built upon good relations with the public," Hoblitzelle says. "And your public relations can be no better than the relationship that exists between a company and its employees."

Guided by that theory, Interstate makes every person who has been with the company one year a partner to the extent that 10% of the profits are put into a bonus fund that is paid at Christmas time. There also is a group insurance fund in which Interstate pays a major part of the premiums, a Loan Fund for use in times of sickness and death, and a general employees welfare fund for emergencies beyond the call of illness.

One of the first actions of the trustees of the General Welfare Fund was to pay \$25 to every Interstater who became a parent. If he was in military service during the war, the check was doubled.

Liberal vacation schedules allot a week for each year's service with three weeks' paid vacation and an extra week's pay for those who have been with the company over three years.

Every Interstater who went into the service received the same schedule of payments his first year in service and at Christmas each year got a check equivalent to two weeks of his salary prior to his enlistment.

Many members of the service staffs are youngsters who

have been compelled to quit school for economic reasons. If they desire to resume their educations later they are given leaves of absence.

During the war many of the young men left families who ran into financial difficulties. Interstate's auditing staff looked into their problems. If they needed \$100 a month to live on and the government allotment was say, \$75, Interstate made up the difference with a check that tided over the family of a soldier while he was away.

"Making partners of our employees has helped to make our organization what it is today", says Hoblitzelle.

"Each man feels that he has a part in controlling his own existence and determining his income. Our success has been accomplished by the individual contribution of every member of the organization.

"Give a man a share in his work and he gives a full and better effort. He works to effect economies that prevent thousands in waste. Any organization is no better than the impression spread by its employees."

Hoblitzelle, throughout the years, both by example and preachment, has placed the greatest emphasis on loyalty and teamwork. This is not the kind of "shoulder to the wheel" talk that sales managers are reputed to expound, but rather a sincere belief on his part that there must be mutual respect between all members of an organization.

"An organization will never be able to survive through the years on the ability or personality of a single individual. A man does well what he enjoys doing. Each man and woman with our company spends the majority of his working hours in close relationship with his fellow workers. If this relationship is not pleasant and happy; if it is not based on mutual respect and affectionate regard, then we are not going to function efficiently, nor, more important, will those involved enjoy the satisfaction and contentment which should be theirs as they go about their daily tasks. They will not be happy, and they will be the real losers."

The 40 years of Interstate have been filled with a number of "firsts" in the industry.

When air conditioning first made its appearance, Interstate



*Shakespeare quote from the Majestic Theater.*

was the first theatre outfit in the Southwest to install it in all its theatres.

When sound was added to the film track Hoblitzelle scooped every other theatre in Texas by wiring his houses for the sound film that revolutionized the theatre over night.

“Uncle Joe” Lockett, of whom we’ve spoken earlier, remembers those radical departures vividly.

“I know that it darned near broke the company to be first in these two improvements,” he says, “but there never was any hesitation because Mr. Hoblitzelle believed the public deserved them.

“He is always ready to gamble his chips to improve his theatres. He would always borrow to the limit to be first”.

Interstate was the first to have nurses and maids on duty for patrons and feminine guests; the first to install ear phones for

the hard of hearing and when “Majestic-Land”, beautiful children’s playground was installed into the Dallas Majestic the entire industry sat up, took notice and copied the idea.

Interstate led the field in installing “crying rooms” where mothers could retire with fretful infants and still see the picture and also was first to put in children’s chairs that fitted into regular seats so small fry could enjoy the show better.

As the hectic 1920s drew to their frantic close, Hoblitzelle decided that he would retire and take Mrs. Hoblitzelle, the former Esther Thomas, of Louisville, whom he had married in 1920, on a tour of Europe. The nationwide chain of RKO was in the market for Southwestern outlets and the deal was closed in May, 1930.

And thereby hangs a tale that perhaps, most vividly of all demonstrates the spirit of responsibility that Hoblitzelle feels for every man who has helped make Interstate Theatres predominate.

The frantic boom days of the late ‘20s had given way to a downward spiral of depression and soon RKO found itself in the courts for receivership. Closing of RKO’s theatres would mean that hundreds of the employees with whom he had worked for years would lose their job.

Hoblitzelle acted promptly. Hurrying home from Europe he made a deal to repossess the properties and the jobs of his old friends and co-workers were saved.

Interstate’s creed that “The theatres belong to the public first and to we who operate them second”, is carried out in the activities of every employee. Before them they have always the example of Karl Hoblitzelle, whose public spirited activities have ranged the globe.

No group whether large or small, regardless of race, creed or color, has ever made a worthy appeal to Hoblitzelle or his staff for help in any cause that served the common good, and had that appeal go unheeded.

World War II provided the acid test of public service. The record of how Interstate met the challenge is set forth here in brief. To go into detail would take volumes.

Long before the United States was sucked into the maelstrom by the attack on Pearl Harbor, the deep seated feelings of humanitarianism and patriotism stirred Hoblitzelle to action –



action that made an incalculable contribution to the winning of four long and arduous years of war.

Injustice of any kind has always brought Hoblitzelle into the arena to combat it. In 1940, he decreed that one day's receipts of all Interstate Theatres be given to Jewish Relief and some \$40,000 was sent to succor them.

In the spring of 1940 Hoblitzelle called a meeting of 25 Dallas leaders – such men as Nathan Adams, Clarence Linz, Herbert Marcus, Sr. and R. L. Thornton. To them he outlined a plan for a giant mass meeting to awaken America to its peril.

Five days later some 25,000 persons crowded Fair Park to hear Hoblitzelle emphasize the major purpose of the gathering: “First, Preparedness, and second the Preservation of Democracy”. And when the meeting drew to a close, the thousands gave unanimous approval to resolutions:

Urging repeal of legislation necessary to make it possible to tender all assistance short of war to Great Britain and France; reaffirming belief in the principles of Americanism; asking that the State Department be assured that material might as well as moral support be given to a program for linking the 21 American republics in a solid front against un-American ideologies; demanding immediate stoppage of shipment of materials to countries through which such materials might find their way to the enemies of Democracy and urging that Congress immediately appropriate \$50,000,000 for relief of war refugees.

Thousands of wires and letters went out from the meeting to President Roosevelt and members of Congress. They were a potent factor in strengthening the mind of Congress on action that made Lend-Lease and the British Destroyer deal – moves which are given prime credit for keeping the Allies in the war – possible a few months later.

When the “Day that will live in infamy” arrived and plunged the United States into war on Dec. 7, 1941, an order went out from the executive department to all Interstate Theatre managers. It was simple but eloquent. It read: “Drop everything and throw your whole effort into winning the war”.

It is impossible to reckon the contribution made by the theatre men of Texas. They were in the thick of every patriotic



movement.

The total of war bond sales alone, made through the concerted efforts of theatre men, ran into the hundreds of millions. In scores of theatres the only ticket of admission needed was the purchase of a war bond; Interstate brought the top stars of stage and screen to Texas to kickoff the bond drives; premieres of outstanding films were held throughout the state to spur bond sales.

Money was not all that was needed to win the war. The United States was desperately short of critical materials and on numerous special days theatres opened their doors to anyone who brought in a tin can, a piece of scrap iron, aluminum, a wad of waste paper.

The pitiful byproducts of war – the hungry and ragged – were not forgotten. On many days a can of food or a piece of clothing was all you needed to see a show.

So well did the theatres of the country do their part in the war bond drives that Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau in 1942 asked the theatre men to spearhead the Fifth War Loan drive that year and the campaign went over with millions to spare.

R. J. O'Donnell, general manager of Interstate Theatres and one of the executives who have played a major part in development of the company, was national chairman of the Fifth War Loan Drive.

O'Donnell spent fourteen days and nights living in airplanes while making a tour to cover 21 motion picture film distribution centers all over the nation.

O'Donnell also has been an inspiration to the men of Interstate for his public service. He was National Chief Barker of the Variety Club, charity organization of the theatre men, and has been responsible for raising of thousands for charity.

In the spring of 1942, the United States had been at war a year and a half. Her fighting forces were battling insuperable odds with suicidal courage and gallantry. On the home front the picture was not bright.

Congress was quibbling over details of the war program; strikes were breaking out all over the land; management in many instances seemed more interested in profits than winning the war

in a hurry.

Mothers of many Dallas servicemen called Hoblitzelle to protest against war delays. At their insistence he called a meeting of key Dallas men and formed a committee whose purpose it was to try and stop all delays that were crippling the war effort and costing the lives of hundreds daily.

The committee, with Hoblitzelle as chairman, decided to call a mass meeting of citizens from all walks of life – capitalists and workmen – mothers and businesswomen, white and black, Jew and Gentile.

To the thousands who answered the cry of “We Want Action”. Hoblitzelle declared:

“This is not a meeting to direct any organized indignation at any particular group, but to express the public sentiment so the President and Texas Representatives at Washington may know that the people of Texas will not tolerate further delay in matters involving the nation’s safety.

“Too much time has been lost already and the whole nation is aware of it. The time for talking is over and the time for action is at hand.”

Thrilled by the call to action, the overflow crowd of 5000 stood and indorsed resolutions demanding: A law commanding 100 per cent cooperation by both management and labor in all essential industries, and sweeping aside all obstacles to total war production.

Prohibition of lockouts by management and strikes by labor.

Providing that anyone responsible for a strike or lockout or taking any part in one, shall be subject to draft immediately by the government for work either in industry or the military forces.

“We further demand”, the resolutions said, “a sincere, vigorous, impartial program to prevent all excess war profits, on one hand, and to encourage a greater contribution by our workers on the other hand.”

The Texans’ call to action spread to every corner of the nation, resounded in the halls of Congress and brought hundreds of letters of appreciation from men at the front and patriotic citizens who were giving to the limit at home.

During the strenuous days of prosecuting the war to a

victorious conclusion, Interstate did not lose sight of those who offered their lives and their health in the service of their nation.

Scores of units were sent out to the army camps of Texas to entertain the hundreds of thousands of men training for combat. As the wounded began to filter back from the fronts, the pain and monotony of hospital existence was brightened by entertainment recruited and sent out by Texas theatre men.

War service was not a novelty to Hoblitzelle. During World War I, Jesse H. Hones, Director of Hospital Relief for the Red Cross, recruited Hoblitzelle to set up an organization similar to the USO of World War II, to furnish entertainment and recreation for the doughboys of that conflict.

Mr. Jones paid tribute to his work in a letter that said: "I knew of your ability and of your own spirit before you came to the Red Cross, and when I learned that I could secure your service to help me in the Department of Military Relief, I was indeed happy and relieved of considerable anxiety, because I realize that to properly organize our recreational work in the hospitals would require study, thought and planning of a thorough and minute kind, and I have never known of anyone who mastered and understood their business to the fingertips more than you. I shall ever be under obligation to you for the way in which you organized and handled the recreational work of the Red Cross in our hospitals."

Secretary of War Newton D. Baker wrote: "If the various phases of war work are to be developed, some of us must sacrifice our ambitions to serve in the uniformed ranks, and the activity that you are carrying on is of the kind that will not admit of letting go. "Will you not, therefore, remain at your present post in the consciousness that in your work you are serving the armed forces and the cause for which they are fighting as directly as if you were carrying a gun?"

During all the multitudinous duties of war, other phases of public service were not lost sight of.

Theatres backed the March of Dimes campaigns to raise funds for the fight on infantile paralysis. Special shorts with notable stars were shown during the drive and in one year, 1945, over \$250,000 was raised.

