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The Bizarre Careers of John R. Brinkley

R. Alton Lee

University of South Dakota

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R. ALTON LEE

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Frontispiece: Dr. John R. Brinkley in surgery.
(Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

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For Marilyn

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Preface

While there is widespread discussion and concern about female menopause, less is said or known about its male counterpart. This phase of the life cycle has troubled both genders since the beginning of time. In men, the male sex hormone, testosterone, declines with age, beginning about forty. Though the decline is gradual and only amounts to approximately 10 percent per decade, it results in the loss of the sex drive, weakening of muscles, and calcium deficiency in bones. Women in menopause can receive supplements of the sex hormones estrogen and progesterone to ease the transition, but for males testosterone replacement may enlarge the prostate gland and increase the possibility of cancer in that gland. Symptoms vary among men, but at about age sixty the prostate begins to enlarge year by year, a process known as benign prostate hypertrophy—and it becomes more difficult to urinate. Most important to many men is the deterioration of potency that accompanies the aging process, and man has long sought relief, or a cure, for this retrogression.¹

Methods of overcoming impotency have a lengthy history of investigation in many differing categories and civilizations. Certain foods, for example, have long been held to be sexually arousing. The Chinese have a venerable tradition that ginseng root is a wondrous stimulant. Eggs and caviar are often associated with sex, as well as celery, asparagus, clams, and oysters—foods that suggest sex organs. Ancient Greeks and Romans used satyricon preparations, usually made from goats, as an aphrodisiac. The Greeks also believed that drinking onion juice for three days increased virility. Quasi-scientists have developed innumerable medicines and devices reputed to increase sexual potency. In the mid-eighteenth century, London doctor John Graham O.W.L. (which stood for Oh Wonderful Love), made a fortune by charging believers to sleep on his electric-coiled “celestial bed.” The bed bathed sleepers in colored lights, while soft music played in the background and incense burned, and came complete with a guarantee to increase the participants’ sexual po-

tency. Infertile couples paid as much as £100 to spend a night on his apparatus.

Any kind of machine or analyzer with voltaic power as its basis, however ludicrous the claims of the owner, fascinates the sexually impotent or hypochondriac. As James Harvey Young explained it, electricity has “always provided a tremendous storehouse of power for quackery.” At the turn of the nineteenth century, Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer of Paris cured his patients with wands and magnets. During his labors he added a word to our vocabulary when, by serendipity, he discovered the roots of hypnotism while trying to help a blind girl.²

Leonard E. Stanhope, one of Dr. Mesmer’s disciples, possessed a D.D.S. and an M.D. from the Homeopathic College of Missouri in St. Louis. In the late 1890s, he discovered his “vast magnetic powers,” as he termed them, and opened the Stanhope Sanitarium and School of Magnetic Healing in Nevada, Missouri. This healing, or as some called it “suggestive therapeutics” through hypnotism, became quite popular in the Nevada area, with a listing of these doctors requiring a half-page in the city telephone directory in 1900. The town’s ministers found the practice “subversive of the fundamental and vital principles of the Christian faith” and organized in opposition, publishing a pamphlet to warn potential victims of the threat. Magnetic healing’s popularity “declined as rapidly as it began” with the assistance of the good preachers, and in 1903 only three such doctors were listed in that telephone directory.³

Americans also have been unusually susceptible to the blandishments of therapists with odd ideas or contraptions. Dr. Albert Abrams of San Francisco was one of the more famous of these practitioners, advocating a theory he called Spondylotherapy, which made use of a strange looking magnetic box to conduct his examinations. He was a distinguished-looking man with pince-nez glasses who began his career as a legitimate doctor but soon realized there were more lucrative sidelines to his profession. His diagnostic machine, sometimes called an “etherator,” contained a maze of electrical wiring. One end he plugged into an electric outlet, and the other he attached to the forehead of a healthy third person. A drop of blood from the patient was placed on a piece of paper inside the box. Abrams then tapped the abdomen of the healthy person, who had to face west during the procedure. By listening to the resonating sounds, he claimed he could diagnose the person’s illness, its location in the body, and even its severity. With further experience, he discovered that he could also determine during the analysis the patient’s gender, age, and affiliation with one of six religious groups. He refused

to sell his machines, which he called the “Electric Reactions of Abrams,” but he rented the ERAs to customers. Among others, writer Upton Sinclair was one of the doctor’s most vocal supporters. The novelist’s recommendation of the procedure, of course, was as salutary as getting an explanation from Babe Ruth about the concept of $E=mc^2$ or an approval from Frank Sinatra on the military decision to drop the atomic bomb, but his endorsement added substantially to the doctor’s reputation in the mind of the public. Abrams’s rental fee for the ERA was \$250; for \$200 more, he would provide a seminar on how to operate his machine. When he died in 1923 he left an estate of some \$2 million.⁴

More recently, at Clinique La Prairie in Switzerland, “injecting live sheep cells is said to be the path to youth.” A recent issue of *Modern Maturity* carried a full-page ad for “Quanterra,” a saw palmetto extract that has been “clinically proven by doctors” to improve the “prostate health of men over 50.” Berries from the saw palmetto tree have a long history of folk use for disorders in the male reproductive tract. While European studies show they make an improvement in symptoms, there is no scientific or conclusive evidence that they are in any way a cure.⁵

Over seven or eight decades ago, similar claims were made for sexual impotency and prostate treatment in east-central Kansas and in southwest Texas. At the turn of the century, one of the most successful medicos ever to administer to the sexually inadequate migrated out of the Smoky Mountains, wandered through much of the eastern United States to the Great Plains, and became known as the “Ponce de Leon of Kansas.” The Sunflower State never produced a more fascinating character, except perhaps Buster Keaton or W. Lee “Pass the Biscuits Pappy” O’Daniel, and certainly never a more eloquent “rags to riches to rags” saga.

As a small boy growing up on a hardscrabble farm on the plains of Depression-ridden Kansas, I remember hearing vague references to the “Goat Gland Doctor” operating near Junction City. I cannot recall any of the tales specifically, but the impression remains that the tenor of them was negative and denigrating. I was too young to question why this could be true, but it seemed strange as doctors are supposed to help sick people and it sounded as though this one, somehow, was taking advantage of them. When I explored the literature about him in recent years, I discovered it to be disappointing, largely inadequate in explaining the man, his personality, his motives, and his achievements—whether he was a gifted doctor with a unique idea or a pure charlatan. This led to my decision to examine this complicated person and attempt to get a better focus on

him, to find what the man himself was like, to discover what he actually did and what impelled him to do it.

John R. Brinkley was, and remains, well known in Kansas. When I discussed my efforts to capture his life on paper, many listeners expressed a keen interest in the project and recalled his famous exploits. Even now, the town clerk of Milford receives letters of inquiry as to whether or not his sanitarium is still in operation—some seven decades after he left there. Today in Del Rio, the reaction is the same a half-century after he died. Brinkley is considered to be a great benefactor of the town, and people still inquire if his hospital is functioning.

As can be expected, he was viewed variously by different people during his lifetime. To most in the medical profession he was dangerous, a quack; to his many patients and supporters he was a brilliant surgeon, a savior of their lost manhood and their health, kind and generous, ahead of his time in medical discoveries. Indisputably, he was a pioneer in experimental glandular studies, political campaigning, and radio broadcasting. He was an excellent student of the psychology of aging and of both the male and female mind, a showman par excellence, brazen, crafty, arrogant, cunning, flamboyant, vain, paranoid, intelligent, and egocentric—in short, a multifaceted person. Each time his enemies thought they had run him to the ground, he escaped only to devise new ways to outwit and bedevil them. Even opponents who sought his downfall agreed that his surgical skills, if channeled into legitimate endeavors, could have led to significant contributions in the medical field, but no one wanted to predict where his wits, cunning, and drive would lead him next in his profession.

His innate sense of timing and perception of the possibilities of innovation enabled him to originate a number of important medical, political, and broadcasting developments, which give valuable insights into the transformation of these fields in the early twentieth century. Because of his exploits, his medical adversaries made certain that state governments tightened their licensing laws and that medical societies enforced ethics more stringently to prevent his type of conduct from flourishing. When he entered the political arena, although a complete novice in this area, he revolutionized campaigning in Kansas and subsequently the nation. He made a number of innovations in radio broadcasting, especially in programming and advertising. Not least, his buccaneering exploits over the air waves resulted in more adequate international agreements to control this relatively new medium.

There is a large body of writing about Brinkley and his career.

Some of it is scholarly; much of it is journalistic and unsatisfying. Separating fact from fiction is occasionally baffling, especially in terms of details about his formative years. Often principal sources offer only what he related, or told others to write, about his boyhood and early adult life. Thus, much that was written about this period of his life merely perpetuated the myths he fashioned. Being a love child compelled him to fantasize about an idealized background and childhood, with marvelous parents and a home life where he was inculcated with the proper values and aspirations.

Indeed, Brinkley tended to invent his persona on an ad hoc basis with unparalleled aplomb. Whenever necessary, he adjusted his biography to suit what seemed best for the immediate circumstances. Occasionally he declared he did not know where he was born, and it is uncertain if this claim was feigned or sincere. At other times, when applying for medical licenses, he listed his birth state variously as Kentucky, Tennessee, or North Carolina—whatever seemed most advantageous at the time. The same was true about the location of his first marriage; it moved to meet his immediate need. His opponents later noted, during court proceedings or hearings, that he was noticeably unperturbed when confronted with significant discrepancies in the facts of his past as he had relayed them over the years.

Despite ambiguities in the details of Brinkley's personal life, the public record seems to indicate clearly that he ruthlessly exploited the sexual frustrations of aging men and the general public's antipathy toward medical doctors in the early part of the twentieth century for his personal gain. In doing this, he acquired a fortune that he displayed in a most flamboyant manner—the epitome of what a contemporary economist, Thorsten Veblen, labeled “conspicuous consumption”—buying diamonds, Cadillacs, yachts, airplanes, and mansions. But, true to his complex nature, he was also very generous to his employees and kind to the unfortunate.

As a master manipulator, Brinkley described on his radio programs the ailments common to elderly people and reminded them that, if they went to their local doctor, they would be told to return repeatedly, charged large fees for office calls, and probably not receive relief—or else endure a ruinous operation. The common wisdom among rural people at the time held that there was “considerable difference between a good doctor and a bad one, but hardly any difference between a good doctor and none at all.” In fact, one authority notes that “it was estimated that a patient in 1900 stood only a fifty-fifty chance of benefitting from an encounter with a random physician.” Brinkley's listeners believed he was a good doctor,

but also a special one who, although he never examined them, could exactly diagnose their ills over the radio and describe what to do about their medical problems.⁶

In his goat gland operations and remedies for prostatic ailments, he was pure con artist. His prescriptions for common debilitations undoubtedly alleviated the problems of many of his listeners even while he cheated them with placebos or in prices for simple remedies. His treatment of the sexually impotent helped many of his patients because they were convinced he could make them feel young again, and thus he did. Impotency seems to be closely tied to the mind-set of the patient, with modern holistic medical practices recognizing that impotence often has a psychological as well as a physiological cause. Doctors such as John Brinkley often appear to be successful in curing for three reasons. First, many human sicknesses run their course and disappear even if left untreated. Second, many of the ills of the elderly are psychosomatic. When the patient is convinced the expert will help him, as American Medical Association official Morris Fishbein describes it, “regardless of how bizarre the doctor’s methods may be, he often will be miraculously cured.” Third, as Brinkley often noted, old people especially are often rejuvenated by “a good cleaning out.” Of course, expectant people also believe more fervently in what they hope will happen. Once word of the doctor’s curative powers over frightening medical problems is broadcast, the reputation spreads, and others anticipate that they, too, can be helped. Morris Fishbein has pointed out that “the human being craves miracles. From the earliest medicine man in prehistoric times, to present-day charlatans these healers are convinced they are divinely inspired and this self-confidence inspires belief in their patients.”⁷

Since at least the emergence of Pan—the mythological half-man, half-beast god of flocks who had the horns, ears, and rear legs of a goat—as the symbol of male sexual prowess several millennia ago, men have been preoccupied with maintaining the “animalistic” virility of their youth. From Hrycus the He-Goat of the Renaissance, who was “always burning for coitus,” to the development in 1998 of Viagra, a pill to reduce male impotency, aging men have sought remedies for the inexorable decline of their virility. Between Pan and Viagra, there have always been charlatans offering nostrums and placebos—at a price, of course—to anxiety-ridden older men wishing to recapture their masculinity. As Brinkley discovered, more often than not the men are willing to pay; this is one category for which the most miserly of rich men are happy to risk their money.

Questions abound about John R. Brinkley and his rejuvena-

tion of old men. Did he have a valid or fraudulent medical education? Why and how did he become the nemesis of Morris Fishbein and the American Medical Association? Why was his radio station so popular among his rural supporters and why was the AMA determined to run him off the air? Was he on the cutting edge in the development of glandular transplantation? Did he actually help many of his patients as they insisted he did? Did he have personality disorders that led to his occasionally bizarre behavior? The Cherokee have a saying that the world is full of stories, which from time to time permit being told. It is time to tell the story of John R. Brinkley.

Chapter 1

Humble Origins

The Appalachian Mountain area of North Carolina, into which the Brinkleys migrated during the colonial era, has a rugged terrain but a pleasant, mild climate. Observers have long described the area as a “make-do” land. The inhabitants, both Indian and white, had to become jacks-of-all-trades and make do with the meager resources the land provided. Its harsh nature made its people tough and independent-minded. In this environment, most mountain folk married each other and raised numerous children, continuing unabated a cycle of grinding poverty. The milieu imbued a chosen few with ambition; infrequently, one with good intelligence, lofty goals, and great resolve managed to escape to a life outside. Others remained trapped in the culture.

Little is known of the early Brinkleys except what John R. Brinkley revealed later in his official biography and from a few scattered sources. William Brinkley, John R.’s paternal grandfather, was one of the first of the family to migrate southward down the valleys from Virginia into this austere culture, settling near Charlotte, North Carolina, while his relatives moved to nearby Mecklenberg County. He was elected captain of the First Regiment of North Carolina Troops in the Revolutionary War and received the usual land grant following hostilities. One of William’s sons, John, became a mountain doctor, that is, one who “read” medicine with a doctor much like one read law with an attorney before entering the legal profession.¹

Clement Wood’s official biography of John R. Brinkley avers that his father, this “doctor” John, attended Davidson College in Charlotte and received a degree. This is highly unlikely, however, as attending college in the antebellum South was expensive and confined largely to the plantation and urban aristocracy who could af-

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ford it, not poor mountain folk. The biography also notes that “he had an eye for comely girls,” a more convincing assertion given that William had John’s first marriage annulled because he was underage, and John outlived several other handsome wives. He had two daughters by his first legal wife, Sally Honeycut. The 1850 census lists John, his second wife, Sarah, age twenty, and daughters Martha and Naomi living in Yancey County, North Carolina. John married his third wife, Mary Buchanan, in Webster, then county seat of Jackson County. (It was this marriage that caused John R. Brinkley to believe he had a half-sister, the celebrated cartoonist “Nell” Buchanan, daughter of “Marguerite” Buchanan.) When Mary died, the roaming doctor moved to Tennessee but soon returned to North Carolina where he married Fanny Knight.²

Fanny, like some of John’s earlier wives, died of tuberculosis, or what the mountain people called the “white plague,” and his inability to save his wives from this scourge made him broody. He was a Methodist and these losses “brought him over nearer to God.” His first four wives died before North Carolina seceded from the Union. John opposed slavery, but loyalty to his state forced him to serve the South reluctantly as a medic during the War of the Rebellion. Twice wounded during the conflict, according to the authorized biography, “he walked palely out of the hospital at last, limping only a trifle, and went on with his tight-lipped healing of the sick, the maimed, the halt, the blind.”³

In 1870, when he was forty-two, Doctor John married Sarah Mingus in Sylva. When Sarah Mingus’s attractive, reddish-golden-haired, twenty-four-year-old niece with dancing blue eyes named Sarah Candace Burnett came to live with them, the family called the aunt “Sally” to avoid confusing the two Sarahs. On July 8, 1885, the niece took to bed in Beta, North Carolina, near Sylva, and delivered a baby boy. She named her son John Romulus Brinkley, John after his father (Sally’s husband), and Romulus for one of the legendary brothers nursed by a she-wolf who later founded Rome. When John R. was old enough to understand, his mother told him the story of Romulus and urged him to be a “builder” when he was a man. The Wood biography declares that when he was baptized as a Methodist, the preacher thought Romulus was a heathen name and changed it to Richard. Brinkley himself later admitted that his friends teased him about his name so much that he went to court and officially made it Richard after his “uncle,” the first John Richard Brinkley. Being a love child in this culture was not extremely rare but nevertheless posed a psychological handicap in the maturation of the individual.⁴



John Richard Brinkley II, as a boy.
(Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

In the official biography, Brinkley says he did not remember his mother, yet Wood, to the contrary, recounts some vivid recollections of her. Wood described Brinkley's infancy with her as not particularly happy, punctuated with the ever-present risk of tuberculosis contagion. She insisted he sleep with her, over the father's objections. During a particularly harsh winter, she developed pneumonia, from which she never fully recovered. This eventually evolved into the "white scourge." Night after night the boy, called Johnnie during his youth, awoke to her coughing and vomiting, the sheets damp with her perspiration. Believing she did not have long to live, she pushed herself to the limit, teaching the boy good table manners and the Lord's Prayer—a difficult task as the little fellow was three years old before he could speak coherent words. She took him to all nearby religious revivals, and Johnnie recalled one particular meeting where he caught chicken pox. The hymns, the emotionalism of the "saved," and the immersion of those baptized made a deep impression on the youngster. As an adult, Brinkley consistently demonstrated a strong piety in public and was very conversant with the Bible.

The Wood biography describes a dramatic and piteous death-bed scene with his mother when he was five.

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In a feeble voice the dying mother called her one child to her bedside. He stared with awed round eyes at her emaciated body, hardly more than skin and bones; he leaned closer to catch the racked whisper that was all she could utter. There was a rattling in her throat; he had been told that this was the death rattle. Her eyes were on the mouldy [sic] plank ceiling; the little son knew that she could see through it to the unseen glories of the New Jerusalem. One emaciated arm came out, the fingers clutching at the counterpane, before they found the tiny son. She had to leave him, she said. She had prayed a lot about it, she said; because she was so anxious about his future. An angel had come to her in the night she said, who had told her that her own aunt would raise him, that he would grow up to be a great and useful man. There were tears trembling in her eyes, and Johnnie wondered why they didn't fall. She brought out the other emaciated arm and looked again toward the ceiling. Feebly she tried to clap her hands. Her eyes opened for a choked shout. 'Kiss me, Johnnie.' And she had gone.

They buried her on a hill at Love's Chapel outside of Sylva. Years later John R. Brinkley marked the site with a granite angel. The inscription reads: "In memory of my mother Sarah Candace Burnett, June 17, 1859, April 23, 1891. J.R. Brinkley, M.D."⁵

Sarah T. Brinkley, or Aunt Sally, and John Richard Brinkley, whom the boy called "father," raised the youngster. The family moved to East LaPorte where the father, who had become a minister in addition to his medical work, was welcome, as doctors were everywhere in the mountains. Patients seldom had money to pay for his ministrations, but sometimes he would bring home a ham or a turkey or occasionally a bucket of honey or molasses. In addition, the Brinkleys had a potato patch, with both white and sweet potatoes. A cow furnished some milk for the boy as well as for making gravy. Doctor John's pleasures included hunting with his dog, dining on his favorite dish of sweet potatoes and opossum, and enjoying a plug of chewing or "manufactured" tobacco, as he called it.

Always he prayed before meals and upon leaving on a medical call. Everyone was expected to kneel and pray with him. On one such occasion, Johnnie watched his pet pigeons strutting and preening in the sunshine. Horrified, he saw a cat spring on one. The boy was too afraid of his father to interrupt the prayer, but afterward he killed the cat in retaliation. His father was strict with him but never



Grave site of Sarah Candace Burnett, Brinkley's mother. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

used the traditional hickory stick, due to Aunt Sally's interventions. John Richard Brinkley taught the boy a simple code: be honest and honorable; guard your good name; honor preachers and doctors as being especially blessed by God; defend justice and righteousness; keep the Sabbath holy; and remember that God is quick to punish wrongdoing. Yet despite the great age differential, he was kind to his son in his own way, making sure the boy was supplied with candy and oranges as well as a mouth-harp, which Johnnie enjoyed playing.

Even as a boy, it was clear Johnnie was mechanically minded, and he always had hammers and tools handy. He was good at mathematics and an avid reader. The wife of a local magistrate who loaned

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him books and magazines discovered he could remember things readily, with a talent that would later be termed a photographic memory.⁶ As Johnnie grew older he, like his father, enjoyed hunting coon, fox, opossum, and squirrel. The Tuckasegee River also provided many happy hours of entertainment. The twisting, narrow mountain stream eventually drains into the Tennessee. Near his home there was a deep hole, perfect for fishing, and a calm stretch of water where boys could swim. The relatively-mild climate was conducive to outdoor sports much of the year. Neighboring outhouses and barns drained into the river, forcing Johnnie to carry water for the house from a nearby spring. Coal oil was expensive at 20 cents a gallon, so he gathered pine knots for the fireplace to take the chill off the evening air and to provide light for his reading. At nights, he watched fascinated as his father mixed his medicines from native herbs and purchased potents, accumulating a good deal of mountain folk medicine through observation.⁷

When Johnnie was ten, his father became gravely ill. The old man suffered from chest pains and had difficulty passing water. He had hardly taken to his sick bed when Aunt Sally told him a man had come asking for his help. The mountaineer's wife, twenty-six miles away, was in need of medical assistance. John hitched up his old mare and plowed a bit of ground where he planned later to plant some corn. He rested on the Sabbath, then Monday morning after saddling the mare rode off along the mountain passes and trails. He made it to the cabin, examined the woman, and gave her some medicine. While her family was eating supper, he sat in front of the fireplace, watching the glowing embers and chewing tobacco. He died while sitting there. Neighbor John Moody brought the body home in a wagon and they buried it in the Wike Graveyard on a hill in sight of the Brinkley house. Johnnie was thrilled with being the center of attention as he rode on the funeral wagon, but was devastated by the solemnity and finality of the occasion. His mother was gone, and now his father. He vowed that he would hurry and grow up to become a doctor like his father, healing people so they would not die.⁸

Thaddeas Clingman Bryson, who grew up with Johnnie, recalled that his father had given John Richard Brinkley the use of a house along with a few acres for taking care of the Bryson family medical needs. Bryson now let the two survivors remain on this meager homestead. Aunt Sally could earn \$3 for midwifing, providing perhaps \$20 a year to purchase the few necessities to survive. They ate large amounts of cornbread and turnip greens, and Brinkley later said that if they had some molasses to sop up with the

cornbread, they “had a feast.” They were not “poor as church mice,” however, as he tried to convince his radio audiences years later. Almost everyone they knew, except the Wikes, were impoverished mountain folk like themselves.

John recalled taking the old mare “over to Nigger Dave Rogers, and hitch[ing] her to the old man’s tanbark mill, and grind[ing] bark for him all day, to receive a gallon of molasses in return. Corn pone, milk, and molasses; it was a feast while it lasted.” But a day’s work for a gallon of molasses! When Aunt Sally was away on “baby cases,” Mrs. Amanda Jackson took care of him. This happened so frequently that he came to regard her as another mother. Four decades later he recalled her fondly and, when he discovered she had skin cancer on her face, offered to pay her expenses to travel to Little Rock to be treated by his friend, Dr. L.L. Marshall.⁹

Meanwhile, well liked by playmates, Johnnie was growing and observing and learning. He was a small boy for his age, but physically quick, fast to learn, and somewhat of a daredevil, friends remembered. Bryson recalled him as a bright young fellow who loved to play around Felix Leatherwood’s general merchandise store. There were always oldsters there engaged in checkers or pitching horse-shoes. An observant, quick-witted youngster could absorb much by listening to their stories.¹⁰

He learned that the left hind leg of a rabbit killed in a cemetery and carried in the right hip pocket brought good fortune. Lacking this scarce omen, possessing a buckeye was also lucky; having both, of course, doubled the possibilities of good fate. Along with these charms, the chap had his boyhood dreams. “He was to be a doctor; that much was determined. . . . [H]is heroes [were] Abraham Lincoln, Thomas A. Edison, William McKinley.” He fantasized about “freeing the slaves,” “illuminating the world,” or “facing an assassin’s bullet” like his heroes. He also dreamt of “healing the sick” and, as all poor boys imagine, of becoming rich.¹¹

Johnnie attended the local school, held three or four months during the winter in a one-room log house. It was three miles from his home, and he later recounted the usual story of walking there barefoot in the snow, uphill both ways. In cold weather, he wrapped his feet in gunny sacks. The school was ungraded, which was normal for the time, and each child was expected to master as many subjects as possible during the brief terms. The teacher was paid \$15 per month, plus free boarding with various families. This low remuneration resulted in inadequate pedagogues, and usually there was an annual turnover when the teacher found a better position.

When it was time for him to begin school, someone told Johnnie

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that the teacher enjoyed cutting off the ears of little boys. When she first came to call, unfortunately, she carried a large pair of scissors in her sewing bag. Johnnie refused to go to school that term. The next year Aunt Sally insisted that he begin, regardless of his fears. There to torment Johnnie this time was a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired little girl named Sally Margaret Wike, the daughter of Jack Wike, school board member and one of the wealthier men in the area. She was the teacher's pet, spoiled, arrogant, and fond of making fun of Johnnie and his patched overalls. She would tread on his bare feet with her leather shoes and, at opportune times, persuade her brother Claude to throw rocks at the boy whom everyone knew was illegitimate.

When Johnnie was thirteen, the school board lengthened the term and financed the change by charging students tuition. Aunt Sally did not have the requisite money, but Johnnie was allowed to attend anyway. Some of the board members later recalled that they had taken care of the additional cost. They employed A.M. Dawson, one of the best-known educators in western North Carolina, at \$75 per month. Dawson's two daughters taught the lower grades while he taught high school subjects. There was no actual high school and Dawson did not award certificates or diplomas, but students who attended his classes experienced no difficulty in being accepted for enrollment in Cullowhee Normal School. Dr. F.F. Brown, pastor of a church in Nashville and president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1932, recalled at that time that he and Johnnie had attended Dawson's school together. Brown subsequently was admitted to Mare Hill College without examination.¹²

By the time he reached sixteen, Johnnie had completed Dawson's courses and found a job carrying mail from Tuckasegee to Sylva. The father of one of his classmates, Vernon Cooper, had the Star Route contract to haul the mail the fifteen-mile distance for \$30 per month. He paid Johnnie \$8 monthly, plus room and board, to carry it for him. Johnnie now had enough money to support himself and Aunt Sally, and—after the poverty of childhood and school days—this lifestyle seemed luxurious. He got up at four o'clock every morning except Sundays, picked up the mail at Tuckasegee, rode a horse to East LaPorte, where his collections were stamped and deposited in the mail bag, and afterward made a similar stop at Cullowhee. Then he rode to Sylva where his letters and packages were sent on down the line. He had a layover at Sylva before his return trip, during which he carefully cultivated the friendship of R.M. Grasty, a large, portly, perennially tired man, who was the depot agent for the Southern Railroad. By now Johnnie's ambition

to become a doctor had hardened. But he was told that one no longer “read” medicine with a doctor as his father had done. It was necessary to attend medical school, which was expensive. In the mountains there were two ways to earn enough money to migrate: teaching school for a meager salary or working for the railroad. The telegraph fascinated the boy, but Grasty told him he was not officially permitted to teach telegraphy.

Johnnie kept busy during his two hour stopover by helping in the depot. He swept the waiting rooms, kept the coal bucket full, and assisted with the baggage and freight. Soon Grasty came to expect him to do these chores. Johnnie held off doing them for a week and the agent got the hint. The old man then agreed to teach him to use the telegraph and Johnnie “learned real quick,” the operator reported. The lad bought a telegraph set from Montgomery Ward, which enabled him to practice at home, when he was not reading a book on medicine. He now had photographs of his three heroes on his wall in the Cooper house. He wanted to pattern himself after Abraham Lincoln, who saved the Union, and Thomas Edison, who also got his start in telegraphy. The third, an image of President William McKinley wearing a Masonic apron, mysteriously fired his imagination.¹³

When one lives in the mountains, it is natural to wonder what lies on the other side. Johnnie had heard of electric lights, telephones, and banks where people kept lots of money, but Sylva did not have any of these wonders. With a population of almost fifteen thousand, Asheville—some fifty miles to the east—was the closest metropolitan center. But how could he get there without money? A round trip ticket on the railroad cost \$2.40. Fortunately, the cow bore a calf, which he sold for \$5. Grasty gave him the name of a woman in Asheville who would furnish him a room, supper, and breakfast for fifty cents. He had Mr. Cooper find someone to carry the mail for two days and boarded the train to the big city, dressed, Wood asserts, in a dirty shirt, breeches held up by suspenders, no underwear, and no shoes or socks. There he rode a streetcar for five cents, asking the motorman and conductor numerous questions about the marvelous new sights. Amused, they let him stay on until they met another line, where the conductor turned him over to a colleague for a free ride in a different direction. This continued all afternoon until he had seen all of Asheville. He followed directions and walked to the park where he saw a tame bear and a monkey, ate a slice of cold watermelon, and touched ice in August for the first time in his life. He found a fruit stand, the first he had ever seen, and bought “two bits worth of bananas” at a penny apiece. “He ate them and ate

them and ate them, and there were always more left . . . he has never cared for bananas since," the biography noted.

That evening Johnnie saw electric lights turned on. He found the rooming house, paid his fee, and ate supper. The next morning he did not know where to relieve himself until another roomer showed him the bathroom and the water closet. The country boy had to figure out for himself how to use the latter. When flushed, the water closet filled so rapidly he feared that the house would flood, and he left hurriedly without eating breakfast, before he could be blamed for the accident. He returned to Sylva that afternoon, his head filled with the wonders he had seen in the big city. The experience made him more determined than ever to escape the mountains and become a rich doctor.¹⁴

Later that year, the district superintendent of the Southern Railroad stopped at Sylva. He fell into conversation with Johnnie, who informed him of his ambition to become a doctor. "You ought to go to Johns Hopkins," the man said, "I'll give you a round-trip pass and you go up there and see what they can do for you." Johns Hopkins had opened its medical school a decade earlier and had become the most prestigious in the nation, with high entrance and graduation standards. Brinkley's biographer relates a most unusual, even preposterous, story of what happened in Baltimore. According to Wood, a barefoot Johnnie appeared at the school, again in his dirty shirt, with trousers held up by galluses and no underclothing, and presented himself to the medical dean. "What high school did you attend?" was one of the dean's first questions. When informed it was Tuckasegee, the dean replied, "I never heard of it. You are probably a good mail carrier. I advise you to stick with that."

Outside, the boy sat on the curb sobbing. A man asked him about his problem and slowly the story came out. The sympathetic fellow showed him a card and sent him to Professor Heap of Milton Academy who gave him a quick examination of high school subjects. The learned teacher said Johnnie had an excellent secondary education and gave him some topics to study. One had to be twenty-one to matriculate at the medical school. So the professor encouraged Johnnie to "go back to your mail carrying job and work on these assignments. Then you can attend Milton Academy next year for some of the subjects you have not had." Johnnie returned to his job in Sylva and continued to do his homework in preparation for attendance at the academy, but this dream was beyond his financial means. (Brinkley likely concocted this story later as background for his improbable claim that he graduated from Milton.)¹⁵

Johnnie eventually got a job with a railroad as a telegrapher

for the fabulous salary of \$45 per month, triple what one could earn teaching. For the next four years he worked at various depots in the area. While at Sylva, he had an interesting experience that later proved useful. A woman sued the Western Union company, alleging that a message sent from Sylva had not arrived in Asheville in time for her to attend her sister's funeral at Cullowhee. When the investigator, a man named Calvert, learned that Johnnie had lived in the area all his life, he appointed him "company detective." Johnnie contacted one of his former teachers and another friend, Professor Robert L. Madison of State Normal School (now Western Carolina University) at Cullowhee. They had seen the woman at the funeral. The professor had given her a glass of water when she fainted at the side of her sister's casket, while the former teacher held her baby for her at the same time. The company representative was pleased with the convincing evidence his "detective" had uncovered for him and promised Johnnie that, if he was ever in need of help, he could call on Western Union.¹⁶

Like Edison, Brinkley began in telegraphy; and like Edison, he traveled to New York City. He found the headquarters of Western Union and informed the manager that he was the best telegrapher in the world. He received a job and worked there for a period, moved to the Central Railway Company in New Jersey, and then worked for the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad in Hoboken. In the fall of 1906, when friends wrote him that Aunt Sally was becoming very feeble, he returned home. He obtained a transfer to work at Bryson City, just east of Waynesville, and moved her there. On Christmas Day 1906, she died and was buried in the Wike cemetery beside her husband, Johnnie's natural father. This broke his last tie to the mountains, but it was a powerful one. Years later he erected a granite memorial to her at a curve on Highway 107 and the Tuckasee River. It bears a bronze inscription that reads:

THE BOYHOOD HOME
OF
DR. JOHN R. BRINKLEY
AND HIS
AUNT SALLY
HER GRAVE IS ON THE HILL-
TOP ACROSS THE RIVER SHE IS
REMEMBERED AND LOVED FOR
MINISTRATIONS TO THE
SICK OF THIS COMMUNITY
THIS MARKER ERECTED IN 1937

IN LOVING MEMORY
 BY
 HER 'LITTLE BOY JOHNNIE'
 SHE WAS THE ONLY MOTHER I
 EVER KNEW

john r. brinkley m.d.

The only monument or physical reminder he erected to his father, John Richard Brinkley, is a joint marker for him and Aunt Sally, buried side by side in the Wike cemetery.¹⁷

After the funeral, Sally Wike expressed her sympathy. A pert, pretty, mature blonde, she seemed to Johnnie so alluring and sincere as she apologized for treating him badly when they were schoolmates. She was twenty-two, a year older than he. He had been a small boy for his age and, at twenty-one, was still of slight build at 5 feet 6 inches and 150 pounds, with a high forehead and auburn hair. Though Sally had always seemed so unattainable, her friendliness as an adult appeared sincere, and Johnnie began courting her. He shared his dreams of becoming a doctor with her while she listened and empathized. She had traveled very little and was parochial. He seemed worldly in comparison to the other boys in Sylva, with his journeys around the country on railroad passes. His stories and dreams fascinated her and, in turn, she provided the security and love he needed to compensate for the loss of Aunt Sally. After an exceedingly brief courtship, they married on January 27, 1907, at Sylva. It proved to be a stormy, acrimonious marriage—producing three daughters, a son who did not survive, and bitter feelings toward each other—which ended, finally, in divorce.¹⁸

For a time John became a Quaker doctor, with Sally as his assistant, and they had a medicine show in which everyone was called “friend” and there was much “theeing” and “thouing.” Dressed in a long cut-away with striped trousers, these “doctors” presented an entertaining play as well as song and dance routines as they hyped a medicine or tonic from one small town to the next. It was during this time that Brinkley began to develop his style of talking to the “home folks.” Here, too, as Gerald Carson observes, “perhaps he found something congenial in the professional attitude of the ‘med show’ spieler to whom a dollar gained by his wits had an allure that was lacking in a ten-spot come by honestly.”¹⁹

This period witnessed the heyday of the vaudeville-medicine shows huckstering patent medicines. These nostrum promoters utilized several marketing techniques in their business: frequent

and repetitious advertising; promotion of credentials, assurances, and proof of the technique's or medicine's effectiveness; distribution of books and pamphlets on medical advice freely or cheaply; extensive quotation of the Bible; motivating potential buyers by capitalizing on their fears; and emphasizing the failings of traditional doctors—including claiming that their advice leads to the grave, that they are profit-seekers rather than healers, and that they are blind to new medical discoveries. John Brinkley learned these lessons well and would develop and expand upon them vastly when he began practicing medicine.²⁰

John eventually gave up this uncertain life, though, and the Brinkleys, with little daughter Wanda Marion, born on November 5, 1907, found themselves in the big city of Chicago, living in a basement room, with John still wanting to be a doctor. He obtained a job with Western Union, but told Sally, "You know I'll never get anywhere in this job. I want to go to medical school." He investigated Bennett Medical College, an eclectic institution that, several years later, became the medical school of Loyola University. Easterners regarded Chicago at the time as the "home roost of all quacks and irregulars," a category in which the "regular" doctors placed eclectics.²¹

At the end of the nineteenth century, American medical schools were at a crossroads with respect to philosophy, the scramble for students, and the practices of their graduates. Earlier in the century, many young men "read" medicine with a doctor and then began practicing when they believed they were ready to go on their own. Professionalism developed, but slowly, as poor economic conditions in the rurally dominated, preindustrial era encouraged most Americans to care for themselves. People typically consulted a doctor only in an emergency, and payment often had to be made in kind. Then medical schools began to proliferate and doctors started complaining of overcrowding in their field. Educational and licensing requirements were lax or nonexistent and, in rural areas, self-proclaimed medical people became so plentiful that a second occupation—often farming, pharmacy, or midwifery, or a combination of these—was necessary for a doctor's survival. Complicating the situation was the fact that physicians did not command widespread respect among rural people until well into the twentieth century, local medicine men and women being the exception. Before that time, lower- and middle-class people often viewed doctors as being less effective in treating common ailments than home remedies, greedy in their fees, and prone to operate before attempting alternatives. Peddlers of patent medicines prospered because of these attitudes.²²

To combat these conditions, young doctors in the Eastern Coast states with higher professional goals met in New York City in 1846. They agreed to come together again the following year in Philadelphia and there they established what became the American Medical Association (AMA). This regional effort endured early frustration because these “regular” doctors were in a catch-22. If the schools in their states raised their requirements, students would migrate to more lenient climes. In addition, as one of the results of Jacksonian Democracy, many states repealed their medical licensing regulations altogether. Thus, the “regulars” could not look to their governments for protection by maintaining or raising professional criteria. During its first half century of existence, the AMA made little progress in raising medical standards. The “irregulars” claimed, successfully, that the association was attempting to monopolize the field of medicine. Early AMA efforts to achieve voluntary reforms of medical education basically failed and the “irregulars” thrived, along with the merchants of nostrums.²³

By the turn of the twentieth century, sectarianism was the most divisive force in medicine and the “regulars” became increasingly determined to drive the “irregulars” out of the profession. By that time, there were at least five principal philosophies, or schools of thought, operating within the medical field. Samuel Hahnemann, a German doctor, founded the homeopathy branch or division, rooted in the belief that diseases could be cured by drugs that produced similar symptoms, or “the law of similars.” The effect of these drugs could be heightened by administering minute doses. Homeopathy stressed the need for a close relationship between doctor and patient because symptoms had to be learned from consultation between the two, much like modern psychiatry. Homeopathy is experiencing a revival in recent years, especially in Europe and through the use of herbal medicines in America. In contrast, the practice of the “regulars,” or allopathy (as it was called then by the homeopaths and eclectics), promoted the doctrine that contravening drugs could best treat disease. As such, it prescribed treating illnesses with drugs that produced symptoms opposite those of the sickness. A third school, osteopathy, was founded by Taylor Still, a medical illiterate. Osteopathy was based on the premise that illness is caused by a dysfunction within the blood or nervous systems. The actual problem arose, Still taught, from the malfunctioning of the small bones in the spine (“osteopathy” means sick bones). The fourth group, chiropractors, borrowed heavily from the osteopaths for their philosophy of manipulating the spine to relieve nerve disorders. Lastly, the eclectics, whose founder, Wooster Beach, edited

a journal in which he denounced “King-craft,” “Priest-craft,” “Lawyer-craft,” and “Doctor-craft,” held a doctrine similar to Thomsonism, asserting that minerals, which came from the ground, were deadly while herbs, which grew toward the sun, were healing. Basically herbal healers, eclectics incorporated into their practice many other medical theories. They accepted and taught conventional medical science but, as their name indicates, were empiricists. They stressed using the medicine that was best for the individual patient or disease and denounced the excessive use of bleeding and mercury treatments—which they believed to be ineffective and even lethal—by the allopaths. Eclectics were best known for their herbal medicines, though, and this is the reason some eclectic doctors survived into the 1960s.