Perturbed by the meager educational advantages afforded

by the rural schools of the state, Hoblitzelle endowed the Texas School of the Air to give the rural schools more of the things that make for a balanced education. Programs were broadcast each week that reached into every corner of the state. The State of Texas recognized the value of this contribution by officially adopting the School of the Air.

Radio House at Texas University is another project. Hoblitzelle for years gave a \$5000 fellowship annually to Radio House so that ambitious music students could earn their tuition while they were learning.

Through the School of the Air, the top music and literature awards were given to the small school, and the Radio House scholarships have helped many a talented youngster along the road to where his talent can be developed to the common pleasure of all.

Countless thousands of school children have learned the lessons of safety in Safety Rallies at theatres where no-admission programs entertained and taught them at the same time.

Interstate backed and sent out College Capers, a musical show staffed by talent from the colleges. The shows played the Institute Circuit and at army camps and hospitals and gave many a collegiate youngster a chance to try his wings on the stage.

Most recent of these dramatic enterprises is Interstate Players. Feeling that the theatre should be decentralized and that a stock company in Texas would fill the hunger for stage plays while at the same time provide experience and recognition for the dramatic talent in Texas colleges, Mr. Hoblitzelle financed Interstate Players.

Many a talented youngster had butted his head against the stonewall of the New York stage. Through Interstate Players he has a chance to show and develop his talent. While the Players put on their offerings over Interstate circuit, all profits go to the Players Foundation.

Interstate is the Texas backbone of the Variety Club. In 1945, the national charity award went to the Dallas Tent of Variety, headed by James O. Cherry, Dallas city manager of Interstate, for such charities as Boys Ranch at Copperas Cove, where youngsters get valuable academic and technical training in a ranch atmosphere,

and for contributions to Freeman Memorial Clinic at Dallas and many other activities.

Texas gained incalculable publicity through the film Cavalcade of Texas which was arranged by Interstate during the Texas Centennial in 1936. The beautiful color panorama of Texas highlighting its mighty resources, was shown throughout the nation.

The Centennial brought about what Hoblitzelle considered "one of the best day's work we ever did for Texas". When that great exposition closed, the Centennial corporation was deep in debt. Some of the directors wanted to go into bankruptcy and salvage what they could from dismantling the buildings.

With the aid of a handful of associates, Hoblitzelle fought for permission to call the creditors – and he was one of the biggest – together and talk the situation over. The result was that all voted to go along with the possibility that a Pan-American exposition would be held later and the buildings saved.

The victory kept the word from going out over the nation that Texas wouldn't pay for its hundredth birthday party.

There is never any question in the minds of Interstate executives as to whether sponsorship of a project will conflict with the box office – if such a project is for the public good or will bring pleasure to thousands.

Interstate has helped produce the Starlight Operetta series that fills Fair Park during the summer. Mr. Hoblitzelle has been active in bringing the Metropolitan Opera Company to Dallas for a week of fine music.

Interstate also brings to Texas many of the outstanding stage offerings from New York, often at a loss.

"We believe that the people of Texas are entitled to see the better New York stage offerings," Hoblitzelle says. "We feel that we are not fulfilling our obligation to offer the finest the theatre presents unless we bring these attractions to Texas."

Intensely interested in civic planning for Dallas, Hoblitzelle has given a city block of land for the establishment of a Y.M.C.A. Community Center near his home in University Park, a suburb of Dallas.

Frequently, a public move will offend his civic consciousness. For instance, county officials during the depression

proposed to cut \$20,000 off the relief budget for a tax survey. Appearing as a private citizen, Hoblitzelle spearheaded the protest against this diversion of funds and the \$20,000 was restored to relief of the needy.

In 1931 the citizens of Dallas were called upon to vote on a large bond issue that was designed to afford relief to the populace generally from poor drainage conditions.

Now the residents of the more prosperous sections of a city can always be counted upon to back a bond issue. They are generally in a position where a few more dollars on their annual tax bill will not work a hardship and they usually vote in the affirmative.

You have to sell the small cottage home owner of the need for bonds to get an issue across. The small home owner areas of Dallas were in a deplorable condition. A heavy rain left these sections standing in a sea of water and inadequate sanitary and storm sewers backed up during the downpours, flooding many small home with backed up sewage.

Proponents of the bond issue convinced these citizens that the bonds would correct this situation and the bonds went over with a large majority.

No sooner were the issues floated than the small home owner was forgotten. The city administration decided that the money would be spent on drainage problems in the Trinity River levee district. The argument was that better drainage in that section would attract manufacturing firms and make that a humming industrial section.

Owners of homes in the smaller residential sections were dismayed. They had put over the bonds, they were a powerful factor in the voting power of the city, but they had no spokesman.

A delegation called on Mr. Hoblitzelle to seek his aid.

As the group detailed their betrayal, Mr. Hoblitzelle's face grew redder and redder. Within 24 hours he had engaged legal counsel to fight the battle of the little man, and the city was enjoined from spending the money on the industrial district and the small homes were taken out of the sea of mud.

As Mr. Hoblitzelle prepared to sail for Europe on a vacation a few weeks later, he received many messages wishing him bon



voyage. Above all, he prized a scroll bearing the names of these small home owners in Dallas bringing heartfelt thanks for just another instance of fighting for the cause of that vast inarticulate body of citizens who would have been lost but for his civic consciousness.

On the cultural side, in addition to sponsorship of the Metropolitan Opera and Starlight Operetta, there are two Hoblitzelle galleries at the Dallas Museum of Art, filled with paintings that have been loaned to the Museum for the pleasure of the public.

In these galleries are displayed paintings by Santi di Tito, Guercinco, Bonifazio Beronese, Antonio Badile, George Vasari, Jacob Jordaens, David Teniers, Mario Marzola and other masters.

When the Texas legislature in 1941 created the Texas Centennial of Statehood Commission to plan a statewide observance of Texas' entrance into the union, Hoblitzelle was named chairman and he brought forth a far-reaching plan that will extend its benefits to Texans for over 100 years.

Hoblitzelle looked around the state and nation and took stock. During the war years the smokestacks of industry multiplied a thousand fold but the agricultural life of Texas practically stood still.

He found some amazing facts. Little Iowa, a fraction of the size of Texas, outranked Texas in the total value of agricultural



*Some examples of the agricultural research awards given by Hoblitzelle Foundation.*

products; Texas produced more cotton than any state in the union but the yield per acre was the lowest in the south; Texas had far more cattle than Iowa but Iowa outranked Texas in cattle value. And so on down the line Texas might have the most but the value per unit was far too low.

Hoblitzelle brought the Centennial committee together with the call: "The culture and traditions of our state are deeply rooted in the soil and its products. If our towns and cities are to thrive, our rural life must be attractive and profitable. Sound, straight-thinking Texans have always come from the farm and ranch. A sound, healthy and happy rural life will always act as a bulwark against the 'isms' that are contrary to our way of life."

He proposed, instead of celebrations and monuments, a hundred-year plan to revitalize the rural life of Texas, to rebuild the land and with the land the man and through the man the state. He suggested that the state of Texas create and finance a coordinating and fact finding commission, "The Texas Rural Development Commission," to assist farmers through rural community planning. This commission would not duplicate, but rather coordinate and augment the work of governmental, state and private agencies to bring about the planned application of selected and related data from a mass of widely separated information.

Through this commission, rural communities would be enabled to make a realistic examination of their resources, advantages and disadvantages, needs and opportunities. The commission would supply every aid possible, but at all times the initiative to carry out these projects would rest in the hands of the community itself.

To make the commission representative he proposed that one member be named from the University of Texas, one from Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, one from Texas Technical College, one from the State Department of Agriculture, one from the State Department of Education, three to be nominated by the executive committees of the three regional chambers of commerce and three laymen, one of whom to be a dirt farmer and one a cattleman.

"The culture and tradition of the state, deeply rooted

in the soil and its products, shall be preserved”, he said. It is to continue those basic principles, and the courage, enthusiasm and independence of the pioneers who laid the sturdy foundation of Texas, that the commemorative program is submitted.

“The great cities rest upon the broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms and your cities will spring up again; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.”

To implement the work of this commission, Mr. Hoblitzelle helped found the Texas State Research Foundation with a gift of \$250,000 from the Esther T. Hoblitzelle Trust set up after the death of his wife in 1943.

This quarter of a million was given to house the laboratories of the research foundation and he further provided a fund of \$50,000 toward operation of the foundation for the next six years, contingent upon other contributions to the operating fund. In announcing the bequest, Mr. Hoblitzelle said: “This is made in part in recognition of the kindness of Texas people shown to my departed wife and myself over the years, and in part because of the dire need of Texas farmers to fit themselves into a changing economy which calls for a new type of research.

“It is my deep conviction that the great need of Texas is for a strong, independent research institution to lead in the revitalization of the rural economy, to undertake technological research which will insure for our farmers a market for their produce through new industrial outlets. Such an organization can serve as a catalyst to expand research, and to raise the standards of existing institutions in the state, for it is an historic fact that private institutions set the pace for state institutions. We have only to look at the results achieved during the last 100 years to prove this contention.

In accepting the co-chairmanship of the drive to raise \$625,000 for the research foundation, Nathan Adams, chairman of the board of the First National Bank, of Dallas, and dean of Texas bankers, said:

“During the past 10 years nothing more important to the welfare of the people of Texas has been presented for their support. This is an excellent opportunity to do something for the entire state, and at the same time reap benefits from it.”

The idea of a 100-year plan to celebrate the Centennial of Texas Statehood, brought gasps of surprise from many parts of the state. But it was no surprise to those who knew Mr. Hoblitzelle and his deep-seated conviction that vision should be paramount in any leader, be it for service of a community, a state or a nation.

In accepting the Linz Award for outstanding citizenship in Dallas during the year of 1938, Mr. Hoblitzelle put his idea into words with a plea for vision in the development of his home city.

“Let no little men stand in the way of vision in planning our city”, he said. “We must not let it be said that we ever were too little and too late in planning for the future.

“We must come out of the valley and on to the mountain top where we can view a broad horizon.

“This nation of ours is big because the men who founded it had vision and the courage to make those visions come true.

“Let us take our capital of Washington for example. The men who planned that capital had imagination and the courage to put that imagination into effect.”

While never seeking public office, Mr. Hoblitzelle has always been in the fore of the battle for sound government, government with vision to better the lot of the common man.

“We should never let men of narrow vision with selfish interests gain control of our government”, he declares. “When you do that you pay a heavy price for your lack of interest in government.”

There is one hard and fast rule in Interstate – that no man ask to be excused from jury service on grounds other than illness. Every qualified employee must pay a poll tax and vote.

“Our very lives are built on the foundation of good government”, he says, “and no many should shirk his duty to his government in even the smallest service.

“In some foreign nations, the people have no choice in what they will make of their lives. They have forfeited that choice by the lack of interest in government. If we let someone else do the job, then we put our freedom as a sacrifice on the altar of indifference.”

His ideas of government are summed up in a favorite quotation by John Stuart Mill: “A people may prefer a free government, but if, from indolence, or want of public service, they

are unequal to the exertions necessary for preserving it; if they will not fight for it when it is directly attacked; if they can be deluded by the artifices used to cheat them out of it; if by momentary discouragement, or temporary panic, or fit of enthusiasm for an individual, they can be induced to lay their liberties at the feet even of a great man, or trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions; in all these cases, they are more or less unfit for liberty, and though it may be for their own good to have had it even for a short time, they are unlikely long to enjoy it.”