The three major sects—homeopaths, allopaths, and eclectics—stressed scientific training. All taught basically the same courses in chemistry, anatomy, pathology, physiology, and other fundamental clinical subjects offered in a medical curriculum. They differed primarily in their use of therapeutics. The general public was likely unaware of these differences, but to the practitioners they were real and crucial. The sects differed, too, in their numbers of institutions. In 1880 the “regulars” had 76 schools, the homeopaths 14, and the eclectics 8. Ten years later these numbers were 106, 16, and 9, respectively, demonstrating stability among the “irregulars” and the increase in strength and influence of the “regulars” during the 1880s. In Kansas in 1883, a reliable source notes, there were 515 eclectics, 104 homeopaths, and 729 allopaths—more eclectics than there were in all of New England. One eclectic doctor boasted that nowhere was eclecticism “more flourishing or numerically stronger” than in the Sunflower State. In all these categories, much of their education was taught by practitioners in the proprietary schools, with staff splitting the profits from the tuition. Many of them desperately sought students, and their requirement, basically, was ability to pay tuition regardless of the students’ degree of literacy.²⁴

Changes came rapidly in medicine during the 1880s and 1890s. By that time the germ theory had gained widespread acceptance, Louis Pasteur had begun immunizing against hydrophobia and anthrax, and Robert Koch of Germany had discovered the bacillus of tuberculosis and the source of cholera. Others found the bacterias causing bubonic plague, diphtheria, and typhoid fever. Wilhelm Konrad Roentgen developed the X ray and Joseph Lister of Great Britain began emphasizing the overarching concept of antiseptic surgery. These revolutionary developments affected all the various schools of medical thought and practice. It should be noted, though,

that these discoveries were basically preventatives. The cures were still in the future, but the age of scientific medicine was dawning just before the twentieth century.²⁵

In this more professional atmosphere, all the sects finally agreed on the need for restoring licensing, a requirement that had been largely abandoned during the period of Jacksonian Democracy. The "regulars" joined the "irregulars" in this effort but early successes came, of course, only when doctors of all types in each state agreed on the need for a medical diploma as the basic criterion for practice. Already practicing physicians were grandfathered, or permitted to continue to practice regardless of the type of degree they held. The "regulars" did not suppress the "irregulars" so much as they coopted them over time. Missouri, for example, passed a law in 1874 requiring only a degree from a legally chartered medical school for licensing. As a result, the state "soon had more medical colleges than anyone could keep track of," concluded Paul Starr. "Many were simply diploma mills." One of these diploma mills would figure heavily in Brinkley's career.²⁶

Soon after arriving in Chicago, John Brinkley made an appointment to talk to Dr. John Dill Robertson, president of Bennett Medical College. The president had once been a telegraph operator, which immediately established a rapport between the applicant and the official. He explained that matriculation in the college cost \$25 with an annual tuition of \$125. If a student could pay the initial fee, he could register and the annual tuition could accumulate until the senior year, but all obligations had to be paid before receiving a diploma. The good doctor, according to Brinkley's official biographer, never explained to the prospective student the different schools of medical thought or the fact that the AMA refused to recognize eclectic degrees. This appears doubtful, as John usually knew exactly what he was doing before he acted, but Wood states that to John, a medical school was a medical school. He borrowed \$25 and matriculated in the summer of 1908. The institution required a high school diploma and he discovered that neither Tuckasegee High nor Milton Academy were accredited in Illinois. He appeared before Peter A. Downey, deputy examiner for the superintendent of public instruction, and passed a series of high school subjects, receiving an Illinois certificate attesting to this achievement on October 23, 1908.²⁷

Medical school classes consumed his day from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. He requested a transfer to the night shift at Western Union in order to continue in school, but he was refused. John told his boss to wire Mr. Calvert about the matter. The latter made sure he got the

night job, and John began working from 5:30 P.M. until the relief man came, usually around 1:00 A.M. This left little time for sleep and, one day, after weeks of this schedule, he fainted in class from exhaustion. Earning only \$75 per month to support a wife and daughter, John was unable to save for tuition. He skipped breakfast and spent five cents for a beer at Boggianna's Saloon across the street from the medical school, where he also ate as much free lunch as the bartender would allow. In the evenings, he bought a ten-cent dinner downtown at Pittsburgh Joe's before going to work. This was an exhausting regimen and, with the added expense of buying medical books, he was going deeper into debt. In the midst of all this, a son was born but—to add to his woes—John Almon survived only three days.

His interest in medical classes kept him going. John had heard of Dr. Henry A. Harrower, who later became a noted preparer of glandular extracts. At that time, the study of glands in medical education was in its infancy. Harrower's lectures at the college convinced John that this would be an intriguing field of investigation that would lead to scientific eminence in the medicine of the future, a view on which he later based his career as a glandular surgeon. At the end of the second year, John spent the summer working a double shift, 5:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M., at Western Union. After giving Sally his first double check, he came home from work to find both wife and daughter gone, with the money. She had left him \$1.10 "for car-fare," noting that he could charge his meals until next payday. Now he had no money to apply to the tuition debt.

Sally sought a divorce and, pending a final settlement, the judge ordered John to pay alimony and child support totaling \$15 per week. He worked two months, making these payments, then grew desperate as the fall semester approached. Sally left Wanda at her sister's house while she worked, and on one of the days the judge allowed him to visit his daughter, he made careful preparations. He timed his call so he could rush in, seize Wanda, and board a train for Montreal as it left the station, one jump ahead of the police. A judge told him that Canada would not extradite a father for kidnapping his own child. Sally wanted her daughter back, forcing her to negotiate for a reconciliation. She had the alimony order dismissed and the reunited family returned to Chicago.

The medical school years were difficult for both of them. Adjusting to marriage, having children, and working long hours proved too difficult. Sally, who was spoiled and ill-tempered, complained that she could never buy decent clothes and that their living quarters were unbearably squalid. John, on the other hand, resented

his wife's continually berating him because he would never amount to anything and, she claimed, he did not "have enough brains to be a doctor." He also worried about the questionable company Sally kept, including a woman who belonged to the Holy Roller sect, and the fact that she visited odd places.²⁸

A Sylva neighbor attested to a story Jack Wike told about his daughter. When his wife, Laura, visited Sally in Chicago and met the Holy Roller woman, an immediate mutual dislike resulted. Later Sally and the woman visited the Wike family, at which time the barn burned down. In 1930, the two returned to Sylva to visit, and the woman burned down the Wike house. The Wikes rebuilt, and when Sally and her friend appeared again Laura Wike drove them away with a stick.²⁹

Acrimony begat acrimony and, before the end of Brinkley's third year at medical school, Sally left him again. The first news he heard was that she had returned to Tuckasegee and had borne another child, Erna Maxine, on July 11, 1911. He wrote the North Carolina State Board of Medical Examiners, explaining his medical training, and received permission to work in the state as an "undergraduate physician" in the summer of 1911. He returned to the mountains to set up a practice. He had purchased a secondhand medical kit before leaving Chicago, which he used to perform his first surgery. A young man working at a sawmill had cut his foot so badly that John had to finish amputating. The fellow lived to tell about it. With his primitive practice, the young doctor accumulated some livestock and a few dollars, but never enough to return to medical school and pay his delinquent tuition. Following another reconciliation with Sally, a friend bragged about Florida's attractions and the Brinkleys moved to Jacksonville, where they lived for a period. Then they migrated to Whiteville and later lived in Vineland, North Carolina, with John working as a telegrapher. He discovered that he was qualified for an undergraduate license by the laws of Tennessee and practiced briefly in Dandridge. These were the years in which Sally later said "we were packing up and going all the time from one place to another."

Leaving Sally, he traveled to St. Louis and found three medical schools that would admit him if he could have Bennett Medical School attest to his three years of training there. But because he did not have the money to pay the tuition he owed, Bennett would not forward his records. He remained in St. Louis during 1912 and 1913, matriculating, he claimed, in the National University of Arts and Sciences and receiving some credits and a scroll, although what he actually did during this interim is unknown. This was a diploma

mill that peddled degrees for payments of \$200 to \$500, offering general subjects and a certificate of attendance for \$100. John received one of these diplomas, signed by Dean W.P. Sachs, stating he had attended there for two years. During later California proceedings against John, Sachs testified he did not know Brinkley and that it was a fraudulent document he had signed in 1918, but falsely dated as 1913.³⁰

He returned to North Carolina, reconciled again with Sally, and she later bore him another daughter, Naomi Beryl, on February 11, 1913. They lived in New York City for a while, then returned to Chicago. Sally finally decided that she had endured enough of this wandering. She gave him an ultimatum: either he forget his medical plans, go to work for Western Union, and support his family, or their marriage was over. When he refused to abandon his medical pursuits, she again left him in 1913, returning to her parents home in North Carolina. She later married John Engren, a carpenter from Princeton, Illinois.³¹

The Wood biography offers little insight into the life of John Brinkley during the following period. These months were filled with flight from bill collectors, hitch-hiking or riding the rails, and fraud—adventures that he neglected to mention for his official biographer to chronicle. In 1912 he had used his “undergraduate” license to practice medicine in Tennessee, finding employment with a Dr. Burke in Knoxville who did not possess a medical degree but owned a chain of offices around the region, concentrating on treating syphilis and gonorrhea. This business featured John frightening “rustic sinners” with detailed models of the results of sexual indiscretions, and Dr. Burke, the “specialist,” curing them. Ever mobile, John returned to Chicago where he met James E. Crawford of Oxford, Mississippi, at the horseshoe-shaped bar in the Breevoort Hotel. Crawford had been a salesman and wanderer and would later reside in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary for transporting a stolen car, and in McAlester Prison for robbing the Hotel Mayo in Tulsa.³²

The Wood biography relates that Crawford was on his way to China to become a missionary, a highly unlikely story given his shady background. He persuaded Brinkley to accompany him to the Orient as a medical missionary, where a diploma or license would not be required. Perhaps, Crawford suggested, John could continue in a medical school there and get a degree. Before sailing to China, though, the two had to stop first in Oxford to say goodbye to Crawford’s parents, then in Memphis to say farewell to his brother. All this was a biographical device to get Brinkley to Memphis, where he would meet the love of his life.³³

Actually, Crawford and John discussed the Burke scam and the two formed a partnership, moving to Greenville, South Carolina, where they opened a two-room office at the corner of Coffee and Main Streets over a shoe store. They hung a sign proclaiming "Greenville Electro Medic Doctors" and placed advertisements in local newspapers reading: "Are You a Manly Man Full of Vigor?" Those who came to receive more manhood were interviewed by Crawford, who was called "Dr." Burke, and then "Dr." Brinkley treated them. The two later claimed they were using salvarsan—a medicine developed by German bacteriologist Paul Erlich for treating venereal disease—or neo-salvarsan for injections, but it was revealed they used a colored distilled water solution for which they charged \$25. After two months, they suspected that their scam was about to disintegrate, and the pair hurriedly left town with unpaid bills for rent, a telephone, newspaper ads, clothing, and pharmaceutical supplies. They made their way to Oxford, thence to Memphis, where Crawford once lived. There Crawford called a couple of girls he knew; one of them was Minnie (Minerva) Telitha Jones.³⁴

Minnie was the daughter of a physician, Tiberius Gracchus Jones, a member of an old and respected Tennessee family. She was lovely, vivacious, fun to be with, and twenty-one, seven years Brinkley's junior; John was attractive, worldly, and full of ambition. It was love at first sight. John neglected to tell her that he already had a wife, and they were married a few days later on August 23, 1913, at the Peabody Hotel. She took him to meet her parents and, the Wood biography states, they "liked him immediately." The couple honeymooned extensively on the funds John collected for his work in Greenville. They spent two weeks in the Federal Hotel in Kansas City, a week in Denver, and three weeks in Pocatello, before returning to Tennessee.

When John next met Crawford, it was in the Greenville jail. Brinkley was arrested in Knoxville and extradited to South Carolina for practicing medicine without a license and for kiting \$40 to \$50 checks in that state. John told Sheriff Hendrix Rector that it was all Crawford's fault. When asked about Crawford's whereabouts, Brinkley readily replied that he was "showing considerable attention to a young lady in Pocatella [*sic*]." The proper authorities were notified and Crawford was returned to South Carolina. He was not pleased with John for "ratting" on him. Dr. Jones struck a deal and retrieved his son-in-law from the creditors for \$200, and on his lawyer's advice, John left town immediately and had his luggage forwarded. Crawford escaped the clutches of the law by paying \$400 on the unpaid bills. The two spent some time in Atlanta, where John

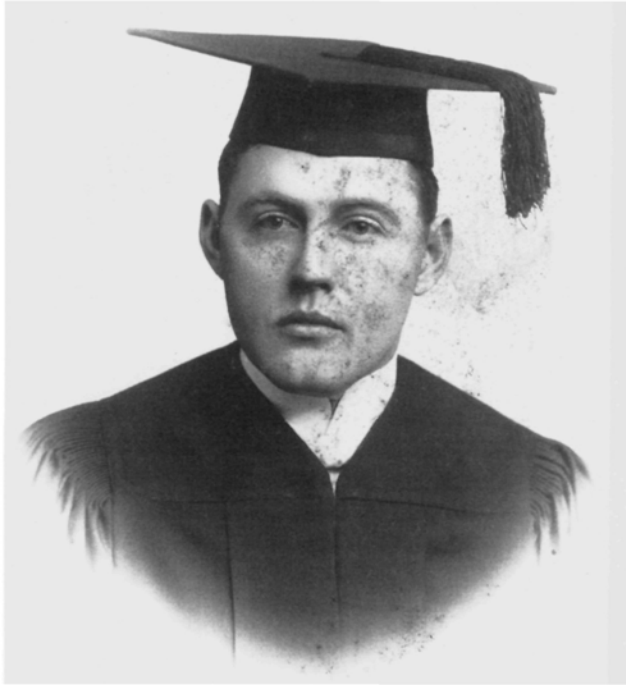
paid him some of the money he owed, and Crawford accepted it as a settlement.³⁵

Brinkley met Crawford years later on a street in Kansas City, where the latter was working and John was attending medical school. They met again in 1922 in the barbershop of the Baltimore Hotel in Kansas City, where John informed Crawford he had his own hospital in a little Kansas town. Crawford asked him if he ran it in any way comparable to their operation in Greenville, and he replied, "very similar," or words to that effect." They would meet again when John ran for public office in Kansas.³⁶

Soon after John and Minnie married, Sally Wike heard the news and came to Memphis to confront the couple, informing Minnie she was still Mrs. Brinkley as she and John had never divorced. It was not until John established a lucrative medical practice in Kansas in 1920 that Sally was able to force him to come to an agreement to help support his daughters.

In 1914 Brinkley practiced medicine in Arkansas with an "undergraduate license" issued by the State Eclectic Board for a one year period. He worked in Judsonia, located between Memphis and Little Rock, for a short time. "Diseases of women and children a specialty," he advertised. This sojourn added to his experience, but did not prove to be very profitable. He frequently rented a horse at the livery stable and galloped out of town. A curious citizen followed one day and discovered that John stopped about a mile out, turned around, and rode back home leisurely. While he impressed some of the locals with his industriousness, he was not as much in demand as he wished. It was during this slack period that he joined the Army Reserve Medical Corps.³⁷

A few months later John took over the practice of a Dr. White in Earle, Arkansas, who was moving to Connecticut to open an office. White asked the postmaster to forward his first-class mail and to leave Brinkley the magazines, circulars, and lower class mail. One day John received a brochure from the Eclectic Medical University of Kansas City, White's alma mater. Recognizing the possibilities, he immediately wrote the school's secretary, describing his three years of study at Bennett College and asking if he could be accepted for their fourth-year program. The secretary responded that he would have to persuade Bennett to send an affidavit affirming his work there and pay \$100 for his final year of classes. He paid the accumulated tuition in Chicago, for which Bennett officials were happy to send the required document. The Brinkleys had saved enough for a year at school and, in October 1914, he and Minnie moved to Kansas City. He received his degree on May 7, 1915, having special-



John Brinkley at graduation. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

ized in the irritations and enlargement of the prostate in elderly men. He now possessed as good a medical education as many of his contemporaries.³⁸

Dr. Edward Mentor Perdue, who was a pupil of Dr. Albert Abrams and remained a lifelong believer in the etherator, was currently, according to the Wood biography, collaborating with the faculty of the University of Rome Medical School on research that sought to determine the cause, prevention, and cure of pellagra. The allopaths controlled the State Board of Health of Missouri, the doctor informed his students, and they would not be allowed to take the examination for a license in that state unless they paid a \$500 fee, or bribe. The Eclectic Medical Board of Arkansas was less demanding, for it was one of only eight states that recognized Perdue's school, so he bussed the entire graduating class to Little Rock. They took the medical examinations for two and a half days. Dr. Brinkley passed and received his license to practice medicine in Arkansas. He now needed to be licensed in the state where he wanted to practice.³⁹

John returned to Tennessee where he took that state's medical

examination and received a license to practice. His father-in-law wanted him to join his office, but John declined as it was not the type of specialization he had in mind. Someone told him Kansas had reciprocity with Arkansas, so he pawned a portable X ray machine in Kansas City and paid the \$25 fee for a Kansas license—number 5845—on February 16, 1916. He later acquired medical licenses in Missouri, Texas, and Connecticut, also through reciprocity.⁴⁰

While searching for a good location in Kansas, John took a job with Swift Packing Company for \$15 per week in Kansas City, Missouri, where he met the billy goat. He and Minnie lived with another doctor who worked at the plant, paying him \$10 weekly for their board and room. His duties did not involve the livestock, but the job offered him, as he put it, “an unprecedented opportunity for studying the diseases of animals” and their glands. This fringe benefit would more than compensate for his salary, which was little more than he earned as a telegraph operator. Goats, he discovered, were immune to diseases communicable to man. U.S. meat inspectors informed him that, when determining whether or not to approve a carcass, they first examined its glands. If they were healthy, the meat was fit for consumption. When he asked them which type of animal was the healthiest, they assured him it was the goat, without hesitation. They had seen over 500,000 goats slaughtered, and never once did they discover in them a disease communicable to man.⁴¹

Sometime during the stay in Kansas City, the Brinkleys decided if John were going to become a respectable doctor, he would have to resolve the problem of being a bigamist. Minnie made John hire a lawyer and file for a divorce. In his suit he attested to having lived in Kansas City, Kansas, the required one year for residence eligibility. He was currently living in Kansas City, Missouri, and the previous year had attended the Eclectic University of Kansas City in Missouri. So his claim was not completely accurate, but close, as only a river separated the cities. He further stated that he had advertised for the previous three consecutive weeks in the *Kansas City Sun* but was unable to ascertain Sally Wike’s place of residence. He stated that they were married on January 27, 1907, which was true, and that the marriage took place in New York City, which was false. Had John been honest, the judge might have decided that Sylva, North Carolina, was a small town and someone there might answer an inquiry on the whereabouts of Sally; there would be no such inquiry for New York. The judge granted the divorce pro forma on December 15, 1915, and finalized it on February 21, 1916. On February 25, 1916, in Liberty, Missouri, John and Minnie were again

married, this time somewhat legally, though they neglected to wait the required six-months following the divorce.⁴²

In 1930 in the trial of his suit against the Kansas Board of Medical Examiners to retrieve his license, John remained fairly consistent, if not completely accurate. Under cross-examination, he stated that he and Sally were married in New York City and, after Sally got an annulment, he married Minnie in 1915. He admitted that, after he was established in Milford, Sally sent her attorney to him and they reached a settlement for child support. He supported his daughters "throughout their entire lifetime," he insisted with much exaggeration. Under questioning, he refused to admit that Sally had him arrested in Memphis. The attorney general did not state whether the charge was lack of child support payments or bigamy, but the question came in the midst of those concerning divorce, annulment, and marriage to Minnie.⁴³

The Brinkleys drifted from town to town for two years. While he was working at Swift, a doctor in Kansas wrote John's school, asking for an assistant. Perdue recommended him, so Brinkley pawned his watch for travel money. He departed a few days thereafter, though, when he discovered the man was performing illegal abortions. One could succeed financially in medicine without breaking the law, he concluded, although he would occasionally stretch it considerably. There was a short stay in Hays before he bought the practice of O.H. Piper of Axtell, which he left one month later. The local newspaper stated that "he posed as an ear, eye, nose, and throat specialist but seemed more concerned in securing a location than in his practice." Then he believed he found his destiny in Fulton, part of Bourbon County, in the southeast corner of the state.⁴⁴

In Fulton, the Brinkleys began to prosper for the first time. His practice received a big boost when he examined an elderly couple and recommended a good cleaning out, with prescriptions for constipation, liver problems, and kidney flushing. One of John's favorite sayings was that "an old stovepipe won't draw if it isn't cleaned out." The old folks were soon bustling about town, singing the praises of the new doctor and sending in patients. John asked one of them, bank cashier Frank Carter, about a loan for an automobile. Frank told him to go to Fort Scott, select a car, write a check, and he would honor it with a loan. Brinkley purchased a Ford for \$417, the largest check he had ever written. Carter later told John he thought a doctor should drive something better than a "Tin Lizzie," so he sold the Ford to the bank bookkeeper and purchased a Saxon Six for \$700. The two Brinkleys joined every available organization in town. He became a Third Degree Mason on January 25, 1917, went to



Dr. John R. Brinkley, wearing his signature glasses and goatee. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

Fort Scott to pursue Masonry to the thirty-second degree, and was made a Shriner in Pittsburg, Kansas. In addition, he affiliated with the Odd Fellows and Modern Woodmen of America and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in Fulton. Minnie Brinkley also joined the Methodists and the Order of Eastern Star, an affiliate of the Masons. It was in Fulton that John began cultivating a moustache and goatee.

The manpower demands of World War I drained the faculty of the Eclectic Medical University of Kansas City, John's alma mater, and Dr. Alexander was forced to recruit an inferior faculty and re-name his institution. Minnie then received an M.D. degree from the institution and John decided to take another M.D. degree from the school, renamed the Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery. A short time later, a national scandal erupted over this reconstituted school as its officials had sold hundreds of medical certifi-

cates. Minnie also received a graduate degree in nursing, from the Brinkley-Jones Hospital in Milford, Kansas. President John R. Brinkley and vice president Minnie T. Brinkley signed her certificate.⁴⁵

It was in Fulton that Brinkley received his first taste of politics. When the mayor's cat ate John's pet canary, John shot the feline, killing it—as he had done to the cat that had eaten his childhood pet pigeon. The mayor began attacking him in his newspaper columns. In retaliation, John announced his candidacy for mayor on a platform of “Clean Up, Clean Out, Keep Clean.” He received such a wide margin of victory that the mayor sold his newspaper and left town.⁴⁶

Soon after the election, in April 1917, the United States entered World War I, and First Lieutenant John Brinkley of the Medical Officers Reserve, who had organized the first ambulance company in Kansas the previous month, was activated and ordered to report to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. The Army soon stationed him at Fort Bliss in El Paso. Riding across southern Texas in late May is a warming experience, especially in full dress uniform with a wool shirt. But soldiers in uniform could not buy beer to cool off, or any alcoholic beverage. When the train arrived in Del Rio, a sympathetic civilian got off and bought a dozen cold beers. Leaving them in a wash basin, he looked at Brinkley and his traveling companion and said, “anyone can drink this beer that cares to.” John Brinkley enjoyed the refreshment so much that he always remembered Del Rio fondly.

The Army assigned him to the Sixty-fourth Regiment as Chief Medical Officer, and the Wood biography reports that he alone was responsible for the entire contingent of over 2,200 raw recruits. The biography describes his ordeal:

Dr. Brinkley was responsible for the sanitation of the whole regiment, the installation of latrines, sewage systems, garbage disposal—and this with a regiment of raw recruits. When the doctor asked them why they had joined the army, their invariable reply was that it was to get thirty dollars a month, with room and board thrown in. They had about as much patriotism visible as a horned toad.

An epidemic of meningitis swept the ranks. Measles, and many other acute and infectious diseases, began to make inroads among them. Many of his patients were in the hospital and the overflow was sick in their quarters. And there were many who were crippled and unfit for the army service—dozens of men on the roll, who should never

have been allowed to enlist. A captain, one day, who had been drilling a company, brought a man in to the doctor for examination, troubled because he could not get the man to step correctly in drill. Dr. Brinkley found that the man's hip had been almost shot away, and was completely ankylosed—that is, that the two bones had unnaturally knit together. Other men had severe heart disease, flat feet, broken arms and legs.

According to his official biography, military service was a terrible ordeal that he could scarcely endure. He was lucky if he got three or four hours of sleep at night. After a short time he collapsed from exhaustion and spent a month in the hospital, followed by a discharge with a certificate of disability. He went to Milford and, according to the biography, “rendered private service to our government,” continuing to serve in the reserves until August 1922.⁴⁷

The official Army records tell a different story, stating that Lieutenant Brinkley served a total of one month and five days. After working two days of this time, authorities placed him under observation for nervous exhaustion at the base hospital at Fort Bliss for the remainder of his service. They then discharged him and when his reserve officer's commission expired in 1922, it was not renewed.⁴⁸

John and Minnie returned to Fulton only to discover that another doctor had taken over his practice. He answered an advertisement in the *Kansas City Star* for a doctor in Milford, which the ad stated had a population of 2,000 (a typesetter at the *Star* had inadvertently added an extra zero). Carrie McDonald owned the building that housed the drug store operated by the departing physician and, wanting to keep it rented, had placed the notice in the newspaper. Brinkley did not want to begin a practice only to have a doctor return from the war to reclaim it, but upon inquiry a woman there wrote him that her son-in-law had moved to Junction City to practice medicine. Five doctors had left Junction City to go into military service and he was replacing one, she informed him; but regardless of what happened, her son would not return after the war because Milford did not have a high school for his children. The doctor who had moved would still tend his patients in Milford if they wished, but would charge a \$10 fee for driving there.⁴⁹

John was completely unfamiliar with the town and later discovered how it received its unusual name. Pennsylvania Dutch, led by Major Abram Barry, first settled Milford in 1855, followed by Vermonters the next year, who were sponsored by the New England Emigrant Aid Society and led by A.B. Whitney. Barry became the

first postmaster and Geary County representative in the Free Soil legislature in Topeka. The society established a grist mill for the inhabitants in 1863. Whitney later purchased it and became an important merchant in the community. Inhabitants first named this settlement Bachellor, after a Boston family, but too much confusion resulted over its spelling and in 1868 it was given a simpler name, Milford. A mill was an important business and the residents wanted travelers to know that they had both a mill race and a ford across the Republican River, two items of consequence in a frontier community. The Brinkleys drove there to look over the situation, hoping it could be a stable, permanent location—one where his world of poverty, of grubbing for a living through medicine shows and dubious practice, of constant moving searching for jobs, and of seeking medical legitimacy could possibly end.

Chapter 2

Toggenberg Goats

In 1968 the Army Corps of Engineers dammed the Republican River twelve miles north of the point where it joined with the Smoky Hill to form the Kansas River at Junction City, the county seat of Geary County (near the geographic center of the United States). This created the largest lake in Kansas and inundated most of old Milford so that modern visitors cannot find the remains of the Brinkley Hospital. The old town the Brinkleys visited in 1917 did not have a high school. It did not have traffic lights, traffic, or paved roads. It did not have water or sewer systems. It did not have electricity or even sidewalks. The railroad depot was across the river one mile from town, accessed by a dirt road. It was a rural area with large shade trees and, over a sixty year period, had acquired only a bank, two mills, a mercantile business, a telegraph, a post office with one rural route, and less than two hundred inhabitants.

John, however, saw possibilities in the community that others might overlook. When he told Minnie they would put down roots there, she burst out in tears. "Look at it this way," he reasoned with her, "Junction City doctors charge ten dollars to drive over these terrible dirt roads to make calls. I can make them for two dollars and we will prosper." She continued to cry. Milford was not at all like Memphis and, unlike living in Earle or Fulton, this location sounded permanent. At that time she had three print dresses, which she had to wash carefully so they would not fade further. She was ready for a better life, one more like that to which she was accustomed in Tennessee. In the attempt to better their livelihood by moving to Milford, the Brinkleys exemplified a national trend at that time of irregular doctors searching for medical work and, when available, taking practices abandoned by regular physicians.¹

Milford is located in a river valley on the fringes of the Flint Hills. The regional weather there, especially the hot, humid summer days, would affect his medical practice. In the era before air conditioning, Brinkley warned his patients that it was too hot in the summer to be hospitalized, and he advised them to follow his example in leaving the area on a vacation each summer.

Brinkley had been cultivating an idea since working at Swift in Kansas City and even earlier—a concept that could make him rich, but one that might work better initially if he were practicing at first in an isolated burg like Milford with its surrounding countryside of cattle raisers and farmers. But it was difficult at first to make ends meet. John and Minnie had only \$23 left from a \$35 fee for a tonsillectomy he had performed at Axtell, Kansas. They were in debt as the auto loan and the cost of the Masonic degrees were not yet paid. John traveled to various homes to treat the sick or to perform minor surgeries for hernias, tonsillitis, or appendicitis. Occasionally he received a call from Leonardville, Wakefield, or other surrounding small towns for surgery and, as he predicted, they slowly prospered. Six months later, after paying their bills, they could point with pride to \$2,000 in the bank.²

Milford's main commercial building came from the 1906 St. Louis World's Fair and had served a number of businesses over the years. It currently had a small drugstore, operated by the former doctor, which the Brinkleys rented for \$7 per month. The back comprised two rooms. John used one for his office, and they set up a bed in the other for their living quarters. Minnie took charge of the drugstore with its soda fountain and sundries. A Kansas City wholesaler stocked the store on credit and in the first month she enjoyed \$600 in sales.³

Brinkley was in Milford less than two weeks when an opportunity presented itself to initiate his great plan. Late one evening a farmer, with whom he was unacquainted, appeared at the drugstore asking for the doctor. He said he wanted to talk privately so they went into the "office." They chatted for some time, getting to know each other. John discussed his background, his lifelong desire to be a doctor, his experience working with the Swift company in Kansas City. It was strange that this would come up in a conversation with a stranger. Then the man told him why he really came to see him: "All in. No pep. A flat tire." He and his wife had a sixteen-year-old son and had wanted another child for some time. He had consulted other doctors, but none of them could help him with his impotency.

According to the Wood biography, "the doctor half closed his eyes and considered." Colleagues had told him how gullible older

men were when they were afflicted with sexual degeneracy. The code of ethics his father had drilled into him would not allow him to be anything but completely honest and straightforward. On the other hand, the lectures of Dr. Henry A. Harrower at the Bennett Medical College floated through his mind. He responded that he had treated sexually weak men with serums, medicine, and electricity, but was unable to help them. This was a plausible come-on. The farmer responded that John had been in the Army and undoubtedly had learned how to help someone with problems like his. Brinkley laughed, said no, then referred to his experience with goats at the meat-packing plant, observing, "you wouldn't have any trouble if you had a pair of those buck glands in you." "Well, why don't you put 'em in?" the farmer asked.

Brinkley protested vehemently, saying it was biologically impossible to transplant the glands of a lower animal to a higher one, or vice versa. The farmer remained adamant. "But it might kill you," the doctor warned. "You go ahead," was the response, "I'll take the risk." According to the biography, "Brinkley felt his flesh crawl, felt dirtied by the thought." Certainly, being new in his practice, he would not want anyone to know about it. Continuing the charade, he asked, "What if people found out?" "Who's to hear about it unless you tell them?" the farmer demanded. "I don't have a goat," the doctor weakly responded in a significant retreat. "But I have," the farmer triumphantly said. "I raise 'em. I'll furnish the goat. You do the operation."

They made the arrangements. The farmer brought the goat late one night, returned home after the surgery, and his wife called the next morning to report that her husband had the flu, an excuse for the doctor to come out and do a postoperative examination. The telephone operator in Milford could easily listen in on the conversation, so they had to be careful about what they said. Two weeks later the farmer again came to the drugstore late at night with a check for \$150. He was so happy with the results of the operation, he said, that he would have made it for a larger amount if he could have afforded it.

Naturally, gossip spreads around a small town, as John well knew, and soon another man, "Jake X," came in late at night saying he had the same problem. (The biography always refers to the first patient as "X.") On the promise, again, of strict secrecy, Brinkley operated this time on William Stittsworth. A month later William brought his wife in for an operation. If the male glands improved the man, as they seemed to have, Brinkley reasoned, a goat ovary might help a woman. He agreed to try this new concept. A year later the rejuvenated couple had a healthy baby boy, which they appropri-

ately and proudly named "Billy." Young Bill Stittsworth graduated from Milford High School with the class of 1936. Sixty years later, Bill gave a reporter his father's version of what happened: "Doctor Brinkley talked Dad into the operation for prostate trouble in November. He returned in February and Brinkley asked, 'Help you any?' Dad replied, 'I got my wife pregnant.' Brinkley snapped his finger and said, 'I got it! The rejuvenation of man.'"⁴

After several similar operations, a problem arose that the experimenting doctor had not anticipated. Billy's father was fortunate because his goat donor was an odorless Toggenberg. Two young men from California on whom Brinkley operated afterward, however, "smelled like a cross between a goat pen and a perfumery shop," the latter being used profusely to mask the penetrating animal musk they emitted. The odor eventually wore off, the men reported. John asked earlier patients why they did not experience odor problems as his most recent patients had. One examined the neutered goat used in the last operation and exclaimed, "That's an Angora billy, doc. I thought any dang fool would know an Angora stinks to high heaven." He told John that he had been successfully using Nibians, Saanans, and Toggenbergs, and after experimenting, the doctor subsequently used only three-week-old male and yearling female Toggenbergs. The California men's operations did not "take" and they returned for a second one, this time using Toggenbergs. Brinkley widely publicized Stittsworth's experience. Indeed, Stittsworth and his son were on the Brinkley payroll for a while, advertising the goat gland operation as a huge success in procreation. Most elderly men, however, were less interested in this consequence of the operation than in increased sexual performance and pleasure.⁵

An even more remarkable case soon appeared. The Stittsworths told John about their cousin in an insane asylum in Nebraska. He had been institutionalized, and his condition was caused, Brinkley claimed, by onanism or self-abuse. Brinkley operated and the man recovered, and later became an executive in a Kansas City bank. Brinkley added insanity to the growing list of ills that the goat gland operation could cure, provided the cause had sexual roots. A few years later, though, a doctor in Massillon, Ohio, wrote the secretary of the Geary County Medical Society inquiring about Brinkley's success in curing dementia praecox (schizophrenia). The county did not have a medical association and the postman delivered the letter to John. Not knowing the inquirer, he carefully answered that he had enjoyed some success in this area and had patients to prove his claim. He wrote that he believed the condition was "primarily due to the infections that invade various parts of the body and through a

general toxemia destroy or impair the functions of various glands." He assured the inquirer that some patients improved and others did not, adding, "We do not have a panacea by any means."⁶

Soon John had six operations behind him, all successful according to the patients. One day, when passing the barbershop, he heard a heated discussion coming from within over whether his operation could really be helpful. One man declared that if the doctor would operate on him, the rest could watch and see what Brinkley did during the procedure. "I'll settle the argument," John exclaimed, stepping inside at that point, "if you fellows will not tell people about it." He performed the operation and the man recovered. The barbershop gang began boasting, as John was certain they would, that the doctor had made Charlie Tassine a "regular billy goat," and Brinkley's reputation around Milford was established. Now he had to make certain that news of his success spread elsewhere through advertising.⁷

During the 1920s, there were two sensational new developments that would help him—radio and advertising—and Brinkley became a pioneer in and a master of both. In the Roaring Twenties, advertising men raised the inherited practice of printing the availability of products or services to a high art form through the psychology of motivation. Bruce Barton's book *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of Jesus* became the best-selling nonfiction book of 1925 and 1926. His theme was pointed: Jesus Christ was a great business executive because "he took twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." The ad men learned the delicate art of transfer. Movie stars or famous athletes used product "X," and thus you should also if you want to be successful and admired. They made Listerine an indispensable liquid for both sexes because it cured halitosis, a condition "your best friend would never tell you that you had." Never mind that it merely covered up one bad odor with another, it became a necessity in everyone's medicine cabinet.⁸

By this time, according to the official biography, Brinkley "had begun to realize he was gifted beyond the run of doctors." He "could not be bound by the rigid artificial ethics of the American Medical Association, the jealous sheep ethics of the leagued allopathic practitioners"—of which he was a member until expelled for extensive advertising. He had his own father's code by which to live. But he needed to discover a way of publicizing his operation without violating the current medical code, if possible. He had to call attention to his work and his unique ability as a surgeon in ways that would reach beyond his home region. He had already promoted himself

locally in a number of ways since moving to Milford, as self-advancement came naturally to him.

Legends abound in Kansas about John Brinkley. One has him crossing a raging river during a blizzard one night to sit at the bedside of a choking child for twenty hours and saving it from diphtheria. During the terrible flu epidemic of 1917–1918 that killed millions worldwide, Brinkley became widely known in east-central Kansas for his work with these victims. The scourge broke out in Camp Funston. On September 26, 135 cases were reported; by the first of October there were 1,100 infected in the Fort Riley area and the virus spread quickly throughout the region. His son's tutor recalled that Brinkley "seemed to have an uncanny knack with the flu. Maybe it was something he learned as a boy in the North Carolina mountains, I don't know, but whatever it was, it worked." Tom Woodbury of Milford remembered hauling Doc Brinkley around during this period. He had a 1914 Ford that could navigate the mud roads in winter that John's Saxon Six could not handle. "He was a wonderful doctor," Woodbury recalled, "he lost only one patient during the flu epidemic and he doctored all around the countryside and at Fort Riley." Mrs. A.W. Irion also retained affectionate memories of Brinkley. "He saved us," she said. "They called him a quack and that just breaks my heart. He was no quack, believe me." Mrs. Irion continued, "Money didn't matter to him, he took care of the poor as well as the wealthy. Everyone here would say that." Arfie Condray echoed the sentiment that "he was a fine doctor and certainly was no quack as he was made out to be. He was a wonderful man." Many Milford residents attested that he performed appendectomies or tonsillectomies free when the family could not pay. Arfie, for example, recalled that when she and three siblings had to have their tonsils and adenoids removed, Dr. Brinkley performed the operations gratis, as her parents were poor. During the great coal shortage in the winter of 1918, he made headlines by requesting a special allocation from the governor based on a medical need and received widespread public support. Brinkley was able to capitalize on these sentiments and utilize them for his own benefit.⁹

Yet now he needed professional help in promoting his special operation. He placed an advertisement in the *Kansas City Star* for an expert. An ad man from the big city came to look over his Milford operation. The man concluded that unless Brinkley had something new and sensational—such as a cancer cure or a new treatment for tuberculosis—there was nothing he could do to help. Well, there was something he did some time ago that was different. He had performed this goat gland operation successfully several times. When

he heard about Brinkley's unusual treatment, the ad man exclaimed, "We've got it! By God, we've got it! Doctor Brinkley, you have got a million dollars within your hands and you don't even realize it." (The promoter had no idea how much he was underestimating both the future income and his client's understanding.) The Kansas City man explained that Brinkley's operation represented something the whole world wanted—youth, the dream of Ponce de León. Brinkley feigned concern that the advertising guidelines of the American Medical Association—which had, in fact, cancelled his membership for his advertising indiscretions after he moved from Fulton—would complicate his promotion plans. The ad representative insisted, as Brinkley knew he would, that he must promote his operation as a medical marvel that the world was "entitled to know about." The consultant then discussed with him the details on how to promote himself, using newspapers, advertising, and direct mailing—marketing strategies in which he had received a basic education years ago from Dr. Burke in Knoxville but would now perfect.¹⁰

Brinkley claimed that he had prepared a booklet detailing his operation and sent it with a cover letter to every physician in Kansas. No one responded. He had sent the same message to every practitioner in the surrounding states. None replied. He had written an article describing the Brinkley operation and submitted it to the American Medical Association for publication in its influential journal. The editor had rejected it because he "could not publish such nondescript material." Though exhausted from the fruitless efforts to promote his operation, John told the ad man to proceed. First, they gathered testimonials from his former patients and permission to publish them. This information was mailed to the one hundred leading newspapers in the country. Only two published it. In addition, John began advertising the availability of his operation extensively in Europe as well as America.¹¹

The chancellor of the University of Chicago Law School, J.J. Tobias, read the story by chance. It caught his attention and he traveled to Milford. He believed he was so rejuvenated by the operation that he summoned Brinkley to Chicago for their annual graduation ceremonies and awarded him an honorary doctor of science degree, another diploma to add to his collection. More important, the chancellor gave the press a prepared statement about his experience that "set off an explosion of publicity." The *Chicago Herald Examiner* publicized Brinkley's operation, "inundat[ing] him with business."¹²

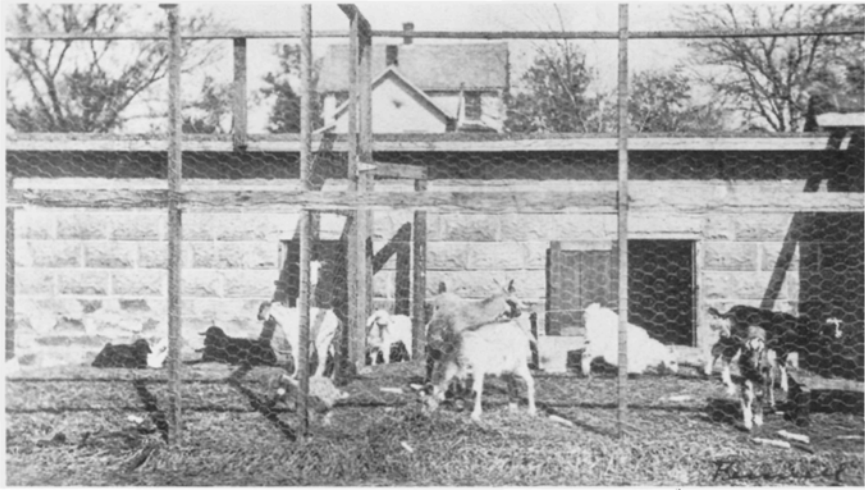
The deluge of patients resulting from this publicity required better accommodations. Minnie Brinkley had received a small inheritance from Memphis relatives. They used the money to buy ten lots in



The Brinkley-Jones Hospital in Milford, Kansas. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

the middle of the village and cleared them of barns, trees, and briers for construction of a hospital. He founded the Brinkley-Jones Hospital and Training School for Nurses with Minnie as the chief shareholder and sold a few shares to area residents. Minnie soon became a proud graduate of the nursing school, signing her own diploma as vice-president of the institution. The lumberman at Milford arranged a loan of \$6,000 for him from a Manhattan banker and John borrowed \$5,000 from a Salina banker to pay the labor costs, which were high due to wartime construction. The Frank S. Betz company of Hammond, Indiana, financed the operating, X-ray, and hospital equipment. The thirty-three-by-forty-foot, three-story completed structure cost \$20,000 and could accommodate sixteen patients. Nurses lived on the top floor. An iron fence surrounded the grounds, and there were pens in the back for the goats. The grand opening came in September 1918, less than a year after the Brinkleys' arrival in Milford. His idea from meat-packing days was really paying off!¹³

Brinkley informed the village leaders that he believed they should incorporate as a town. He discussed his building plans with them and the volume of business he could bring to the town with the proper facilities. His hospital would need electricity, running water, and a sewage system. The local paper reported "sentiment in favor of doing everything possible to get the proposed improvements." To become a third-class town under Kansas law, citizens had to



Brinkley's Toggenberg goats. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

petition for a charter and swear that there were between three hundred and two thousand inhabitants. After incorporating in the spring of 1920, Milford was authorized to hold an election and establish a city government.¹⁴

There were setbacks. In August 1919, a fire destroyed the Milford business block, including the drugstore, and John had failed to insure the contents. Undaunted, he borrowed more money to build the "Brinkley Block." The main building, costing \$30,000, was made of fireproof brick and tile and accommodated his drugstore, a post office, a barbershop, a restaurant, and a butcher shop. The next year, though, the Brinkleys faced bankruptcy as a result of over-expansion. The early deluge of patients was not sustained and there were not enough to keep the hospital full. His unflagging optimism had led him to overextend his resources, and creditors began to press. The American Electrical Company of St. Joseph secured a court judgment for its bill for wiring. Sheriff M.D. Peeso had to attach the building but allowed him to continue to use the hospital to provide needed medical services.¹⁵

Some Milford taxpayers questioned the wisdom of allowing the relatively new doctor to overwhelm them with his dreams of potential medical success. Three months after obtaining the city charter, some disgruntled citizens drove to Junction City to seek legal counsel "about unscrambling the Milford municipal egg." If the Goat Gland Doctor proved unable to achieve his medical fantasy, why pay in-

creased taxes to support a city that would never develop? The municipal charter remained, though, and a year later the citizens voted 172 to 117 to establish a high school. A group of property owners opposing any higher taxes organized to fight the proposed school, charging that there had been irregularities in posting notices, establishing district boundaries, and holding the election. They lost the fight, however, and the high school opened in September 1921. John Brinkley was beginning to make a major mark on his community.¹⁶

Brinkley built electrical, water, and sewage systems for his hospital and soon his power plant supplied Milford businesses, then the Methodist church, then residences. He expanded the water and sewer systems also, and sidewalks were built. The Brinkleys were \$35,000 in debt but the village was enjoying great improvements. John continued to promote the town's well-being as he envisioned it.

Among other improvements, John hired Kites Cleveland to pave the mile of road in cement from town to the depot, one of the first such improved roads in Kansas. Before Thanksgiving and again at Christmastime, the Brinkleys threw ducks, geese, and turkeys off the roof of their building to grateful citizens waiting below to catch them. During their travels, John acquired a bear that he thought of as the beginning of a zoo for Milford youth. He put it in a large cage on the house and hospital grounds and the children enjoyed watching it on their way to and from school. One night the bear began bellowing, however, and in exasperation John went out and shot the animal. He had the cage removed and thus ended the genesis of a zoo.¹⁷

John decided sometime in early 1927 that he was at a cross-road in Milford. Either he needed to expand his facilities there or move to a more promising location. Hearing of his unrest, H.R. Reaume, of the Junction City Chamber of Commerce, sent him an invitation to locate in that metropolis. Brinkley replied that he was "giving the matter serious consideration." He had a sizeable investment in Milford, however, and could not make this move without considerable thought. But he expressed the hope that "a way may be worked out whereby I can make the change." Brinkley finally decided, though, that he could not abandon his \$100,000 investment and would expand in Milford rather than relocate. There really was little advantage in moving to Junction City with his specialty.¹⁸

In October 1927, John Brinkley began construction of one of his pet projects. He foresaw his Community Institute as drawing citizens together by combining and enriching their religious, social, and business lives. Building a new Methodist church and parson-

age was the first step in this plan. He wanted to name it the John R. Brinkley Methodist Episcopal Church, but the bishop put a damper on this display of egotism, suggesting that a more appropriate name might be found, one with more spiritual connotations. John searched for the proper minister and found Charles Everett Draper of Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Draper had just received a year's sabbatical with pay and was looking for an opportunity to establish a community center somewhere. He had the necessary experience and Brinkley had the money, so they made an ideal combination. They used the Methodist property west of the hospital to build a double tennis court of concrete and a forty-by-one-hundred-foot swimming pool. Later they constructed a band shell as well as a place to show outdoor religious and inspirational movies. The Reverend Draper dramatically increased Sunday school attendance by offering fifty cents for each new recruit, and at one point some five hundred people from the surrounding vicinity studied the Bible on Sunday mornings in his church. The two also envisioned a large building for community gatherings. They began offering the Community Life Institute, a free summer program of instruction in "Bible, Citizenship, Health, Music, and Recreation," to anyone who wished to come to Milford. It was advertised as "Big, New, Different, Better than a Chautauqua." In 1926 Brinkley sponsored a baseball team and named them, not very subtly, the Brinkley Goats. Their shirts had a billy goat emblazoned on the back with "DR. BRINKLEY" printed on the goat. That fall his team won the Rocky Mountain tournament in Denver, a game that he broadcast on his new radio station. He later built a new, greatly expanded hospital in Milford.¹⁹

With increasing affluence, the Brinkleys traveled and John pursued postgraduate work in surgery. In 1918 he went to Chicago to take a course in emergency surgery under the direction of Dr. Max Thorek, who had been experimenting for some time on sexual rejuvenation using gorilla glands. John's problem that summer, Dr. Thorek diagnosed, was "indulgence in alcohol," and he suggested Brinkley retake the course the next year. John heeded this advice in 1919, and this time Thorek concluded that the Kansan's objective in medicine "was solely to make money." Brinkley's response to this criticism was that he had "a scheme up my sleeve and the whole world will hear of it." Thorek would remain his enemy and reappear later to thwart John's plans.²⁰

Brinkley reportedly prescribed for Mrs. William Jennings Bryan at this time. He believed his successful operations should result in an invitation to perform surgery on the ailing Woodrow Wilson, whom he said he could help as he had treated "many nervous and para-

lytic patients." He stated that Bryan asked him to come to Washington, but cautioned that operating on Wilson would have to be done "in utmost confidence." Wanting and needing publicity badly, "the Great Brinkley wrote the Great Bryan that the only way he would go to Washington to see the ex-President, was to make a special train run from Milford, Kansas to the marble city on the Potomac, with Brinkley and his goats on board." End of negotiations!²¹

In the summer of 1920, Brinkley returned to Chicago and made arrangements to perform surgery in the Park Avenue Hospital. He announced that Milford was too small, the expenses there too great, and that henceforth he would practice in the Windy City. He released a statement saying that some wealthy Chicagoans were supporting his plans to build a new hospital and medical school there. He was performing his goat gland operation, and the Chicago police visited him, notifying him that the fifteen goats he had at the hospital were an illegal nuisance that had to be removed. To cap things off, the Illinois authorities discovered that he was practicing without a state license, so the Brinkleys rather abruptly returned to Milford. Sheriff Peeso had seized his hospital on August 20, but when John returned from Chicago ten days later, Peeso allowed him to continue to use his hospital until he could straighten out his finances.²²

Trouble returned from a different direction. Business at the Milford hospital remained slow, and Brinkley accepted the invitation of Dr. Date R. Alexander to lecture on his goat gland operation at the Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery, his alma mater. In turn, the college awarded him the honorary degree of doctor of medicine and surgery, another degree for his collection and more initials to add after his name. While teaching in Kansas City he received a phone call from the Geary County Attorney saying Minnie had been arrested for illegally selling alcohol to a dentist friend at the hospital. The dentist, accompanied by his friends to Junction City, got roaring drunk, which made the sale illegal in dry Kansas as it was not used for medicinal purposes. Brinkley rushed home and, rather than letting his wife face the charges, pled guilty to three counts of bootlegging. His lawyer was the County Attorney's partner and this eased the transfer of the charges from Minnie to him. The third charge was for maintaining "a common nuisance in violation of the liquor laws of Kansas," from December 1, 1919, through February 25, 1920. He was fined \$100 and sentenced to thirty days in jail on each of the counts, plus court costs of \$94.25. Five days later, he appeared before Judge R.L. King of the Eighth Judicial District, who suspended the jail time and placed him on two years probation.²³

North Carolina neighbors had described John as a "reckless"

youngster and, during the early Milford years, he displayed his character flaws in several ways, including emotional instability occasionally aggravated by alcohol. In 1918 his father-in-law paid a visit, a difference of opinion arose, and there were community rumors that a gun and alcohol were involved in the altercation. On another occasion he chopped the tires of a Milford resident's auto with an axe. At one point he chased the ambulatory patients out of his hospital with a butcher knife. One colleague, Dr. Horatio Dwight Osborn, had an ear missing, which many claimed John had bitten off during a misunderstanding. Another version held that John went on a rampage with a knife and a patient escaped by tying bed sheets together and lowering himself out a window while Osborn got his ear sliced off in an attempt to subdue his boss. None of these incidents warranted mention in the autobiography.²⁴

At another time, John became involved in a shooting incident with Jesse Wilson and a judge put him under a \$1,000 bond to keep the peace. In another incident, Osborn again suffered injury when he had to subdue a gun-wielding John with a heavy board—but not before John had bitten a finger badly enough to require a nurse's ministrations. Late one night Sheriff Peeso received a call that Brinkley was "shooting up the town and that everyone was in hiding." Before he could issue a warrant for his arrest, John walked into the sheriff's office, "perfectly sober" the officer said, and asked him to arrest ten Milford residents on gambling charges. When the sheriff went to Milford the next day to investigate, the Brinkleys were gone, likely never to return, some residents claimed. But after lunch they appeared; John was served, found guilty of disturbing the peace, fined, and placed under a \$2,000 bond. Each of the ten gamblers was fined \$5 and costs, settling the incident.

John had an ingrained sense of Western self-reliance. One day, Dr. R.R. Cave, a physician from Manhattan, came to Milford uninvited (perhaps under directions of the American Medical Association) to witness an operation. He walked into the office to find Brinkley twirling a handgun the way cowboys brandished their weapons in Western movies. "You seemed to be prepared for any emergency," the visitor observed. "Yes," Brinkley replied, "we have to be on our guard here. Just the other day a fellow came in here to Dr. Osborn and stuck a gun in his belly and demanded a shot of morphine. Believe me, they won't do that to me. Any time they stick a gun against me, one of us will have to stop right there." Cave remarked that he had heard Minnie was an attractive woman. "She has to be or she wouldn't be Mrs. John R. Brinkley," John responded, very ill-manneredly to his unwelcome guest.²⁵

Mrs. O.L. Maddox of Kansas City recalled that as a young woman her family took her to the Brinkley hospital soon after it opened for an emergency appendectomy. After she recovered, her brothers came to take her home. Brinkley “straddled the doorway with a revolver in his hand, and threatened to shoot my two brothers if they did not pay him the \$290 that he said they owed him for operating on me.” She claimed he was using “the vilest language I ever heard” and she thought he acted like he was drunk. Her brothers claimed that Brinkley had charged them \$190, which they had already paid. As the Brinkleys prospered and gained respectability, however, these tales of drinking and violence ceased and Milford residents remembered the positive aspects of the “Goat Gland Doctor.” But it was difficult to move beyond the youthful escapades of the medicine shows and the reckless days of “Dr. Burke.”²⁶

Meanwhile, Brinkley’s experiments and the study of glandular medicine in general were gaining increasing publicity as other pioneers experimented and aroused public interest, especially among elderly men. Others’ investigations in the new field added to his reputation and Brinkley, in turn, closely followed their work. During the 1920s, many respectable surgeons came to believe erroneously that animal tissue or organs could be transplanted into humans without rejection. Doctors later discovered that human bodies reject most animal transplants but can usually accept new human organs with drugs like cytoxin that were developed after World War II to help patients fight rejection. The lack of understanding during the 1920s about animal-to-human transplants worked to Brinkley’s and his colleagues’ benefit. It was in this decade, however, that the medical community learned much about endocrine glands—thyroid, adrenal, pancreas, ovary, and testes—and their transplantation.

Charles Edouard Brown-Seguard pioneered these glandular studies. In the early 1890s, he made extracts of dog and guinea pig testes, filtered out bacterial organisms, and injected himself. One day he exclaimed, “all has changed and I have regained at least all of the ‘force’ which I possessed a number of years ago.” In 1892, he began publishing his results and, by the turn of the century, the “cult of injection spread like wildfire.” Dr. Serge Voronoff of Paris continued this line of experimentation after 1900, and rejuvenation began receiving worldwide publicity.²⁷

In October 1919, the chief medical officer of the San Quentin prison, Dr. Leo L. Stanley, performed a remarkable experiment. He removed the testicles of a murderer, who was sentenced and executed, and transplanted them into a prematurely aged inmate of the prison. He then performed some thirty similar operations over a

period of time, gradually acquiring knowledge and experience, and prison press releases proudly described his work. Publicity over his successes stimulated a renewed interest in the investigations of Dr. Voronoff, who was currently transplanting testicular slice grafts from young rams into the testicles of aged rams. His reports impressed Dr. Max Thorek, who was also exploring the possibilities of glandular transplantation, and he invited Voronoff, who was visiting in New York City, to come to Chicago to lecture on his findings at the American Hospital. Brinkley was Thorek's student that summer and wanted very much to attend the lecture and meet the famous man, but Thorek and hospital officials intervened and kept him out.²⁸

Voronoff returned to his hospital in Paris to continue his work, but decided to operate on humans. Being unable to acquire human testicles readily, he began experimenting with transplanting monkey glands into humans. He conceded that glands from animals would be foreign bodies that patients would reject, but thought that because anthropoids "form a race very close to the human race," their glands might be accepted. Edward Liardet of London, one of his patients, told reporters that Voronoff's operation had given him a new lease on life. Francis Heckel, another French surgeon, attested to the fact that he watched Voronoff work on seven patients, including one of Heckel's, and the operations were all successful. Voronoff's fame subsequently led to his being able to charge between five hundred and one thousand pounds sterling per operation. Glandular specialists in the United States carefully publicized these developments and, in the words of David Hamilton, a prominent Edinburgh transplant surgeon, "1921 was marked by growing enthusiasm in America for rejuvenation by grafting."²⁹

In Vienna at the same time, the highly respected surgeon Eugen Steinach was experimenting with transplanting sex glands using guinea pigs. He argued, erroneously, that an ovary graft under the skin of an old sow resulted in a revival of its ovaries. After considerable investigation, he began offering the Steinach Operation Method for human males. This approach was rooted in the concept that is currently used for male sterilization—the vasectomy. Specifically, it involved cutting off and ligating (tying) the tube carrying sperm from the testis. He believed, incorrectly, that this had an invigorating effect on the human body and, if performed on only one testicle, fertility would be maintained. For women, Steinach used radiation treatment on the ovaries. Voronoff and Steinach vied with each other for press coverage and for the lecture circuit. All the while, Brinkley kept abreast of their work.³⁰

Mrs. Gertrude Atherton, the best-selling author, also popular-

ized transplantation during the Roaring Twenties. She received the Steinach Method treatment and subsequently published the novel *Black Oxen*. The book related the story of a New York society woman who, approaching sixty, received a successful rejuvenation treatment, after which both a young journalist and an Austrian prince proposed marriage to her. The book led the best-seller list in 1923 and was rewritten into a play, and preachers denounced it from the pulpit—all of which placed the author in touch with women all over the world who sought details about the results. When Mrs. Atherton attained the age of seventy-five, she was rejuvenated again and died at age ninety, still producing novels. Rejuvenation was the vogue during the Roaring Twenties. By 1924, there were an estimated 750 surgeons, mentalists, and necromancers in the United States offering some type of glandular treatment for various needs.³¹

The year 1921 witnessed the beginning of a revival in Brinkley's medical business. Sydney B. Flower edited a journal entitled *Rejuvenation*. Flower stated that he "felt himself slipping, couldn't remember anything, was indifferent to beauty either in a rose or a woman." He traveled to Milford, had a goat gland operation, and testified that two days later he felt like a new man. Returning to his home in Chicago, he was able to write two books in fifteen days, although he did not boast of their quality. He wrote for the famous series called "Little Blue Books." He published one of these in 1921, entitled *The Goat Gland Transplantation*, a ninety-six-page treatise describing the work of European physicians in this field, lauding the discovery that the endocrine glands played an important role in the human body, and extolling the Brinkley operation. According to the *Junction City Union*, John was surprised at the appearance of the volume because he had no intimation, he modestly claimed, that he would be included in the famous "Little Blue Book" series! Brinkley, in turn, helped sell the *Rejuvenation* magazine by sending a letter to those on his extensive mailing list suggesting they buy the recent issue, which contained an article that he had written, for half-price, or ten cents. The doctor received a great deal of publicity from Flower's book, which was later retitled and republished as *Your Health*.³²

E. Haldeman-Julius of Girard, Kansas, who edited the Socialist journal *Appeal to Reason*, also published the Little Blue Books. His series of some six thousand volumes reprinted some of the great classics from Plato and Shakespeare to Marx and Engels, and many self-made men received their higher education by studying them. After the American Medical Association wrote Haldeman-Julius about the details of Brinkley's medical career, he stopped publishing the rejuvenation book and substituted a new one on "quack rejuvenation."

Haldeman-Julius responded to the AMA that he “was surprised to learn that medical quacks have been using the Little Blue Book on rejuvenation.” He promised to withdraw the offending booklet when the AMA sent him a different manuscript on the subject. The association asked him to pull the book immediately and said that Morris Fishbein would send him one as soon as he could write it.³³

Brinkley employed several public relations men, as they are now termed, who dreamed up promotional schemes for him. One of them, H. Roy Mosnat, brought him much newspaper publicity. Minnie Brinkley once testified to his importance by describing him as the one “that got Dr. Brinkley into that ‘crooked’ work.” The extensive newspaper publicity helped Brinkley become more widely known on the national level. For instance, William Hosea, a self-styled doctor and a rejuvenated man, wrote a report that was distributed by the Hearst papers in 1921 which ballyhooed the story of the Marahajal Thakon Galub of Morvi’s coming from India to New York City for a goat gland transplantation. According to the article, Dr. Brinkley had instructed the imminent patient’s chief medical officer on how to treat him “to enable him to have vitality enough to make the long journey” halfway around the world.

Other newspaper reports described Brinkley’s achievements in medical experimentation. One reporter credited him with being “the only surgeon in the United States who has ever successfully transplanted an eye from one living creature to another.” A news service syndicated the story across the country that he had transplanted eyes from one rabbit to another and planned to continue his experiments until he was successful in applying the procedure to humans. The doctor was most sympathetic to blind people, the release noted, and this endeavor was important to him. Another report described his work with cancer, always a popular topic. “To Kansas will come the honor of a cancer cure” if his experiments are successful, proclaimed the local newspaper. To conduct his work, Brinkley offered free radium treatments at his hospital. “We believe we have discovered a cancer cure,” he was quoted as saying, but he advertised that he needed more patients with external cancer to receive the radium and “a special cancer serum that we are preparing here.” (This special release preceded by one year the announcement of Dr. C. Everett Field’s work at the Radium Institute of New York during a meeting of the American Medical Association. Believing cancer to be a germ disease and finding previous forms of treatment to be inadequate, Field had prepared a procedure combining X rays with radium.) There were no follow-up stories of how many patients with external cancer came to Milford to take advantage of Brinkley’s offer.³⁴

On another occasion, the *Havana Morning Post* carried a story that “goat gland transplantation has been made compulsory in Japan by the government.” The report alleged that the action was taken “in order to rejuvenate aged charity patients in its institutions and enable them to return to self-supporting work.” Brinkley received worldwide publicity on his goat gland “rejuvenation” through the efforts of Mosnat and his other effective public relations men throughout the decade of the 1920s.³⁵

Some of this wire service news came to the attention of Harry Chandler, owner of the *Los Angeles Times*. In the fall of 1922, the publisher invited Brinkley to come to California and operate on him and some of his editors. John responded that he did not have a California license to practice medicine. Chandler applied the necessary pressure to persuade the State Medical Board to give John a thirty day permit to practice with a California-licensed doctor. The Brinkleys moved into the Alexandria Hotel and he went to work. Chandler was impressed with the results and gave the operation a great deal of publicity. He also paid the doctor the required \$500 for the job but suggested this was too cheap for such successful results. Henceforth, Brinkley’s fee would be a standard \$750, or more if the patient could afford it. For the rare operation using human gonads, he charged a much larger fee of \$2,000. While Brinkley was in Los Angeles, the *Times* was just installing KHJ, the city’s first radio station. Brinkley was so impressed with this new phenomenon that a year later he built a radio station in Milford.³⁶

The Los Angeles trip turned out to be quite profitable, in part because on October 7, 1922, the *Los Angeles Record* carried an advertisement stating that William Stittsworth and his son Billy, the first goat gland baby, were appearing in a film there. The announcement proclaimed “Rejuvenation Through Gland Transplanting” and featured a picture of a stork and a listing of the topics of the accompanying movie, *How Human Life Begins*. The crowd that attended was reportedly large. Because sex was the primary topic of discussion at the screenings, there were separate showings for men and women, and those under twenty-one were not admitted.³⁷

Moreover, during his California visit, Brinkley operated on several movie stars, garnering a profit of \$40,000. He claimed that there was such a demand there for his services that a number of businessmen attempted to keep him in the area by offering to establish a hospital and sanitarium for him in Ensenada, in southern California. They supposedly leased the Hidalgo Hotel and signed a contract with a local rancher to supply the goats. Ensenada, the doctor observed, had “excellent climatic conditions” for his work, and the

sanitarium would resemble the famous Battle Creek Health Resort in Michigan. Brinkley decided against this venture, though, when the road between Tijuana and Ensenada washed out during a heavy rainstorm, and he returned to Milford richer and wiser. During these early years Brinkley had dreams of moving to a big city but always returned to Kansas. The fact that authorities in other states were more diligent about maintaining certification requirements than those in his home state undoubtedly played a role in his decisions.³⁸

In addition to the California trip to avoid the hot and humid Kansas weather, the Brinkleys traveled and worked out of state often during the summer months. In 1918, following the surgery course in Chicago, the Brinkleys vacationed on the East Coast, reporting "a pleasant, busy and profitable trip, returning to the Windy City again in 1919 and 1920. They traveled to New England in 1921, the local Junction City newspaper noting that "he had a profitable summer in the big eastern cities, performing many operations." While in New York City they bought a Stutz Bearcat, a symbol of prosperity at that time, and Minnie received her first fur coat. They rented a house in Connecticut and enjoyed it so much that they began building their own home in Milford next to the hospital upon their return. In Bridgeport, Connecticut, he operated on a man while Fox Motion Picture cameramen filmed the procedure before an assemblage of doctors and nurses. He was also filmed operating on a woman during a female goat gland transplant, the first goat gland operations ever documented on film. The Brinkleys were in California in 1922 and, after returning to Milford, John cautioned possible patients there that time to receive help was limited, as he had many requests from prospective patients in Mexico and would be traveling there soon. His warning brought in a number of people wanting surgery. The flurry of activity required building a twenty-four-by-twenty-seven-foot addition to the hospital to provide a special operating room.³⁹

When the Brinkleys made a trip to the Far East in 1923, it received widespread news coverage. Following their return to Milford in the summer of 1923, John received an invitation from Dr. R.A. Thompson, an oculist from Kansas City who had fitted the Brinkleys with glasses and now lived in Shanghai. Thompson promised to recruit wealthy Chinese patients for Brinkley's operation if Brinkley would split the fees evenly with him. Shanghai did not require foreign doctors to have a medical license; one needed only to have a certificate from a listed medical school and be registered with his consulate. John closed the Milford hospital temporarily and the Brinkleys sailed from Seattle, accompanied by the ever present Dr. Osborn. They visited Yokohama after its disastrous earthquake, then

Tokyo. Arriving at Shanghai, they signed in at the Astor House Hotel. Their suite cost \$65 per day, a price that, for Kansans, seemed exorbitant. He operated on several men and women in Shanghai's Chinese Red Cross Hospital, then moved inland where he performed surgery on the president of the Bank of Peking. He purchased some rugs in that city and a centuries-old robe made with strands of gold that had belonged to an emperor. When the collector told him he had to pay a bribe of more than a hundred dollars to have it stolen out of the imperial palace, Brinkley decided it was a bargain at \$500. The Brinkleys then traveled on to Nanking, Tientsin, Saigon, and Singapore on board the French ship *Paul le Cat*.

John added to his research knowledge on this voyage. He received permission in Saigon to travel to the Vietnamese interior to visit a monastery of eunuchs. They permitted him to examine their prostate area and he could find no trace of the gland, which confirmed what others had suggested. If a male is castrated at an early age, the prostate does not develop, indicating a direct relationship of the testes to that gland.⁴⁰

The Brinkleys visited a botanical garden at Singapore, where Minnie decided she wanted to take a branch of a coffee tree home as a souvenir. As she broke it off, she found that it was home to a colony of stinging ants. All of a sudden she felt hundreds of bites, "a number of them biting below the belt, almost as if they had the ethics of American newspapers and organized doctors," the Wood biography stated. She quickly made "an all-time standing-jumping record for speedy disrobing" while the doctor laughingly attacked the ants. During this phase of the voyage John circumcised one of the princes of Siam in the ship's hospital. From the Far East, they continued their world trip to Egypt, where they had a strange experience with an Arab fortune teller. He had them scrawl marks in the sand and he "read" them, telling them they were going to have a "picaninny." When they finally got this translated to mean they would have a boy, they smiled ruefully at each other. They had been married ten years and still had no children. But his forecast would prove correct three years later. Then on to Europe.

When in Berne, Switzerland, Brinkley visited with Dr. Emil Kocher of the Kocher Institute. They discussed the unusual amount of thyroid disease in that country and the work the Swiss doctor, and his father before him, had done in their investigations. When the physicians were forced to remove too much thyroid from a patient during treatment, they compensated for this deficiency by successfully transplanting thyroid from sheep glands. After their journey through Europe, the Brinkleys returned to Milford a more worldly

and more wealthy couple. John had earned \$40,000 from his share of the fees for his operations in the Orient, and they had both enjoyed what proved to be a memorable world tour.⁴¹

One night on the way to Singapore, John Brinkley had experienced a most unusual dream, a fantasy so vivid it awakened him. He envisioned a cemetery with open graves. Heavy rain washed the bones and corpses out of their resting places, and they were laying all around him. Then he was on a mountain top, again in heavy rain, and he could not descend the precipitous side without falling. "Suddenly three figures dressed in white appeared. One took his arm on either side. The third, leading the way, pointed out how he could stride safely to safety." Upon awakening, he told Minnie, "I have just had a vision from heaven." His biographer, Clement Wood, fancied himself a psychoanalyst, as did many people at that time, when Sigmund Freud was highly popular in Europe and America. To Wood, the message of this vision was clear: Brinkley was certain he would overcome major difficulties because he would be assisted by his mother and Aunt Sally, with his father leading the way. Lincoln, Edison, and McKinley also would be on hand to help.⁴²

In his dream, the hazards in his way represented the obstacles brought on by the diploma mill scandals of 1923. These were breaking just as he was making plans to take passage and they continued to unfold while he was on his trip. According to Morris Fishbein, there were at one time around twenty-five thousand graduates of diploma mills practicing in the United States. Fishbein, editor of the American Medical Association's influential journal, began in 1918 to publish annual protests denouncing lax state medical licensing requirements, especially those of Arkansas, California, and Connecticut, the three major violators of AMA standards. The editor also became "a vociferous opponent" of the Steinach Method and refused to publish any article discussing this field of investigation.⁴³

In 1923 the *Kansas City Journal Post* and the *St. Louis Star* began a series of revelations concentrating on eclectic institutions in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Chicago. The schools, especially Brinkley's alma maters in Kansas City and another in St. Louis, were selling degrees for prices up to \$1,000, after many students attended classes for only a short time. These "doctors" acquired a license and, through reciprocity licensing, gradually filtered into communities in other states. Connecticut was one of the worst offenders and was so embarrassed by the exposure and bad publicity that the state rescinded all licenses issued to eclectic doctors, including Brinkley's. While traveling he received the news that his license was cancelled on the basis of his medical degree. Respond-

ing to his secretary's cable, John asked how it could be revoked without a trial or hearing when he was thousands of miles away. She replied that Connecticut had issued a blanket order on all eclectic degrees. There would be no more profitable summer vacations in New England for the Brinkleys!