The development of education opportunities in Texas has occupied a great deal of time and effort of Mr. Hoblitzelle. He has contributed generously to Southern Methodist University and serves on the board of directors of Texas Technological College at Lubbock and Hockaday School in Dallas.

Recently, when a storm of dissention arose at Texas University over the question of academic freedom, Mr. Hoblitzelle expressed himself:

“Academic freedom goes hand and hand with responsibility. If a people is privileged to sit in an air of academic freedom, then they must shoulder the responsibilities that go with that freedom. “I believe that the faculties of our colleges should first gain the facts and then judge them impartially. They should be impartial in the presentation of those facts.

“If a teacher be intelligent, yet lacking in character based on honesty and truth, then he is dangerous to the students of our state.

“The first and most important obligation of a teacher should be the well-being of the student. He should have no part in any school or college unless he is striving to make that institution a place of learning of the first water.”

Mr. Hoblitzelle believes that the men and women who give their lives to teaching are deserving of far more generous treatment at the hands of Texans.

“I would like to see our educational institutions reward their teachers more in keeping with the importance of the profession of teaching”, he says. “I feel that then we could obtain more capable men.

“I do not believe that tenure should be carried to an extreme. When teachers are no longer doing a top job they should

not be retained. The student then is paying the price for keeping them in the classroom.

“I feel that Texas should set up a pension system for teachers, separate from the old age pension.

“And when the day comes that a teacher falls behind the parade, and cannot make a valuable contribution to the education of our youth, he should be retired.”

He believes that the cry of “academic freedom” has been needlessly raised in many instances far beyond the importance of the issue of the moment.

“I have been on the boards of many education institutions” he says, “and I never have heard the question of academic freedom even remotely discussed.”

With his own example of having chosen a \$5 per week job at the St. Louis World’s Fair that had a future, in preference to a post paying \$125 a month, always in his mind, he deplors the tendency of the youth of today in putting the dollar mark of ‘How much will it pay’ on opportunities in business.

“I feel that that is the wrong philosophy of life”, he explains. “The most important thing for youth is to do the thing that he wants to do. The sum total of life is how much happiness you get out of it. If you do a better job, do something well, you gain a definite satisfaction. If you do the thing you like to do you will be happier.

“The material things of life are relative to the happiness you get from doing a job well.”

Mr. Hoblitzelle believes the future of youth lies in its own hands, in the ability and opportunity to acquire knowledge and then make that knowledge pay dividends. He has an illustration from his own youth.

When he graduated from high school in St. Louis his health was frail and he decided to cultivate a small farm on the outskirts of the city and sell the produce from house to house.

His father was an excellent cook and one day he told young Karl that the young guinea hen was one of the most succulent of fowl. Guinea hen was a drug on the market, selling for 10 cents each but the buyer had to bone them.

Arising early one morning, Hoblitzelle went to the poultry market. He bought a boning knife and paid a butcher \$5 to teach



him how to bone guineas. He sold the boned guinea for \$1.50 each and had more customers than he could supply.

He simply took knowledge and made it pay off.

As material success crowns the efforts of a man more and more, we ask for what reason have his efforts been given a measure of success beyond that of the average man?

In Karl Hoblitzelle, the answer has become apparent in recent years – to use the fruits of that success to enable others to hew out and make the best of the opportunities the American way of life offers them.

Prior to Mrs. Hoblitzelle's death, a foundation was formed to hold in trust funds to be used for charitable, educational and cultural purposes in this section of the country. At her death, the major portion of her estate was left by her to this foundation. At his death, his estate will be made available for the same purposes. These provisions for the future are but natural for a man who has patterned his life on Stephen Grillet's memorable thought: "I expect to pass through the world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to a fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again."

## THIRD BIOGRAPHY

Harry Ransom was a friend and colleague of Karl Hoblitzelle, and the Foundation appreciates the cooperation of UT-Austin's Ransom Center in re-printing Chancellor Harry Hunt Ransom's address to the American Newcomen Society in 1962. That organization began in England to honor the achievements of individuals in business, engineering, and societal development. The American chapter was established in 1923 with a charter including the recognition of industry, educational, and military leaders. Due to declining membership, the group dissolved in 2007.

From: Harry Ransom's "*The Vision of Karl Hoblitzelle*"

### **The Vision of Karl Hoblitzelle**

*Harry Hunt Ransom*

*March 15, 1962*

My fellow members of Newcomen:

Most successful men are single-sighted. They see something to do and they do it; they sight a goal and they attain it. In a similar way, most notable careers are single in aim. They are marked like one-lane roads down which great men crawl or run or clamber or careen to destinations which seem fateful in the event even when they have been carefully contrived.

Karl Hoblitzelle is not such a man, and his career cannot be submitted to any such description.

The biographer of Karl Hoblitzelle must review his living in terms of a dual vision. In every year of a very active life, his most practical accomplishments have been informed by an ideal; yet the ideal in his most imaginative plans has been kept in constant touch with reality. He has always had the rare quality of joining sentiment to fact without marring the grace of that sentiment by expediency or fogging the clarity of that fact by false sentiment.

The Hoblitzelle vision has been multiple in another way. It has combined four large perspectives. The first perspective

demands upon a sense of existence which associates vitality in the individual with personal relationships, with inheritance and family ties, with the sheer happiness of people alone and in groups, with the importance of all true records of man's living, with the inescapable conditions of continuity in man's experience, and with the dignity of human life itself.

The second perspective has opened up to him the significance of community, the importance a man's place of living and his living together with the citizens of that place, with citizenship in a state and awareness of the state's tradition as well as its present and future prospects, with the meaning of America as a changing country and of this nation in a changing world, with the welfare of whole populations within regional, national, and international boundaries, and with the enterprise required not only for the good of the individual but also for the preservation of Americanism as a defensible ideal, as a process of thought and thoughtful action.

His third perspective has been focused upon land; it has made him conscious of physical properties of setting, the significance of town and countryside, the importance of agriculture and related sciences, and the deep implications of man's relationship to the earth.

His fourth perspective, renewed in many of his official undertakings and pervasive in all his personal relationships, has been a conception of loyalty which every man owes his family, his friends, and his own principles; the loyalty which provides not only support but also motive power for institutions as different as local government, churches, banks, colleges, and medical establishments. Mr. Hoblitzelle's loyalty is not the kind which creates mere titles and banners and buttons, nor even the kind which provides a man with patterns for energetic action in creeds or constitutions or campaigns. It goes to the heart of mankind's common condition and the necessity of each man's reliance upon others if he is to achieve the good and preserve the best.

The importance of these perspectives in Karl Hoblitzelle's career is confirmed by every record of his work. His own life began in St. Louis in 1879. The inheritance of his family from a long line bearing the name Hoblitzelle was focused in his earliest

upbringing. The seventh child of Clarence and Ida Hoblitzelle knew a family life which communicated pride with rigorousness and mingled the disciplines of childhood with courtesy.

A business philosophy is not only inherited, it must be tried in practice and proved in competition. From the tradition of his forebearers and from the lively success of contemporaries in the Hoblitzelle clan who entered politics, business, and the arts, Karl Hoblitzelle must have been guided by many examples, examples of pitfalls as well as profits. Yet there was always, one must believe, the counterpoint of an ideal of conduct which came from the same sources. Anecdotally, the son has put with affectionate good humor the sense of this ideal as it was illustrated by his father. He recounts a typical business negotiation of the elder Hoblitzelle, who at the point of the story was engaged in the harness and saddlery business:

“In those days it was fashionable to use expensive buggy whips. Their handles were beautifully carved and inlaid with gold or silver. Only the wealthy could afford them, but as my Father’s shop was patronized by a number of people with means, he stocked quite a few of these whips. They sold for around \$125 each.

“One day a friend bought one and told my Father to send him a bill for it. The weeks went by and the end of the month came, but no bill was sent. Another month, probably two, passed before Father remember that he had sold one of the expensive whips. But he couldn’t recall the name of the buyer.

“By a process of elimination, figuring the recent needs of his various friends with respect to buggy whips, he decided that three particular men might have bought the article. Bust since he couldn’t decide which one, he sent the bill to each of them, reasoning that only the man who bought the whip would pay the bill.

“To his great surprise, all three men sent payments by return mail. Maybe one of the three had actually bought the whip. If so, the other two – knowing Father’s bookkeeping technique – did not wish to hurt his feelings; so they paid also.

“My Father would never have thus imposed upon his friends. So he sent all three payments back, and took over a hundred-dollar loss on the transaction.”

Karl Hoblitzelle entered what some call the “entertainment field” and others call the “theater” at an epochal point in place and time, the St. Louis Fair – the Universal Exposition of 1904.

Hoblitzelle’s choice of a world fair as the site of his first regular employment was made with characteristic concern for the context of the work and the prospect of development as well as immediate financial advantage. The immediate advantage was modest enough. He had to refuse a relatively munificent salary of \$125 a month as an auditor to accept the \$5 a week which the Fair offered. But the Fair also offered work with several of the leading designers and planners in American entertainment and a chance to see from the inside how World Fairs worked.

World Fairs do not always work smoothly, even when they are visited by the President of the United States. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt was scheduled to visit St. Louis and its exposition. Mr. Hoblitzelle’s participation in the great event is as characteristic of him as it is historic in illustrating administrative emergencies on such occasions. It also illustrates what might be called the Hoblitzelle Law: Do what you have said you would do, even when others are doing and saying the unexpected. Mr. Hoblitzelle’s recollections of the occasion are ample evidence of that principle:

“The administration force of the Fair was then located in a group of buildings erected by Washington University. Prior to the President’s arrival, a Colonel in the United States Army, whose name I have forgotten, came to St. Louis to arrange with the officials of the Exposition not only for the President’s entertainment, but for his protection.

“The administrative buildings were connected underground by a passageway or tunnel which made it possible to get from one building to another without going out of doors. These buildings also were connected with the power plant located down by the railroad tracks. At this time the Exposition was all fenced in and we had guards at the gates to keep the general public out and admit the workmen who had proper passes. At this time the Fair had not opened.

“In my capacity as assistant to Mr. Taylor it was my duty to work out arrangements for our working force to get in and out of

the administrative building during the President's visit, and this particularly was true of the men employed in operating the power plant, which was on a twenty-four-hour schedule.

"Arrangements were made for a dinner to be given the President in one of the buildings in this group which later housed Queen Victoria's Jubilee presents. The upshot of many meetings with this Colonel was that we got up a special pass which was signed by the Colonel and Mr. Taylor. These passes were given to those persons who had the obligation of operating the power plant, and to those administrative people who had night work to do.

"I happened to be sitting in my office in the early evening of the day of the President's visit when the telephone rang. It was the head of our electrical department advising me that instructions had been issued at the gates that no passes were to be honored that evening and until the President had left unless they were special passes issued by this Colonel.

"This, of course, came as a great surprise to me, especially as the Colonel had made no mention to me that he was intending to disregard the arrangement we had previously made.

"Naturally, I got him on the telephone, finding him at the office of the Jefferson Guard, and asked him if he was remanding our previous agreement. He advised me that he was, and said I would have to get these new passes to all of our people who had to get into the building during the evening.

"I explained to him that if I had been advised of this during the afternoon it would have been a very simple matter to get the new passes into the hands of our people, but that they were now scattered and it would be impossible to reach them.