William P. Sachs was a key figure in this investigation. He had been a Lutheran minister and dean of Walther College until his sensational divorce in 1912 prompted his church to defrock him and remove him as dean. He later worked as superintendent of schools in Washington County, Missouri, where he obtained copies of various types of degree and certificate forms. He also retained seals of Walther College, Washington County, and the office of Missouri state superintendent of public instruction. When the scandal broke, officials arrested Sachs. He turned state's evidence and received clemency for providing evidence to convict more serious offenders connected with the ring. He estimated that he had sold five thousand fake diplomas and certificates and that as many as fifteen thousand persons were practicing medicine in the United States with false credentials they had purchased. He had been operating for a decade, and his business accelerated markedly when Prohibition began, he explained, as many men saw the medical degree as a means of legally obtaining and selling alcohol, a most profitable enterprise during the Roaring Twenties.

For \$5 to \$10—or sometimes as much as \$25—Sachs sold blank degrees to Dr. Ralph Voigt of Kansas City, Dr. Date R. Alexander of Kansas City, and Dr. Robert Adcox of St. Louis. They, in turn, filled them out and sold them as medical or law degrees to “merchants, policemen, hospital orderlies, street car conductors, salesmen, bartenders, bookkeepers, electricians, etc.,” for as much as \$1,000. Once they had purchased a degree and spent as long as a year in some school, the aspiring doctors obtained a medical license, “the practice commonly being for a learned man to substitute in the examinations for the ignorant ‘student.’” Following prosecution of Voigt, Alexander, and Adcox, the states of California and Connecticut summoned Sachs to testify in their investigations and also asked John Brinkley to appear. The latter was on his world tour.⁴⁴

John soon learned that the exposures were centering on Dr. Robert Adcox of St. Louis, who had been advertising Brinkley and Henry J. Shireson as his two most successful products. Shireson had made a fortune performing his “beauty operation” on wealthy women. The *Journal Post* story focused on Brinkley, noting that he would be asked two questions at the Connecticut hearings: (1) Was it true that his wife purchased her diploma through Dr. Adcox and

Dr. Date R. Alexander?; and (2) before she and other classmates (including H. Dwight Osborn, graduate of Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery), took the state board of medical exams in Hartford, did Brinkley and Alexander procure copies of the tests and spend all night preparing “ponies” for the applicants?⁴⁵

The dust had not settled on the diploma mill scandals when Brinkley received word that his application for a medical license in California had been denied. It was during those hearings that Dr. Sachs testified that he had sold John a diploma in 1918. He also stated that he did not know him at the time and that he had predated the diploma to 1913 as requested. California indicted Brinkley on the charge of conspiracy to circumvent the medical licensing requirements of that state. Brinkley described this episode as “a persecution . . . no more justified than the persecution of Christ.” When a deputy sheriff of California presented the extradition papers to Governor Jonathan M. Davis, a Democrat, he was coldly received. “What do you want him for?” the governor demanded. “He is not a regular doctor and might injure our people by giving poison instead of medicine,” came the response. “Well,” said Davis, “California is a long ways from Kansas and I don’t believe your people are in any danger from him.” Davis’s refusal to extradite Brinkley stemmed from their close personal ties. When he practiced in Fulton and Davis lived in nearby Bronson, Brinkley had been Davis’s family doctor. As late as 1940 Morris Fishbein told an audience that California and Arkansas were “the greatest stamping ground for quacks” because they had not yet tightened their medical practice laws. California’s indictment in 1923 seems at best hypocritical and at worst substantiates Brinkley’s charge that the AMA was “out to get” him. John later insisted that the American Medical Association spent \$150,000 attempting to have him extradited to the Golden State. The California charges were finally dropped in 1925, but there would be no more profitable working vacations in Los Angeles, operating on wealthy older movie stars.⁴⁶

These developments alarmed Brinkley for it appeared as though the legitimate medical establishment was closing in on him. The danger renewed his interest in an idea he had been contemplating to obtain foreign degrees and licenses to demonstrate to prospective patients that he was a most learned doctor. After John took another intensive surgery course in Chicago in the summer of 1925, the Brinkleys set sail for Europe. He secured letters from his old mentor, Dr. Edward Mentor Perdue, and from Dr. N.E. Leake, director of laboratories at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis. The latter wrote that Brinkley “contemplates a trip to Europe for the purpose

of study and I am pleased to recommend him for examination and licensure." He added that John had been a surgeon and chief of staff of a hospital, had seventeen years experience, and was a member of the American College of Surgeons and of the American Hospital Association, all of which was true.⁴⁷

First, Brinkley tried Dublin, only to find that the Mayo Brothers, "the distinguished surgeons from Rochester," were guests of honor there. Obviously, there was no need for him to apply. He traveled to London, where he was informed that allopaths had a monopoly in England, and the country did not recognize the degrees of eclectics, homeopaths, or osteopaths. Glasgow University had adopted the same rule. Perhaps Italy would be easier and kinder. At the University of Rome, he gave authorities a letter from Perdue, which he was certain would gain him entrance. Officials told him he would be welcomed as a student and given a degree, when he passed their examinations—in Italian, of course. Even the Italians were proving to be difficult. He submitted another letter from Perdue to Professor Eduardo Perroncito of the University of Turin. The distinguished professor, unfortunately, was currently on emeritus status, but he had a son who was dean at the University of Pavia. This centuries-old university claimed Christopher Columbus as a student, and Volta had made his great electrical experiments there. John strongly hinted that some sort of philanthropy for the medical school was imminent, which certainly did not damage his cause. They accepted him and he took the exams, which another notorious Brinkley news release described as lasting nineteen days and being of "the most strenuous sort." Pavia awarded him a medical degree on July 23, 1925. The report added that "Dr. Brinkley is said to be the first foreigner of any kind to receive a degree from the university." (An Austrian had worked for a year but failed to pass the examinations.) John returned to Italy that November, took the necessary exams, and received his Italian license to practice. Armed with this, he returned to England and by reciprocity received a license to practice there on December 4, 1925. Dr. Osborn also received his degree from the University of Pavia at the same time. Obviously the eclectics were not the only medical schools to sell degrees.⁴⁸

In a costly act of defiance and extreme impudence, Brinkley wrote the American Medical Association (which had expelled him from membership) in March 1927 requesting an update in their directory of doctors to list his Pavia degree, rather than the one from the Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery. Officials at the University of Pavia soon were informed that the Medical University of Kansas City was an eclectic school and were encouraged to re-

voke John R. Brinkley's degree even though he had passed their exams. The American Medical Association pressed the school to act but the Italians procrastinated. The AMA went over their heads to appeal to dictator Benito Mussolini to intervene, and the degree was rescinded. Dr. Thorek, his old nemesis from Chicago, later bragged that he corresponded with his close friend at the University of Turin, Dr. Perroncito, who then wrote his son at the University of Pavia about Brinkley, leading to the revocation of the degree.

The AMA worked diligently to persuade the British Medical Association, who licensed Brinkley on the basis of his Pavia degree, also to annul their permit. As late as 1933, the British secretary complained of the difficulty of finding a feasible means of erasing Brinkley's membership in their organization. He finally decided to notify John that his registration "was apparently an error" and that his name "must disappear from our books." He later followed this up with a note to the AMA that Brinkley had not disputed the action. The Britons even cancelled his free subscription to the *British Medical Journal*.⁴⁹

While in Europe that summer, Brinkley added a refinement to his gland operation. He learned in his travels, he said, that he could improve the results of his treatment by adding a feeder nerve and attaching a blood vessel at the testicles, a procedure he came to call his "Four Phase Compound Operation," which he advertised for the next five years.

The *New York Evening Journal* and other newspapers reprinted Brinkley's planted news item about his Pavia degree. "Here," said *Hygeia*, another Fishbein publication of the American Medical Association, "the career of Brinkley as a giant in quackery begins to develop." The flood of letters to Milford rose to thousands per day, and residents were convinced their town would soon become another Rochester, Minnesota, as patients thronged there to receive the ministrations of the Goat Gland Doctor who had studied in Europe. Many people testified that the streets of Milford were packed on weekends with patients arriving and departing. By this time Brinkley had performed hundreds of his operations and was continually perfecting his technique. As he admitted, he was treading unknown ground, and he never knew beforehand the results of his scalpel in a given operation. He learned as he operated, and he expanded his description of his results and exaggerated his claims at the same time—although he continued to emphasize that his operations were not successful in all cases.⁵⁰

Publicity proved to be his principal asset, and he received much of it free through his planted news items. A few months after he

operated on Chancellor J.J. Tobias of Chicago, a press photographer caught the seventy-one year old in a great pose, clicking his heels in midair. Newspapers from coast to coast printed the photo, in some cases perhaps coincidentally, above the current news of the passage of the women's suffrage amendment. The wealthy and the famous began to seek Brinkley out and he garnered even greater headlines with his operations on the *Los Angeles Times* staffers and Hollywood movie stars.⁵¹

Over the years Brinkley developed an extensive mailing list that grew enormously after his radio station went into operation in 1923. To impress readers, he sent a circular with the letterhead "Brinkley Research Laboratories," which was described as a "department" of the Brinkley-Jones Hospital in Milford. Those on his roster received a form pamphlet advertising his modern hospital; its capacity of sixteen patients; its complete X-ray equipment; its surgeon-in-chief, John R. Brinkley, M.D.; T.L. Jones, M.D., pathologist; and its specialty of "operative and chronic cases." It was signed "ethically yours, the Brinkley-Jones Hospital Association." In another place, the pamphlet emphasized that "it is an ethical institution." Once added to his files, prospective patients received a barrage of information intended to pique their interest and motivate them to travel to Milford for an examination.⁵²

The pamphlet *Paw and Maw*, which Brinkley "dedicated to the Prostate Man," proved to be a great solicitor of the elderly with sex problems. It discussed the developments associated with aging, noting that men's physical problems stem from an enlarging prostate and women's from menopause. Sufferers endured common symptoms including "lumbago, constipation, loss of memory, sciatica, rheumatism, getting up nights, headaches, bladder weakness, and high blood pressure." It discussed Paw's tribulations in seeking help from family doctors who wanted only to operate on his prostate. The pamphlet could be obtained by sending name, address, age, occupation, and ailment, plus ten cents to cover costs, to the Brinkley Hospital in Milford. A postscript noted that the sufferer should read the "Blue Book" entitled *Your Health* in conjunction with *Paw and Maw* as the two were connected together as one complete statement.⁵³

John R. Brinkley's primary thesis was that the gonad glands, testes and ovaries, had two principal roles: external ejections for reproduction and internal secretions for bodily needs. The internal secretions were as vital as the external ones, because they "act through the blood and affect every cell in the body," his literature proclaimed. These ductless glands produce hormones, emitting tes-

tosterone for men and estrogen for women. Taking pressure off the external function would subsequently stimulate the internal one, Brinkley claimed. The enlarging prostate and female menopause interrupted these normal processes, but this could be corrected by surgery. He argued that an enlarged prostate robbed the testes of blood and nerve supply, resulting in the loss of potency. Removal of the prostate resulted in impotency, so he suggested that older men attack the problem in another way with the Brinkley Compound Operation. *Your Health* declared that his procedure, “conceived, attempted, perfected, worked out in its last detail, is a crowning achievement. If he (the originator) should do no more, he has rendered a service to humanity that will live for centuries to come.”⁵⁴

Although most doctors then knew—and all now know—that Brinkley’s operation was physically incapable of resolving these defects, many impotent men claimed he rejuvenated them because of its placebo effect. Impotency usually works in a cycle. If the victim suffers from a high anxiety level, this increases the erection problem. But if this level is lowered, he can relax, thereby relieving the impotency. Most of Brinkley’s patients wanted to believe—resulting in decreased anxiety—and, convinced by the doctor’s assurances and his proclaimed success rate with others, they were cured, at least until an adverse experience again accelerated their apprehension level. This could account for the many satisfied patients who returned for repeat treatments.

In William J. Fielding’s book *Vitality Again*, Brinkley explained that he could use only human, ape, or goat glands for his operation. He found human glands, from recently deceased young people, to be extremely difficult to obtain—although he could and did acquire them—and very expensive. Ape glands like those used for Voronoff’s experiments were almost impossible to obtain in America, so this left goat glands. They were acceptable, he claimed, because goats were immune to diseases communicable to man.

Whatever their source, the sex glands, according to Brinkley, represented “the source of all human energy.” While all glands are connected in the body, the sex glands “would seem to have the power of most directly stimulating, and in a manner dominating, the human body and mind, by their particular kind of hormones.” Thus the secret lay in reviving aging sex glands with young goat testes via the Compound Operation. “A man is as old as his glands,” the doctor emphasized in his publications.⁵⁵ Brinkley often likened the gonad system to a battery. Claiming modern society moves too rapidly and that the human engine cannot run this fast, he urged prospective patients to rejuvenate their battery with his operation.⁵⁶

In order to promote the benefits of his Compound Operation, Brinkley argued that the alternative Steinach Method was problematic and possibly ineffective for several reasons. First, the procedure could not aid patients who had already become senile. Second, results had to be obtained by shock or irritation, and this is not always successful. Third, the treatment would offer no assistance if the genital glands were worn out. Finally, ligation of both testicles would result in sterilization.

Although his surgery was filmed and he later invited specialists to Milford to watch him in action, he never fully explained the technical aspects of his procedure to other surgeons. In *Vitality Again*, he generally described a four-part process: First, transplant slices of a three-month-old Toggenberg testis into a human testis; next, block the vas deferens on that side, because if part of the secretions of the new gland were not restrained, “the patient would be given to lascivious use of his power” (a patently exaggerated claim to pique interest); then, make certain the spermatic cord to the vas deferens was open; and finally, transplant a blood vessel and a nerve to the reinvigorated testis to make certain there is sufficient blood supply for the transplant and for “more nerve energization.”

Brinkley offered a cautionary note to prospective patients about their wives: “Don’t get the impression that women are icebergs and are content with impotent men. I know of more families where the devil is to pay in fusses, tempermental [*sic*] sprees, etc.—all due to the husband not being able to function properly. Many and many wives come to me and say ‘Doctor, my husband is no good.’” Brinkley insisted his operation was “good for High Blood Pressure, Hard Arteries, and IMPOTENCY. Ah, that last one is the big factor.” He modestly explained that, while some declared him to be an authority on glands, he did not claim that distinction. His operation, he noted, also had helped patients with epilepsy, diabetes, and insanity. Not every patient made a complete recovery, but he claimed his “batting average is high. That is what counts. . . . Well, what is my batting average? Oh, about 90 to 95 percent! How’s that?”⁵⁷

In his famous libel trial of 1938, though, attorneys forced Brinkley to admit that a “majority” of the goat glands “were gradually absorbed” by the patients’ bodies. “I don’t mean to say that the little thing lived,” he insisted, and “if it became infected . . . it would spoil.” In other words, his claim for the success of his operation was false. As experts now know, and as Brinkley realized at the time, the human body would reject this foreign element and, only if lucky would it not “spoil” or become infected.⁵⁸

Dr. David Morgan, a transplant surgeon at Glasgow Univer-



Dr. John R. Brinkley in surgery, assisted by Minnie Brinkley. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

sity, rendered a more accurate description of the operation a half-century later, with evidence drawn from Brinkley's testimony in 1930 at hearings to revoke his license. Morgan speculated that he used an entire testicle for the graft, as the young goats' glands were small ones. He theorized that Brinkley made an incision not on the testes, but higher up on the groin, and placed the graft near the spermatic cord. This allowed him access to the vas deferens as it exited the testis. He then did "an odd thing" by injecting Mercurochrome to clear any infection from the seminal vessels near the prostate gland. This also promoted the mystique of the procedure as the Mercurochrome then passed into the bladder, causing the patient's urine to be clouded for a few days with the antiseptic. For phase four, Brinkley claimed he searched for and found a small artery and nerve in the tissues adjacent to the gland, "attaching them crudely to the outside of the patient's testicle." Neither of these last two steps would have any real effect, Morgan avers, because "the blood supply, even in the elderly, is adequate; the nerve supply to the testis plays no part in its secretion." He probably operated on only one side, the specialist added, as working on both testes would result in sterilization.⁵⁹

In addition to the Compound Operation, Brinkley offered for the “stay at home sufferers” a “Special Gland Emulsion.” Purchasers had to submit “full particulars” of their case to him and pay \$100 in advance. Then Brinkley would send a month’s supply of the emulsion and a rectal syringe for its application. His advertisement for this home remedy featured a testimonial from George W. Ford of Santa Ana, California, who reported that a former partial paralysis on his right side “had practically left him” and that he no longer used a cane but walked “briskly.” In addition, his eyesight had improved, and he claimed that “every ailment I have had has improved.” With such testimony, readers would think this was pretty strong medicine!

Those who traveled to Milford for their treatments received explicit instructions. If arriving by automobile on Route 40, one had to drive twelve miles north of Junction City on Highway 77. If coming by train from Kansas City, patients boarded Number 103 at 10:40 A.M. Coming from the west, they left Denver on Number 104. Then, patients from either direction would lay over in Junction City until the local departed for Milford at 3:25 P.M. After business picked up, “Happy Harry” met the arrivals at the railroad station and bused them to the hospital in a renovated World War I truck. There were normally a dozen or more, usually older men, and they had to arrive on Sundays. The staff assistants and sometimes the surgeon-in-chief himself performed the examination and diagnosis that afternoon and evening. Later, as business increased, Brinkley built a larger hospital, which would allow him to process fifty patients per week.

Henry Ford’s newspaper published a series of articles in 1924 attacking Brinkley as a charlatan. A Kansas reporter read this, interviewed Brinkley, and wrote a lengthy defense of the doctor. The writer described his impression of Milford and the hospital, with its white woodwork and “soothing quiet” walls of light blue and gray. The patients’ rooms were each nicely furnished with an overstuffed couch and, later, headphones or a radio. He described the hospital president and chief surgeon as having a “trim alert figure of average height [Brinkley was actually only five feet six inches tall] with a neat mustache and goatee of auburn hair.” He possessed “a statuesque head that a phrenologist would admire, a broad high forehead [read receding hairline here], dreamy, light blue eyes, with a shrewd and friendly twinkle in them.” He wore horn-rimmed glasses and chain-smoked cigarettes. The reporter said he “strikes you at once as a man of utter sincerity; he is free from guile, pretense, and flippancy.” The doctor kept himself “fit for his great work” by keep-

ing the hospital open from September to April or May and taking a vacation of some type every summer.⁶⁰

The hospital vice president, Minnie T. Brinkley, who received an M.D. degree from the Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery in 1921, did not possess a Kansas license to practice—although she held a Connecticut license until it was revoked. She greeted the patients individually on Sunday evening, or sometimes later that night, and extracted the \$750 assessment that covered the operation, hospital stay, and fees. An attractive, congenial person who met the patients with a cheerful “here come my men,” she could also be aggressive concerning collection of the fee. She doubled as the anesthetist. Her brother, Tiberius L. Jones, after returning from the A.E.F. in World War I, set up a practice in Wakefield but soon moved to Milford to participate in the lucrative goat gland practice. Brochures listed him as the hospital’s pathologist; he also performed some of the surgeries when the schedule was busy. Ray Heard, a Milford resident who worked in the hospital, recalled that Jones was a good doctor when he was not drinking, but he was in his cups frequently.⁶¹

Horatio Dwight Osborn, M.D., who received his degree from the St. Louis College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1922 and was awarded another M.D. degree from the University of Pavia for a brief interlude, did not possess a license to practice in Kansas but held a Connecticut license—until it was revoked—and one from Arkansas. He played a major role in the hospital and was also a close friend whom the Brinkleys looked upon as almost a son, one whom, as John put it, they “had raised and educated.” John unquestionably gave him his medical education. Osborn was originally a druggist from Harrison, Arkansas. He began working for John as the Brinkley chauffeur. He would go on to become almost a partner, acquiring over the years a great deal of property in Milford. Osborn performed many of the operations and handled the X-ray department of the hospital.

The innocent young donors were shipped in from Arkansas and housed behind the hospital. The doctor did not have to worry in Milford about animal nuisance complaints as he had in Chicago. The natives loved his goats because they provided employment to many residents. The patient could select his contributor, if he wished, and Minnie secured the vital glands. The transplant operation took only ten or fifteen minutes, after which the patient was returned to his or her room to recuperate. At one time when a process server came, Brinkley asked if he could wait a short time because he had a scheduled operation to perform. He then completed the operation “in a few minutes.” Patients had to leave the hospital by Friday so preparations could be made for the next incoming group on Sun-

day. Brinkley's opponents insisted that the staff rigorously enforced this turnover to prevent the outgoing patients from discussing their experience with the newcomers. If not fully recuperated, they had to stay in the town hotel—also owned by the Brinkleys—or sometimes with their relatives who had accompanied them to Milford. Alumni of the Compound Operation received a certificate with gold seals and heavy black script attesting to their experience “at a cost of \$750” on a certain date, ornately signed “Dr. John R. Brinkley, Dr. Minnie Brinkley.”⁶²

As the Goat Gland Doctor's fame increased, so too did the jokes: What is the fastest four-legged animal in the world? A billy goat going past the Brinkley Hospital. When Brinkley flew overhead in his plane, the farmer's daughter would exclaim to her aging father, “Pa, Doc Brinkley is coming after you.” Or there was the story of the patient whose grandson accidentally dropped his prescription in the well. When asked if he'd drunk any of the water yet, the patient replied, “No, we haven't even been able to get the pump handle down.” There was also the line that “Dr. Brinkley can make every man the ram that am with any lamb.”

In the autumn of 1926 an advertisement occupying two-thirds of a page appeared in “a sensational Sunday newspaper.” A billy goat head dominated the center with one large horn spelling “PREACHES FUNDAMENTALISM” and the other “PRACTICES GOAT GLAND SCIENCE.” Subtitled “How a Famous Surgeon Combines Old-Time Religion and New-Fangled Operations on a Strange Medico-Gospel Farm,” it pictured John on one side holding a baby and Minnie on the other with a goat. Brinkley was described as holding a medical degree from the University of Pavia and being licensed by Italy and the British Medical Association, “a surgeon of distinction whose services have been recognized here and abroad.” He was listed as a thirty-second degree Mason with a \$50,000 radio station “to broadcast fundamentalist doctrines and denounce evolutionists.” Furthermore, Brinkley had recruited a preacher for Milford, and every Sunday night moral and religious movies were shown in the town park. This type of sensationalism brought the Brinkley Operation widespread publicity and increased the numbers of prospects wanting it. John began dreaming, as did Milford residents, about Rochester, Minnesota, and his hospital becoming a second Mayo Clinic. Use of his radio station to attract attention proved this to be a reachable goal in terms of numbers, if not of the most advanced medical treatment. The diploma mill scandal temporarily rendered a severe setback to his business, but his radio station would again attract patients in great numbers to Milford.⁶³

Chapter 3

Radio Advertising

John Brinkley was first introduced to the magical world of radio when he visited California in 1922. The *Los Angeles Times* had just established its wireless station with call letters KHJ. The letters represented three canaries named Kindness, Health, and Joy, a logo that accompanied all of its broadcasts. Brinkley immediately sensed the vast potential of the relatively new medium and decided to build a station in Milford in order to entertain his hospital patients while they were recuperating, as he described it. John was in debt for his other buildings and this was not a light financial undertaking. When Minnie later asked why he was spending so much money on it, he replied that, if nothing else, the license would be valuable in the future. He was certainly correct in this perception.¹

Guglielmo Marconi developed the first practical transmitter and receiver in 1894. The following year, when his native Italy proved unappreciative, he traveled to Great Britain, where he received a patent on his idea. The next few years witnessed experiments and improvements in the field, and radio's usefulness for ships at sea particularly became apparent. In 1910 Congress enacted the Wireless Ship Act, which required ships with fifty or more passengers to be equipped with a set capable of sending and receiving messages over a distance of at least one hundred miles. Lee DeForest, who invented the triode vacuum tube, envisioned as early as 1909 the possibility of sending broadcasts of opera, news, and advertising into homes, but it was not until after World War I that this concept began slowly to be accepted and then rapidly implemented. David Sarnoff proposed to do this with station KDKA in Pittsburgh, and the station gained widespread notoriety when it broadcast the presidential election returns in November 1920.²



Brinkley's hospital and radio station, KFKB, in Milford, Kansas. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

This historic event caught the imagination of people, and soon they were tinkering with crystal sets and “cat whiskers,” trying to pick up stations across the North American hemisphere. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to participate in radio broadcasting—and receiving permission for it was simple. Brinkley applied to the Department of Commerce soon after he returned from his California jaunt and easily obtained authorization to build a station. A large, fifty-by-sixty-foot brick building near his hospital housed the operation. He interpreted his call letters, KFKB, to stand for “Kansas First, Kansas Best,” or alternatively, “Kansas Folks Know Best.” Using the slogan “the Sunshine Station from the Heart of the Nation,” KFKB began broadcasting in September 1923. Station WAAP in Wichita was the first in Kansas, but KFKB, the fourth commercial station in the country, would quickly become first in the nation in terms of listener interest because of the programming genius of John R. Brinkley.³

While the Brinkleys were in China on their world tour, John received word on the progress of construction of the building. Local carpenters built it without blueprints. His secretary wired him that “the gable looks like hell.” His terse reply came back, “tear the damn thing off.” A month after his return a fire badly burned the building and the spring and summer months were spent in rebuilding it—not an auspicious beginning. The new station and its equipment

cost an estimated \$65,000, a sizeable investment, before KFKB ever went on the air.⁴

Brinkley insisted on maintaining two principles from the beginning: no advertising and no recordings. KFKB would present only live entertainment. Records were cheap and performers were expensive, but his listeners would have none but the best, he averred, again guessing accurately that this would be a good business principle to follow. Although it varied from time to time, the following daily schedule was typical after he had made adjustments in the routine:

5:00-5:30	Dutch Hauseman and Cook
5:30-6:00	Health Lecture by Announcer
6:00-7:00	Bob Larkin and His Music Makers
7:00-7:30	Hints to Good Health by Announcer
7:30-8:00	Bob Larkin and His Music Makers
8:00-9:00	Uncle Sam McRee and His Entertainers
9:00-9:30	Markets, Weather, Cash Grain, Dutch Hauseman and Cook
9:30-10:00	Public Health and Sanitation
10:00-11:00	Special Features
11:00-12:30	Steve Love and His Orchestra
12:30-1:00	Health Talk by Dr. Brinkley
1:00-2:00	Special Features
2:00-2:30	Dutch Hauseman
2:30-3:00	Medical Question Box
3:00-4:00	Bob Larkin and His Music Makers
4:00-4:30	Uncle Sam and Dutch Hauseman
4:30-5:45	Arthur Pizenger and His Orchestra
5:45-6:00	Tell Me a Story Lady
6:00-6:30	Orchestra
6:30-7:00	Dr. Brinkley

The announcer's health talks were written by Brinkley, and the Tell Me a Story Lady, with her tales of the adventures of Little Cuffy Bear and other fables, was the Milford banker's wife. Uncle Sam McRee was a fiddler and Junior played the harp. On Sundays the broadcasting hours were 8:00-9:00 A.M. and 12:00-7:00 P.M., featuring Charles Everett Draper, D.D., preaching in the morning hour. Otherwise, the entertainment was professional, although to easterners and urbanites, its relative low quality likely seemed either quaintly endearing or repellent. KFKB's well-rounded mixture of health talks, country music, comedy, poetry readings, market news, weather re-

ports, local talent, some good orchestras, and gospel preaching—sometimes by Brinkley himself—was designed to appeal to the “country hicks” that the doctor sought as listeners. Clues to Brinkley’s intended audience also can be seen from the timing of the daily schedule, which began early in the morning to reach busy farm families.

The large studio accommodated groups such as the nearby Fort Riley Band or the high school marching band from Marion, Kansas, as well as smaller groups of local performers. Former Governor William Avery recalled that he and three or four high school classmates were thrilled to appear on KFKB. One of the girls played the violin and Avery honed his political talents by delivering an address.⁵

In the 1930s Brinkley recruited some stars from his home area in the Smoky Mountains. Samantha Bumgarner, who sang and played the banjo or fiddle, began recording in the 1920s and became a popular performer at Brinkley’s station in the 1930s. Henry Cagle, another Jackson County product, joined Bumgarner in Texas, where they appeared daily on the schedule. His broadcasts, both in Milford and later Del Rio, proved very important in the development of country music. The real star of the station, though, was John R. Brinkley. Rural people loved him and KFKB, as later polls indicated, and they also came to trust what he told them.⁶

Mixing religious fundamentalism with medical advice, Brinkley emphasized the work of the Masonic Order, his strong family values, and his common folk background to woo the rustic listeners. Mrs. Robert J. Hubbard, a nurse, said her husband often listened to John’s pitch for his operation on the radio. She opposed his going to Milford but, sometime when she was absent from home, he traveled there and received the operation anyway. She was certain John’s Masonic discussions were the particular lure because Robert “put so much confidence because of them [*sic*].”⁷

Brinkley had a peculiarly captivating monotone and a well-honed sales pitch that he had picked up during his medicine show days. Also, his voice was a fascinating combination of mountain twang and Kansas nasal drawl, adding appeal to his marketing pleas:

My dear, dear friends—my patients, my supplicants. Your many letters lie here before me, touching testimonials of your pain, your grief, and the wretchedness that is visited upon the innocent. I can reply now to a few—just a few. Others I shall answer by mail.

But, oh my friends, you must help me—remember your letters asking advice must be accompanied by two dollars, which hardly covers the cost of postage, steno-

graphic hire, and office rent. I am your friend but not even a great baron of Wall Street could withstand the ruinous cost of helping you unless this small fee accompanies your letter.⁸

Farmers, especially those in Western Kansas, appreciated his broadcasts of grain and livestock conditions. They could pick up reports from a Denver station and one in Clay Center, Nebraska, but they marketed their cattle in Kansas City and their wheat at Kansas elevators, so they depended on KFKB to keep them current on regional farm news and prices. The local newspaper reported "the farmers are strong for Dr. Brinkley's station and his programs. . . . The only fault they find with it is the present broadcasting hours, which are entirely too limited to suit them."⁹

Speakers over the airwaves are entirely dependent on their oral delivery for effectiveness, and Brinkley proved most successful in creating a radio personality that appealed to rural folks. He had a noticeable, though not heavy, southern accent in his mesmerizing voice. Kansans had a little difficulty with his pronunciation of "kemical," "colyum," and "frenny," but they soon adjusted. Cancer came out "cain-cer" but his fans used "like" as a conjunction and also double negatives, just as he did. Gerald Carson observed that Brinkley "was the fortunate beneficiary of the psychological principle of synesthesia; that is, a sense impression producing an associated mental picture." As he spoke, rural listeners received "a sharp visualization of the skilled and trusted physician" when he came on the air with his familiar "greetings to my friends in Kansas and everywhere."¹⁰

A Kansas politician observed that "any number of women have been heard to remark about Brinkley, that a man with such a pleasant voice must be a good man." Women surely appreciated his warning to husbands that their wives also had sexual needs, a topic that was not widely discussed at the time, even by doctors with their patients. He also had a natural proclivity for teasing his audience along. He insisted the patient was always right and, on one broadcast, he told the story of the man who was determined to have an X-ray of his head, over John's objections. The negative proved, just as the doctor was certain it would, that the patient's head was empty. Arthur Godfrey is credited with being the first famous radio personality to use a one-on-one persona in order to talk to listeners as a friend. Brinkley preceded him by at least a decade. His radio image was that of the humble homespun country doctor who wanted only to "help my friends out there in radioland." There was much discus-



John R. Brinkley talks with his followers during a broadcast. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

sion of the topic of sex on KFKB and, although it was usually medical in nature, this attracted many rural listeners who had an earthy sense of humor and of sexual activities. In addition to his graphic farm language, he occasionally injected Latin medical terms to impress his rural listeners with his credentials and knowledge.¹¹

The problem soon arose for Brinkley, and for all broadcasters, of how to pay for this expensive medium. In the early period, talent was relatively cheap because performers were eager to appear on the air. But the novelty soon wore off, and they began to demand payment according to their popularity. On August 28, 1922, station WEAJ, a New York City broadcasting station owned by American Telephone and Telegraph, provided one answer when it sold ten minutes of time to a Long Island real estate company. This proved both popular and profitable, and two years later AT&T permitted its independent stations to engage in sponsored broadcasting. The modern system quickly emerged, with cleaning product companies especially bringing soap operas or country music to their listeners at expensive fees,

along with others willing to spend generously to present their message. The early broadcasters were prone to change wattage and frequency at will. All of this early confusion and debate over advertising, wave lengths, and cheating on wattage led Herbert Hoover, the secretary of commerce during the Roaring Twenties, to call a series of conferences from 1922 to 1927 to try and bring some order out of the chaos. Out of these meetings emerged the Radio Act of 1927.

The 1927 law created a Federal Radio Commission (FRC) of five members to regulate the industry. The act declared that radio stations must operate "in the public interest, convenience or necessity." The commission granted temporary permits and worked on the various problems involved in granting new and permanent ones. Future licenses, it was decided, would be issued for a three-year period, subject to renewal. The FRC also reluctantly accepted the concept of advertising because no other feasible choice appeared. Yet, it stipulated that if a station was found to be abusing this privilege, through excessive or lewd use, its license would not be renewed. Significantly, the law stated that the commission had no power to censor, but stations could not broadcast "obscene, indecent, or profane language."¹²

Early on, Brinkley devised and insisted upon his own set of guiding principles for his station:

First, no price quotation whatever. I own the station. I have a hospital here. I will not ask people to come to my hospital, and if I will not ask for patients, my advertisers will not make pleas to purchase.

Second, no records shall be played. Records are cheap, but full time talent is far more valuable than its great initial outlay.

Third, the station will never become an advertising or selling medium. No merchandising shall be conducted from it.

Fourth, the station shall never be used for controversies, but all organizations shall be permitted a hearing, regardless of creed or beliefs. The station shall be an open forum.

Fifth, KFKB shall not be a chain station, unless the listeners demand it. A recent poll showed that they did not.

Sixth, the station shall be kept clean, so that none shall be offended. No suggestive language or risqué music shall be permitted. The programs shall be of a nature as to be welcomed in every home.