"He said that he was very sorry but that this was his decision and that it was up to us to get the passes to our people on the night shift.

"I told him that the day shift would go off within twenty minutes, and that if he did not rescind the order, or if he failed to instruct his people to honor the passes we had originally agreed upon, that the day shift would close down the plant. This statement seemed to have little or no effect on him and he hung up. I called the power plant and told the men there that unless the order was issued to admit the night shift on the special passes which this



man had personally signed along with Mr. Taylor, that they were to simply pull the master switch and let the men go home.

“Quite naturally, these were tense moments, and I sat at my desk counting the minutes as they ticked away. In about twenty minutes the lights in my office went off. Meanwhile, the President and his party and the honored guests had assembled in Governor Francis’ office in the Administration Building. A few minutes after the lights went out the telephone rang and the governor’s secretary, Collins Thompson, asked what in the world had happened, saying they were in total darkness.

“I explained that the Colonel had refused to honor passes which we had previously agreed upon, and which he as well as Mr. Taylor had signed, to get our night shift through the gates. In not more than two or three minutes the telephone rang again and it was the Colonel, and he wanted to know what in God’s name had happened. I told him that he was as much in possession of the facts as I, since he had rescinded his order covering our agreed arrangement to get our people in through the gates, and that it was entirely his responsibility that the buildings were in darkness.

“He said that if we would turn the lights back on that he would immediately call the two gates and instruct the guards there to honor the passes we had agreed upon. Meanwhile, Smith in the electrical department had waited to hear from me, and I told him to throw the switch back on. This was probably the only time the lights have been turned out on a President of the United States.”

In his earliest business experience, Karl Hoblitzelle had the usual and immediate practical motive of making a living, but immediate employment did not obscure his investment in a way of life and in ways of looking at life through organized entertainment of men and women and children. Problems of popular entertainment and the obligations created by those problems have been common since the days of the Greek theater. Every generation since then has had its quota of experimenters, reformers, and prophets to suit the need of the time. Hoblitzelle combined experiment, reform and prophecy in a career that led from 1905, the date of his investment of \$2,5000 in the Interstate Amusement Company, through the establishment in Dallas in 1915 of Interstate’s executive offices and on to the climactic re-establishment of Interstate’s

interests threatened by depression. He experimented with ideas, he reformed by persuasion and his own example, he gave his colleagues – and he will leave his successors – a sense of prophecy which combined business courage with an acute social sense of obligation to those who pay their time as well as their money for entertainment in an age when theatrical claptrap is turned into neighborhood, and city, and national presentation of good theater. Neither the traditions of old vaudeville, which he helped change radically, nor the new folksiness of the American “moom pitcher” after the First World War drove him into any self-consciousness about what some critics persistently call “cinema.” Good theater was good enough for him.

The ways in which he brought this ideal into practical operation have been told in the business too many times to be repeated here.

Openings and closings, purchases and sales, combinations and re-combinations, dramatic steady growth and even more dramatic single acts (such as the recouping of the fortunes of a whole chain struck by depression) have entered into both the balance sheets and the big headlines of this success story of the industry. I prefer to dwell on a simple piece of evidence of the Hoblitzelle business influence in the life of the only Hoblitzelle manager I ever knew intimately. He was a superb manager, a superb representative of the business. But he was also a remarkable man, and not least remarkable for the way in which he drew vitality from the theater while he put vitality into it. I have no idea where he stood in the organization’s hierarchy; I have the impression that the matter did not greatly concern him. He had resolved his happiness by making others happy, and he showed no visible signs of that conflict which often pulls a so-called “employee” to pieces – making his living while contributing to the success of an organization he does not own.

The history of the stage is a constant reminder that the main excitement of theater is also the main source of its major occupational disease, to which many of its greatest figures have succumbed. Theater is momentary. The whole theatrical process, like a journalism of the imagination, is transient. Thus many theatrical ideas and the philosophy of many theatrical figures are

ephemeral. This patent fact has never shaken Karl Hoblitzelle's sense of the permanence of important records of man's experience in and out of the theater – records which hold for us and recall to us memorable performance, workmanship that is worth treasuring, and unforgettable words.

In a fashion so quiet and unassuming as to escape wide public notice, Karl Hoblitzelle has built or assisted in building great permanent collections of the theater, of dramatic literature, of craftsmanship in silver, and experimental materials for performance on the boards, on the screen, and on the air. Many founders of such collections are concerned mainly with the sheer virtuosity of collection (which is an art, and a socially useful one); others think mainly of shoring up the memory of the past (and the past does need its bulwarks no less than the present). But the Hoblitzelle collections are designed for uses in the future: that is where his deep sense of the continuity of human experience has kept coming in.

You will recall that Horace Walpole gave a long but almost jaunty name to the happy quality in human experience by which suddenly now and then, things work out just right. He called that quality of experience "serendipity." Of the collections which have recently been gathered into the University of Texas libraries, none has produced more of this quality than the Esther Hoblitzelle Library, established in memory of Mr. Hoblitzelle's gracious and talented wife.

This serendipity leaps the short gap between Dallas and Austin. In Mr. Hoblitzelle's Dallas office at the Republic National Bank are six beautiful portraits – Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, and Woodrow Wilson. By happy accident, the Esther Hoblitzelle Library will house such pieces as a folio once owned by Washington, original letters of Thomas Jefferson concerning the Louisiana Purchase (that historic event celebrated by the World's Fair in St. Louis); a memorable group of pieces by Franklin (who would have held his own even among the directors of the Republic National Bank); Lincoln's own copy of the Psalms; Robert E. Lee's autographed collection of Lighthorse Harry Lee's military reminiscences; and a Wilson collection which were the leaves of daily politics in his time but have become both American

political philosophy and American literature.

These are happy circumstances. For apart from the academic distinction, the scholarly significance of what Mr. Hoblitzelle and the Hoblitzelle Foundation have brought to pass in the collections at the University, it is surely the happy mind – open to justice and alert to the opportunity of new learning and creation – that best characterizes the Hoblitzelle Library and its collections given to the people of Texas.

This concern for life and its significance and for the conditions of man's happier state closely links Karl Hoblitzelle's professional interest in theater with his philanthropic devotion to the medical sciences. The most visible evidence of that devotion is seen in the great Southwestern Medical Center of Dallas, which has had his steady guidance and his generous support. Not less important, though less visible to the eye, has been his encouragement of research and his pervasive influence upon the careers of members of medical professions whom he has assisted.

For many years, medical institutions and their supporters in Texas have called on his mind and his hand. Because of plans and prospects which he has advanced, crippled children, men and



*A portion of the Dallas Medical District, including Children's, Zale Lipshy, and Parkland Hospitals.*

women sick of body, and those who are perplexed of mind have all found healing places. His deeds are visible in the acquisition of land for such programs in the erection on that land of buildings to house those programs, in the manning of schools and hospitals and staffs without which no program could possibly be continued.

With his colleagues in the Southwestern Medical Foundation, he has seen in the Southwestern Medical School and its affiliated institutions the means of alleviating human pain and illness. He has also envisioned the Center as a possible means to take up the challenge of our ignorance in many of those sciences which improve the human lot.

Perspectives on community differ. American history was made by the differences – extending from the New England town meeting to barn-raising in the agricultural sectors of the country. Karl Hoblitzelle has always had this local, prideful sense of the place where he lived – St. Louis, Dallas, Cape Cod.

Unlike some earlier American communities, Dallas is less a state of mind than a state of motion. Mr. Hoblitzelle has accounted for as much of the motion as any citizen in Dallas history; but he fits none of the stereotypes drawn and written for a city which in recent years has sometimes liked to refer to itself as “Big D.”

Bigness one suspects, is only incidental in the Hoblitzelle notion of greatness. Witness the fact that in no conversation of several dozen about his accomplishment did any Texan recently discussing Mr. Hoblitzelle ever refer to the mere magnitude of any of his accomplishments.

Instead, those things which he has assisted in Dallas loom vivid in the minds of his fellow citizens because he has endowed them with purpose, sense, and grace – all three. In half a century he has been associated with as many drives, campaigns, and other civic undertakings as any other living man. Yet community dynamics have always met in him a strict judgment of community good, and the exciting invention of urban progress has always found in him a close connection with community integrity.

From one of the most profitable undertakings in the Southwest, the Republic National Bank, to the necessarily unprofitable but essential work of community charities he has reflected an even, intelligent, irresistible tenor of good citizenship

in the community.

Nor is his sense of community limited to a city address. It has encompassed the state. When Texas celebrated its Centennial in 1936, it was Karl Hoblitzelle's support of these ceremonies of patriotic reminiscence that changed the focus from mere nostalgia and regional patriotism to the viable present and the inescapable future.

In the same spirit he has joined movements which have signalized the whole American community. At no time has the United States provided its common cause more emphatically than in the time of war. During both world conflicts, Karl Hoblitzelle has been central to the activities which represented the citizen's assumption of his patriotic obligation.

For any American inclined to make mere busy work of his patriotism, the Hoblitzelle career would be tonic. There is nothing patronizing or condescending about his notion of community "welfare." Well-being of those among whom a citizen lives, makes his living, votes, goes to war, or plans his future has been one of the essentials for him of good local, state, and national health.

The private enterprise of mere action can be the driving force of sound business. The private and public enterprise of Karl Hoblitzelle has been full of action, but it has never lacked (and it has never lost) an endowment of thoughtfulness that puts ultimate purpose above present ease or easy profit.

*For a man whose name is connected with  
so many building stones and so much mortar  
it seems improbable to expect sentiment and  
sense about the wider earth, the soil that  
makes things grow by nature.*

As clearly defined in his career as theater enterprises and the private enterprise of big business has been his concern for those who turn the land. The aesthetic of the gardener and the economic necessities of the farmer have roused his active interest. He has also been the wisest kind of observer about millions of acres turning from an agricultural to an urban economy.

At the Centennial of Texas, he announced: "We propose to



commemorate 100 years of Texas statehood in a long-time program designed to revitalize rural life; to rebuild the land; and with the land, the man; and through the man, the state...

The psychological and social condition of the farmer – the involvement of financial security with both the social status and the dignity of agricultural work – led him to establish an agricultural foundation that makes as much dollar-sense as his banking and as much historical sense as his collection of historic objects.

There is nothing magniloquent about any firsthand report on what Karl Hoblitzelle has done about raising crops. Among the crops he raises are citrus trees. I remember an occasion when he was not present, a mid-morning affair which mid-Americans call by the impossible name “brunch.” He was doubly represented, though, by a colleague and by pink grapefruit grown on Hoblitzelle acres. When one of the guests, unacquainted with the property of this fruit, poured sugar on it, the colleague – in something akin to horror at the sacrilege – said half audibly, “Thank God the Boss isn’t here. Sun and rain have already sweetened that grapefruit.”

Mr. Hoblitzelle has summarized his belief in the instant need of revitalized agriculture.

“There are two things of importance in Texas today,” he observed in 1954. “One is a revitalized agriculture, based on sound research, the findings of which are applied by men who are proud to be farmers.”

It is completely characteristic that he then related the life of the mind to the life of natural growth.

“The second is a higher standard of education and research in public institutions of higher learning.”

Without any sort of research, I surmise that nobody will ever know all that the Hoblitzelle vision has seen and done for Texas education.

Not least has been his perspective and constructive criticism. Not least has been his service to administrative and advisory boards. Not least has been his gifts by foundation grant and personal subscription to universities, colleges, and schools. Greatest of all, however, has been his unnamed, unrecorded encouragement to those who sought their own education or who

were seeking means to educate others. No tax amount, no internal revenue department working overtime with electronic computers could track down the dollar value or the educational potential of his confidence and trust in what an honest mind bent on an honest task can accomplish.

If vitality gives a man's perspectives color, if community bonds give them breadth, if awareness of the land makes them realistic, a deep sense of loyalty gives them personal meaning and integrity.

The twentieth century has been a time when symbols, catchwords, mass political hysteria, and the insane devotions of the subversive have sometimes been mistaken for the loyalties they are supposed to represent. It seems likely that in this or any other age, real loyalty must have its deepest roots in the simplest relationships – of the family, friends, and close associates. This influence in a man's life is not confined by its source; on the contrary, is sure to be reflected in a man's widest activities.

Karl Hoblitzelle's profound sense of loyalty began in his own family – in loyalty to his parents, to their other children, and to his wife.

In the shaping of his own attitudes, his loyalties have not been mere rules of thumb or nice philosophy; they have been daily practice. Like all his other practices, they are open-eyed as well as open-hearted. Two years ago, when a building was being dedicated in his honor by the University of Texas, a Regent who had been associated with Karl Hoblitzelle for many years wrote:

“I have never known a man who could be more completely devoted to what is best in a friend without letting his own opinions exaggerate either the friend's virtues or his defects. But if, between friends, it ever comes down to what Karl Hoblitzelle believes is right or wrong, true or false, friendly opinions will have to stand the test of those beliefs.”

Nor is this sense merely passive, simply because it is impartial. An apocryphal story has it that in the office where Karl Hoblitzelle's colleagues carried on Interstate's business in sort of rotunda of clashing ideas, the motto was: “In this room, you will have to fight for your opinion.”

In any arena, Karl Hoblitzelle is willing to fight for his own



*From Florence Hall, located on the SMU campus.*

convictions. His loyalty to business organization to institutions, to his city, his state, and his country is based upon this trail by battle, not only in the intellect but of the spirit.

It has been his own genius for loyalty to ideals that has made the other men loyal to Karl Hoblitzelle. It has also been the chief secret of his business success, the gift for attracting public confidence.

Among the aristocracies of a Republic, some may still depend upon setting or tradition; some upon form or sentiment; and some – which never last long – upon accident or expediency. In business, as in his personal life, Karl Hoblitzelle has perpetuated an aristocracy of integrity. He has made experiments; he has made money; he has made history in more than one field; and he has made friends. Yet he has never made a pretense. His public statements, like his private conversation, reveal not only his ideas but also his perspectives, not only the man but also his spirit. In his speech at the dedication of the Republic National Bank, Hoblitzelle spoke in a characteristic vein. It is completely

characteristic that he combined his belief in an institution with his belief in a friend.

“It is not my intention to dwell on the material aspects of this great institution, but to call your attention to the more important forces which have made this accomplishment possible – the vital human elements that have welded this institution into an organization which has consistently cast its bread upon the waters and had it returned many-fold.

“This vital force did not come into being by accident, but is the result of unselfish leadership and inspiration of one man – Fred Florence – a man not only of vision and judgment, but of outstanding citizenship.

“Therefore, I think you will agree with me that the inscription on the plaque on the Ervay Street entrance of this structure is symbolic of the Republic family. I quote this inscription: ‘This building is dedicated to the principle that no institution can long endure that fails to faithfully and unselfishly serve its country, its state and its own community.’

“I therefore dedicate this building, this banking house, and the Republic family to the service of our country, our state and our community. With the inspiration of our Heavenly Father, we will go forward with courage and zeal that we may be worthy of the confidence placed in us by our fellow man.”

The End

## CHAPTER THREE

The Foundation adopted a corporate structure in April of 1953, and the composition of the Board also changed at that point. Mr. Hoblitzelle’s “boys” – the young men with whom he surrounded himself and conducted his business affairs – began to fill the Foundation’s Board positions. John Q. Adams, who had been the involved with the Trust, was named as the Managing Director within the new structure, and George MacGregor, President of Texas Utilities and later Chairman of Southwestern Medical Foundation, was elected to the Board. Van Allen Holloman, Mr. Hoblitzelle’s attorney, became Secretary.

During the early 1950s, a housing area for African American families was developed in northeastern Dallas – Hamilton Park. Mr. Hoblitzelle led this civic effort to provide opportunities for these families to own their own homes and begin to build equity. Many had been displaced due to the expansion of Love Field. These homes were priced at around \$8,000, but few of the potential owners could be approved by conventional financing. Karl Hoblitzelle solved that problem by making a \$217,000 loan to the Dallas Interracial Association, which provided mortgage financing to the buyers. One repayment of \$25,701 was recorded during 1954, but the balance of that loan was subsequently forgiven. This new neighborhood sparked retail development in the area, and one of the new streets there was given the name “Hoblitzelle Drive”.

In his book, *The Accommodation*, Jim Schultz wrote about the politics and economic and social challenges of race relations in Dallas. In the 1960s, the city remained largely segregated, and in the same paragraph where he criticized Interstate Theaters for not broadly and immediately adopting full integration, he wrote that “in the creation of Hamilton Park, men such as Florence, Hoblitzelle, and others acted in good conscience and on for what was, for their

day and place, liberal conviction.”

In 1961, Mr. Hoblitzelle led the effort to bring a historically Black college to the Dallas area in order to provide young African-Americans with a higher education alternative. Bishop College, which was founded in 1881, relocated to a southern Dallas campus from its original location in Marshall, Texas, and Judge Sarah T. Hughes, a Foundation Board member, used her considerable influence to provide leadership and fundraising potential from business and philanthropic individuals in the community. The college closed in 1988 after a financial scandal. Paul Quinn College acquired the campus in 1990 and moved to Dallas from Waco.



In 1955, the Foundation purchased 100 acres of land on the southwestern corner of Inwood Road and Forest Lane with the anticipation that The Hockaday School would eventually move to this location from its Greenville Avenue campus. The Directors agreed to provide the land to Hockaday if they were assured that sufficient funds could be raised to complete the needed construction. Ella Hockaday and Karl Hoblitzelle were friends, and he often shared afternoon tea with her during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In the latter half of that decade, Mr. Hoblitzelle began to fund the collection of theatrical archives on behalf of the Ransom Center at the University of Texas. The breadth of the collection includes works from Shakespeare to minstrel shows to silent film music. This period of the Foundation’s history was the first point at which the Foundation engaged the global political climate by providing funds to send copies of a new book, *Democracy vs. Communism*, written by Kenneth Colgrove, to each high school in Texas. In 1958, Umphrey Lee passed away and Lynn Harris, Mr. Hoblitzelle’s personal secretary and assistant, was appointed Curator of the Foundation’s manuscripts, paintings, rare books, silver, antique furniture, and other objects of art owned by the Foundation and Hoblitzelle. Some of these pieces eventually found their way to the Texas Governor’s Mansion. Fred Florence was named Chairman of the Board.





*"The Hoblitzelle Collection of English Silver", created by Lynn Harris in 1963.*



One of Lynn Harris's first duties as Curator was to create an elegant catalog describing The Hoblitzelle Collection of English Silver, which would be unveiled at a formal dinner hosted by Harry Ransom. One thousand copies were published and distributed to friends, associates, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the rare book collections at libraries of several universities and museums, including the Vatican and the Victoria and Albert in London. The unused paper and leather were burned and the lead fonts used for the printing were melted – there would never be a second edition.

In the Preface, Mr. Hoblitzelle wrote that

*Our collection grew, not along the lines of the novel and the historical, but along the paths of hospitality. What we collected we put to use in decorating our home and gracing our table for the dinners and parties which infused life into our silver.*

*It is not, then, the patina of age, nor the value of the pieces assembled in the collection which are important to me, but the patina of love which guided their selection and surrounded their use.*

There were 572 pieces of sterling silver in the collection, and the time span of the collection begins with a tankard created in 1692 to a meat dish made by William Bateman, the son of the



*Covered Cup, 1742 by Paul de Lamerie, gift from Hoblitzelle Foundation to the Dallas Museum of Art in 1987. Image courtesy of Dallas Museum of Art.*

celebrated woman silversmith, Hester Bateman, in 1830. Many of the major pieces of silver were taken to Austin in the trunk of Lynn Harris' car over a series of many weekends to be photographed by a noted professional in that field, Gillis King. Mary L. Kennedy was the author of the catalog.

The silver is used annually at a fundraising event for the Dallas Museum of Art. Proceeds from this dinner party create support for the Decorative Arts division at the DMA. The Foundation hosted the 25th (Silver) Anniversary of the "Silver Supper" during its 75th Anniversary year. This celebration also provides an opportunity to recognize the contributions of six Directors who retired over the preceding three years and to welcome their replacements onto Hoblitzelle Board of Directors.



During these years, Mr. Hoblitzelle was also engaged in quite a different initiative. He was asked to assist the U.S. government's Central Intelligence Agency's operations by making "pass-through" grants to international organizations which were actually vehicles for collecting information and disrupting anti-U.S. activities. The funding for this operation came from bogus foundations set up by the CIA that "laundered" financial support through philanthropic organizations that believed that they were being patriotic by supporting U.S. interests. A Google search for "Hoblitzelle" coupled with "CIA" will provide additional material on this little-known aspect of the Foundation's activities in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Recordings of a radio address by Mr. Hoblitzelle and a song performed by Mrs. Hoblitzelle (stage name "Esther Walker") are also accessible through that search application.



John E. Mitchell, Jr. was elected to the Board in March of 1960, and Fenton Baker, Dr. W. E. Crow, and Lynn Harris were named Directors in 1961. Expenditures during 1963 included a cotton-picking machine for the experimental citrus fruit ranch near Mercedes, TX, continued support for the UT-Southwestern Medical School, Southern Methodist University, and a retainer for interior



*A wing of Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas.*

decorator Ruben Knox to create a rare books library named for Esther Hoblitzelle on the University of Texas campus in Austin. Fred Florence passed away in 1960 and James Aston from Republic Bank joined the Board of Directors of the Foundation in 1964. Mr. Hoblitzelle's nephew, Alfred Clifford, Chairman of the Mathematics Department at Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans and Professor of Mathematics at Tulane University, was elected to the Board in January of 1965. In 1964, the Foundation began publishing and distributing an Annual Report listing each grant made during the year and the total asset value of the Foundation's resources.



Karl Hoblitzelle died in 1967 and is buried next to his wife in a modest Hoblitzelle Family plot (# 63) at the Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis.

At the Board's first meeting after Mr. Hoblitzelle's death, the following resolution was offered by Mrs. Hulsey and Judge Hughes:

RESOLVED: That we, the Directors of Hoblitzelle Foundation, more closely associated with Karl Hoblitzelle and for longer than any other group, express our appreciation for the rich human returns which that association has brought to us, individually and collectively, and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED: That in appreciation of what he brought us and in recognition of his stature as a man and as truly a friend of mankind, we dedicate our thoughts, our efforts, and ourselves to the furtherance of those ideals, ideas, and practical objectives to which he devoted himself and all his resources – mental, spiritual and material.