As with so many of his pronouncements, this one involved much that was practical, but it also contained a mixture of self-serving piety and high principles that he had no intention of maintaining. Brinkley frequently violated points one and three on a massive scale. Later, in disregard of point number two, he recorded many of his political speeches, health talks, and key parts of daily programming—becoming a pioneer in recording innovations. On the other hand, he consistently tried to provide extensive live entertainment. He knew it was good business, and he set precedents with this and other policies.¹³

In a short time, Brinkley's twice daily medical talks discussed his hospital, the signs of aging in the body, his Compound Operation, the extensive qualifications of his staff and facilities, and his readiness to give the best service to those who came to Milford. Knowing most of his listeners were rural folk, he used language they could easily understand: "Note the difference between the stallion and the gelding. The stallion stands erect, neck arched, mane flowing, champ-ing at the bit, stamping the ground, seeking the female, while the gelding stands around, half asleep, going into action when goaded, cowardly, listless, with no interest in anything. Men, don't let this happen to you," he warned. Remember, "a man is as old as his glands." He had an innate sense of the power of repetition, which is—as medicine show men realized earlier and as advertisers on radio and later television would discover—highly effective with most listeners. Thousands "had received real and lasting benefit" from his operation, he said repeatedly. Come to Milford for the Fountain of Youth!¹⁴

The message he sent concerning his medical practice was to the point: "Men giving a history of nocturnal frequency and loss of sex energy should have a careful examination of the prostate gland, not only for hypertrophy enlargement but for atrophy, a wasting away, and for fibrous or selerotic [selenium] hardening condition as well. Include the urinary bladder in the scrutiny. If the frequency is of a day rather than a night, it is well to suspect a bladder stone. Remember that prostates are cancerous and be on the lookout for [a] nodular and uneven prostate gland. In neurasthenetics we look for syphilitus [syphilitic] cause, even in the absence of venereal disease. We do a Wasserman on all such patients." It is an old trick of medicine men to list a number of symptoms, because the odds are great that the listener has suffered at least one of them. Neurasthenetics refers to fatigue and loss of energy. The message illustrates Brinkley's awareness that occasionally throwing in a few medical and technical terms baffled the rustics and assured them the expert was knowledgeable and current in his expertise.¹⁵

Included at the end of this message were some horrible examples. One doctor diagnosed summer flu, but Brinkley's doctors discovered that the patient's abdomen had filled with pus from a ruptured appendix. Another case was diagnosed as tuberculosis of the bowels, but "we operated for pyetitus [pyelonephritis], or pus in the kidneys." These were unusual examples because time and again Brinkley faulted doctors for doing just the opposite of what occurred here. Usually Brinkley argued that other physicians incorrectly diagnosed and prescribed for illnesses, insisting upon operations that the patients did not really need. The message continued: "The medical profession stands aloof and justly looks with suspicion upon the indiscriminate use of the word 'cure.' There is no such thing. It is the pet word of quacks, charlatans, and those who prey upon the ignorant and gullible. The conscientious specialists, surgeon and physician, endeavor to place the patient's body in condition to cure itself . . . by removing the cause." At the bottom of the last page there was a form to return to the Brinkley Hospital requesting copies of publications such as *Paw and Maw*, *Your Health*, and others.¹⁶

KFKB often operated according to its own guidelines as other stations did in this period of chaos, when the FRC was trying to sort out the new medium's problems and resolve them. Managers often changed both power and frequency arbitrarily in attempts to reach the maximum number of listeners between competing channels. A press release on January 12, 1927, announced Brinkley's station was on 431.4 meters but was going to change to 428.3. That April he noted that listeners could pick up KFKB on 1370 kilocycles, or 219 meters, with 5,000 watts of power. On July 1, 1927, the Federal Radio Commission reported that KFKB should be on a frequency of 1240 kilocycles with a power of 2,500 watts from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. and 1,500 watts after 7:00 P.M. On February 27 of that year, Congress passed the Radio Act, which gave the FRC power to bring order out of this confusion by applying strict regulations. In May 1928, the commission listed a number of stations that had to present evidence of the validity of their operation in terms of wattage, frequency, kilocycles, etc., in order to retain their license. KFKB was not included here, indicating either that the FRC was unaware of its deviations or—more likely—that there were worse offenders to discipline. Of the nine stations in Kansas at that time, KFKB was the strongest with 1,500 watts at nighttime, the station next in power being authorized at half of that amount. In 1927 Brinkley applied for 5,000 watts of power, as did station WDAF in Kansas City, owned by the *Kansas City Star*. KFKB's application was approved and WDAF's was rejected. As Brinkley noted in a form letter

to supporters, his station could now be heard anywhere in North America.¹⁷

"If you are disgusted with being below par, with the condition of your health and vitality, listen to the lectures given by Dr. J.R. Brinkley over Radio Station KFKB, Milford, Kansas . . . at one, six, and ten o'clock p.m. each weekday except Saturday." Notices such as this drew increasing numbers of listeners, and what had begun as a hobby to entertain patients soon became a vital tool to draw attention to Brinkley's medical business. In particular, the radio station proved effective in attracting older men to his hospital and, later, in promoting sales of pharmaceuticals. A.B. MacDonald, a newspaper reporter who wrote a series on Brinkley's activities in 1930, observed that "probably 90 percent of all [his] patients . . . were lured over the radio." Brinkley formed the KFKB Broadcasting Association on November 26, 1929, and the radio licensee was changed from Dr. J.R. Brinkley to the association. He then could claim that the station was owned by other people and that he held only one share, regardless of who controlled the station's policies. Actually, John Brinkley held one share, seven shares were owned by seven people in the Junction City and Manhattan area, and Minnie Brinkley held the remaining 992 shares.¹⁸

Those pursuing treatment came to Milford in droves. Run-down businessmen and millionaires, frustrated in their quest for youth and vitality, sought out the Kansas Ponce de León. Patients came from far and near, though most traveled great distances to arrive at Milford, and Brinkley claimed he had fewer patients from Kansas than from any other state. By 1924, men seeking surgery had arrived from Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany, England, France, Mexico, Canada, Alaska, South America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. William Battenfield of Gilbert, Arkansas, remembered shipping an average of forty goats per week to Milford during the mid 1920s.¹⁹

Brinkley also experimented at his station with significant innovations, and soon after he first began broadcasting in 1923 a student at Kansas State Agricultural College, Sam Pickard, conceived the idea of College of the Air. Pickard, Louis Williams of the Extension Service, and Eric Lyman of the Physics Department of the college worked on the concept of broadcasting the lectures of college professors and Pickard proposed the idea to John Brinkley. It cost \$150 to lease a telephone line from Manhattan to Milford, so Pickard, Williams, and Lyman chipped in \$50 each after being informed that the college did not want to provide that kind of money for such a risky experiment. Although the program *did* have some glitches—

often the telephone lines crossed and students heard a mixture of college lecture and country gossip—participants managed to receive the classes on their radios and complete the accompanying assignments. When they later enrolled at the college, they would receive credit for the courses. This sounded to Brinkley very similar to what he claimed he had done in completing high school courses for Milton Academy in his earlier Baltimore visit, and he heartily approved of the program. Pickard also suggested having radio sets in school houses so that teachers could tune in to particular programs and further their students' education. With such innovative ideas, Pickard was an early pioneer in developing broadcasting's educational potential.

On December 1, 1924, station KSAC went on the air for Kansas State Agricultural College, and KFKB's experiments formed the basis for its subsequent extension work. William Jardine was president of Kansas State Agricultural College at the time. When President Calvin Coolidge appointed him secretary of agriculture in 1925, he brought Pickard to Washington as the radio editor for his department. Pickard later received appointment as a member of the Federal Radio Commission, serving during the time that the group approved increasing the wattage of KFKB and denied that favor to WDAF.²⁰

In addition to educational broadcasts, Brinkley incorporated other innovations in developing his radio programming. Following his return from his around-the-world trip, he concluded that his listeners would be interested in a travelogue, and he devoted several programs to describing what the Brinkleys had seen in their travels and his impressions of their visits to various countries. Later, he continued reporting about trips taken during summer vacations, and the travel segments proved to be quite popular with his followers. In addition, Brinkley began the risky venture of broadcasting a series on "the world's great literature which had meant so much to him." These segments, too, turned out to be surprisingly popular with his rural audience, who seemed eager to learn more about their world.²¹

Brinkley proved to be quite perceptive of the importance of understanding politics—especially for those in his type of medical business—and he made good use of his station to protect and to promote his purposes. If he approved of them and their policies, both Republicans and Democrats received free air time at Milford, provided they were important officials. Often, if the individual were prominent enough, he allotted them broadcast time even though he opposed their views. These favors turned out, as he expected, to be politically profitable later. The list of politicians who utilized KFKB's

airwaves included Democratic governor Jonathan Davis (representing another reason Davis told the California sheriff that Kansas would keep Brinkley as long as he wanted to stay), Republican Charles Curtis, first as a senator and later as Herbert Hoover's vice president, and Congressman James G. Strong from the Milford district. Brinkley knitted close ties with other Kansas politicians, including state attorneys general and national politicians whose support stood him in good stead when he later needed their political intervention.

The topic of children provided another source for his radio broadcasting. The Brinkleys loved children, particularly as they were childless, and demonstrated this fondness frequently. As a small boy, Ray Heard had a newspaper route, and John allowed him to sell his extra copies to the hospital patients. Heard recalled that one time a group of larger boys persuaded some younger lads to ask the doctor for a job. He put them to work washing the lower windows on the hospital that they could reach. When they finished, the panes were in worse shape than before and needed washing badly, as the older boys expected. John, too, understood their scheme and, when the older boys came asking for work, he hired them to wash all the windows, high and low, this time doing a good job. Minnie particularly befriended Ray and insisted, over his mother's objections, on giving him a young neutered billy goat. When the goat died later, Ray's mother told him it was because he had pulled the goat's beard too much. Ray then warned Minnie that her husband would die because he pulled his beard excessively. An amused John explained to the lad that stroking his goatee, as he did often, helped him to think and was not dangerous to his health. He did not mention that it was a sign of neurosis.²²

The year 1927 was a blessed one for the Brinkleys. After years of wanting a child, on September 3, Minnie delivered a healthy baby boy, whom they named John R. Brinkley III. Wags snickered that he was a goat gland baby, which the Brinkleys hotly denied. The Wood biography noted that "he came as easily and naturally as Isaac was born to Sarah, long after she and her husband Abraham had given up hope for a child." Johnny Boy, as they called him, was the darling of his parents and they doted on him in every way. (They spelled it "Johnny," in contrast to "Johnnie," as Aunt Sally had spelled John R. Brinkley's nickname.) Above average in intelligence, the boy began talking on the radio at age two, and children looked forward to his singing "Happy Birthday" to them. With a little coaching he managed difficult words such as "tonsillectomy" and "hemorrhoids."

Minnie worked in the hospital during the daytime, so the Brinkleys hired Arfie Condray to cook for the family and take care of

Johnny Boy. She rose early to prepare their breakfast—usually bacon, toast, and eggs sunny-side up—on the wood burning stove at 7:30 A.M., and they ate dinner promptly at 6:00 P.M. Because John wore silk shirts, Arfie was glad she was relieved of doing the family washing. After she washed dishes in the evening, she retired to her room on the third floor of the hospital with the nurses, and Minnie took charge of the boy. As might be expected, his mother spoiled him terribly. Every morning Arfie had to pick up the pots and pans that he had scattered throughout the house the previous evening. Johnny loved his hammer and nails and Minnie even let him drive them into the floors. Arfie recalled that while Minnie's tongue "was loose at both ends," John was quiet, thoughtful, always reading "a book or something."²³

When Johnny Boy went to school in Milford, it was a major event. He rode his tricycle with a bodyguard walking nearby. Mom and Dad drove their sixteen cylinder limousine slowly down the street behind them to make doubly certain nothing untoward happened. Thornton Edwards, the school principal, recalled that the Brinkleys wanted to accelerate the boy but also wanted him to be around other children in order to develop socially. They hired Lowell Brown, the former grade school principal, as a tutor, and the school board remodeled an extra room for Johnny and his teacher. The guard sat outside the room all day, and during recess and the lunch break he watched for suspicious characters. With John involved in politics at the time and because of their wealth, the Brinkleys feared kidnapping or worse. Edwards reported that Johnny's guard was unobtrusive and the children soon became adjusted to his presence and ignored him while playing.²⁴

Another mouth to feed led Brinkley to venture into the oil business. All over central Kansas, people were wildcatting for petroleum during the mid and later part of the Roaring Twenties. All his holes came up dry, but his investments in successful oil companies proved lucrative. The arrival of Johnny Boy also gave him an idea for using his radio station to promote audience listening and to increase family income. After receiving the powerful 5,000 wattage approval, he decided in 1929 that mothers could use advice in raising their babies. According to his official biographer, he soon was "talking as intimately to the mothers in his unseen audience as he would have done to a single mother in his consultation room. He told them in plain unadorned language the best way to take care of their babies, to treat them for minor ills, to use the necessary prophylactics in the constant warfare against germs; and he particularly encouraged them to have their children immunized by vaccination against

diphtheria, smallpox, and typhoid fever." These on-air medical talks on child care by a physician were another "first," and listeners "went wild over the homely feature" according to the biography.²⁵

Brinkley's medical talks were larded with vague or nonspecific phrases such as "leading medical authorities state," "one of the best surgeons in the United States assures me," or "reliable textbooks show." Dr. Brinkley was the "authority," of course, and he determined which textbooks were reliable. He pleaded with his suffering listeners to seek "early medical treatment," to go to a "good hospital," and especially to have "a capable surgeon." His health talks were designed to whet the appetite for literature that explained his operation and its results more fully. He appealed to listeners to "keep your health" and take care of "the robber prostate gland" because as it enlarges, "the functioning of the sex gland diminishes." Brinkley cautioned: "You owe it to yourself and to your wife. I have a method of preventing the enlarged prostate from being removed. . . . I have thousands and thousands of patients . . . and I ask you men to make an investigation of my work through my patients. . . . If you will write them and enclose a stamped envelope, they will tell you of their experience. . . . When you fool around with medicine and massage and such treatments they will ultimately cause your prostate to be removed. . . . We are telling you the truth." He constantly assured listeners that he wanted only to assist them, and that he was their good and helpful friend. Yet, occasionally when he was drinking, according to one of his early nurses, he referred to his patients as "the old fools." A master of manipulating people's emotions, he continually preyed on his listeners' fears, particularly their dread of cancer.²⁶

Brinkley was most persistent once he obtained a listener's name and an indication of interest. A follow-up letter pressed prospective patients:

You have expressed an interest in Rejuvenation. I am doing this as well as all manner of surgical operations. I am the originator of 'animal-to-human gland' Surgery and feel that my seven years experience entitles me to your serious consideration.

I want you as a patient of mine, if you are considering Rejuvenation by the 'Old Reliable' method. What is keeping you away from me? Be frank and let me know. Your letters are confidential. Appointments when wanted are often difficult to obtain.

Cordially yours,
Dr. J.R. Brinkley²⁷

As early as 1927 the hospital business was so brisk that all of the people who wanted to come to Milford could not be accommodated. With his usual flair for publicity, John planted a story in the local newspaper in late November of that year that detailed his plans for “a series of building operations for the following year.” He expected to construct an entirely new hospital south of the radio station with one hundred beds available. It would be complete with a drugstore and an out-patient unit for diagnosis. Employees would be housed in the old hospital building. One year later, based on a story from another Brinkley news release, the newspaper again reported patients being turned away and that ground would be broken the following week for the new brick colonial, three-story hospital, which was to be completed the following May. By March 1930, workers were laboring around the clock to finish the building, “a four-story sanitarium.” They also were rushing construction of a new post office building that would include the hospital offices.²⁸

At this time Brinkley’s colleague and brother-in-law, T.L. Jones, faced a serious setback in health. While trying to push his car out of a mudhole, he suffered a sunstroke. The next morning he had a stroke of apoplexy and then a second stroke that left his left side paralyzed. That weekend the Brinkleys took him to the Battle Creek Sanitarium for treatment. A few weeks of therapy helped him to recover, and he eventually returned to Milford to resume his practice at the Brinkley Hospital.²⁹

Brinkley’s well-received health talks flooded his hospital with letters from listeners—some estimates ranging as high as fifty thousand per day—seeking his advice. The Milford Post Office had to be upgraded to second class, first class being reserved for offices in large cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. It required fifty secretaries to process the deluge. Harrison Woodbury recalled that “Dr. Brinkley was so famous that he often got mail addressed only to Dr. Brinkley. It carried no other address and always arrived.” The population of Milford grew to three hundred due to his medical facilities, as most of the citizens were dependent on his practice in one or another capacity. No wonder the natives adored their famous doctor!³⁰

Thousands of listeners wrote him that “if our family doctor had been able to do anything for us, we would not have written you in the first place.” Hundreds of others told him they had asked their doctor to prescribe what Brinkley advised and the response was that “they were not going to permit that radio quack to tell them what to do with their patients.” Brinkley proved especially skillful over the years in antagonizing the membership of the American

Medical Association. With this inundation of medical questions, Brinkley justified what he was doing by reminding critics that Dr. Royal S. Copeland gave health lectures and advice over the airwaves (later parlaying his radio popularity into a U.S. Senate seat as a representative from New York) and a "Dr. Evans" conducted a Medical Question Box in the *Chicago Tribune*. Even the U.S. Public Health Service, he rationalized, released medical advice to the masses through its pamphlet *Prevention of Disease and Care of the Sick*. This was mailed to rural areas and encouraged self-diagnosis, self-medication, and self-treatment for farm people who did not have medical services readily available.³¹

Sensing great potential sales here, Brinkley's response to this glut of mail resulted in his most financially successful program. In the fall of 1929 he began prescribing to his radio listeners by telling them to write him or to go to their drugstore and purchase remedy X for their ailment. When he discovered some of his less-quick listeners were receiving and giving mixed signals about his prescriptions, he started the daily program of Medical Question Box. This became so popular that he soon was making three half-hour presentations daily. He invited people to write him about their symptoms and placed a stenographer, Ruth Athey, in charge of several secretaries, who sorted the daily mail into categories of fan mail, questions, thank yous, etc. Miss Athey then gave him as many of the "question" letters as she thought he could cover the next day, and he studied them before going on the air. Sometimes, she testified, he would "lay one aside for further study." He read the symptoms of "A B of Garden City" over the air, prescribed "C, D, and E," and told those with similar complaints to order these drugs from his drugstore in Milford. Presently, he was filling a huge amount of prescriptions from his store, and this was seriously depleting the business of druggists, especially those in the immediately surrounding states.³²

In short order, a delegation of concerned pharmacists visited the Milford doctor. His mail order business was ruining theirs, they hotly informed him. Knowing he had badly alienated area doctors with his Medical Question Box and other activities and, perceiving it to be good strategy and profitable to woo the druggists, he worked out a plan with them that they could not resist. In a two-hour session, they organized the Brinkley Pharmaceutical Association, which eventually included some 1,500 members in Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, and parts of Arkansas. To avoid the possibilities of his rural listeners becoming confused with his pharmaceutical terms, he arranged his prescriptions by numbers. He would prescribe by numbers, and listeners would give the desired

ones to their druggist, who had to be a member of the Brinkley Association and consult their lists in order to know which prescriptions they wanted. The result was what might have been expected. In more than five states, people collectively ceased going to their regular doctors and also stopped purchasing patent medicines because the Milford doctor and his prescriptions cured their ills, or so they believed.³³

Brinkley reasoned that pharmacists gave the prescribing doctor a cut of their prescription profit, so he should have one also from his members. Some prescriptions on his list sold for as much as \$10, but most cost around \$2 or \$3. The druggists gave him \$1 for each prescription they sold, and they still managed to double their price on aspirin, laxatives, etc. Then, too, he was sending them more business than they had ever enjoyed. Some reported an increase of \$75 to \$100 daily in their drug sales. Everyone connected with the association was making more money than ever, while regular doctors and the patent medicine companies lost substantial business. The Pharmaceutical Association also boosted Brinkley's hospital business. When he prescribed over the air and helped women listeners, they reasoned he could help their husbands also, and they often urged their spouses to travel to Milford for the Compound Operation. Brinkley was far-sighted enough to select Percy S. Walker, a Topeka druggist, as president of his association. Walker, significantly, was the brother-in-law of William A. Smith, attorney general of Kansas.³⁴

Brinkley's letters of instructions to his druggists cautioned them to keep the list of numbered instructions "in your safe and don't talk to traveling men. These go to you by registered mail and if the opposition finds out what they are it is your own fault. . . . If patient is not 100% pleased, make full refund and charge me for it. A girl handles your accounts, and you must report every Saturday at the close of business, whether any sales or not, because if you don't report the girl kicks you off the Accredited List." There was no indication in the records that any druggist failed to report.³⁵

On another occasion, Brinkley sent members an inventory of the prescriptions and their prices at his Milford drugstore. "Any druggist selling these prescriptions for less," he warned, "will be removed from my list." "Don't be writing me that customers say they can get Constipation and Liver medicine at Milford drugstore for less than \$3.50," he stated. "Ask them to try." Members were urged to purchase from Lloyds Wholesalers or, in some cases, Parke Davis and Company. The prescription for number 114, "Constipation and Liver Med., 8 oz.," sold for \$3.50. Three of the eight ounces were Lloyds's

Chioanthus and one ounce was Parke Davis's Cascara Evacuant, Number 110, Eczema and Psoriasis Remedy, cost \$5. Four ounces of "Lloyds Tr., Quasa" for pinworms cost \$2. The list also included the warning that "these prescriptions MUST be kept confidential. Be loyal to your druggist, your God and to me." "This goes to you by registered mail," he warned, "protect it. It means money to you."³⁶

Prescription number 60 for reducing weight of both men and women proved to be a Brinkley favorite. It consisted of one dram of Lloyds's phytolacca and twelve ounces of Lloyds's Bladder Wrack, cost \$3, and was designed to "eliminate excess of salt, fats, condiments, sugars and starches. It contains no habit-forming drugs and is non-toxic," he reminded druggists. He often prescribed number 71 to radio listeners. It consisted of a one-to-three-thousand-part solution of Mercurochrome to water for antiseptic uses. Prescription number 50, a liver medicine, cost \$3.50.

Dr. H.W. Gilley, an Ottawa, Kansas, physician, described attending a stricken rural mail carrier, a story the Kansas Medical Board emphasized in the 1930 hearings to revoke John's license. The man had collapsed, his body cold and in shock. He had just taken a dose of number 50. It contained a solution of hydrastis cascara and chioanthus, relatively harmless laxatives. Hydra cascara is a species of the Buckhorn bush and its bark serves as a laxative for the bowels. Chioanthus is made from the bark of the tree commonly known as the Snowdrop and is prescribed for ailments of the liver and its secretions. The two herbs were fundamental to Brinkley's prescriptions to "clean out" the body. The action of this combination on the patient in this case, whom Brinkley had never seen in order to diagnose and prescribe a treatment for his illness, was so drastic that the doctor had to perform an emergency operation to try and save his life. During the hearing on the issue of cancelling Brinkley's license, the druggist involved, John G. Kaiser of Ottawa, described what actually happened. He had sold Harold E. Humrickhouse a bottle of the liver and constipation medicine in March. He never sold any to Harold's father, Edward, who found his son's bottle and took a dose, a situation that could occur regardless of the doctor or prescription. Despite the emergency operation, Edward died on May 16. This case is a good example of the horror stories the AMA gathered to discredit Brinkley and his practice of prescribing for patients he had not examined.³⁷

Two or three times daily, Brinkley read medical symptoms that listeners sent to him and then, like a quarterback changing the play at the line of scrimmage with an audible call, he would bark out a series of numbers. As he suggested, other ladies listening to the

broadcast would recognize the medical signs as their own, and they would be "awfully dumb" if they did not find out what was wrong with them. The following broadcast is typical:

You are listening to Doctor Brinkley speaking from his office over station KFKB. We must dig into our question business this morning. The first question is from Somewhere in Missouri. [Questioners often used pseudonyms to avoid embarrassment.] She says she enjoys our talks. She states her case briefly, which I appreciate. She had an operation, with her appendix, ovary and tubes removed a couple of years ago; she is very nervous and has dizzy spells. She says the salt solution and constipation and liver medicine has already benefited her. In reply to your question No. 1, I am more or less of the opinion that while the symptoms are to a great extent those of a premature menopause, I think they are not, but yet they are due to the fact that you have a very small amount of ovarian substance remaining. In my practice in such cases as this I have for many years used prescription No. 61 for women. I think you should [use it], as well as Special Prescription No. 50, and I think if you would go on a vegetable diet, a salt-free diet, for a while and use Prescriptions No. 64, 50, and 61, you would be surprised at the benefit you would obtain.

Or listeners might hear the diagnosis this way: "This little lady has been seeing spots before her eyes, has dizzy spells, and is constipated. Prescriptions 66 and 74, which she can procure at the Acme drugstore in , at five dollars and seven dollars, will bring her relief."³⁸

At other times, Brinkley sounded quite mercenary and crass: "Now here is a letter from a dear mother, a dear little mother who holds to her breast a babe of nine months. She should take No. 2 and—yes, No. 17—and she will be helped. She should order them from the Milford Drug Company [this announcement preceded the association of druggists he formed], Milford, Kansas, and they will be sent to you Mother—collect. May the Lord guard and protect you, Mother. The postage will be prepaid."³⁹

Listener interest in his medical talks is understandable when he discussed his procedure for resolving problems of men or, in the following case, for a woman who complained of not being able to have children: "For three months take Doctor Brinkley's treatment for childless homes. Of course doctors say it is vulgar for me to tell

you about this, but we are taking a chance and we don't think it is obscene down here. If I can help some father and mother that do not have children in their home, to bring a little darling into their home, just one, through my suggestions, I will take all the cussings and a lot more than I have already taken from my ethical friends. If this lady will take Nos. 50 and 61 and that good old standby of mine, No. 67, for about three months, and see if there isn't a big change taking place. Don't have an operation." On another occasion, though, he undoubtedly did not make a hit with a woman who complained of having too many little darlings, advising, "I suggest you have your husband sterilized and then you will be safe from having more children provided you don't get out in anybody else's cow pasture and get in with some other bull."⁴⁰

Speculation over Brinkley's annual income from this prescription business ranges as high as \$750,000, to as low as \$400,000. If he was performing about fifty operations per week as he claimed, for forty weeks annually (with three months vacation in the summer) at \$750 each, this would provide an additional \$1.5 million. His overhead, of course, was enormous with so many people on his payroll, and he was noted for his generosity. But despite these costs, his annual income was substantial by the end of the Roaring Twenties. The doctor now drove custom-made, \$7,000 Lincolns with gold-plated hub caps and sixteen-cylinder Cadillacs. The governor later named him an admiral in the Kansas Navy, and he proudly wore the proper uniform and carried a sword while sailing on his yacht. One of his Cadillacs had "Dr. Brinkley" or "JRB" emblazoned in gold plate in thirteen places. He and Minnie had a great penchant for diamonds and owned some the size of hazelnuts. His wife's diamonds were described as "fabulous." A diamond on John's right hand was eleven carats in size, the one on the left was fourteen carats. His diamond tie pin was an even larger twenty-four carats. He also owned a diamond-studded tie clasp two inches long and three-quarters of an inch wide and a diamond pin with a fraternal emblem. This garish display of wealth seemed quite natural on the doctor, his supporters believed.⁴¹

John also increased his life insurance significantly. In May 1929, Manhattan Mutual Life reportedly raised his total policy amount to \$140,000. "It is believed to be one of the largest policies of its kind issued in Kansas," the local newspaper informed its readers. The following year Dr. J.R. Brinkley was named a director of the Manhattan Mutual Life Insurance Company when he increased his life insurance coverage to \$191,000. John wrote to his little son at the time, in a letter to be read later, that he did not want him to be

poor as he had been. He wanted the boy to become a Mason and a doctor, so he purchased a policy that would pay Johnny Boy, when he turned eighteen, \$200 per month for eight years to finance his medical education.⁴²

During this period Brinkley acquired another ad man and further refined his mass communications techniques. Solon MacNab, an Indianapolis motorman in his seventies, had received the Brinkley operation in 1924 and was very satisfied with the results. A few years later he tuned into a KFKB broadcast and, reminiscing, wrote to the doctor to remind him of the episode. Brinkley saw a golden opportunity and responded that he would appreciate a photograph if MacNab had one. The old fellow sent two: an old, unattractive one he had used when applying for his streetcar job and a recent one that improved his appearance. They showed a striking before-and-after contrast. Brinkley sent him a check for \$100 "in appreciation," and MacNab was so pleased he told him to use the pictures as he wished. Soon they were widely circulated to advertise the effects of the Compound Operation.

MacNab subsequently became part of the Milford advertising staff, making a salary of \$30 weekly. His first production was a day-by-day account of his experience in the Brinkley Hospital when he received the rejuvenation operation. Then he wrote letters addressing impotency and the importance of healthy glands, with the admonition to "act now before it is too late" followed by hundreds of testimonials. By 1929, Brinkley, through MacNab and his other public relations people, had perfected his mass mailing process: First, Brinkley made an initial contact. This was followed-up with testimonials and pamphlets. Finally, letters were sent emphasizing the need for immediate action. These stressed the hospital's busy schedule and were filled with pat phrases such as, "surely you do not enjoy poor health," "act now before it is too late," and "remove the short from your batteries and notice the change." Brinkley always kept careful records of persons who responded and those who were delinquent. The latter group received crafty follow-up letters that gently chided addressees for failing to respond to the earlier literature. At one point, he gave away a radio each week to the respondent who answered his questionnaire "most promptly and most sincerely." During another promotional, the prize was a red Irish setter.⁴³

In 1938 a group of chemistry students was listening to a Brinkley pitch. James Harvey Young, a graduate student, dropped in to see his friends, listened to the appeal for letters describing sexual inadequacies, wrote a real tearjerker, and mailed it to his radio station. In three weeks, a fancy radio arrived and, after consultation with

the Law School dean, the students kept the radio for use in the lab.⁴⁴

In developing his literature, Brinkley knew he was appealing largely to country people and crafted his materials accordingly. One of the address blanks, for example, on a form for ordering Brinkley literature was very brief, indicating it was prepared for general distribution to box holders and rural routes. Moreover, in his mailings and broadcasts, Brinkley repeatedly emphasized that—like most of his audience—he had come from humble beginnings. It is an old ploy of pitchmen not to sound too “slick,” and Brinkley kept this principle in mind in his broadcast appeals. Yes, he was learned and skilled in medicine, and he was far ahead of his profession, but he also had “strength of character,” because he had to “pull himself up by his bootstraps” to become the brilliant surgeon he was. At the same time, Brinkley did not shy from emphasizing his medical credentials. “B.A., M.D., LL.D, Sc.D.” invariably followed his name on literature, indicating a learned man. He emphasized his role as the “founder and presiding genius of the institution [Brinkley Hospital].” He stressed the significance of his operations on important people, dropping names such as Chancellor Tobias of the University of Chicago, Colorado State Senator Wesley Staley, and A.S. York, former president of the Dental Association of Florida. Recipients came to believe they knew him personally because his literature contained numerous pictures of himself; his staff; his hospital; his wife, who also was touted as being a doctor; Johnny Boy; and his other Milford facilities. Letterheads referred to him as “Chief Surgeon of the Kansas General Hospital,” implying to out-of-state people that his was a state institution. He continued to list himself as a member of the Army Medical Reserves and a graduate of the University of Pavia, after it was not valid to do so. In 1927 Congressman Strong tried to get John R. Brinkley’s commission in the reserves restored, and only the vigorous opposition from Colonel Fred O’Donnell, a leading Junction City surgeon, prevented him from achieving this aim.⁴⁵

A reporter from the *Kansas City Star* explained how the Brinkley system of communications operated:

In all the history of quackery there never was another system so perfectly and smoothly devised to rope in victims. . . . The system begins with his radio. From morning to night it operates, with orchestra music, old fiddlers, singers, and other entertainment. This . . . corresponds to the banjo picker and singer of the street medical faker; it attracts the public and holds it for the ballyhoo of the faker

himself and his lectures, the climax being the sale of his fake remedies.

Brinkley's ballyhoo is in his radio lectures each day. In these he describes the ailments of men, the symptoms of lost manhood, and the sure remedy he has in his goat gland operation. He invites correspondence through the mails; that is the second step in his 'come-on' ballyhoo, and here is the high spot of his system. Once a person writes to Brinkley he is doomed from then on to receive a deluge of pamphlets, testimonials and urgings to go to Milford and be examined.

The old-time faker appealed to dozens with his street show, though, while Brinkley appealed to millions with his radio broadcasts.⁴⁶

William P. Sachs briefly reappeared in Brinkley's life in 1931, following the losses of Brinkley's licenses. He lived at the Milford Sanitarium for a period of time and, under the name E.J. Meister, travelled around the countryside selling stock to begin publishing a newspaper, the *Junction City Independent*. The proposed daily called itself the "people's newspaper" and was strongly pro-Brinkley. Meister, or Sachs, was especially effective in raising money for the project from German-speaking people and in speaking to these same people over KFKB. The paper, which Brinkley was supporting, would have more effectively promoted the doctor's news releases than its competitor, the *Junction City Union*, but the enterprise folded within three months due to lack of general interest. The rural area obviously could not support two newspapers and the *Union* proved too well-established to be driven out of existence.⁴⁷

Soon after the founding of the Brinkley Pharmaceutical Association, the *Kansas City Star* began receiving sharp protests from patent medicine companies that Brinkley was ruining their business and that, if it continued, they would be forced to discontinue their advertising—a major source of revenue for the paper. The newspaper received another stinging blow when its radio station was denied increased wattage while KFKB's upgrading was approved. Only one station in the area could receive this increase and KFKB was the chosen one. Brinkley was assisted, no doubt, by Sam Packard, a member of the FRC. To cap these affronts, in November 1929, *Radio Digest* conducted a popularity contest—a primitive form of the Neilsen ratings—for radio stations in the United States and Canada that continued until the following April. The journal offered a gold cup to the winner and a silver cup for six regional champions. The winners and their numbers were announced in April 1930:

Canada, CFQC	3,842
East, WJZ	4,210
West, WNAX	17,031
South, KWKH	19,514
Middle West, KFNF	46,556
Far West, KFOX	64,557
Gold Cup, KFKB	256,827

WDAF in Kansas City, KFKB's primary competitor, came in at twenty-fifth with about ten thousand votes. Something had to be done about the radio doctor! The newspaper found an eager ally in Morris Fishbein, editor of the American Medical Association's journal. On April 10, 1930, Fishbein wrote an editorial in the AMA journal, calling Brinkley "a charlatan of the rankest sort" and urged the Federal Radio Commission to curb his radio activities, which he was using to "victimize people and to enrich himself." The AMA Division of Investigation had by this time a large file on the Milford doctor that it had collected during the 1920s. The *Star* would soon add to this file as the journal had assigned its top reporter, Alexander B. MacDonald, to investigate and write a series of articles on the Goat Gland Doctor.⁴⁸

MacDonald, an experienced reporter, had worked for the *Star* or the *Kansas City Times* (the morning edition of the *Star*) since 1892. After World War I, he wrote for the *Star's* feature desk. In addition, he occasionally submitted feature stories to the *Country Gentleman*. In 1930, immediately after his Brinkley sequence, he penned another series of articles that helped solve a murder case in Amarillo, Texas, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize. He traveled widely to research his stories but he also continued his interest in developments in and around Kansas City. While the *Star* and *Times* were Kansas City, Missouri, papers, they had a wide readership in Kansas, as they covered much of the eastern part of that state's news.

MacDonald did extensive work on Brinkley's background, including interviews in Jackson County, North Carolina. Among others, he talked to Sally Wike Engren, who recounted her version of their marital discord: John had abandoned her and her three daughters on three different occasions before she finally left him, and he was sporadic in his child support payments. Then the reporter bearded the lion in his den by interviewing the doctor in his Milford office. Afterward, MacDonald wrote:

As I sat down he opened a fresh packet of [Murad] cigarettes. I began immediately to weigh his diamonds, to

see which was the biggest, the one in his necktie, the one set in a ring of platinum on a finger of his right hand or the one on his left hand. They glittered as he moved, and my decision was that the one in his tie, as large as a hazel nut, had it over the other two.

By the time I had decided that point he had lighted his cigarette, had seated himself opposite me, and said, "I'll answer any question you ask me."

"They say you charge \$750 for transplanting the glands of a goat to a man."

"I do," he snapped out, "That is my lowest price. If a man is able to pay more I charge \$1,000 or even \$1,500."

"They say you ship young goats in from Arkansas, fifty and sixty a month."

"I do and it won't be long until I am bringing them here at the rate of 1,000 a month. If I had accommodations here for 1,000 patients I would be performing that many goat gland transplantings a month."

MacDonald noticed the sound of hammers and saws with the new construction going on and asked,

"How much do you have invested here?"

"A half-million dollars, and I've made every dollar of it in the last thirteen years, with the American Medical Association and most of the doctors fighting me. I get fat on fights," and he laughed. All through the interview he laughed and joked.

Brinkley discussed his one hundred employees in Milford, the enormous amount of correspondence he received, and the buildings then under construction. He also had plans to build the new Brinkley Memorial Methodist Church and parsonage. It would have "chimes and a fine pipe organ" (John loved organ music) and would cost \$50,000. The Brinkley Hospital and support buildings, which were then going up, would cost \$100,000 fully equipped and would house shops, a gymnasium, a clinic, and a large theater. These new brick buildings appeared to be permanent, the reporter observed. Brinkley responded, "Each of these new buildings I am putting up is intended to be a unit in a great surgical institution that will be in operation, I hope, down through the ages. . . . My ambition is to build up here in Milford a second Rochester, Minnesota, an institution like that of the Mayo's, with the best surgeons and physicians in the world,

great hospitals, clinics and so on. . . . The Brinkley name will be perpetuated here.”

MacDonald asked Brinkley if he feared the possibility of losing his radio license. “They can’t take what I haven’t got,” John responded, because KFKB was owned by the Broadcasting Association (of which his wife owned 992 of the 1,000 shares). Then MacDonald asked about the state medical board’s threat of revoking Brinkley’s medical license. Brinkley retorted, “If they revoke my license, I have five licensed physicians and surgeons, and six graduate nurses here with me now. They would keep right on and I could bring here a staff of graduate doctors from the best universities in the world.” He had applications from over one thousand professionals at that moment, he added, who wanted to come to Milford. MacDonald asked about his questionable medical training, and Brinkley told him of his background and education, which he considered entirely legitimate. “Of course the doctors will say I am a hypocrite, but my mother was a good Methodist. She died when I was a kid, in the Tennessee Mountains, back in North Carolina, and I was raised by a good Methodist aunt; and so, whether they believe it or not, I am a Christian. I talk on Christian ideals twice each Sunday over the radio, and there’s my Bible,’ and he pointed to a well-thumbed Bible on his desk.” When asked about his pharmaceutical association, Brinkley denied receiving any kickback from the druggists, because any money sent him went into the “radio broadcasting fund.” He refused to admit ever having lost any patients from surgery. Finally, John told the reporter that the opposition of the AMA doctors to his practice was making him “rich.” When queried about how much money he made, he laid his hand on the reporter’s knee and replied, “now you have no right to ask me that, have you? I am doing quite well, thank you.”⁴⁹

The next day the *Star* ran the second in the series, this one about his dissatisfied patients. A number of them said that after the psychological uplift following the Compound Operation, they soon were let down and then felt as old as their original glands. This observation led some experts to speculate that he was giving patients a shot of vitamins, which had just been discovered in the 1920s, and after the effects wore off, they often suffered a relapse. John L. Zahner, a Lenexa, Kansas, farmer, described his trip to Milford. He arrived on Sunday, as required, and Dr. Osborn examined him, telling him his prostate was as big as his fist. He was sent to bed and sometime after midnight Mrs. Brinkley came in and told him he was “a borderline case,” which he understood to mean he lay between life and death. She had a check made out for \$750 ready for him to

sign and scared him so badly he signed it. He said, "I believe I never would have signed it had she come to me in daylight, but at that uncanny hour of the night, with the sick men all limping up and down the halls, lights flickering, examinations going on, I was unduly influenced and I signed it." Zahner thought by Friday he was "five times as bad" as he had been the previous Sunday but he still had to evacuate the hospital at least by Saturday. When he got home, he tried to stop payment on the check but it was too late.⁵⁰

MacDonald also reported the experience of "Mr. H., a Kansas farmer" [S.A. Hittle of Springhill]:

I have been ruined by Dr. Brinkley and his assistant, Dr. Osborn. I am 71 years old and have worked hard all my life, saved some money on this farm and reared a family here, but I had a trouble that came upon me in my old age and I used to sit here and listen to Dr. Brinkley talk over the radio and he described my ailments exactly.