## CHAPTER FOUR

With the death of Dr. Crow in 1968, John Stemmons was asked to join the Hoblitzelle Board and James Aston was elected President of the Foundation. Included in Mr. Hoblitzelle's will was an assignment to the Foundation of ownership of the assets in Hoblitzelle Properties, which included the Majestic Theater buildings in Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, the Rio Grande Valley ranch, the Hoblitzelle homes in Cape Cod and Dallas, and some other buildings and acreage. It took a few years for the Foundation to sell and gift these resources, and since the Foundation was the beneficiary of these assets, the individuals who had provided for the management of these properties during Mr. Hoblitzelle's lifetime became a responsibility for the Foundation. Consequently, Thelma Susie Coleman, Mr. Hoblitzelle's personal bookkeeper, Dr. Raphael Cintron, ranch manager, and Eric Brendler, on-site supervisor of the San Antonio Majestic building, R. J. Blich a real estate specialist, and Jessie Albrecht, an accountant, began to earn small pensions from the Foundation as an acknowledgement of their years of loyal service to Karl Hoblitzelle and his interests. Mr. Hoblitzelle's "oilman" – Ronnie Perkins received a testamentary gift, but was not included among the members of this group of continuing pension recipients. Susie Coleman lived until June of 2016, one month before her 104th birthday.

Dallas' Republic National Bank's Trust Department continued as the fiscal agent of the Foundation and would report to the Board regularly on the financial holdings and performance of the stocks and bonds in the portfolio. At the end of April, 1970, the Foundation held approximately \$40 million in assets.

Fenton Baker resigned in 1969, and John Adams passed away shortly thereafter; James Keay joined the Board in 1971.



Lillian Bradshaw and Dr. Charles Sprague became Directors in 1972. Susie Coleman began recording the Minutes of the meetings as Secretary. Expressing his confidence in the Foundation's leadership and direction, Alfred Clifford resigned in 1972, and Robert Cullum joined the Board. Also during 1971, the Hoblitzelle Collection of English Silver was placed on loan to the Harry Ransom Center on the University of Texas' campus, along with conditions for its security, storage, and availability to scholars, students, and other interested individuals. The collection was subsequently returned to the Foundation and given to the Dallas Museum of Art in 1987.



In 1975, Van Allen Holloman resigned as Vice President and Grants Coordinator of the Foundation, but continued to serve as a Board Member. Lynn Harris assumed Holloman's titles and duties, along with his responsibilities as Curator. This transition included hiring a new executive assistant, Catherine Ragsdale, a full-time salary for both employees, and establishing a dedicated office site for the Foundation in the Republic Bank Building.

During the October, 1977 meeting, the Foundation made one of its largest pledges ever – \$1,000,000 toward the \$40 million cost of a new Downtown public library. At this same meeting, Jim Key introduced the Board to the concept of the relocation of the Dallas Museum of Art from its Fair Park site. A formal request for a \$1 million commitment toward that initiative was submitted by Margaret McDermott the following year. Total assets of the Foundation at this point were just over \$50 million. During this period, the Foundation made grants to Southwestern Medical Foundation, Texas Tech University, and many social service and educational programs which focused on the needs of African-Americans and Latinos. Both the Dallas and San Antonio Majestic Theater buildings were donated to the communities in which they were located.

In the early 1980s, Mr. Aston took over the Chairmanship, although George MacGregor remained on the Board. Mrs. Hulsey and Judge Hughes remained Directors as well, but did not participate in any of the meetings during this period due to their

age and physical conditions. In 1985, Dorothy Cullum was elected to the Board, taking the place of her husband, Robert B. Cullum who had passed away in 1981. In 1984, a Resolution was adopted that would allow for the removal of a Director, by a two-thirds vote, due to an inability to function. On a motion by Mr. Hollomon and second by Mr. MacGregor, Judge Hughes and Sarah Hulseby were moved into an "Honorary Lifetime Director" status. At the Board's last meeting in 1985, Mr. Aston announced that Lynn Harris would be 72 on his next birthday and that Paul Harris, his son, would join the Foundation in January of 1986 as Executive Vice President and begin a year of familiarization, experience, and training. Also, Gerald Fronterhouse and Jim Berry were elected to the Board of Directors at this meeting.



Mary Stacy, a former Administrative Assistant to Dr. Kern Wildenthal at UT-Southwestern Medical Center, joined the staff of Hoblitzelle Foundation at the end of 1986; Catherine Ragsdale retired two months later. Mary would serve as Board Secretary, the Foundation's daily interface with grant seekers and colleagues in the field, and as the first-contact point with the Foundation for the next fifteen years.

During this phase of the Foundation's evolution, the "Executive Committee", consisting of the Chairman, the President and the Treasurer, would meet with Mr. Harris the week before the formal Board Meeting in order to make recommendations for approval, denial, modification, or tabling of the opportunities that had been presented since the last meeting. Mr. Stemmons eventually voiced his objection to this process, stating that these recommendations presumed the agreement of the full Board prior to sufficient discussion – he wanted there to be more Board participation in the selection process. Mr. Stemmons also stated that Mr. Hoblitzelle's instructions that the Foundation should not sell any Republic Bank stock, due to the possible reaction to this move in the broader investment community, should be faithfully followed, even though some of the Hoblitzelle group believed that the Foundation's portfolio held too much of this one stock. That turned out to be true just a short time later when the Bank

was taken over by the FDIC in 1988, acquired by NCNB, and had its name changed to NationsBank within two years. Assets of the Foundation went from \$91 million 1987 to \$66 million at the end of the following year.

As of this writing, the Foundation's assets are in the range of \$135 million, and over \$140 million has been distributed in grants during the 29 years which have passed since that financial setback.

The Foundation's future was no longer so closely aligned with Republic Bank; the FDIC put the office lease onto a month-to-month basis, and the Foundation made plans to relocate. Unimproved space in an office building on Sherry Lane in Preston Center was completed, and the Foundation moved there in 1990.

## CHAPTER FIVE

As Paul Harris became responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Foundation in late 1986, he was greatly assisted in absorbing the philosophy, character, and culture of the organization by Jim Aston and Lynn Harris, along with Jim Keay, Dr. Sprague, and Lillian Bradshaw. The Foundation settled into a pattern of three Board meetings per year, each preceded by an Executive Committee Meeting. The newsletter *The Ellipsis* was launched with the purpose of keeping the Board informed of any news on regional non-profits in which Hoblitzelle had an interest, as well as the national landscape of philanthropic activities, regulations, and trends. Investment professionals from the Foundation's Trust office made presentations during each meeting, and funds were available to make meaningful contributions to approximately one-third of the applicants at each meeting.

Harris was given the authority to decline any proposal that would have no chance of being funded due to its nature or the location of the organization. The published guidelines of the Foundation stated that the Board preferred specific, non-recurring capital projects and that requests for underwriting, general operations, endowment, research, and scholarships were seldom reviewed. After two years at the Foundation, Harris began making "staff level recommendations" that were based upon the funds that were available, traditional interests of the Foundation, and informal input from Board Members. Mr. Aston suffered his first stroke in 1989, and his ability to direct the course of the Foundation began to wane. Mr. Keay chaired the meetings that Mr. Aston missed during this period.

In 1990, the Foundation's Board determined that a formal audit of the Foundation's financial activities should be accomplished each year. Before then, Mr. Aston's view was

that since all of the grant payments, payroll, and expenses of the Foundation were administered through the Bank's trust operation, an additional formal audit of the Foundation itself was unnecessary. There was no legal requirement for an audit, and the Bank was properly bonded and regulated. Mr. Stemmons made the motion that the Foundation engage Peat Marwick (now KPMG) to audit the Foundation's most recently completed fiscal year. Dr. Sprague provided a second, and the Foundation has received professional audit services annually ever since. Every year, the audit process also includes a review of the capital sales and acquisitions that have been made on behalf of the Foundation's Board of Directors by the investment arm of the Bank's trust operation or other investment relationships.

Mr. Hollomon passed away in 1991, and Mr. MacGregor resigned as a voting member of the Board. At the May, 1992 meeting, Mr. Stemmons again raised the question of the composition of the Executive Committee and the heavy influence that its decisions had on the outcomes of each Board meeting. Mr. Aston maintained his view that the status quo was favored by him – Mr. Stemmons verbally resigned. Mr. Berry and Mr. Fronterhouse tried to encourage Mr. Stemmons to reconsider, but they were unsuccessful, and Mr. Stemmons left the Board Room. A few months later, Mr. Stemmons was named the fourth "Lifetime Honorary Director" of the Foundation. At the first meeting of 1993, Mr. Aston suggested adding a fourth member to the Executive Committee's proposal review group, who could be changed periodically. Dr. Sprague was named to this post for the next meeting. George A. Shafer was added to the Board in 1993.



During the early 1990s, the Foundation made more multi-year pledges than it had previously, and there began some discussion of a "cap" on total obligations so that resources available in any given year were not consumed by payments which were due when a new year began. The Foundation's assets were in the \$80 million range, and Mr. Harris informed the Board that he was using the \$5 million level as a maximum for total pledges. That spending/pledging discipline has been modified over the last 20

years to make the “total owed” number not more than 5% of the Foundation’s assets on the 15th of the first month of a new fiscal year. That two-week period at the beginning of the new distribution cycle would allow the Foundation to know its precise asset value and pay pledges due until the total obligations were below the 5% of asset mark, which is the current practice.

In May of 1995, the Directors began discussions that would lead to the engagement of new Board members. Mr. Aston and Lynn Harris were both in poor health and recognized that their terms as contributing Directors were near the end. Mr. Keay pointed out that the Foundation should keep in mind that Hoblitzelle is a private foundation that is relatively small and that it is non-political. However, he said the Foundation should be very cognizant of the social, cultural, and political realities of a changing population, and that the new emerging group of Directors must bring some stature of their own to the Foundation and have a high level of respect for both the traditions of the Foundation and for the viewpoints of each of the other individual Directors. Lynn Harris and James Aston resigned from the Board in the fall of 1995, and Aston passed away that October.

Mr. Keay was elected Chairman, Mr. Fronterhouse moved to the President’s position, and Mr. Shafer became Treasurer. Mr. Keay sat in the middle of one side of the Board room table, vacating the “head of the table” position usually reserved for the highest ranking individual in the room, and instituted a policy whereby a committee of three Directors would make recommendations on grants to be approved and declined on a rotating basis. Caren Prothro, Bill Solomon, and Jerry Farrington were elected to the Board at the spring meeting of 1996.

By 1997, the Foundation’s assets exceeded \$110 million, and Dr. Sprague reviewed each medically-related application and made recommendations to the Grant Review Committee. Dorothy Cullum’s announcement of her retirement from the Board in February of 2000 prompted discussion of adding two new Board Members. Out of 32 names initially suggested, the Board elected Linda Custard and Don Williams to the Board; Dr. Wildenthal became a Director at the February meeting of the Foundation in 2001. At this point, under Mr. Keay’s leadership, the



Foundation adopted a policy of terminating a Board member's eligibility for service upon their 75th birthday. This addition to the By-Laws ended the Directorships of Dr. Sprague, Mrs. Bradshaw, and Mr. Keay. Mr. Fronterhouse became the new Chairman, Mr. Shafer moved to President, and Mrs. Prothro joined the Executive Committee as Treasurer. Sprague, Keay, and Bradshaw were all elected as Honorary Lifetime Directors at the Board's June meeting of 2001. After 15 years as Corporate Secretary, Executive Assistant, and Office Manager, Mary Stacy retired and Donna Berry, who had previously worked for The Meadows Foundation, joined the Foundation's staff.