I was operated on at 9 o'clock at night. Brinkley and Osborn simply ruined me, That's all. I have been unable to do a day's work since they operated on me. I want an opportunity to go before the medical board of Kansas and let those doctors see how I have been mangled and mistreated by men who call themselves surgeons.

Then there was the story of "Mr. E., another Kansas citizen" [Grant Eden of Osawatomie]:

Late that Sunday night Mrs. Brinkley came to me and urged me to take the operation. . . . At 11 o'clock that Sunday night they operated on me. I was on the operating table exactly fifteen minutes.

I had trouble from it and I sent for Mrs. Brinkley and she said: "Go to sleep and forget it." I continued to get worse and on Friday they insisted that I go home.

Mr. E. got an infection and had to have a local physician take care of him. "I am a ruined man, physically," he lamented.⁵¹

MacDonald interviewed John Ferris and his wife, Louise Seaberg Ferris. She was Dr. Thorek's nurse in Chicago when John took the advanced course in surgery in 1919, and she liked his "surgical style." Brinkley persuaded her to join his staff, and she stayed in Milford for a year. She married Ferris, one of his goat gland patients, and moved to his farm in Nortonville. Brinkley also operated on her,

making an incision in the fatty part of her legs and stitching in a piece of goat gland. The man is “diabolical,” she told MacDonald, “the most cruel, pitiless, and cold-blooded man I ever knew.” He charged her \$1,000 for an operation that was of no help. Her husband’s \$400 operation was also useless. On the other hand, Mrs. Lee McChesney later testified in the medical hearing that Mrs. Ferris told her the *Kansas City Star* story did not quote her “truthfully.”⁵²

Immediately after MacDonald’s first expose was printed, the *Star* began receiving letters from other disgruntled Milford veterans of the Compound Operation. Almost no one was neutral about Dr. Brinkley. His supporters worshiped him and his opponents hated him. The *Star* series aroused a strongly divided partisan populace. It is significant that political campaigns and elections in Kansas immediately followed this series of attacks and Brinkley capitalized on his followers’ aroused emotions to good effect.⁵³

The *Star* series included death certificates of a number of Compound Operation patients who subsequently died. In a legal suit Brinkley responded to questions about each of the death certificates that he signed over the years. Under cross examination, he described each case as he remembered them. This one died of peritonitis after an appendectomy, that one died of old age, this one was a premature birth; none died as a result of the Compound Operation, as the MacDonald reports were suggesting.

The newspaper also published accounts of some men who were en route to have the operation but reconsidered when they read the current reports. Rolla M. Reeves, a Montana rancher, arrived in Kansas City with \$750 in traveler’s checks and a bad case of rheumatism in his legs and back. He had heard a KFKB broadcast, wrote for the literature, and learned from Brinkley that his problem probably was caused by his aging prostate. When he reached Kansas City on his way to Milford, he read a newspaper account of the death of a Brinkley patient from New Jersey and asked a nearby patrolman if the story could be true. “You bet it is true,” replied the officer. “You had better investigate some more.” The train for Milford departed, and Reeves boarded another headed in the other direction back to Montana. William Black of Kenora, Ontario, Canada, also arrived in Kansas City in the midst of the *Star* series. He made inquiries and took the next train home, asking the *Star* to send copies of the stories to his wife, so she would understand why he did not proceed with the operation.⁵⁴

Journalist Ernest A. Dewey wrote an article for *The Debunker*, published by Kansan E. Haldeman-Julius, entitled “‘Dr.’ John R. Brinkley, The Superb Quack Who Sells Sexual Potency.” Based on

the *Star* stories, he was convinced MacDonald had proven his case against the doctor. Dewey later concluded, however, that MacDonald continued his attack far too long and, in doing so, promoted Brinkley's popularity with the masses. "Never in my newspaper experience have I seen so asinine a campaign," he stated. MacDonald had engaged in a "senselessly maudlin, foolishly prolonged" attack, continuing "long since there ceased to be anything left to caterwaul about." Dewey concluded that MacDonald was "a feverish follower of the Rev. William A. 'Billy' Sunday, the famous evangelist, and this accounted for the "unrestrained crude sensationalism not usual for the staid old sheet [*Star*]." ⁵⁵

John Brinkley's immediate response to the *Star* attack was to buy a double-page ad in the *Kansas City Journal Post*, the *Star*'s rival, that featured pictures of his new hospital, his radio station, and many of its performers. He paid \$2,842 for this publicity. He also filed a \$600,000 damage suit against Morris Fishbein for writing the "quack" article and Dr. William S. Yates of Junction City for distributing the offending essay among Kansas doctors. In addition, he fought back on his radio station, referring to the AMA as the "Amateur Meatcutters Association" and Morris Fishbein as "Little Old Fishy." ⁵⁶

Chapter 4

Beset by Enemies

The *Kansas City Star* attack proved to be only the opening gun in the campaign of the American Medical Association against John R. Brinkley. Morris Fishbein and Arthur J. Cramp of the AMA had been building their Brinkley file with material for several years but bided their time for a propitious moment to take action. In 1928, the AMA journal published Fishbein's essay on John Brinkley's background and his goat gland operation, but this circulated only among its members and had no great public impact. When Brinkley began his extensive radio and medical advertising and medicinal prescribing in 1929 and stepped hard on the financial toes of doctors in his region, however, something had to be done. Local physicians might try to ignore or denigrate him, but his flamboyant enterprise could not be disregarded very long by the organized profession and influential medical people throughout the country. The *Star* series attempted to ban him from the air; the concurrent AMA campaign was designed to remove him from the field of medicine.¹

The study of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in American Medical Schools brought far-reaching reforms in that field. Under its auspices, Abraham Flexner visited every medical school in the nation. At that point "the country boasted some of the best physicians in the world; it also suffered some of the worst," according to a medical historian. The Flexner Report of 1910 revealed all kinds of practices subject to criticism, including libraries with no books, faculty too preoccupied with their private practices to do justice to their teaching responsibilities, and nonexistent advertised laboratories. This disgrace shamed the profession into imposing higher standards for its schools, among other changes, and spelled the doom of the proprietary schools. Many of the weaker

schools were unable to continue under the resulting pressure. In 1906 there were 162 medical schools; by 1910 this number had declined to 131 and by 1915 to 95. The next step for the American Medical Association came with policing the state licensing systems and the weeding out of “irregular” doctors, or the “very worst” who had graduated from the feeble schools that had been eliminated—an attack that was spearheaded by Arthur J. Cramp. As state after state began forcing eclectics, homeopaths, and other “irregulars” to conform to new standards, many of these physicians had to leave medicine and find other work or drift from state to state until taking final refuge in Arkansas and California, the last states to tighten their medical regulations. A large number of homeopaths soon discovered that the allopaths were correct after all in their treatment of patients and easily converted to the thesis that opposites cure. In Kansas, the eclectic John R. Brinkley chose, instead, to stand and fight the powerful organization.²

Soon after graduating from medical school, Arthur Cramp decided to dedicate his career to ferreting out charlatans in the profession. His motivation in this endeavor stemmed from his daughter's death at the hands of a quack doctor. The practice of medicine did not appeal to him, and he was delighted with the invitation to join the American Medical Association's staff as an editorial assistant. As his early exposures of the patent medicine business gained notoriety, the AMA established a Propaganda Department with Cramp as its director. Soon he was carrying on a voluminous correspondence with doctors everywhere inquiring about nostrums, and his “Fake File” grew enormously. Increasingly, as inquiries came in over the years, he had only to consult his files or his publications to answer them.³

Morris Fishbein assisted Cramp in his crusade when the former began editing the AMA journal in 1924, the year after John Brinkley began broadcasting on his radio station. According to Minnie Brinkley, Fishbein—whom she called the “poor Jew boy”—originally was a homeopath who had taken university courses with her husband. He proved to be as ardent an opponent of medical quackery as Cramp. Fishbein soon emerged as a figure to be reckoned with in the AMA's power structure and immediately became an implacable foe of John Brinkley, whom he considered to be the most notorious of quack doctors.

From the time he became editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in September 1924, Fishbein “energetically advanced the association's interest,” not only through its publications, but as a spokesman. In 1928, for example, the trustees reported

that he had delivered fifty-eight addresses the previous year to state medical societies. Fishbein's aggressiveness over the years, though, "alienated groups within and without the profession." He received some adverse publicity during World War II when Senator Claude Pepper, a Democrat from Florida, sharply criticized him for "capitalizing on the shortage of doctors" to promote the sale of his book on home medical remedies. Pepper exhibited Fishbein's *Modern Home Medical Adviser* before the Senate Military Affairs Subcommittee, attacking the book's assertion that "25,000 doctors are in uniform and more [are] being taken every day," as an inducement to buy the book. "I hope we can protect the medical profession against such charlatanism," Pepper pleaded. Finally, during the AMA's protracted struggle against a national health plan during the Truman presidency, Fishbein's bellicosity forced the trustees to request his retirement, and in June 1949 the AMA lost "its most daring and adroit leader."⁴

Fishbein noted that the AMA had entries of two hundred thousand charlatans and medical fakes in its files but concluded that John Brinkley was "the most dangerous because he is daring and particularly because of his radio. No other quack owns a radio station," he noted ominously. This was not true, of course, because Norman Baker, who pedaled a cure for cancer, operated a similar station. In a short time, Fishbein began a campaign to bring Brinkley to heel, a quest that proved to be a most difficult and enduring task. As one authority noted, Fishbein had "a real genius" for exposing quackery and attacked "'goat gland' Brinkley and all the other hosts of amusing, reckless and dangerous frauds with a gleam of relish in his eye."⁵

Fishbein first struck in January 1928 when he published his lengthy article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, calling John R. Brinkley the epitome of quacks. When the Pratt County Medical Society received this issue, it took the lead in Kansas in forcing the question of revoking Brinkley's medical license. Pressured by this group, at its spring meeting that same year, the Kansas Medical Society condemned the Milford doctor and petitioned the Federal Radio Commission to halt the broadcasts of station KFKB. Brinkley responded with editorials over his radio, and for every unhappy Brinkley patient the medical societies uncovered, the Goat Gland Doctor promised to produce ten with affidavits attesting to their positive experience at Milford. The FRC began investigating Brinkley's activities, with the zealous assistance of the AMA, and then in the spring of 1930 the *Kansas City Star* published its series of scathing attacks on the Milford doctor—which gave both the AMA

and the FRC much needed ammunition. The campaign now rapidly escalated.⁶

The *Star*, the AMA, and the Kansas Medical Society organized a well-coordinated strategy. As W.G. Clugston reported, "money and talent are available to both sides. Both have their self-preservation instinct aroused. So it ought to be a show worth watching." For the next several months, the Brinkley issue captured front-page headlines in Kansas newspapers. On February 11, 1930, the AMA secretary and general manager, Olin West, wrote to J.F. Hassig, incoming president of the Kansas Medical Society, who was also a member of the Kansas Board of Medical Registration and Examination. West's letter noted that the AMA had received many complaints about KFKB's advertising programs and inquired whether the Kansas Board had investigated this activity or if they were even authorized to take action in such flagrant cases of abuse. Hassig replied that the Brinkley "matter" had been before his group for several years. The board had furnished the Kansas attorney general "with all the evidence that we have in the case and so far he advises us that we do not have enough evidence to revoke his license" and be sustained by the Kansas Supreme Court upon appeal. In addition, the Kansas Medical Society had asked the Federal Radio Commission to revoke his radio license but had been "unable to get them to take any action."⁷

Attorney General William Smith, a very political animal, was in an unenviable quandary: on the one hand he had pressure from friends and relatives to help the politically influential Brinkley; on the other, he wanted to be elected a member of the state supreme court in 1930. At that time, members of the high court campaigned for the position and had to be elected on a partisan ballot. He did not want hundreds of influential doctors and druggists and their patients demanding why he did not prosecute the Goat Gland Doctor.⁸

On March 13, 1930, West again wrote Hassig that the AMA was "being covered up with letters from western states complaining bitterly" about Brinkley's broadcasts. The association was informed that his talks "are obscene and extremely disgusting." The AMA secretary could not understand why the Kansas Board did not investigate and revoke his license.⁹

In his litigious adventures that followed, John Brinkley wisely chose the Topeka firm of Jackson, Forbes, and Smith for his legal representation. Fred Jackson, a former member of the state legislature and previous Kansas attorney general, was still active in politics. Colonel James E. Smith was the son-in-law of incumbent governor Clyde Reed. It also helped that Percy Walker, president of

Brinkley's druggists' association, was the brother-in-law of the current attorney general, William Smith. After Smith stalled them three times, the Kansas Board of Medical Registration and Examination finally had to force his hand "with threats" before he proceeded with any action against Brinkley.¹⁰

Six days later, Hassig replied to West that the Kansas Board, of which he was also a member, had met with the Kansas attorney general. Smith was terribly busy that day, however, and their morning appointment had to be postponed twice. The board members persisted, though, and Smith surrendered that afternoon and talked to them. Hassig reported: "We proceeded to lay the facts before him and it was at least thirty minutes before he seemed to be the least interested . . . and another twenty minutes . . . before he said to see [W.C.] Ralston [an assistant in his office who handled medical board issues]. This is going to be a real battle. . . . If you have any affidavits that might prove useful we would be pleased to have them." Hassig noted that the board wanted to use a Dictaphone to transcribe Brinkley's talks, but they were under pressure because Kansas law required their doing so at least thirty days before his hearing. Hassig believed it would be wise to tape some of his medical talks before Brinkley could be alerted to their action. They did not realize Brinkley would be brazen enough to adopt a studied indifference to their actions in his subsequent broadcasts, except to criticize and satirize them. The board also was concerned about the delays as they wanted the hearing to take place "before Brinkley could flee to Europe."¹¹

Hassig was caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place with complaints coming in from both sides of the medical profession. The AMA was hounding him to take action and the county medical societies were becoming agitated and writing him about their concern over the Milford doctor. M.C. Martin of the Harvey County Society warned him on March 20 that "our next meeting threatens" to become an anti-Brinkley session. Martin observed that "we feel as though this ignoramus is a much more potent influence for public harm than the famous Dr. Bye, and Dr. [William O.] Coffee [an ophthalmologist with dubious credentials who sold a cure for cataracts through a mail order practice and with exaggerated claims], Aimee McPherson [the notorious radio evangelist of Los Angeles], and the child-murdering Hickman all rolled into one." And West of the national office continued to pressure him from the other side.¹²

Secretary West made an inquiry to the Federal Radio Commission concerning Brinkley's notorious radio advertising. Its secretary, Carl H. Butman, responded that the FRC could not censure broadcasters. If the AMA wished to submit affidavits of complaints

about KFKB programs, however, the FRC would take them into consideration when it discussed the renewal of the station's license in the summer of 1930. On March 26, West happily wrote Hassig that this suggestion presented the Kansas Medical Society with "a splendid opportunity" to present evidence to the FRC that could stop some of KFKB's "pernicious broadcasting." He advised Hassig's group to secure as many of these affidavits as possible and forward them to the commission.¹³

Hassig responded to this suggestion by noting that the issue of KFKB's broadcasts was "a national affair" because of their vast coverage. But he complained that Brinkley had money and "money buys influence." Hassig detailed a recent run in with the governor's son-in-law, who called on him and demanded to know what he planned to do to Brinkley. "We are going to put him out of business," Hassig snapped back, but he knew Brinkley exerted a potent influence on Kansas politics. Brinkley's lawyer, Smith, was no relation to Kansas attorney general William Smith, Hassig wrote West, but they are "warm, personal friends."¹⁴

On May 12, Hassig lamented to West that his board was "up against the strongest political combination that could possibly have been assembled by any one person." He assured the AMA secretary that "we would have failed in our efforts" if it had not been for the stories of the *Star*, which had exercised "a powerful influence," and Morris Fishbein's strong editorial in the AMA journal. That month, when Fishbein appeared in Kansas City to give an address over WDAF and to speak to the annual meeting of the Kansas Medical Society, he was presented with notification of a \$600,000 damage suit for his article two years earlier that denounced Brinkley as a quack. Brinkley also included Dr. William Yates of Junction City in the legal action because of his role in distributing the offending article among county medical societies. The Kansas Medical Society had extended to Dr. Fishbein "a \$600,000 reception" on his recent visit and speech, Hassig assured West, possibly with unintended humor. Fishbein spoke extensively on quacks to a packed and enthusiastic audience but without mentioning Brinkley by name. In this heated atmosphere, there was no need. Meanwhile, the medical society president was feeding stories to the third leg of the triad, the *Star*, by "leaking" tips to its reporter, MacDonald.¹⁵

Reporters interviewed Fishbein during his visit to the Sunflower State, focusing on his "war on Brinkleyism." The AMA official informed them that "nothing is to be left undone." The doctors would enlist the aid of the Federal Trade Commission, the postal authorities, the FRC, better business bureaus everywhere, and "all other

agencies." The subject of quackery and charlatanism was given special attention at all the doctor's gatherings, the story continued, "because of the crusade that has been worked up to prove that Dr. Brinkley's style of practicing must be stamped out."¹⁶

The climax to the campaign against KFKB in Kansas came when the Harvey County Medical Society sent two resolutions to the state medical society on "May Sixty [sic]" 1930. The first stated that the broadcasting, medical, and surgical practices of Dr. John R. Brinkley are "unadulterated quackery," "harmful," and "without healing virtue." The second noted that the efforts of his associated druggists in "helping to further his obnoxious propaganda" constituted a "breach of professional ethics." The county doctors insisted that the state medical society take action against him. The widespread campaign of newspaper articles and medical society efforts resulted in the AMA's petitioning to revoke Brinkley's radio license and the Kansas Medical Society's requesting the state attorney general to take legal action to recall his medical license. Secretary West wrote Hassig that the AMA would not send an official representative to the FRC hearing but suggested the Kansas Medical Society provide an official to testify. W.C. Ralston spoke for the state of Kansas in the Washington, D.C., meeting, and Hassig represented his society concerning the license of KFKB. On the same day that Brinkley heard about the FRC reviewing his radio license, he learned the state medical board would hold hearings in preparation for revoking his medical license.¹⁷

Once the *Star* exposures began, disgruntled patients began deluging reporters with their stories. As a Fishbein editorial in the AMA journal noted, if Brinkley had "confined his quackery to this particular field [of goat gland transplantation] he would not have had so many hostile testimonies from unhappy patients." Rejuvenation patients were often reluctant to complain if the operation was unsuccessful. Yet Brinkley had become increasingly interested in treating prostates and, as Fishbein noted, "men do not have the same hesitancy about discussing operations for the relief of pathological conditions of the prostate that they do in talking about sexual rejuvenation."¹⁸

On April 29, 1930, Dr. L.F. Barney, outgoing president of the Kansas Medical Society, filed a formal complaint with the Kansas Board of Medical Registration and Examination requesting it revoke Brinkley's license. In preparation for the election of 1932, Brinkley later had a Pinkerton interview Dr. Barney. Formed as a detective agency in mid-nineteenth century, the Pinkertons were used as an armed force to protect strikebreakers and to incite violence in the

widespread labor unrest following the Civil War. During the twentieth century, companies and individuals continued to hire them to investigate, gather information, or deliver threats and warnings. As a result of his troubles over his licenses, Brinkley employed a number of these agents for investigations during and following this traumatic period. Using a "suitable pretext," the detective posed as a patient and discussed with Barney the issue of revoking John's license. The physician admitted "he had spent an entire summer on the case" and he conceded that "some of the evidence brought out in the trial" was not fully developed. A.B. MacDonald promised he could produce the corroborating facts, "especially that in connection with the alleged bigamy," but Barney never heard if the reporter had actually carried through with his pledge. The doctor noticed that the *Star* was not printing any further attacks at that time against Brinkley, and concluded that the newspaper assault had been "stopped" due to the Brinkley lawsuit.¹⁹

The Kansas Medical Board accused John of fraud in misrepresenting his medical education to obtain his Kansas license. This included his two eclectic degrees and the one the University of Pavia annulled (though he received the final degree several years after obtaining his Kansas license). The board also accused him of committing felonies in Milford and of drinking alcohol. They charged him with diagnosing and prescribing over the radio, advertising on his station, and marketing the fraudulent Four Phase Compound Operation. The advertising and radio prescribing complaints should have constituted their major charge, but in essence, they "eventually fell back on attempts to discredit his medical qualifications and his practice of surgery." These were the issues over which the doctors of Kansas were most incensed and the primary reasons they wanted to revoke his license at any cost. They were on firmer legal grounds in attacking his advertising tactics, but not so on other issues.²⁰

As early as April 3, 1930, John Brinkley alerted the members of his pharmaceutical association that the president of the Kansas Medical Board would try to "haul him" before its members at their June meeting, charging him with assisting the counter-prescribing druggists. "It seems to me the bounden duty for each druggist to do his duty in this matter. No suggestions from me are necessary and each druggist knows what he can do," he added. Brinkley also instructed his Pinkerton detectives to interview the board members individually, and they discovered—as Brinkley expected—that the doctors had decided before the hearing that they were going to vote negatively. When he received the formal notice from the board, he

immediately sought a restraining order from the District Court in Shawnee County, Kansas. Judge George Whitcomb, however, responded that the board had done nothing more than set a time for the hearing, and there was no presumption at that point of what action the members might take.²¹

Brinkley's lawyers then appealed to the state supreme court. On June 13, Judge Rousseau A. Burch delivered an opinion that was frequently cited by federal judges who later heard the case on appeal. A portion of this nugget of legal history is worth quoting:

The complaint [of the board] was by no means confined to challenge the success of the licensee's goat gland operation, the claimed result of which is that dotards having desire without capability may cease to sorrow as do those without hope, and the complaint was not that the licensee is a quack of the common, vulgar type. Considered as a whole, the gravamen of the complaint is that, being an empiric without moral sense, and having acted according to the ethical standards of an imposter, the licensee has perfected and organized charlatanism until it is capable of preying on human weakness, ignorance and credulity to an extent quite beyond the invention of the humble montebank. . . .

We have here a complaint that, by virtue of a license obtained by fraud, the imposter holding it is fleecing the defective, the ailing, the gullible and the chronic medicine-takers, who are moved by suggestion and is scandalizing the medical profession.

Brinkley then appealed Burch's decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. That body stayed the hearing for ten days, then denied his appeal. The Kansas Board was ready to set the hearing date but, due to this and other delays, it was not until July 15 that it began its procedures in the capital city.²²

On the day of the Supreme Court ruling, the second blow fell. The FRC announced it did not plan to renew his license but allowed KFKB to continue to broadcast while the owner responded to the charges against him, if he preferred. John and his lawyers immediately began making elaborate preparations for his response. He first called for one thousand satisfied patients to travel to Washington and testify for him. He planned to charter a train for them and pay their way. He also issued the same invitation to the members of the Kansas Medical Society, then at its annual meeting, but later can-

celled these offers as he decided it “wouldn’t look right” to the FRC to demonstrate this pressure.²³

Brinkley retained George E. Strong, a Washington attorney and son of Congressman James G. Strong of his district, to represent him. He did not have a friend on the FRC now that Sam Pickard was no longer a member. The FRC was composed of three radio representatives and two lawyers. Seventy-five Brinkley supporters entrained with him to D.C., paying their own expenses. The AMA had brought the charges but was not officially represented at the hearing. Arthur Cramp of its Bureau of Investigation appeared, not officially but “as a silent observer,” and refused to be interviewed by reporters. The AMA feared any official representation might prejudice a jury in the upcoming Fishbein trial of libel in Geary County, Kansas. This left W.C. Ralston to press the charges before the commission and Hassig to testify in support of him and the board’s case.²⁴

W.G. Clugston reported the hearing with the headline. “Radio World Has Eyes on Milford Permit Contest.” The reporter noted that the hearing had started out as a simple case, but began to loom more ominously when it was discovered that international agreements were involved. “From Chicago to Shanghai, they are interested” in the proceedings, he wrote, because “no fewer than a half dozen issues are involved” concerning international broadcasting—an estimate which was undoubtably too low.²⁵

John Brinkley faced three charges: KFKB had deviated from its assigned wave length; he was broadcasting obscene and indecent things; and his answers to listeners to his Medical Question Box were inimical to the public interest. Most of the attention focused on the Medical Question Box issue during the three-day hearing. A number of his supporters testified to his medical abilities. For the opposition, Dr. Hugh H. Young of Johns Hopkins University and Hospital stated that prescribing medicines wholesale and by radio was very dangerous: “Personally, I would never be willing to send out prescriptions or to make a diagnosis on any such information as that [in listener letters] without examination and without a study of the case other than the opinion of a person who knew no medicine himself or herself. I think that such a practice carried out by itself would be of the greatest possible danger.” Dr. E.S. Edgerton, current president of the Kansas Medical Society also testified effectively about Brinkley’s unusual medical activities.²⁶

The commission asked Brinkley’s radio staffers to describe the station’s activities. D.D. Denver, assistant manager, proudly displayed the cup KFKB had won in the popularity contest staged by

Radio Digest of Chicago. He stated that the association's weekly income included \$5,000 to \$7,000 from the Brinkley Hospital for advertising the goat gland operation and about \$5,000 from the Brinkley druggists. He also explained that political use of the station was made by Vice President Charles Curtis, Governor Clyde M. Reed, Kansas Attorney General William A. Smith, Congressman James Strong, and a national committeeman whose name he could not remember. It was not until 1934 that the law was changed to require licensees to provide political candidates free "equal time" for broadcasts to respond to their opponents, but the FRC at this time was interested in what political uses were made of radio. During the years 1927 to 1930, the current licensing period, KFKB had approximately twenty-five staff members on its roster to whom it paid about \$5,000 monthly. These included cowboy singers and crooners, a cowboy orchestra, a regular twelve-piece orchestra, and three announcers. Brinkley's attorney filed over two hundred affidavits that he had solicited from persons testifying that they had never heard John use vile or obscene language over the radio.²⁷

The 1927 law denied the Federal Radio Commission the right to censure radio broadcasts because such action would violate the First Amendment. Their most effective power lay in determining if the radio station was being operated "in the public interest, convenience or necessity" and using this as a basis for license renewal or rejection. The law also forbade broadcasting "obscene, indecent or profane language" and required the board to consider this in making its decision. Brinkley's lawyers were unsuccessful in keeping pamphlets sent to prospective patients out of the evidence. They were not admissible, they argued, because they were sent out by mail, not radio. Presiding Judge Ira E. Robinson ruled, however, that they were admissible if mailed in response to inquiries from radio listeners. Brinkley's pamphlet *Life* was particularly an issue here as the post office had already ruled it as "lewd, lascivious, obscene and suggestive." John's staff argued they had not sent it in the mail for "some time," but the commission ruled against him.²⁸

Significantly, the "point to point" communication issue arose during the hearing. The Washington Radio Conference of 1927 produced the International Radiotelegraph Convention Agreement that forbade point to point broadcasts from one person to another for commercial purposes. Commissioner Robinson asked:

Isn't this point to point service in violation of the international agreement? Here is one particular person writing in to Dr. Brinkley, and his answer appeals to that person;

that surely is point to point communication for commercial purposes.

This commission wants to know if this station would be asking for a license if it were not for the income that Dr. Brinkley obtains for his goat gland operation which he solicits over the radio. We want to know if the Brinkley station is run for private profit or for the public interest. If we give Dr. Brinkley a license to operate a radio station to prescribe and recommend his medicines, then must we give a license to Lydia Pinkham and others?

The commissioner was making a narrow point here because all radio stations were operated for a profit, of course, as no broadcaster could afford to stay on the air for purely altruistic reasons.²⁹

Commissioner Robinson asked one of Brinkley's attorneys, Charles B. Trimmer, a pointed question about the viability of his practicing law on the radio. Trimmer responded that the issue instead was whether a doctor could serve the public interest better "on the radio than by telephone or in the newspaper."³⁰

Brinkley's lawyers produced a surprising and effective witness. Dr. O.M. Owensby, a general practitioner from Pittsburg, Kansas, had considered the Goat Gland Doctor a quack. Then his druggist friend persuaded him to go to Milford and observe an operation. He was converted after witnessing Brinkley's performance. The counsel for the FRC asked him if it was good medical practice to prescribe without examining the patient. He responded that he "would not want to attempt a general practice that way," but added that he "often has prescribed over the telephone." A few weeks later this friendly witness would join Brinkley's staff at the Milford hospital.³¹

The hearings ended on May 23 when Brinkley declined to testify. Strong, his attorney, feared putting him on the stand because of the presence of Kansas Assistant Attorney General Ralston. Strong was convinced that Ralston was in Washington primarily in order to cross-examine Brinkley to obtain leads for further court action in Kansas. The commission gave his lawyers ten days to file certain financial and other statements. A few days later, John authorized his lawyers to offer a compromise to the board, based on the direction and tone of the hearings. He would discontinue broadcasting the Medical Question Box if the FRC believed this was not in the public interest. This was a smart move as he was certain he would soon lose his medical license and, if he could keep his radio in business, others could do the operating in his hospital. On June 13, the commission voted three to two not to renew the license. The FRC set

a significant precedent here by basing its decision on the conclusion that the licensee's broadcasts were not serving the public interest. Commissioner Robinson, despite his sharp questioning during the hearing, spoke for the minority of E.O. Sykes and himself, both of whom were lawyers, who favored a probationary license on condition that Brinkley ceased prescribing medicines over the air and stopped advertising his hospital. Otherwise, the minority accurately insisted, Brinkley's broadcasting was no different than other companies who furthered their business interests by radio advertising.³²

Despite the KFKB Broadcasting Association being the official licensee, not Brinkley, the majority of radio experts determined that the station's programming "is conducted only in the personal interest of John R. Brinkley" and that the Medical Question Box "is inimical to the public health and safety, and for that reason is not in the public interest." If observers were concerned about fair play and giving the station a chance to fulfill Brinkley's promise, however, and if they considered the many public services of KFKB, they would likely determine that the minority took the more defensible position. The majority's principal concern was answered when Brinkley agreed to discontinue the Medical Question Box. But the three remained adamant that Brinkley had been sinning and must not only be stopped but also punished for his past sins. Certainly, the remaining elements of KFKB's programming were in the public interest—especially segments on weather, news, and markets that were extremely important to farm folk—and the station's entertainment appealed to rural listeners. Perhaps the majority believed that cowboy yodeling was "indecent."

The decision enraged Brinkley and he immediately took to the air to denounce it. He charged that the *Kansas City Star* had convinced President Herbert Hoover—who, Brinkley said, owed the newspaper political debts—to use his influence with the FRC and force the resulting decision. When challenged later about his denunciation of the president, he asserted that Vice President Curtis informed him that Hoover personally intervened with the FRC to have his license revoked. John also made the outlandish accusation that the AMA channeled thousands of dollars to the legal counsel of the FRC members to obtain the favorable opinion. The medical organization was such a powerful political force that it had no need to resort to these tactics. Immediately following this diatribe, he began his usual Sunday sermon with "now I shall discuss some of the beatitudes of Jesus as they came from His mouth on the Mount of Olives." His lawyers were incensed over these charges and threatened to withdraw from the case unless he retracted them. John complied and

they immediately filed for a stay order in the Washington, D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals.³³

When no further action had been taken, KFKB went off the air on June 20. Three days later, the circuit court granted the petition and broadcasting resumed until February 1931, when that court sustained the decision of the FRC; there was no other option open to the judges. On February 21, Brinkley gave his farewell broadcast, calling the decision "a blow to the doctrine of free speech." At this point, the Missouri Board of Health instructed its secretary, Dr. James Stewart, who attended the radio hearings, to begin successful proceedings to annul the license they had given Brinkley through reciprocity.

Brinkley was not finished with radio broadcasting, though. He immediately flew to Mexico and signed what he announced was a twenty-year agreement to build a transmitter and broadcast from Villa Acuna, just across the Rio Grande River from Del Rio. His Kansas station had 5,000 watts of power; his new one would have 50,000 watts. With this he could blanket the North American continent and overwhelm even strong stations. He returned to Milford and continued to broadcast by remote control, sending his signals by telephone to his station in Mexico, XER. He eventually sold KFKB to the Farmers and Bankers Life Insurance Company of Wichita for \$90,000, and it operated in Abilene. The station later became KFDI in Wichita.³⁴

Concurrently with the Brinkley case, the AMA was moving against another radio encroacher in its field, Norman Baker of Muscatine, Iowa. Baker's career had parallels with Brinkley's, though Baker had no medical degrees and also ran a mail-order business for batteries and alarm clocks. Baker sold a cure for cancer, making him by far the more dangerous of the two broadcasters to patients. He published a magazine called *The Naked Truth*, and had a 5,000-watt station, KTNT. He owned the KTNT café in Muscatine, the KTNT service station, a correspondence school, an advertising agency, the Western Drug Company, and he built steam calliopes. He was a truly well-rounded entrepreneur and capitalist. Like Brinkley, Baker took advantage of the hostility of many Americans, especially in the rural areas of the South and Southwest, "to orthodox medical professionals."³⁵

His "hospital" specialized in problems with varicose veins and "aluminum poisoning." One day he discovered a paste that was used in taking knots off the shins of horses and he made this his cancer treatment. This was similar to the old "Hoxie" cure that originated in Taylorsville, Illinois. Five test cases submitted to the treatment, and KTNT heralded their recovery for years after they had died. Tragi-

cally, many sick people gave Baker their life savings instead of seeking medical help before it was too late. Baker never practiced medicine himself and his hospital was always careful to say that its patients were “improved” but never “cured.”³⁶ Morris Fishbein disliked this type of “quack” even more than he did John Brinkley, if that was possible. To him, “of all the ghouls who feed on the bodies of the dead and the dying, the cancer quacks are the most vicious and the most unprincipled,” and he believed Norman Baker was the worst of these.³⁷

With an incredible leap of imagination, Baker told his radio listeners that the American Medical Association had offered him \$1 million for his cancer cure. Their intention, he claimed, was to hold it off the market and force cancer sufferers to resort to surgery to save their lives. Not for a million dollars would he part with his discovery! Both he and Brinkley constantly stressed the idea that the “regular” doctors always wanted to operate for every affliction. If Kansas and Iowa cannot protect people of other states from this “effluvium,” the editor of the AMA journal intoned, “they are indeed to be pitied for their weakness and condemned for their crime against the great American public.”³⁸

The *Des Moines Register* finally exposed the true nature of Baker’s operations. The newspaper’s investigations revealed “many deaths” of his patients because of his “vicious influence against modern scientific diagnosis and treatment.” It also listed his associates in his hospital, including J.L. Statter and Charles H. Gearing, as “prostituting the words physician and healer.” Baker claimed that he was being persecuted by the “Medical Trust,” that he was benefiting 25 percent of his cancer victims, and that the *Register* was “cowardly, contemptible, and dirty.” In the meantime, the AMA insisted that Iowa must rid its communities of these “blatant quacks,” and the FRC must stop these “obscene mouthings and pernicious promotions” that were being broadcast by these charlatans.³⁹

The AMA was closing in on charlatans like Baker, and about the same time that Brinkley heard from the FRC, Baker received a telegram from the commission telling him to appear, if he wished, to demonstrate that his broadcasting station was “serving the public interest.” He could not prove this, of course, and his station lost its license. Like Brinkley, he bought a station in Mexico, across the Rio Grande from Laredo, and continued to blast the North American continent with high-wattage broadcasts. He also later moved his base operations to Arkansas, again following the lead of John Brinkley, because of that state’s lax medical regulations, apparently in his belief that success begets success.⁴⁰

Just before Brinkley's FRC hearing, the *Star* carried a story that Methodist officials would not accept the church John had built in Milford. The new, \$100,000 Brinkley Hospital was closed two weeks after it opened. The old, smaller hospital continued to be used, although the number of employees and its overhead expenses were "pared sharply." Following the publicity of the radio hearing and the impending medical hearing, Brinkley's business in Milford declined significantly. The *Star* continued its happy news by reporting that postal authorities were investigating Brinkley's activities to determine if a fraud order should be issued against him.⁴¹

Following the *Star* stories on dissatisfied patients, William Fuhrman of Atchison, Kansas, brought suit against Brinkley for \$50,975. On March 14, 1930, Fuhrman had had an operation that subsequently caused him great pain and the impairment of his health. The plaintiff named Dr. and Mrs. J.R. Brinkley, the Brinkley Hospital, and Dr. H.D. Osborn as the perpetrators in the case. When the undersheriff tried to serve the summons on the Brinkleys, he found they were on the train returning to Milford from the FRC hearing. The Kansas Medical Board members were happy to hear the results of the radio license decision, but were concerned over the delays in their own hearing. It had been reported a month earlier that they "had reliable information" that Brinkley had inquired at a Kansas City travel agency about tickets to Europe, and that he had already applied for a passport. The additional time he had to spend in Washington, D.C., proved worrisome to them.⁴²

The Brinkleys returned from Washington just before the medical inquiry, which began on July 15. It was held in Topeka in the Hotel Kansan and continued for two months. Most of the time, a crowd of approximately seventy-five people packed into the hearing room to observe the proceedings. Before they started, Fred Jackson and reporter MacDonald greeted each other with "a spirited exchange of personalities" that threatened to become physical. Jackson sarcastically suggested that the board swear in A.B. MacDonald of "a" Kansas City newspaper as an expert witness. MacDonald called Jackson "a rotten grafter," and Jackson responded that the reporter was "a dirty crook." Jackson's associates had to restrain him in his chair.⁴³

The following weeks witnessed, according to the authority on Kansas medical history, "the most sensational medical hearing ever held in Kansas or, for that matter, in the United States." John R. Brinkley faced eleven charges:

- (1) When he applied for a Kansas medical license he claimed he graduated from Tuckasegee High School and

another high school in Illinois. The board found that the schools did not exist.