## CHAPTER SIX

By 2005, the Foundation's assets exceeded \$120 million, and the grants made remained almost exclusively for specific, non-recurring capital needs. Although the founding documents of the Foundation restrict grants to Texas, the Foundation's main focus was always on the Dallas region. Donations to other projects outside of the Dallas area were usually to universities, food banks that served dozens of counties, or for disaster relief. The Foundation would also always participate in community efforts to restore old Interstate Theatre auditoriums throughout Texas.

Two "Program-Related Investments" (PRIs) were made during this decade. The first was a loan to the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas of \$1.5 million to assist with the costs of a new headquarters in Downtown Dallas. Proceeds for the sale of United Way's old building were part of the financing package for the new construction project, but there were no buyers at the sales price that was set. In order to avoid a "fire-sale" or incur more debt, the Foundation made a loan at a 0.0% interest rate, secured by the structure, for up to three years. The facility was subsequently sold for \$1.6 million, and the Foundation was repaid. As an added bonus, the stock market had declined during the nine-month period that the loan existed, so that PRI allocation maintained its \$1.5 million value while the rest of the Foundation's portfolio absorbed a loss.

Another example of the Foundation using its assets to further its charitable mission without writing a grant check was an arrangement whereby the Foundation provided a guaranty to Amegy Bank for issuing loans to Frasier Revitalization, Inc. to cover the costs of acquiring properties in the Frasier neighborhood, which is located south of Fair Park, for demolition and

redevelopment. This multi-year initiative and eventual tax credit financing resulted in the creation of a Parkland Hospital clinic for that part of the City and room for further redevelopment for other nonprofit uses. Since those loans were also partially secured by the real estate itself, the Foundation's liability if FRI were to close its doors was in the \$400,000 range. The loans made by Amegy were eventually paid in full, and the Foundation's obligation was released. Making the needed financing available to FRI by pledging to use the Foundation's assets and reputation to backstop those loans was essential to the eventual success of FRI's work in that neighborhood, and the Foundation never had to actually pay for any abandoned obligations.



In 2007, Mr. Fronterhouse resigned and was replaced as Chairman by George Shafer. Bill Solomon was given the title of Vice Chairman, and Caren Prothro became Treasurer. Paul Harris' title was changed from Executive Vice President to President & CEO. Also, discussions began that year regarding a possible move of the Foundation's offices from Preston Center to the historic Caruth Homeplace, which was adjacent to and being restored by the Communities Foundation of Texas. Hoblitzelle Board member Linda Custard was the Chair of the committee at CFT that was overseeing this project. Deedie Rose, John Dayton, and Rafael Anchia were invited to join the Board in 2008. During the following year, Mr. Shafer and Jerry Farrington retired from the Board, and Bill Solomon moved into the Chairman's position. Mrs. Prothro was named Vice Chair, and Don Williams was added to the Executive Committee as Treasurer.

The Foundation moved into its new offices at the Caruth Homeplace early in 2010 and held its first meeting there in May. Everyone was delighted with the new facilities, and this historic home and five acres located only two blocks south of NorthPark Center provided the Foundation's staff, Directors, guests, and applicants a very suitable and inviting atmosphere in which to continue the Foundation's work. Donna Berry resigned her position in February of 2012 and Kathleen Stone assumed her duties.



*Location of Hoblitzelle Foundation in the Old Caruth Homeplace, as of 2010.*

Mrs. Custard attended her last meeting in January of 2014. Her departure marked the beginning of a three-year period that would see six of eight board members reach their 75th birthdays. The Board mapped out a plan to collect names of Dallasites that could bring their special experience, community knowledge, and energy to the Foundation. The individuals on this list would be evaluated by the Nominating Committee, and a vote would be taken after the list had been reviewed, condensed, and prioritized. Karen Shuford and Jere Thompson, Jr. were offered the opportunity to join the Board at the beginning of 2014, and the Board anticipated adding two more individuals in January of 2016 and 2017. Deedie Rose attended her last meeting in early 2016, and Dr. Wildenthal and Don Williams participated in their final meeting in May of that year. Mrs. Prothro would leave the Board in January of 2017, and Mr. Solomon would be the last of these six men and women, reaching the end of his over 20-year association with the Foundation the following May. New Directors named to complete the transition were Lydia Novakov, Dr. Daniel Podolsky, and Catherine Rose. An additional new member would be nominated by the end of the year. John Dayton became Chairman at the Board's May, 2017 meeting, Karen Shuford was elected Vice Chair,

and Jere Thompson, Jr. continued in his role as Treasurer and the third member of the Executive Committee.

Paul Harris has worked at the Foundation for more than three decades as Executive Vice President and then as President and CEO and will retire in December of 2017 – the Foundation’s 75th anniversary month. After the Board went through a thorough search process for the next executive director, Katie Harris Robbins, Paul’s daughter and Lynn Harris’ granddaughter, was chosen to assume the responsibilities for the day-to-day stewardship of the Foundation, protecting its reputation in the field, and beginning another quarter of a century of thoughtful, meaningful, and useful service to the community.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

**H**oblitzelle Foundation began as a Trust at Republic National Bank. Mr. Hoblitzelle was Chairman of the Board, and many other men who occupied the highest administrative positions at the Bank were asked to serve as Directors of the Foundation, including James Aston, Jim Berry, Jim Keay, and Jerry Fronterhouse. In funding the Foundation, thousands of shares of Republic Bank were transferred to the Foundation, and Mr. Hoblitzelle wrote a letter to the Directors saying that they were not allowed to sell any Republic stock, as observers would assume some inside knowledge that there may be trouble not known to the general public. During his lifetime, he had great faith and confidence in the strength of the Bank. His views may have changed if he had lived until the days of computerized trading strategies and savings and loan failures.

Since the beginning years of the Foundation in the early 1940s, the Trust Division of Republic National Bank and its successors (NCNB, Nations Bank, Bank of America, U.S. Trust) has been an invaluable partner in carrying out the mission of the Foundation. Rather than hiring financial and additional support staff, the Foundation has relied on the administrative assistance offered by the Trust arm of the Bank, and this has been a very efficient, fiscally prudent, and value-added component of the Foundation's work. In addition to the monthly payroll and bill-paying activities, all grant checks are issued by the Trust Department, not by the Foundation itself. This provides an additional layer of protection from unintentional errors or misconduct. During the Foundation's first sixty years, it owned real estate and royalty interests in several oil production operations; all of these assets required professional management that could best be provided by the Bank rather than directly overseen by the Foundation independently.



In the late 1980s, Hoblitzelle Foundation was one of the largest stockholders of Republic Bank, and when the bank failed, the Foundation's portfolio took a terrific loss. Other investments in the early years of the Foundation were directed by professionals in Republic Bank's Trust Department. Over the years, a "total return" philosophy has been adopted that generates grant and administrative funds from appreciation, selling a stock that is not performing well, dividends, and interest income. Recognizing that the Foundation needs a return of approximately 8% annually to cover expenses, make the required grants, and keep up with inflation, the asset mix currently used is 20% fixed income, 70% domestic and foreign equities, and 10% in some alternative vehicle such as real estate. The Finance Committee has always rejected hedge funds as being too expensive and too risky and believed that the size of the Foundation's endowment was not large enough to accommodate that asset class.



Hoblitzelle Foundation currently focuses its grants on specific, non-recurring capital initiatives. There have been grants made for program support, endowment, scholarships, and underwriting uses, but these have been rare and are almost always initiated by Board members. In order to make more significant and "impactful" grants, the Foundation is not shy to make six and even seven figure grants to causes and projects that are of major importance to the community. Each year, approximately one-third of the funds due for distribution are paid during the first two weeks of May, the first month of the Foundation's fiscal year, in order to meet multi-year pledge obligations.

The Board recognizes that grants paid above 5% of its assets level will impact the portfolio's ability to appreciate and has maintained a spending discipline over the decades that reflects that understanding. There are provisions in the tax code that allow foundations to pay a 1% excise tax on earned-income rather than the standard 2%, and the Foundation has been active in national efforts by the Council on Foundations, The Philanthropy Roundtable, Philanthropy Southwest, and others to have this aspect of the tax regulations streamlined or eliminated.

The Foundation is also aware of the non-dollar denominated value of a grant. Approval of an application, even when that pledge may not be actually paid until a future fiscal year, generates momentum, validation, and encouragement for the grantee, often helping them be successful with other funders. This “soft-dollar” benefit is much more useful at the beginning of a campaign rather than toward the end.

Mr. Hoblitzelle expressed his views of how his Foundation could be most relevant and successful:

*I think that Foundations of this type are most useful when they serve to telescope time. Thus, a Foundation may bring or help bring into being a project or program of great promise and worth which might well fail or be long deferred because of lack of financial support from other sources. I think this approach offers greater opportunities to the Foundation to be useful than the making of contributions or recurring gifts to programs which have already been activated.*

*I am inclined to lean towards and be most sympathetic to those programs which in general involve discovery, transmission and extension of facts, thoughts, ideals and ideas. It seems to me that if this nation and the world of nations are ultimately to outlaw war and live in harmony, peace, health and prosperity, this can only come about as a result of all the peoples of the world being aware of, accepting and adopting those facts, thoughts, ideals and ideas which are true and good. While Hoblitzelle Foundation has not the substance or intent to project itself across national or even State lines, in its own sphere, Texas, it seems to me it can do much to implement those programs and projects which search for facts and truth and/or communicate, teach*

*or project facts, thoughts, ideas and ideals,  
whether they be in the field of science, arts,  
the professions or philosophy.*

*In an effort to make this a better world in  
which to live, I believe that Hoblitzelle  
Foundation should also, in accordance with  
the principles set forth in Paragraphs ONE and  
TWO above, welcome opportunities to help  
underprivileged and minorities and  
handicapped groups to improve their  
opportunities for advancement.*



Over the years, the Foundation has participated in the programs of several national and regional organizations offering conferences, continuing education, and representation in Washington, D.C., where the laws governing the operations of charitable grant-making organizations are formed and implemented. These associations have included The Independent Sector, The Philanthropy Roundtable, The Council on Foundations and Philanthropy Southwest. Hoblitzelle Foundation was one of the original members of Philanthropy Southwest, previously known as the Conference of Southwest Foundations, when it formed during the 1950s as the first regional association of corporate, community, and private/family foundations in America. Hoblitzelle Foundation is also an active supporter of the Dallas Regional Chamber and its role in developing a healthy and prosperous business climate in North Texas.



*Benemerenti Medal honoring Karl Hoblitzelle and given by Pope Pious XII in 1954.*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Karl Hoblitzelle did not seek public recognition or social status with his philanthropy, though he did not operate anonymously either. He believed that it was essential that those who were successful were also obligated to serve their communities both with financial support and civic leadership. Hoblitzelle was a founding member of the Dallas Citizen's Council. He gave the inaugural speech of the newly formed Council in 1938 and served as the organization's President from 1945 to 1946. In his address, he emphasized the importance of a "Dallas Spirit" that would encouraged Dallas' business leaders to make public service and cooperation a priority, often putting the needs of the City ahead of individual business interests if necessary.

As a side note, Mr. Hoblitzelle was one of the sponsors of a national competition to be the first community to build and fly an airplane – named "Dallas Spirit" – from San Francisco to Hong Kong in the late 1920s. The aircraft, piloted by Dallas resident and World War I aviator "Lone Star" Bill Erwin, was eventually lost somewhere over the Pacific Ocean.