(2) In March 1920 he was charged with two counts of selling liquor and one for maintaining a nuisance.

(3) He threatened to shoot a man and had to post bond to keep the peace.

(4) In 1920 he practiced medicine and surgery in Chicago without a license.

(5) His license to practice medicine in Connecticut was revoked because it was based on a fraud—his eclectic degree.

(6) He applied for a license in California and was refused because of his fraudulent medical degree.

(7) He was indicted in California for fraud and the Kansas governor refused to extradite him.

(8) He claimed to be a graduate of the University of Pavia after his degree from the institution had been annulled.

(9) His Compound Operation could not be performed successfully as he described it.

(10) He had diagnosed and prescribed medicine over the radio.

(11) He advertised his medical business through his radio station.

The first seven charges had little legal relevance because they either occurred before 1923 and therefore were not currently applicable or they dealt with his medical education and eclectic degrees, which were not fraudulent except in the eyes of the AMA. The eighth charge was no longer meaningful as he had not claimed that degree for some time. Only the charges against advertising and feasibility of his compound operation remained. Numbers five, six, and seven are interesting from a legal viewpoint as the eclectics were on equal footing with homeopaths and allopaths in Kansas law for membership on the State Medical Board. Brinkley's lawyers should have used this law as a defense against those charges. The Kansas legislature amended the statute governing the medical licensing board in 1923, but the law was not retroactive. It required that all types of doctors be represented on the board and that no one specialty could have a majority, yet the AMA insisted that eclectic and homeopathic degrees were fraudulent! This requirement apparently was easily forgotten by governors who made their appointments to the board on the basis of politics rather than medical training. During the adminis-

tration of Governor Edward Hoch (1905–1909), three eclectics, two allopaths, and two homeopaths were serving. In 1909, the new governor, Walter Stubbs, unwittingly appointed four allopaths for a majority, two eclectics, and one homeopath and then had to correct his mistake before the names were finally forwarded for confirmation.⁴⁴

At the time of the Brinkley case, the board again was composed of four allopaths, two eclectics, and one homeopath. When the term of one of the allopaths expired, Governor Ben Paulen immediately replaced him with M.C. Jenkins, a homeopath from Pratt, who had already decided Brinkley was guilty of any charges brought against him. On the other hand, the Board procedures were fair, as they knew Brinkley would appeal an adverse decision and their tactics would have to withstand court scrutiny.⁴⁵

Attorney General Smith represented the board and proceeded first. He was not in an enviable position. The most effective testimony for the AMA came from Dr. L.F. Barney, retired president of the Kansas Medical Society, who served as primary witness, chief inquisitor, and juror. He insisted that the Compound Operation was “valueless” because it was impossible to make an anastomosis or functioning connection of any blood vessel in the body where Brinkley claimed he operated. He argued also that it was inconceivable “to transplant nerve supply that will function,” as Brinkley described it.⁴⁶

Sworn depositions from people who could not attend the hearing constituted much of the testimony from the AMA. The Brinkley attorneys objected to each one of these, arguing unsuccessfully that if the witnesses could not appear at the hearing to be cross-examined, Brinkley’s defense team should have been present at the depositions in order to file statements of rebuttal. For example, eighty-nine-year-old R.J. Hibbard of Topeka, too old to attend, submitted a negative affidavit testifying in regard to Brinkley’s method of enticing suffering patients to come to Milford. The attorneys objected, to no avail. The board refused to disallow.

The evidence that John “drank heavily and was abusive rested almost entirely with one family who were easily shown to be unreliable witnesses and to have a personal grudge. . . . The allegations of [his] profanity also failed; no one seemed to object that he said ‘God-damn’ on the radio” occasionally. One woman insisted that Dr. Brinkley threatened her by swearing obscenities. On cross-examination, she admitted that he had exclaimed, “that goddam little imp, getting out of bed when I told her not to,” too soon after receiving an appendectomy. In Brinkley’s defense, Lee McChesney, bank cashier and next-door neighbor to the Brinkleys, stated that he never saw John drink as long as he had lived in Milford. A former nurse,

Edith Butler, insisted she had never seen him enter his hospital "in an intoxicated condition." Brinkley himself testified that although he was not a teetotaler, he never drank while in Milford, partaking only occasionally while on vacation. When asked about the bank's assets, McChesney declared that in 1917 when John arrived, they totaled approximately \$75,000 and were currently about double that amount—illustrating that Brinkley's activities had been very economically beneficial for Milford. He would not testify about John's financial records for professional reasons, but declared that Brinkley did not hold any certificates of deposit there because the bank did not offer them for sale.

The hearings were not lacking in humor. One session was devoted to proving that Brinkley had been married to Sally Wike, as though this disqualified him as a physician. It was also "bruted about" that he was the author of some of the Little Blue Books published by that notorious Kansas Socialist E. Haldeman-Julius, which would be scandalous to many contemporary Kansans. One grave contention of his "professional immorality" included his giving birth control information to a mother of twelve "who was nearing the point of physical breakdown from her burden of child-bearing."⁴⁷

During the course of the hearings, state officials ordered an alcohol inspection of the Brinkley Hospital. The inventory came up eight gallons short over a period of years since the last inspection, and Minnie Brinkley was notified that her alcohol permit was revoked. John called Congressman Strong, who got it restored to her promptly.⁴⁸

In regard to the Compound Operation, the Brinkley lawyers were prepared to show that gland transplants were orthodox in current medicine. Professor Thomas Orr of the University of Kansas Medical School affirmed the testimony by affidavit of William J. Mayo of the Mayo Clinic that animal gland transplantation was impractical. But the defense counsel rejoined with the works of Thorek and Voronoff, and they discredited testimony against gland transplanting in general. When Orr testified that this area was still experimental and would not yield on that point, the friendly Kansas counsel led him through the following:

Mr. Ralston: You do not mean that Voronoff's experiments or work are still in the experimental stage, do you?

Professor Orr: Yes.

Ralston: Don't you know that it has been adopted by all or nearly all of the prominent physicians and surgeons of the country?

Orr: I know that it has not been adopted by most. . . .
 Ralston: Take the first word you read. Dr. Thorek of Chicago has adopted it, hasn't he?
 Orr: I think that he has.
 Ralston: Performing it every day?
 Orr: I couldn't tell you how often.

Yet after discussing Voronoff's work, the experts conceded it was possible that glands from monkeys could work, and that young ones were better than old ones. (Voronoff was still held in high repute in some medical circles.) Defense counsel led them to concede that young goat transplants might also succeed. In regard to Brinkley's graduated fee system, Orr admitted during cross-examination that many doctors adjusted their fees on the basis of ability to pay. To charge everyone identical fees, he submitted, was "unfair to the poor," an honest, but telling, admission.⁴⁹

Dr. Lyons Hunt did not seem to help the AMA's case when he agreed that, under certain circumstances, gland transplantation "offered great possibilities." Hunt was a graduate of Western University of London, Ontario, and the Royal College of Edinburgh. He practiced in New York City and had published widely on the experimental work taking place in testicular transplantation. Six weeks before the hearing on Brinkley's medical license, attorney George E. Strong approached him to testify for Brinkley's defense but he refused, claiming that the present state of knowledge of transplanting glands did not indicate that these operations had any permanent effect. Ironically, he appeared at the hearing, instead, at the behest of the AMA.⁵⁰

Ultimately, the most damning testimony again came from Dr. Edgerton, who declared that it was dangerous to prescribe over the radio for heart and kidney problems without performing laboratory tests. The Brinkley defense cleverly responded to this with quotes from a recent article written by Morris Fishbein entitled "The Doctor of Tomorrow." In this essay, Fishbein predicted that the doctor of the future would never have direct contact with patients, but would sit behind a large desk while diagnosing and prescribing over the television, much like John Brinkley was doing with his Medical Question Box on the radio. Brinkley's mentor Dr. Perdue embarrassed Dr. Edgerton—but did not damage the latter's testimony—when during cross-examination he made him admit that he had not read one of the medical works from which he had quoted in his direct examination.⁵¹

Dr. Hassig, of course, was called to testify. The doctor probably

had a reasonably normal memory, but he suddenly developed complex amnesia upon cross-examination by Brinkley's chief lawyer, Fred Jackson. He could not state when the Kansas Medical Board first discussed the Brinkley problem but he thought it was at the 1929 meeting in Wichita (this was in error by several years). When Jackson asked him if a member, Dr. C.J. McKnight, had suggested at that time that the board should give Brinkley a warning about advertising and prescribing over the radio before it took action, he could not recall. Moreover, he could not remember responding that they could not delay with a warning to Brinkley because "there was too much pressure from outside" to act promptly. He did not recollect if that pressure came from Morris Fishbein. He also could not call to mind if he had discussed with Mr. Ralston the fact that he was going to Washington to testify before the FRC. Yes, he was a subscriber to the *Kansas City Star* and read it faithfully. He had read most of MacDonald's stories on Brinkley. The first time he met MacDonald he told the reporter about the Zahner case. He remembered Mr. Zahner giving him his affidavit and cancelled check for his operation as evidence, but he was certain he did not show or give the affidavit to the *Star* reporter. No, he did not recall reading the Zahner story in the *Star*. That must have been about the only one he missed. This unfruitful examination continued ad infinitum. In his suit against Hassig and the medical board later, Brinkley correctly asserted that the campaign to deny his medical license came as a result of a powerful conspiracy that was determined to revoke his license as a warning to the more obscure "quacks."⁵²

Some time after that annual Kansas State Board meeting in 1929, someone became curious and investigated Dr. McKnight's background. When the board met the following year, the person revealed that McKnight "apparently did not have even as much of a license" as Brinkley and yet had been practicing in Kansas for eighteen years. Governor Clyde Reed immediately asked for his resignation from the medical board. McKnight explained, to no avail, that he had received his license in 1912 but did not realize at the time that he also had to register it. The building that housed his practice had caught fire and, in the subsequent confusion, someone stole his license. The board responded harshly that he would have to apply for a new one. Dr. McKnight admitted that he might "find it [a] hard job to pass an examination now before this board," after his neutral but indiscrete support of Brinkley the previous year.⁵³

Dr. M.C. Jenkins of Pratt wanted a vote on the second day of the hearing before the defense presented any witnesses. The board should not allow the Brinkley lawyers to cross-examine, he insisted,

and “embarrass and browbeat the state’s witnesses,” but the board was fair in this respect. They knew they had to be careful because Brinkley obviously would appeal their negative decision.

When the defense’s turn came, Brinkley’s lawyers had a procession of satisfied patients as witnesses. Outside the hotel some did handstands for reporters and photographers. One sixty-eight year old fellow wanted to jump over a table in the hearing room to attest to his new-found energy and agility. W.G. Clugston, a political reporter, described the scene in this way:

They came like clansmen called from the hills to do battle against a great enemy. They came from all walks of life. A rich oil operator from Texas flew to Kansas to testify for him . . . to say under oath that if he hadn’t had Brinkley’s goat gland operation and couldn’t get it in any other way, he would give every cent he possessed for it because it had made a new man out of him. There were butchers and bankers, farmers and railroad men, travelling salesmen and coal miners; there were wives of men who had submitted to the operations; there was a regular doctor from Illinois, and an irregular practitioner from Missouri—they all came to declare under oath that his operations really produced rejuvenating effects.⁵⁴

For two weeks in the Kansas summer heat, John Brinkley—the only man in the room wearing a jacket or suit coat—sat smoking aromatic Murads, stroking his beard, and acting with composure. His Pinkertons had gone to Jackson County, North Carolina, to interview John’s old friends and neighbors. A number of them traveled to Topeka and gladly testified that they had taken high school courses with him and that they had “graduated” together. They were proud of their old friend who had left the mountain country and made a success of himself. Two of his former teachers also attested to Brinkley’s having taken high school classes. Obviously, he did not graduate from a traditional high school or receive a diploma, but schools do appear and disappear over the decades, and Brinkley’s experience was not unusual for that time. The “distinguished” Dr. E.M. Perdue discussed his introduction of John to the authorities at the University of Pavia and assured the board that glandular transplantation such as that performed at Milford was not only entirely possible but was being done by “eminent surgeons.” Yet Perdue’s questionable reputation hurt Brinkley’s cause with the regular doctors more than it helped, and they were the jury John ultimately faced.⁵⁵

The procession of favorable testimonials seemed endless, and it appeared that Brinkley could honor his promise of keeping them coming all summer. Finally, after forty-five, Attorney General Smith banned further patient testimonies. John then took the stand, good-humoredly referring to "this little show we are putting on here." He was "composed, plausible, and articulate." He was impressive in his discussion of his early training and study in transplantation, especially the methods of the Swiss surgeons. When his counsel asked why he had not published his results, he responded that he had attempted to do so but the medical journals "would not publish such novel findings."⁵⁶

At the end of the hearing, Brinkley placed five hundred supportive affidavits in the record, then exploded his bombshell. Well aware of the value of public opinion, he invited the board to come out to his hospital and witness his operation. The board had no choice but to accept this challenge. When reporters interviewed him outside the hearing room, John offered the opinion that the real issue involved was the right of doctors to "adopt and use new methods even if they have not been approved by those in control" of the American Medical Association.⁵⁷

The *Kansas City Star* reported that Hassig intended to ask the Kansas attorney general to order the Geary County attorney to institute proceedings against H.D. Osborn for practicing medicine without a license. Osborn had "picked up his medical knowledge from Brinkley." When asked where Osborn was during Brinkley's operations before the visiting doctors on September 15, 1930, one response was that he was on vacation. Another was that he was "relieved today," but the person added that he had heard the "Dr." had "fled the state to avoid prosecution." Ten days later the newspaper reported that fifty-two complaints against Osborn were filed with the county attorney, charging him with operating on patients illegally.⁵⁸

With the offer to witness a Compound Operation, the board appointed a delegation of twelve doctors, including Owensby and headed by Dr. Hassig, to go to Milford as official spectators and report their observations to the entire board. After giving the visitors a tour of his radio station, Brinkley took them to the hospital and asked them to don sterilized robes. They watched the removal of testicles from two young goats. Claude Pierce was the first patient, the son of a man from Red Cloud, Nebraska, who had previously had a Compound Operation. This was a two-phase operation and Brinkley lectured as he worked, explaining his procedure and asking for questions. The second operation, a four-phase procedure,

on P.N. Kroger of Minneapolis, Kansas, took longer than usual due to complications. The visitors declined his invitation to stay for lunch.⁵⁹

When he finished, a Topeka newspaper related that he told his hostile audience “if any of you gentlemen have patients that you feel need attention of this kind that you are not prepared to give, we will be glad to handle them here for clinical purposes.” Brinkley’s biographer states that following the operations, the doctors left, “their heads hung in shame, with their tails between their legs like whipped curs.” Not quite. The *Kansas City Times* headlined its coverage: “A SURGICAL FAKE, the Goat Gland Cure a Hoax.” The *Kansas City Star* reported the doctors as saying that Mrs. Brinkley’s method of taking the glands was very unscientific. She did not take proper precautions and “there was great danger” that the glands were contaminated with tetanus germs. “Numerous Brinkley patients had died of tetanus,” the *Star* gratuitously added as an unsubstantiated reminder to its readers of the doctor’s dangerous procedures.⁶⁰

The medical committee testified about their experiences in Milford. Dr. Edgerton of Wichita observed that Brinkley claims “he rejuvenates men by directing a new blood supply to certain glands and by splicing certain nerves so that they give a new ‘kick’ to those glands. . . . Brinkley did neither of those things . . . [because] those nerves are not in that part of the body.” Dr. Orr testified that the operation would have no effect in helping a hypertrophic prostate problem. When asked if the operation would have any other effect, he replied, “not unless he introduced infection with it.” Dr. C.C. Nesselrode, graduate of the University of Kansas and Harvard University Medical Schools and a London medical college, substantiated these conclusions. One unidentified member of the board proclaimed that the operation he witnessed would not be of any benefit to the patient, but was “as skillful and deft a demonstration of surgery as he had ever witnessed.” Perhaps this was the same doctor that Clugston reported as observing, “well, at least no member . . . can say Dr. Brinkley is not a skilled surgeon. I have seen some of the best surgeons in the country perform and I have never saw [*sic*] one show more aptitude.” One unsympathetic writer concluded that the visiting doctors “had explored a hospital which surpassed for modernity, convenience, and luxury the places in which their own carving was done.”⁶¹

The witnesses retired to Topeka, reported their findings—omitting details of Brinkley’s skilled surgical ability—and the board immediately directed the attorney general to proceed with revoking license number 5845 held by Dr. John R. Brinkley on the bases of

“gross immorality” and “unprofessional conduct” on all charges. Calling this a “persecution,” Brinkley responded by filing suit against Dr. Hassig and the board in the Federal District Court of Kansas. He claimed that the state law creating the Kansas Medical Board was unconstitutional because it gave the board authority to hold hearings and revoke licenses but contained no procedures for them to compel witnesses to appear at their hearings. This litigation resulted from his frustration in being unable to cross-examine the AMA witnesses who submitted affidavits. Secondly, he argued that when the board took his license, it denied him due process of law by depriving him of the property right to practice medicine. The appellees responded that their hearings were not judicial proceedings and thus the strict rules of court procedure did not apply. They affirmed also that the license to practice medicine in Kansas did not grant a right, but was rather a franchise that could be awarded or revoked. Knowing that Brinkley would appeal, of course, the board had very carefully followed legal procedure so that the record of the hearing could be used to its advantage in a higher court. The district court judge sustained the board’s revoking of Brinkley’s license on the bases of charges ten and eleven, but he described charge number three as “silly”—a label which could be accurately applied to several of the charges, especially the ones concerning his education and describing his youthful indiscretions as being of “gross immorality.”⁶²

In the Wood biography, Brinkley asked rhetorically, “was this a trial or a prosecution?” and answered, “in this case there was only undue process of injustice. If ever there was a case which cried aloud for reversal on appeal, this was it. But the courts of Kansas and the United States were deaf to this man, who had been picked out for slaughter by the organized allopathic doctors’ trust, the aptly named medical octopus. . . . It was not a trial: it was a persecution.” The Milford Chamber of Commerce took out full-page ads in the *Topeka Capital* and the *Kansas City Journal Post* to protest this unfair proceeding against their popular doctor.⁶³

Brinkley’s long, drawn-out appeal of this decision finally reached District Judge Tillman O. Johnson and, in September 1935, Johnson sustained the board, ruling that Brinkley’s principal error was his radio advertising. He “made the practice of medicine a business, adopting the usual methods of propaganda by the use of the mail and the radio for its development and extension. . . . The possibilities of injury to the general public resulting from such methods are . . . apparent.”⁶⁴

Meanwhile, John Brinkley had promised not to practice medicine in Kansas until a decision was reached on his appeal. His regu-

larly licensed physicians and surgeons kept his hospital operating, and he continued broadcasting while his case in the District of Columbia court was pending. In fact, the radio and medical hearings ultimately increased his business in Milford. They had made him a martyr in the eyes of many Kansans, while the AMA, the FRC, and even the *Kansas City Star* were viewed as foreigners attacking one of their own Kansans. One source notes that "all their opposition seemed to accomplish was to attract an even larger following of sympathizers." Brinkley reported being informed that the newspaper had lost twenty-five thousand subscribers in one week following the Topeka hearings. He allowed his suit against Morris Fishbein to lapse when he declined to pay \$1,000 in additional court costs on February 13, 1934. He had begun the suit as a public relations gesture and knew it was futile and not in his best interests to pursue it.⁶⁵

The coverage of the FRC and Kansas Medical Board hearings "was accompanied by tremendous publicity." Nothing like this had ever happened in the medical profession, either in Kansas or nationally. The reportage of the two Kansas City newspapers revealed both their prejudices and the ability of reporters and editors to slant news intentionally in order to influence their readers. In one *Star* issue covering two Brinkley stories, the term "quack" or "quackery" appeared in the two headlines and fourteen times in the articles. In addition, in the same four columns, the term "charlatan" was used on seven occasions. In contrast, the *Star's* rival, the *Kansas City Journal Post*, used the term "quack" only twice in reporting these stories. The *Journal Post*, in covering the hearings for several months, refrained from using the terms "quack" or "charlatan" but consistently referred to Brinkley as the "Goat Gland Doctor." After the license revocation, the *Star* cheerfully announced that "the superquack of Milford is finished."⁶⁶

The two lengthy hearings were a terrible drain on Brinkley physically and mentally and were quite unlike the leisurely summer vacations the family usually enjoyed. The Brinkleys decided to escape for a rest. If they drove their automobile as they usually did, though, they would be a target for reporters everywhere they stopped, and they were in no mood to answer questions. John feared air travel and had never flown. Moreover, when Johnny Boy was born, John and Minnie promised each other never to endanger their lives by flying. But John had heard some models were quite safe by this time, so he called the Wichita airport and chartered a plane and a pilot. G.A. McDonald flew them in the *Romancer*, the cabin plane that Charles Lindbergh used when he courted and married Ann Morrow in Mexico City, where her father was U.S. ambassador. The

Brinkleys loved the speed and safety so much that they promised to buy a plane if McDonald would be their pilot. They purchased a Travel-Aire (later Beech Aircraft) and soon replaced it with a Lockheed Orion capable of a speed of 240 mph. John later bought a ten-passenger Lockheed Electra, painted blue and gold with a specially designed luxurious interior.⁶⁷

They flew to Florida for some fresh air and sunshine, then returned to Little Rock to visit Minnie's relatives. What happened there varies with different sources. W.G. Clugston's version was that Brinkley visited an old acquaintance in the Arkansas capital and asked for advice on how he should proceed. (This undoubtedly was Dr. L.L. Marshall, who currently was supplying Brinkley with a "secret serum" that he was using for his new technique for treating the prostate.) They talked at length and then the friend said: "Why the hell don't you go back up there and get on your radio and become a candidate for governor. You can get yourself elected and then you'll be in control of the State Medical Board. Go on home and get on the radio and tell people what a dirty deal you've been given. Give 'em hell and don't ever quit fighting; you know there is no life without fight." Brinkley had never considered state politics before because he was pleased with the wealth he was earning through his medical practice. But when he arrived at the airport to take off, a reporter asked him about his future. He impulsively responded, "Why I think I'll go back up to Kansas and get on my radio and get myself elected governor." He flew to Tulsa to check on some of his Oklahoma oil investments, and then on to Wichita, where he continued by limousine to Milford.⁶⁸

According to Clement Wood, after the medical hearing he was flooded with letters urging him to run for governor. "We want to show the world what the people of Kansas really think of Dr. and Mrs. Brinkley . . . by electing you governor," many people wrote. But it was September, the primaries were completed, and the general election was only a little over a month away. The letters continued to pile up, though, and he decided to seek vindication at the polls "as a man persecuted like Christ and St. Luke."⁶⁹

It is immaterial what prompted him to enter politics at that time. Perhaps it was only the political season, which can affect people in strange ways. Probably he relished the thought that he might gain control of his archenemies. He particularly hated the Kansas Board of Medical Registration and Examination, and as governor he could determine its appointments. In any case, this political period would not be a normal one in the United States, and especially not in Kansas. The nation was rapidly sliding into the worst depression

in history. The two vital economic forces in Kansas—petroleum and agriculture—were in deep crisis and the public mood was becoming desperate. It is also significant that Brinkley's losing two licensing battles had dominated the news headlines since late spring and, in the eyes of thousands of supporters, he had been victimized. For the next two years he would prove to be the greatest performer in Kansas political history in his quest for the governorship of the Sunflower State. Morris Fishbein and his colleagues in the AMA had "defrocked" him and were convinced that they had "Dr." John R. Brinkley by the glands and had heard the last of him. They had yet to gauge fully the man's resourcefulness and ingenuity.

Chapter 5

Brinkleyism

W.G. Clugston, political correspondent for the *Kansas City Journal Post* for several decades during the first half of the twentieth century, was a perceptive observer who knew almost as much, if not more, about Kansas politics as did the principals involved. In his book *Rascals in Democracy*, the reporter took his main theme from sociologist Herbert Spencer's 1884 classic, *The Man Versus the State*. Those who directed the two-party system in the United States threatened the survival of the democratic process, the Father of Sociology claimed. In applying this thesis to Kansas, Clugston argued that although the Republicans almost always predominated in elections, both major parties were controlled by a sinister group of powerful figures who governed the state's political life regardless of the party currently in office. The people, he insisted, must have a mechanism to deprive the two parties of their monopolistic power over candidate nomination in order to choose their own leaders, and it must go beyond the direct primary process. John Brinkley's candidacy, based on a political style that came to be called "Brinkleyism," which closely resembled the earlier Populism, represented to Clugston the possibility that a majority of Sunflower citizens might "throw off the yoke of any oppressive and exploiting group that seeks to monopolize the machinery of the established political parties." Brinkleyism almost succeeded in 1930 because the masses were ready to rise up in protest against the terrible conditions of the Great Depression. In Kansas, oil and wheat were of great economic importance, and the producers of these two commodities were suffering desperately by 1930. Tens of thousands of Kansas laborers and their families also were enduring economic hardships.¹

Almost inconceivably, the already desperate economic conditions in the Wheat Belt worsened with the Wall Street Crash in 1929. The current governor, Clyde Reed, tried to help his citizens, but his party faced a serious cleavage. As in the days of Populism four de-

cares previously, a desperate rural constituency was seeking leaders offering panaceas, rather than the same old clichés offered by most politicians. Demagogues abounded at this time. “Ma” and “Pa” Ferguson of Texas, “Alfalfa Bill” Murray of Oklahoma, and Huey Long of Louisiana, for example, capitalized on the current economic instability and the resulting disgruntled citizenry. The masses yearned for real leaders with new ideas that would help in this crisis.²

Republican Reed’s stint as governor from 1929 to 1931 further split his party. When Senator Charles Curtis, a veteran of fifty years in Kansas politics, became Herbert Hoover’s vice president, Reed appointed Henry J. Allen, an old friend and supporter and part of the party’s former progressive faction, to replace him. Allen had promised previously not to accept the nomination. The old guard wing of the Republican Party considered this to be a violation of Reed’s preelection pledge, and they caused the governor much grief from the beginning of his administration.

Reed achieved several gains for his farm constituency, including improvements in the highway department and the building of more farm-to-market roads, but as the elections of 1930 approached, he found himself increasingly unpopular because of continued depressed economic conditions and the bitterness of the conservative wing of his party. David Mulvane, national committeeman and leader of the opposition forces in the Republican Party, decided to contest the control of the Reed-Allen faction. Mulvane announced that Frank “Chief” Haucke, a Council Grove farmer, would oppose Reed in the gubernatorial primary. Haucke presented Kansas voters with several qualifications for the office: he had been a distinguished football player at Cornell University, he had served in World War I, and had been elected commander of the state American Legion. In addition, he did not smoke, drink, chew, or gamble, and was a bachelor. Other than the latter, these qualifications generally were more important to Kansas voters than what the candidates promised to do to improve their state. As Ernest A. Dewey wrote in a national journal, “Kansas politics is dominated by a triumvirate—the W.C.T.U. [Women’s Christian Temperance Union], the anti-Saloon League and the Methodist church. It would be the sheerest folly for any aspirant to put himself against these powerful and arbitrary organizations,” which held the puritanical view on smoking, drinking, and gambling.³

Friends first gave Haucke his nickname “Chief” because he had a large collection of Indian relics. Later he erected a monument to the Kaw Indians, whose reservation had been in the Council Grove area, and the tribe subsequently adopted him and called him Chief. He appeared to be a winning candidate as he was well liked in the

conservative faction and, as a state legislator, had opposed, though unsuccessfully, giving Reed \$40,000 to investigate the enforcement of Prohibition in Kansas. This money quickly dissipated in trying to dry up Wichita, a Democratic stronghold, and the governor had to request an additional \$75,000. Haucke argued that Reed would use the money to pay off political debts; thus each man held strong feelings against the other.⁴

In 1930 Harry H. Woodring, a young banker from Neodesha, began a rapid rise in the Democratic Party. Woodring, too, was a bachelor who did not smoke, chew, drink, or gamble, and had served as state commander of the American Legion. He also had the distinction of being the only former Legion commander in the United States who was skillful at knitting and fancy needlework. Woodring's mother had placed his five older sisters in charge of raising him. While other boys swam and played ball, Harry grew up playing dolls and doing needlework. His sisters called him "son," but the boys called him "daughter." His army service in World War I, however, helped him shed his effeminate traits, but he never lost his love for knitting and was widely known as "a beautiful tatter." In the primary, Woodring campaigned in almost every county in Kansas, promoting a "businesslike" government and a tax cut—a popular idea due to the depressed economic conditions. He handily won and, because of the Republican split, anticipated the general election with relish.⁵

The Republican primary was ardently contested. The hot-tempered Reed continued to make caustic comments about his enemies in the old guard, and his personality became a major issue. The question of Prohibition also surfaced, with both candidates stressing the need for enforcement. Ultimately, Haucke defeated the incumbent governor—principally because he had an agreeable personality, compared to Reed's cantankerous temperament.

Winning their respective primaries, both Haucke and Woodring had the advantage of being relatively new faces on the political scene. Interestingly, both candidates forsook the campaign trail for a few days in early October. They boarded a train for Boston to attend the annual convention of the American Legion, where they roomed together and worked for the election of a fellow Kansan for national commander.⁶

Both primary winners changed campaign managers for the general election. Haucke's original man, John Breyfogle, could not continue because of business responsibilities, and John D.M. Hamilton replaced him. Guy T. Helvering stepped into the shoes of Woodring's manager, John Wells, who had developed "stomach

trouble." Helvering had been a Treasury Department official in the Wilson administration, and he and Woodring would play important roles in state and national politics during the New Deal years.⁷

The resulting general election might have been dull if not for John R. Brinkley's entering the fray as a write-in, independent candidate. He joined the race in the heat of publicity over the rescinding of his radio and medical licenses, showing a shrewdness of timing that helped him attract the sympathy vote. Citizens in dire economic straits could empathize with a doctor who had been railroaded out of his principal means of livelihood; besides, they enjoyed his popular radio station. It was too late to get his name on the ballot, though, because the legislature had tightened the nominating rules following Emporia publisher William Allen White's earlier, unsuccessful campaign against the Ku Klux Klan. White made his bid for governor in 1924, and the next year the legislature mandated that only those candidates running in the primaries could have their names printed on the general election ballot. Any other newcomers to the race could enter only as write-in candidates. The legislation thereby limited the people's ability to produce an independent candidate and illustrated the two major parties' firm control of the nominating process—a monopoly that W.G. Clugston had long deplored. Initially viewing the race as a lark, Brinkley enjoyed immediate success, prompting him to begin to take his campaign more seriously. Even though he felt he could not win, running for governor provided him a chance to get "his case before the people—and tell them some things about the *Kansas City Star* and about their public officials in Topeka, which he thought ought to be told."⁸

The *New York Times* described the situation thusly: "Kansas, state of political peculiarities, is astir with a new form of popular uprising. A movement has gained considerable headway which, despite immediate failure, might easily point the way for the future selection of public servants without the aid of political party organization. . . . Many in both parties felt that 'lightweights' had been chosen as their standard bearers. . . . Then, too, the state is seething with unrest. Times are hard in the towns as well as in the rural sections and taxes are high. . . . The situation is such that if the delicensed doctor were not in the picture the Democratic chances in Kansas would be brighter than they have been in years."⁹

Five days after the Kansas Medical Board revoked his license, Brinkley announced his candidacy, saying "let's pasture goats on the statehouse lawn" and promised to abolish "unnecessary boards and investigative bodies." He began promoting his campaign platform, specifically designed to appeal to farmers, laborers, the poor,

and others disaffected by the conditions pinpointed by the *New York Times*. He urged the abolition of the Kansas Court of Industrial Relations (his advisers did not realize that this body was emasculated in 1925 after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it ineffective in *Wolff Packing v Court of Industrial Relations*), provision of adequate workmen's compensation, and ratification of the National Child Labor Amendment. He favored free textbooks, free medical service for the poor, and health clubs for children in every county. He opposed corporate farming because it was "unjust" to the family farm and urged eliminating the "disgrace" of poor farms and establishing pensions for the elderly, the blind, and "those unable to work." The latter preceded the similar benefit plan of Dr. Francis E. Townsend of Long Beach, California, by three years and the Old Age and Survivors Insurance Law (Social Security) by six years. All of this provided a very perceptive platform on which to campaign, especially considering that Brinkley was a complete political amateur.¹⁰

Brinkley also proposed building a recreational lake in every county in the state. Evaporation from these lakes would stimulate more rainfall and moisture for Kansas crops, he assured listeners, and many of his supporters—without thinking—endorsed this unique concept. He reiterated throughout his brief campaign that the statehouse in Topeka was filled with corruption and inefficiency. He advocated paving thousands of miles of roads through an increase in the gasoline tax. Finally, he urged Kansans to buy Kansas products. He had a snappy slogan that exhorted all good citizens to: "Clean Up, Clean Out, Keep Kansas Clean," which had come from his race for mayor of Fulton over a decade earlier.

When Brinkley announced his candidacy, a Lyons, Kansas, politician summarized his ability to appeal broadly to many groups. First, Brinkley was a Mason and a Shriner and had spent many hours on his radio extolling the virtues of those fraternal lodges. In addition, he was well-known for his religious devotion and work and financial support for the Methodist Church in Milford. Such religious activity would appeal to moderate Christians as well as more extreme groups like the Ku Klux Klan—an organization, though technically dead, whose "soul went marching on in Kansas." In addition to these specific groups, Brinkley also appealed to the general populace thanks to his very public legal struggles: "Others admire a fighter and an underdog and many feel that as a physician he has been railroaded out of the profession," said one observer.¹¹

Brinkley staged a whirlwind, five-week campaign the likes of which the people of Kansas—and those in other states—had never seen. He talked to the public for several hours every morning on

station KFKB, whose license appeal was still in the courts, then got into his airplane and flew to a rally or was driven in his limousine to a nearby political meeting in the afternoon, and finally returned to Milford to broadcast again at night. Everywhere he went he drew huge crowds. At first the Haucke and Woodring campaigns treated his candidacy as a joke. Then as his crowds grew larger, they began to wonder not whether he had a chance, but whether he would draw his support from traditionally Democratic voters or from Republicans. Many came to see the famous Goat Gland Doctor out of curiosity, yet what would happen if he managed to interest them in his powerful, Populist message? The *Topeka Daily Capital* reported large numbers of potential voters who were almost fanatical in their loyalty to the Goat Gland Doctor and their claims for his medical wizardry. The tough economic conditions made "persecuted" radio listeners sympathetic to the "persecuted" Doctor Brinkley. Thousands of Brinkley supporters "were made in the last few weeks with his radio talks," Clif Stratton, a political reporter acknowledged. He was talking "especially to women" and presenting himself as the "poor man's friend." He also encouraged the populace's growing, latent resentment against the medical trust, repeatedly insisting, "all of us physicians and nurses down here at Milford are good Christian folks just like you."¹²

Election day was rapidly approaching and Brinkley supporters needed to organize immediately. This they did extemporaneously. The two major candidates were "given an eye opener" in mid-October when a call went out over KFKB for a gathering in Oakland, a Topeka suburb. A great crowd assembled, and they opened the meeting by singing "America." Enough contributions were quickly gathered to pay the expenses for the rally, including renting the auditorium. C.M. Harper, Congregational minister and former mayor of Hays, paid tribute to Brinkley, stimulating many in the audience to come forward and testify for the good doctor. They organized a "Brinkley for Governor" movement, and similar spontaneous meetings took place over much of eastern and central Kansas. One observer compared the movement to that of Populism forty years earlier: "It grew from the grass roots and acquired its leadership as it grew larger. The only difference today is that it goes by the name of Brinkleyism and has been cultivated among the grass roots. The conditions causing the people to be dissatisfied are very much the same—high taxes, low prices for agricultural products and a belief that the party leadership has deteriorated."¹³

When Brinkley attended a rally in a larger town, the meeting places consistently overflowed with his followers and the curious.