Some of the tributes that came Hoblitzelle's way during his lifetime included the Linz Award, a Special Citation from the American Legion, a Presidential Certificate of Appreciation from Harry Truman, a hand-embroidered Benemerenti Medal from Pope Pious XII in 1954, a Citizenship Medal from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a service award from the National Council of Christians and Jews, and an Excellence Award from the Massachusetts Horticulture Society for the gardens at his summer home on Cape Cod.

In addition, there are many structures and sections of buildings in this region used for charitable purposes that bear the Hoblitzelle name or the names of Board Members who have carried on traditions laid out through example by Karl Hoblitzelle.



There is a very large painting hanging in one of the major stairways of Dallas City Hall, commissioned by an unnamed individual in the early 1950s. It shows a group of fourteen Dallas leaders painted by regional artist Victor Lallier, and the men pictured in the painting were chosen by a secret ballot from among 75 nominees. Karl Hoblitzelle, in his signature white linen suit, is the central figure in this painting.



Karl Hoblitzelle's lifestyle would not by any means be considered extravagant or ostentatious, but he did live well. He was always well-groomed and smartly dressed, enjoyed



*Clarence Holder, Lynn Harris, and Will Freeman assist Mr. Hoblitzelle with his lobster.*





*Hoblitzelle home on St. Andrews Drive in Dallas.*

entertaining, fine liquor and wine – particularly for serving to his guests, spending his summers at his Cape Cod home, and hosting sets of friends there who would travel from Dallas to Boston’s Logan Airport for a week’s stay at “Linden”, the Cotuit, Massachusetts estate’s name. His sister, Nell Tritle, was the resident hostess, and helped with the entertainment of the friends and business associates who were invited to the Cape for a visit. Occasionally, he would use the airplane that belonged to Republic Bank for his trips, and there are stories of rare bottles of wine from Mr. Hoblitzelle’s collection having the contents re-packaged into dark brown pharmacy bottles so that they could be shipped across State lines without undue attention. When prohibition began, Mr. Hoblitzelle purchased the entire bar stocks of the Baker and Adolphus hotels in Downtown Dallas and therefore had one of the finest – and largest – cellars of wine and spirits in the region. These crates of bottles were kept in the basement of his residence behind two huge bank vault doors.

His automobile of preference was Cadillac, and he owned a standard-size poodle, Beede. He liked his coffee served one-half of a cup at a time so that it would stay hot, and had a habit of turning the lights of his office at Republic Bank off when he left for lunch.

He was a gentleman in all respects and valued good manners, courtesy, generosity, and faithfulness.

Some sources say that Mr. Hoblitzelle was an Episcopalian while many Dallasites thought him to be Jewish. He was not an active member of any local congregation, and his giving did not reflect any particular bias toward or opposition to any faith group. Suffice it to say that he was ecumenical in his spiritual life, always respecting the beliefs of those he encountered and with whom he worked, sharing the common elements that encourage working toward a community's goals for health care, expanded opportunities for the under-privileged, sustaining interest in the arts and humanities, and working together to achieve a common mission.



In addition to his home at 4004 St. Andrew's Drive in University Park (Dallas), Hoblitzelle enjoyed many days during the winter months at his cottage in the Rio Grande Valley at his citrus fruit farm, Ranch-O-Hills. He appreciated the company of the ranch manager, Raphael Cintron and his wife, Josephine, the unhurried pace of life there, fishing in a lake that was created for that purpose, and the proximity to several inviting restaurants just on the other side of the U.S./Mexico border. He would also travel



*Hoblitzelle residence on Cape Cod.*

NEW HOME OF  
**MAJESTIC**  
BIG-TIME-THEATRE VAUDEVILLE



KARL HOBLITZELLE  
*President of the  
Interstate  
Amusement Co.*

ALL THE WORLD'S A  
STAGE, AND ALL THE  
MEN AND WOMEN  
HEREBY PLAYERS.  
BACKGROUND,  
DEDICATED TO ALL  
THEATRE AND WHOLESALE  
ENTERTAINMENT IN  
GRATEFUL RECOGNITION  
OF THE SUPPORT ALWAYS  
GIVEN ME BY THE PEOPLE  
OF DALLAS.  
KARL HOBLITZELLE

APRIL 11<sup>th</sup> 1921  
MARKS THE TRIUMPHANT  
OPENING NIGHT  
OF THE  
NEW MAJESTIC THEATRE  
"The South's Largest and  
Most Palatial Theatre"

1921 ELM STREET DALLAS, TEXAS



to other more distant destinations during the early spring and fall when his household staff was relocating from Dallas to Cape Cod and back. Paul Harris' mother, Pat Harris (later Aston) would often accompany Mr. Hoblitzelle, his sister, Nell Trittle, and Lynn Harris on these trips.



Although the bulk of Karl Hoblitzelle's initial wealth came from the vaudeville and then motion picture business, he was not particularly enamored of the Hollywood crowd. His interests were focused on the comfort, efficient business practices, and physical locations of his theaters; he left entertaining and hosting live appearances of movie stars in the mid-1900s to his associate, R.J. O'Donnell. Hoblitzelle was steadfast in promoting "family friendly" entertainment, contrary to the typical vaudeville fare in the early 1900s. On display in the Foundation's office is a 19"x12" poster from 1914 for the employees of the Interstate Amusement Company that emphasized using proper language, respect for females, and appropriate behavior on stage and in the dressing room areas of his theaters.

*This is a Family Theater – tell no story, sing no song, do no business you would not want your mother or sister to hear or see. Suggestiveness or lewdness of any type is absolutely forbidden. Likewise the use of such words as "God", "Damn," "Hell," "Bull," etc. is prohibited. A disrespectful or unseemly characterization of the Hebrew, Irish, German, or any people will not be tolerated.*

These standards of conduct are as relevant today as they were over a century ago.



During the 1940s, Interstate Theaters, under Mr. Hoblitzelle's direction, began to build an employee assistance fund with a very small portion of revenue from ticket sales. Employees could apply for financial help should there be a death in the family, a house fire,



*Texas Historical Commission plaque at the Majestic Theater in Downtown Dallas.*

a prolonged illness of a child, or any other such misfortune. When the theater system was sold, this fund initially went with the assets to the purchasing company, and retired Interstate executives filed a law suit on behalf of the employees that took the position that this particular fund was intended to support the needs of Interstate employees and should therefore be excluded from the transfer. The suit was successful, and those funds were put into a Trust that was managed, without compensation, by these former executives. Employees of Plitt Southern Theatres, the new owner, were also made eligible for assistance, and the Plitt group provided some meaningful financial support. At one point in the 1990s, the fund was worth over a million dollars, and the Trustees began a program

of sending a \$400-\$700 check monthly to any Interstate (or Plitt) retiree who had less than \$30,000 in annual income. Payments were changed periodically to reflect growth or losses in the portfolio's value.

The hope was that the investments would continue to generate the funds needed to maintain those regular monthly payments as long as there were qualified recipients who needed that assistance. With the dramatic fall of the markets in 2008, the Trustees, who were now the children of the original Interstate executives or former employees from the 1960s, voted to terminate the Trust when the total assets reached \$300,000. That threshold was met in 2012, and the remaining 50+ retirees who had been the beneficiaries received a final check of \$5,000 apiece and notification of the end of the Trust's ability to continue. The final audit and tax filings were made, and in 2015, a small residual was transferred to the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation in Los Angeles, an organization that has as its mission the support of elderly workers who were involved in moviemaking and theater operations during the 1900s. Hoblitzelle's interest in the welfare of his employees had lasted over four decades beyond his death.





*Mr. and Mrs. Karl Hoblitzelle, dressed for an evening out at the movies.*

*In a tribute to Karl Hoblitzelle, the great showman Cecil B. DeMille said, "In his own way, Hoblitzelle has been an empire builder – and his is a prouder achievement than the empires that have risen and fallen since 1906, for his is built not on conquest, but on service, not on the forces that divide men, but on the ideals which united them."*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Foundation Minutes

Annual Reports

Ellipsis newsletters

Grant Database

Pre-2000 inactive paper files stored at the Communities Foundation of Texas

Diaper Days of Dallas

The Accommodation

Google search for “Hoblitzelle” and “Esther Walker”

Handbook of Texas

Dallas Morning News archives

Agricultural Research at Renner 1944-1966

Southwestern Medical Foundation’s Perspectives, Spring, 2014

Dallas Citizens Council’s “An Obligation of Leadership”

Schatzie (Natalie H.) Lee’s story about Clarence Hoblitzelle and the Hoblitzelle collection of paintings at the Dallas Museum of Art

Dr. Luther Holcomb’s eulogy

Legacies – Fall 1994, A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas

Majestic – A pamphlet published by The Dallas Morning News on the occasion of the reopening of The Majestic Theater in 1983

The Guiding Principles of Hoblitzelle Foundation

A visit to the Bluebonnet Gallery in Desoto, TX – extensive collection Interstate memorabilia and the archives of the Former Employee Trust

Interstate Theatre Collection – Dallas Public Library

The Hoblitzelle and Interstate Theatre Collections at the Ransom Center on the Campus of University of Texas-Austin

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– Paul W. Harris

## PARTNERS IN PHILANTHROPY

This history of the Foundation would be incomplete without acknowledging its partners in philanthropy – the organizations with which it has worked to improve our community. A rolling ten-year list of those agencies appears on the Foundation’s website. The names listed below represent some of the hundreds of grantees who have done their part in providing the Foundation with opportunities to fulfill its mission and then carrying forward the work enabled through the resources provided.

UT-Southwestern Medical Center  
Parkland Hospital  
Presbyterian Medical Center  
Children’s Medical Center  
Southern Methodist University  
University of Dallas  
Texas A& M University  
University of Texas-Dallas  
Austin College  
Dallas Baptist University  
Jesuit College Preparatory  
Bishop Lynch School  
Trinity Christian Academy  
Episcopal School of Dallas  
Greenhill School  
Uplift Schools  
Lamplighter School  
The Shelton School  
St. Mark’s School of Texas  
Susan G. Komen  
Dallas Community College District  
Boy Scouts of America  
Salvation Army  
North Texas Food Bank  
Promise House  
Texas Research Foundation  
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas  
Dallas Opera  
Dallas Theatre Center  
Dallas Zoo  
Parks for Downtown Dallas  
Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind  
Hope Cottage  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Texas Heritage Foundation

Southwestern Medical Foundation  
Baylor Medical Center  
Methodist Medical Center  
Texas Scottish Rite Hospital  
Texas Christian University  
University of Texas-Austin  
University of North Texas  
The Hockaday School  
Bishop/Paul Quinn College  
Dallas Public Library  
Ursuline Academy  
Bishop Dunne School  
Volunteer Center  
Cistercian School  
KIPP Academy  
KERA  
Senior Source  
St. Philip’s School  
Suicide & Crisis Center  
Big Thought/Young Audiences  
YMCA/YWCA  
Girl Scouts of America  
Goodwill Industries  
Visiting Nurse Association  
Down Home Ranch  
Dallas Arboretum  
Dallas Museum of Art  
Dallas Symphony Orchestra  
Majestic Theater-Dallas  
Trinity Trust  
African-American Museum  
American Red Cross  
New Friends New Life  
Dallas Council on World Affairs  
Dallas Institute