In Kansas City, for instance, he attracted a crowd twice as large as that which came to hear the popular Vice President Curtis. When an assembly was called outdoors, the gatherings were enormous. Cash Davis, an avid supporter from Augusta, summoned a rally in his pasture between Augusta and Wichita. The result was “the largest political assemblage, estimated at 20,000 or more, in Kansas history.” Rolla A. Clymer, publisher of the *El Dorado Times*, reported “they came in trucks and jalopies, by bus and even some by foot. . . . None ever knew how many people were in that jumping, whooping, yelling, enthusiastic log jam of people that autumn afternoon.”¹⁴

In approaching the gathering, Brinkley circled the pasture in his blue and gold airplane, a typically dramatic gesture, and people grew excited when they saw someone in the window waving a handkerchief. He landed, with Minnie and Johnny Boy in tow, and the crowd roared as they emerged. They waited forty-five more minutes while the people continued to gather. Someone checked the license plates of the vehicles packing the surrounding country roads for several miles and found that at least twenty-five different counties were represented. The fanatic, the faithful, the curious, the hostile, all came to hear the famous doctor. It was Sunday and Brinkley spoke for half an hour on biblical passages, mixing—as usual—Scripture and medicine. As it was the Sabbath, he refrained from talking politics. Many political observers were discovering “something mesianic about the Brinkley appeal.”¹⁵

His name's absence on the ballot posed the greatest potential problem for the Milford man. Fortunately, a helpful precedent had been set by the campaign of Grover Pierpont, a recent write-in candidate for political office. Pierpont's supporters had written in his name variously as “Perpont” and “Peerpont.” Yet because the intent of the voters was obvious regardless of spelling, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled that the votes must be counted. William Smith, attorney general and Republican candidate for the state's highest court, ruled accordingly in Brinkley's case two weeks before the election. Smith sent instructions to county election officials specifying that if voters wrote “Mr. John Brinkley,” “Mr. Brinkley,” “Dr. Brinkley,” “Doc Brinkley,” or “Brinkley” in the proper place with a cross in the box on the right, the vote should be counted. The vote would not count if the wrong Christian name or initial were used, but it would be counted if the second initial was incorrect or omitted. Then, a few days later, Smith reversed his decision and ruled that in order for the votes to count, Brinkley's name would have to be written exactly as he recorded it when he filed his candidacy. Thus, only votes marked “J.R. Brinkley” would be awarded to the Goat Gland Doctor.

Votes with stray or unnecessary marks would be disqualified. According to Smith's second ruling, other spellings would be tallied—if the ballots were not otherwise disqualified by errors—but they had to be enumerated for separate and distinct candidates, according to the names written in. Smith's abrupt reversal likely stemmed from his own political motives. As Brinkley supporters were, ideologically, more likely to vote for L.S. Harvey, Smith's Democratic opponent for the Kansas Supreme Court seat, Smith presumably reasoned that dismissed Brinkley ballots would also lead to cancelled votes for Harvey.¹⁶

In his run for governor, Brinkley had the support of the *Wichita Beacon* and its publisher Max Levand. In response to the doctor's call, Levand sent H.G. Hotchkiss, "a skillful publicist," to help in the campaign. Hotchkiss, a traditionalist, believed the Milford man was relying too much on his radio broadcasts and did not realize the tremendous impact Brinkley was making with this significant innovation. He coordinated another massive political rally late in October in Wichita's Forum. This was "a masterpiece of political organization." KFKB's musicians entertained the audience as it gathered. The hall soon filled to capacity, forcing the Wichita fire department to turn people away. The crowd, which continued to swell outside the Forum, heard the inside rally through loudspeakers. Roy Faulkner, KFKB's "Lonesome Cowboy," warmed up the audience by playing the guitar and singing "The Strawberry Roan." He was called back for several encores. Faulkner was an extremely popular KFKB entertainer and the first well-known singer to yodel on the radio. He later moved to California and joined Gene Autry's backup group, the Riders of the Purple Sage.¹⁷

Attractive, well-dressed Minnie spoke to the crowd about her duties as wife and mother. Johnny Boy, now three years old, came on the stage in a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit to be with her and appeared again later when free candy was distributed to the children in the audience. Finally, it was time for the main event. Brinkley strode dramatically to the microphone at the center of the stage. He began by stressing how careful the voters must be to write his name exactly as he had filed it. ("J.R. Brinkley" was emphasized repeatedly over KFKB and his organization distributed thousands of pencils with "J.R. Brinkley" printed on them.) In his Wichita speech, he used a hypothetical situation to show the audience how he might lose the election if they correctly wrote in his name but failed to place an X in the appropriate box. Blaming the poor economic conditions on the Republicans in power, Brinkley explained his platform for improvement as the "people's candidate." He emphasized

how Kansans could help the economy by buying their own products. He promised to pave roads and get them out of the mud. Then, certainly frightening the members of the American Medical Association, he promised state medical aid to the poor. If he were elected governor, though, and was unable "to find a way to provide this without increasing your taxes one cent, I will go ahead and build a free clinic in Milford myself that I was starting to build when my troubles began." The combination of his voice, his flashing eyes and diamonds, his immaculate and commanding appearance with dark-rimmed glasses and auburn goatee, and his easy manner of presentation made a great impression on the rural folk.

The chairman had introduced him as "Moses, who has come to lead us out of the wilderness." Brinkley picked up on this theme and spoke passionately about his travels and experiences in the Holy Land. "I, too, have walked up the path Jesus walked to Calvary," he said. "I have spent much time in Palestine and Jerusalem. I stood in the Saviour's tomb. I know how Jesus felt." "The men in power wanted to do away with Jesus before the common people woke up," he noted, "Are you awake here?" Jesus had been persecuted; Brinkley had been persecuted. Brinkley imparted to his followers a sense of moral responsibility in their vote: "Remember, only you and God will be in that voting booth."¹⁸

Brinkley made a final appearance on the Sunday evening before the election in the Topeka auditorium. Again there was a huge crowd. The hall held 2,000, but there were 3,500 people in seats and in the aisles and another 2,000 milling around outside. Minnie introduced him simply: "You are going to hear J.R. Brinkley. I wish to tell you how much we appreciate your coming, and we hope to see you all at Milford sometime." Wearing a huge sunflower in his left lapel, as he always did at political rallies, Brinkley refrained from discussing politics. Instead, he preached a sermon "that would have been right well received coming from the regular minister in almost any church in Kansas." "I do not talk politics on Sundays, boys," he emphasized to reporters afterward—a stance similar to that of Harry S. Truman, who was running for reelection as county judge in Kansas City at that time. Hundreds waited after the speech, the Topeka newspaper reported, "just to touch even the garments of J.R. Brinkley."¹⁹

Brinkley was a highly popular candidate in certain areas, and leading politicians had to feel apprehension over a story that surfaced on the last day of October. A straw poll was taken at the Shell Oil Refinery in El Dorado and one man at work there dropped dead with shock when he heard the results:

Brinkley	222
Haucke	34
Woodring	26 ²⁰

Meanwhile, Haucke and Woodring, both “dry” candidates, were campaigning against each other and vying for the important American Legion vote. Haucke and fellow Republicans pledged good government, a road program, improved economy, and a reduction of property taxes that were disproportionately high for the depressed farm economy. Woodring and Democratic State Chairman Guy T. Helvering anticipated victory. They believed they had united the Democrats while the bitter primary race had badly split the Republicans—and whenever Kansas Republicans divided sharply, Democrats won. The Democrats, too, pledged economy in government and promoted a road program.²¹

Both the Republicans and Democrats were positive that their man would win, though neither group was sure of the size of the Brinkley vote. Neither of the two parties wanted to challenge Brinkley, however, for fear he would throw his backing to the other candidate. This apprehension reigned supreme in both major parties on election eve.²² In the meantime, Brinkley was consulting soothsayers: “The people’s astrologist told his listeners today that the stars indicated a landslide for Brinkley,” a news release reported. The doctor, they said, “was born under the sign of cancer—that of Roosevelt, Wilson, and other notables. The fourth day of the month—today—is Brinkley’s luckiest day.”²³

On election day, November 4, the weather was pleasant, and Brinkley supporters set up loudspeakers near many polling places. These were on private property and were strategically located to comply with Kansas election law requiring them to be a certain distance away from the voting booths. The amplifiers continually intoned the message, “Vote for J.R. Brinkley, make the cross in the square. Write in letter J, letter R, letters B-r-i-n-k-l-e-y.” Despite this repeated emphasis, voters wrote his name many different ways that day, often with “doctor” included and occasionally just “the doc.”

As boards began reporting votes, Brinkley frightened his opponents when he took an early lead. Leaders of the two major parties sent word to their poll watchers and vote counters to scrutinize carefully ballots with Brinkley’s name on them, however spelled, to determine if they could be rejected. As a result, he began to fall behind as the urban vote came in. Hundreds of stories emerged from this election detailing how the Goat Gland Doctor won but was counted out with spoiled ballots. Both Democratic and Republican counters

would make an additional mark on a ballot and exclaim, "Look, someone has spoiled his vote!" When citizens, who were unsure about how to cast a write-in ballot, asked if this was where one could vote for Brinkley, poll watchers would explain, "Yes, and you make sure you write your name on the ballot as Doc Brinkley would really appreciate knowing you voted for him." In some instances, absentee votes were thrown out because their affidavits were improperly completed or because they were filed before election day. Such shenanigans were successful in swinging the election because Brinkley's campaign brought out thousands of people who normally did not vote or participate in politics and who did not thoroughly understand the election process.²⁴

Clif Stratton, political reporter for the *Topeka Daily Capital*, predicted an unheard-of half-million votes that day. At 4:00 A.M. on November 5, the morning after the election, the following results were announced:

	<u>State</u>	<u>Milford</u>
Haucke	151,538	34
Woodring	147,303	27
Brinkley	119,555	305

The next most contested race was between William Smith of Valley Falls and L.S. Harvey of Kansas City for a seat on the state supreme court. It was not known for several days that Smith clearly, but closely, was the winner. The governor's race was not officially tabulated until November 16.²⁵

For the next two weeks first Haucke, then Woodring won the governor's chair, then Haucke, then Woodring as the absentee votes and revised tabulations came in. Woodring later observed that "perhaps no man was governor as many times. . . . For eleven days I was governor in the morning, and in the evening I wasn't governor." The race was so close that an official canvass of the votes was necessary to determine the winner. The ballots of the residents of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Leavenworth were particularly contested. This was a federal installation and the question arose over whether these people could legally vote for state, county, and local offices. (In 1938 the state supreme court ruled in another case that they could not.) In 1930 around 300 votes were involved. Woodring won 281 of these votes, and his total state plurality over Haucke was only 251 votes. If Woodring could keep those votes, he would win. The Republican leadership immediately took court action to annul them. Just as quickly, they began contemplating the

wisdom of this decision. If they were successful in their demand to count these votes, Brinkley could request a recount of the entire race. An honest assessment of the votes and a full investigation had the potential of making Brinkley the winner. Besides, the Republicans controlled the legislature and that body could keep Woodring in check for two years. Ultimately, the Democrats and Republicans would do anything to keep Brinkley out of the governor's mansion because no one in Kansas knew how to control him! Intra-party harmony immediately reigned in Kansas and the Republicans withdrew their suit. The official tally gave Woodring the office with 217,171 votes, Haucke was second with 216,920, and Brinkley had 183,278. Amazingly, John received over 30,000 votes more than the well-known William Allen White had received in his write-in campaign against the Ku Klux Klan in 1924. A record-setting 600,000 votes were cast, the abnormally high figure attributable to the Goat Gland Doctor's enticing many citizens to the polls that day who normally were indifferent to the political process.²⁶

Brinkley supporters immediately demanded that he request a recount. John declined, he said, because of the cost involved—in truth, an unlikely obstacle for the millionaire doctor. But Brinkley could make more in a month as a physician than he could in two years in the governor's office and probably did not really care to occupy the office. He wanted primarily to replace the members of the Kansas Board of Medical Registration and Examination. Although he believed he had been cheated out of fifty thousand votes, he publicly accepted the loss stoically. After all, the next election was only two years away, and he had plans to keep his radio broadcasts alive and to keep campaigning during the interim. No doubt he scared Kansas politicians thoroughly when he later broadcast from Mexico to "my good friends in Kansas," promising them "I shall be back with you again, my dear, dear friends"—a pledge that he redeemed. Kansas politicians could not be reassured when Minnie Brinkley announced that "if he is not allowed to go on the ticket, she herself would run for governor." In addition, doctors were concerned that the legislature might tinker with the state's medical practice laws in retaliation against them.²⁷

Newspaper editor William Allen White drew an interesting conclusion from Brinkley's candidacy. He noted that of the twenty-eight counties Brinkley carried, twenty-two of them had voted for Haucke in the Republican primary. Shawnee County (Topeka) had given Haucke 12,000 votes in the primary, but only 1,000 votes in the general election, with Brinkley close behind him. The stronger a county voted for Clyde Reed, he observed, the greater their vote for

Brinkley. This sharp Republican cleavage, the Emporia journalist insisted, must be healed before 1932.²⁸

W.G. Clugston concluded, perhaps wistfully, that the state “is near—if not in—a state of political revolution.” In a column headlined “Brinkley Vote Suggests Political Revolution May Be Near in Kansas,” he argued that “unless there is a change in sentiment before 1932, there may be an uprising such as even Jayhawkers have never witnessed.” In one week, he noted, over twenty thousand letters arrived in Milford attesting to the people’s disgust with “the holier than thou hypocrites.” The election was “a rebellion against outside influence, especially from newspapers which take [their] leadership from Missouri.” The *Salina State Journal* agreed with this assessment of the Missouri influence, as did the *Topeka State Journal*, both newspapers that were unfriendly to Brinkley. “These forces were responsible for the Brinkley strength through having persecuted him,” the latter paper noted.²⁹

Legends abound in Kansas about Brinkley’s race in 1930. One is that he received twenty thousand votes in Oklahoma and carried three counties there. This makes an interesting though improbable story, as Oklahoma law at that time did not permit write-in votes nor have a provision for them on the ballot. Fanatics, of course, could have written in his name anyway, following the instructions he gave them over the radio. The most enduring myth is that he was cheated out of the governorship—a belief held by many Kansans then and now. In any case, it is truly remarkable that, with all the fraud and chicanery going on, he was able to get 183,000 votes officially counted without the support of organized watchers, poll clerks, and tabulators. Certainly professionals in the two major parties must have wondered about Brinkley’s popularity with the masses if there were almost 200,000 ballots that could not be thrown out for some trivial reason.³⁰

W.G. Clugston told an interviewer in 1952 that between twenty-five and fifty thousand Brinkley votes were thrown out and any “truthful” Democrat or Republican “would concede it, as they had admitted it to him.” Francis Schruben wrote to and interviewed many people several years later who were connected with this election. He found that most Republicans professed not to believe Brinkley was counted out. “Chief” Haucke was one exception. William Avery, governor from 1965 to 1967, was another Republican who believed Brinkley won but was “technically” counted out. Democrats, on the other hand, insisted that if the votes had been properly counted, the Milford doctor would have won. Haucke supporters also believe that Governor Clyde Reed used his office “to swing enough of the

absentee ballots for Haucke into the discard to ensure Woodring the victory." The truth will never be determined, but an informed observer best described it thusly: "the most biased old time leaders in Kansas today will admit that, if all the ballots intended for Brinkley, but thrown out for technical reasons, had been counted, Brinkley would have been governor of Kansas in 1930."³¹

Emporia Republican William Allen White lent his pen to an interpretation of the Brinkley campaign. Four decades earlier, he had written the caustic editorial about the Populists entitled "What's the Matter with Kansas," which won him widespread national attention. He now penned one about Brinkleyism in a piece that is worth quoting at some length. He noted that a similar phenomenon was occurring in other places:

Bill Thomson of Chicago, Hylan of New York, Curley of Boston, Ware of Pennsylvania, Jack Walton of Oklahoma, "Ma" Ferguson of Texas, and Jeff Davis of Arkansas are contemporary examples of Brinkleyism. Some states can laugh [at Kansas], but not Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois or Chicago, where they elected a governor morally four cuts under Brinkley and have maintained a mayor seven stories under Brinkley.

. . . the Brinkley vote should be a warning to the smug, well-fed group even in Kansas, where on the whole things go well—a warning that things must go better, that there must be a more equitable distribution of the common wealth, and that political parties should not juggle as they juggled last August with serious and important matters of factional split.

. . . the Brinkley vote is a symptom, bad as Brinkley is, and he could be little worse. But the worse he was the more dangerous is the symptom.³²

Following the election, according to Bert Comer, who would run with Brinkley in 1932 for state attorney general on the independent ticket, Alfred M. Landon met the successful Woodring in the Hotel Biltmore in Kansas City. Landon had been state Republican chairman and campaign manager for Clyde Reed in 1928 and for the unsuccessful Reed primary in 1930. Out of this meeting came what was to be known as the "Missouri Compromise of 1930." The Democratic candidate agreed to split the patronage 60 percent to 40 percent in return for Landon's cooperation for the next two years. Landon thus gained almost half the state patronage, defeated

Woodring in his bid for reelection, "then promptly kicked out every appointee who had the slightest Democratic leanings."³³

Under Governor Woodring, "things" did not go "better" as White had hoped. Out of power for several years, the Democrats were hungry for office, and Woodring had to satisfy them with only 60 percent of the placements. His appointment of Guy Helvering, Democratic state chairman, to head the highway department, proved to be crucial. The Democrats in Kansas badly needed to fill their financial coffers, and the Woodring-Helvering administration did just that. They demanded a 5 percent salary donation from each state employee, known in some states as a "lug." Later the "lug" went to 10 percent, and this became a campaign issue in 1932. As an economy measure, Woodring also cut his own salary by 10 percent and netted some savings through reorganization of state departments.³⁴

Overall, though, nothing was done nationally, or by the state, to help farmers. In the summer of 1930 under the prodding of President Herbert Hoover, Congress created the Farm Board with a fund of \$500 million. The Farm Board tried to help farmers financially by using the fund to purchase surpluses and keep them off the market in an attempt to raise crop prices. None of the expectations were fulfilled, however. By 1932 the board had spent much of its funds, farmers continued to glut the markets, and the price of wheat in Kansas had dropped from one dollar to twenty-five cents per bushel during this period. When that same Congress enacted the Hawley-Smoot Tariff in 1930, the highest in American history, it hurt farmers further by raising prices on manufactured goods that they had to purchase. As W.G. Clugston noted, twenty-five-cent wheat meant a farmer had to spend a bushel for one treat of ice cream cones for his family of five. In the summer of 1931, Kansas farmers were blaming the Hawley-Smoot Tariff, Herbert Hoover, and the Federal Farm Board for their economic woes. By 1932 agrarians in many areas of the Midwest were in revolt, through the Farmers Holiday Association and similar movements. The political scene in Kansas seemed ripe for the return of John R. Brinkley.³⁵

In the midst of these Sunflower State developments, in January 1931, Brinkley announced his plans to build a radio station at an undetermined point in northern Mexico. The following month, he described his newly discovered interest in Mexico in a feature article that was widely reprinted across the state. He found "Mexico's climate exhilarating and the Mexican people industrious and happy." He singled out the chief of communications, Juan Alamazan, for his courteous negotiations and announced that he intended to help the Mexicans develop their northern states, where he planned to locate

his broadcasting station. "The Government of Mexico realizes all the injustices that has [sic] been done to them through misleading press reports," he noted, "just as a great injustice has been done to me."³⁶

As a tangible indication of his interest in the area, John became involved in a large irrigation project. The Quemado Valley development, northwest of Eagle Pass, Texas, encompassed over ten thousand acres that supporters envisioned being developed into citrus farms. John and Minnie advertised the enterprise over their radio, and Bill Branch built station EXPN at Piedras Negras to promote the area. Finally, in January 1932, several hundred people from Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and elsewhere gathered on Las Moras Creek to hear speeches extolling the concept and attend ground-breaking ceremonies for the new Texas town of Brinkley City. This turned out to be one of Brinkley's more unfortunate promotions because, while the irrigation project ultimately prospered, the Texas metropolis he envisioned withered on the vine.³⁷

Brinkley leased a telephone line from Milford to Del Rio for \$10,000 per month to broadcast by remote control from Kansas to Mexico and then back to his North American listeners. His return to the air assisted the burgeoning political groups that began functioning right after the election of 1930. For the 1932 campaign, Brinkley had support organizations and a "newspaper" called *Publicity*, published by a Wichita supporter, Elmer J. Garner. He placed Mollie Vosberg, former Reno County treasurer, in charge of coordinating all of his campaign organizations because, he explained, his numerous business flights to Mexico required him to be away from Kansas too much of the time. The political winds were blowing in Kansas as early as April 1931 when a national business journal announced: "We believe Dr. Brinkley to be a man of the highest type, and an example to the world. His fine professional services have won him the commendations of some of the greatest medical authorities in the country. In addition to this, he possesses a comprehensive understanding of the industrial and political problems that are confronting the State of Kansas at this time, and is eminently qualified to solve them."³⁸

On February 15, 1931, promoters staged a massive rally in Milford. Over twenty thousand Brinkley supporters came by car and bus with banners reading "BRINKLEY FOR GOVERNOR IN 1932." He assured the crowd that, while he had no ambition for political office, he had a duty to fight for the people. That day he tentatively announced his candidacy for governor on the independent ticket. Four days later, he declared that if anyone barred him from the race, Minnie would run instead.

At their annual meeting in February 1932, the Republican Kansas Day Club discussed Brinkley's possible candidacy and concluded that he should be taken seriously. The *Wichita Beacon* had conducted a straw poll, which demonstrated John's continued popularity with the masses. He received 16,452 votes, Woodring 4,221, and three possible Republican candidates garnered a total of only 707. Though striking fear in the hearts of Republicans, these results were taken in Brinkley country months before the official campaigning began by a newspaper that was supporting him.³⁹

In June 1932, in what the *Kansas City Journal Post* described as the "headline of the week," Brinkley formally announced his candidacy as an independent, ending "countless rumors" that had been circulating across the state for several months that he might run for governor or U.S. senator as a Democrat or a Republican. One hundred thousand Kansans signed his petition to get his name on the ballot. The next governor "will have to beat John R. Brinkley," the newspaper added.⁴⁰

John continued to consult astrologists about his political and legal future. His signs indicated that he should not engage in "any more suits than necessary" and "as a rule a Jury will always favor you more or less," rather than a judge. A famous astrologist of Brinkley's warned him, "Mars was near the sun, Saturn opposite Venus and Uranus in conjunction with Venus, I would not advise putting too much money into politics as I doubt you can get the election this year." On another occasion the astrologist complained that Brinkley expected "too much from astrology," and that he did not realize the stars were "only one factor in determining what will happen on any particular day."⁴¹

The Republican leaders claimed that they were receiving the same call to fight Brinkleyism that they had answered in fighting Populism forty years earlier. They failed to mention that conditions in 1930s Kansas were quite similar to those of the 1890s: high taxes, low farm income, and widespread belief that leadership in the two major parties had deteriorated. In early January 1932, Alf Landon announced his candidacy. Known as the "fox" since his exploits of college days in bringing back chickens from their coops for his fraternity, Landon often mooched cigarettes from voters—certainly a switch from the tradition of politicians passing out cigars. As Reed's campaign manager, he had considerable political experience and correctly analyzed the Republican Party's urgent need to unify in 1932. In the spirit of unity, leaders convinced Haucke not to enter the primary, and Landon easily dispatched his remaining opponent, Lacey Simpson—the candidate of Haucke and national committee-

man David Mulvane—and his “harmony” campaign. When Landon won the primary, he thereby gained control of the Republican Party.⁴²

William Smith, though now a member of the state supreme court, remained active politically from his judicial chambers. Following the primary, he threw his considerable political influence behind Landon, “solely because [he] was intent on saving the State from Doc Brinkley, who was going to run again.” Smith later admitted that he “was prouder of his fights against Brinkley and the Klan than any other event [sic] in his life.”⁴³

Woodring had a reasonably good record for controlling governmental expenditures and garnered further support for his highway program, winning a resounding victory in the Democratic primary as a result. William Avery recalled that he was “a nice guy,” but not very popular. While he did nothing bad, he was unable to do much good, either, because of his status as a minority governor who had to work with a Republican-dominated legislature. As the Republican leaders surmised in November 1930, they could control him easily.

In 1932, both Woodring and Landon charged that Brinkley paid no real estate taxes, because his home was now in Del Rio. Woodring also informed reporters that the Milford doctor was not paying any state taxes on \$1 million in bonds and securities. This time the major parties were taking the doctor seriously.⁴⁴ Both Republicans and Democrats managed to uncover John’s old partner, James Crawford, who was currently selling automobiles at the DeWitt Chevrolet company in Kansas City. Crawford was very frank with the Pinkerton detective investigating for Brinkley, talking at length about a certain J.H. McCoy, who was working for the Chicago firm of Loesch, Scofield, Loesch and Burke, legal counsel for the American Medical Association. McCoy had interviewed him when he was serving time in the Oklahoma penitentiary. Two months before the lawyer arrived, the warden told Crawford he had orders from the Department of Justice not to let him “communicate with a certain individual.” After reading about current Kansas politics, Crawford concluded Brinkley was the man they wanted to isolate from him. McCoy gave him \$5 and a box of cigars for openers. If Crawford gave him the evidence he wanted, McCoy would get him a pardon. Crawford gave the AMA agent the deposition he requested, but he never heard from the AMA again, and did not receive the pardon. He soon learned not to trust AMA representatives as much as his criminal friends. At least among thieves there was a code of honor.

Crawford told the Pinkerton he had been approached recently by both major parties in Kansas. The first representative offered

him \$250 per month plus expenses and use of an automobile if he would follow Brinkley and make speeches in the campaign towns on the next day. He told them his price was \$25,000. He claimed both sides had called on him several times, though the Democrats had made the best offer. They were willing to pay him \$10,000 for two months work if he would give ten speeches and write a signed statement to be released to all large Kansas newspapers "just prior to the election." Crawford was "hard up and was giving it some consideration," he threatened. He did not recall names, but one was a Democrat, who was "quite prominent in Topeka," and the other was "a prominent Republican." Others in the parties who had called on him refused to give their names.

Crawford had "no personal animosity" toward Brinkley, he told the detective, but he was angry because John was "the cause of his arrest and being taken back to North [*sic*] Carolina." He estimated that he and John had made \$5,000 in South Carolina. He complained that he had not received his share of the loot, although he had agreed to the settlement the two made in Georgia following their visit to the Greenville jail. He wrote Brinkley earlier asking for \$10,000, but all he had received was a copy of a radio broadcast. At this point in 1932, accounting for interest and the principal, he said he would settle for \$2,000.⁴⁵

A week later, the Pinkerton again talked to Crawford "along the lines suggested by Dr. Brinkley." Crawford's main topic of interest was what he thought John owed him, and although he said he did not loan Brinkley money, he believed they had not split the profits fairly. He warned that he "had been approached during the last three days again by parties from Kansas" and was about ready to accept their proposition. Now all they asked of him was a signed statement for publication for late October. He would have to accept this "soon if Dr. Brinkley does not satisfy him as he is badly in need of money." He was certain that the American Medical Association would approach him again because in the new trial he would be available for court service and thus they could not use his deposition. He believed they would try to persuade him to leave the state, but he would not do so until after the trial in order to help his old friend. If he were subpoenaed, he would appear for the trial, but would testify only "that the deposition taken from him was done so under coercion."⁴⁶

Brinkley did not pay Crawford to stay out of the campaign, but the doctor's attorney, James Smith, observed that the latter might well make a public statement attesting that he had been bought off because Crawford would apparently do anything for money. Brinkley and his advisers were concerned that one of the major candidates

might persuade Crawford to circulate the deposition he gave the AMA about his partnership with John. Smith's advice was that "while the deposition may hurt, it probably would not hurt as much as raising an issue about it and getting into a muddy mess." The lawyer believed John should not dignify Crawford by paying much attention to him and that John should call his bluff, which he did.⁴⁷ In a final attempt, Crawford visited John in his Milford office, offering to make a new deposition for \$300. John ordered him to get out. If Crawford would lie for the AMA, Brinkley concluded, he "would give a deposition to me and say I paid him \$300 . . . and they would get another from him. I wouldn't have anything to do with him."⁴⁸

During the subsequent publicity over the Crawford issue, John Brinkley introduced listeners of KFKB and his Mexican station to Bert Comer. Comer told the radio audience that he wanted them to know exactly what kind of a man John Brinkley was. He explained that Brinkley had asked him to make a full disclosure of the episode by reading the Crawford deposition over the radio. Comer omitted, of course, the more savory sections, such as John's spending two weeks in the Greenville jail.⁴⁹

With Brinkley's sudden political fame, Sally Wike Engren also reappeared in his life, wanting money. Brinkley's Pinkerton detective interviewed P.N. Price of Tuckasegee, North Carolina, who had known John and the Wikes for many years. Price told the investigator that he believed John Brinkley did not have an enemy in the vicinity until the Wike family turned on him. Claude, Sally's brother, had a federal loan of \$6,000 on his farm and had defaulted in his payments. The rumor was that he would lose his farm but that "they were going to collect money for every month that Sally was separated from" Dr. Brinkley and thus "pull out" and save the farm.⁵⁰

T.L. Powell of Sylva, North Carolina, told the detective that Sally had just returned from Chicago. She was "very angry and said she would not see Brinkley become Governor unless he squared accounts with her." The next week, she returned from Kansas, where she had seen Woodring and Alf Landon. Mr. Powell believed there was "something" to her story, because someone "must be backing her" as "she would not be travelling at her own expense." Naomi Beryl Brinkley, the third daughter, had been married in Milford in the spring of 1932 and Brinkley had "ordered her [Sally] to stay away from the wedding." She was quite upset over this snub. Powell believed "she could do him [Brinkley] a lot of damage." He could have quieted her easily a year ago, but now after the wedding, it would require \$3,000 to \$5,000 and Powell believed he could soothe her feelings very quickly. Powell was on friendly terms with Sally because he had

raised Naomi until she was eight years old and he had paid her expenses to visit her mother in Chicago on occasion. If Sally campaigned against Brinkley in Kansas in 1932, no newspaper mentioned it.⁵¹

The opposition did use Sally in the *Pink Rag*, political organ of the Republicans that, like *Publicity*—Brinkley’s newspaper published by Elmer J. Garner, who was funded to support the doctor throughout the decade—produced a barrage of “news” against the opposition for its supporters. With its motto of “a newspaper that tries to give the Devil his due,” the *Pink Rag* achieved its aims through vilification and innuendo. In stories published before the November election, the paper charged that Brinkley had deserted Sally and his three daughters frequently and had failed to support them financially. Brinkley, on the other hand, insisted that he had not neglected his family, especially recently. During his license fights he had sent them on a tour of Europe in the summer of 1930 to get them out of the country. In the summer of 1933, the Brinkleys would take the three on a yacht trip. It was good politics, of course, to be a supportive father while campaigning for political office.

John’s astrologist noted that, in regard to whatever Sally wrote about him, “let us hope that for some reason there will be as much delay as possible [in the publication] . . . for after November, Saturn will not be as unfriendly to your Mercury for another seven years.” If he would send Sally’s date of birth the astrologer could determine how her stars could affect John in a public or professional way.⁵²

Brinkley kept his Pinkertons busy during his campaign. Through their work as well as the efforts of his thousands of other contacts, the doctor boasted that “there is very little that takes place in the state that I do not hear of.” He heard substantial rumors of threats on his life and feared the threat of assassination—and the possibility of becoming a literal martyr—during appearances before his huge crowds. He wrote his campaign manager, Ernest A. Dewey, that he wanted “a bullet proof vest that goes down below the waist line and protects both front, back, and sides and fits up around the neck because I am not going to be any too safe along in October and November of this year facing these crazy mobs. . . . This must be kept an absolute secret. . . . Should it become known that I am wearing one, the fellow would aim his bullet toward the head or some unprotected spot.” Dewey purchased one from a detective agency for \$75 and assured the candidate that the vest was “exactly like the one worn by Al Capone,” and therefore was the best type available.⁵³

The Brinkley campaign of 1932 was more sophisticated than

the jerry-built one of late 1930. He again used his radio station and plane extensively, but his campaign against Woodring and Landon was more organized. In 1930 he had experimented with his Public Forum, a program where citizens could mail him their concerns or questions about civic life, and he would read and answer their queries on the radio. He continued and expanded this innovation in the new campaign. He was driven to his rallies in his golden brown Cadillac with his monogram on the doors and joined his entourage on Ammunition Train No. 1. This was a garishly painted Chevrolet truck with sides that let down like the tailgate of a medicine show wagon, making a stage for performers. It was equipped with amplifiers and had a "five mile horn" four feet in diameter mounted on the top that was sounded as they approached a town. Rural people had never before enjoyed spectacles such as this, except for ancient medicine shows. His rallies, where audiences could see live performances of their favorite radio stars, proved to be exciting experiences—especially during the Depression when people craved cheap entertainment. The Singing Cowboy loosened up the crowd for him. Roy Faulkner noted that "The Strawberry Roan" was still a favorite in 1932. John would then mount the stage, take over the microphone, and deliver his stirring message. Then he would leave for his limousine "like a wraith, without handshaking, without contact with the common people, a man of mystery! That is his method. Apart, heard by the multitude but seen by few, he has built up his legend."⁵⁴

H.G. Hotchkiss again advised Brinkley. He cleverly planned an informal grassroots campaign strategy that would best suit his candidate. Hotchkiss directed Brinkley to avoid personal attacks on anyone, but rather to employ "fun poking" and satire directed at his opponents.

Our policy as to Woodring was to have him appear with good intentions—good character, but weak[,] never bad.

No personal attacks[.]

. . . We did not bear down on him [Landon] much. For we wanted him elected in case Doc lost, and I never did believe he would win under conditions then prevalent, and told him so.

. . . The addresses were not to be prepared by master minds, they were just informal visits. Telling stories. Having fun. Never bringing up condemnations of anyone.⁵⁵

In mid-September, the Reverend Gerald B. Winrod, the Wichita clergyman with Fascist tendencies, openly endorsed Brinkley. He



Brinkley's campaign truck, Ammunition Train No. 1. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

declared that he and his followers kept their “fingers on the Kansas pulse” and believed he would win. Winrod sent him his “spiritual blessing” because of his “stand for the highest religious and moral interests.” The two major parties had experienced the Brinkley phenomenon in 1930, and with Brinkley’s securing this and other endorsements—such as that of former Democratic governor Jonathan Davis—they were frightened, so much so that at this time reports circulated that they were laying plans to impeach him once he took office.⁵⁶

Brinkley’s campaign slogan continued to be “Clean Up, Clean Out, Keep Kansas Clean,” and he again promised free textbooks, a lake in every county, and the paving of hundreds of miles of roads—all of which he claimed he would do without raising taxes. This time he also promised reforestation. He told one group of citizens that “winds, insects, and county engineers” were the worst enemies of Kansas trees. Both Woodring and Landon favored a graduated income tax. Brinkley opposed this and supported a flat income tax instead. His opponents made much of this as his flat tax would not greatly affect the Milford doctor’s income. Of course it would not concern him at all if he lived in Texas as he was planning. Brinkley also recommended a minimum cost of \$3 for car license plates, with

profits going to build roads. The current tax was \$8 and was earmarked for highways, but he believed the amount was too high for poor people. In addition, he thought these rates should be graduated. "A man like me can afford a \$6,000 automobile," he told an audience. "I should pay \$73." Drivers like him should "help the poor devils out who are too poor to pay high prices for tags." He noted that the citizens had bought their governor a twelve-cylinder Cadillac. Brinkley said he had purchased his own limousine, and he reminded followers that "I will be driving the same car out of here tonight that I will drive when you send me to Topeka." Woodring wanted a minimum tag price of \$6, but Landon recommended only sixty cents. When a Republican congressman reminded Landon that this amount would not cover the costs of distribution, Landon responded that it "will get votes, won't it? Getting votes is what I am interested in right now."⁵⁷

The Democratic platform promised better regulation of utilities, lower automobile license fees, improved workmen's compensation, unemployment relief, and increased taxation of banks. Woodring opposed free textbooks, saying it would be unfair for citizens of one county to purchase books for a millionaire's son in another county. Other than the latter, he and his party were obviously appropriating many Brinkley planks to appeal to the masses. The Democrat also incurred the wrath of public school teachers by supporting a tax limitation to freeze the 2 percent property tax amendment for school support. Woodring accused E.L. Pinet, president of the Kansas State Teachers Association (KSTA), of playing politics with his organization's funds. The allegation was true, as the KSTA bought several fifteen-minute time slots in October and early November for Brinkley to speak on KFBI. On the eve of the election, thousands of school children distributed doorknob pamphlets urging voters not to support either Woodring or the tax limitation amendment.⁵⁸

Woodring and Helvering received much political capital over the fact that their highway department had built hundreds of miles of "all-weather" roads. Ernest A. Dewey, Brinkley's campaign manager, implored Brinkley to make an issue of this. He emphasized that the Helvering roads were cheaply constructed with "a kind of oil or asphalt junk" a few inches thick that would last only two or three years. The voters were not being told that a majority of the hard-surface roads built by the present administration would have to be replaced "and the money already spent on it will be a total loss to the taxpayer." Dewey also reported that "a good deal of the reason for the installation of oiled roads has been some kind of graft connection where the oil and asphalt company 'got to' Helvering. These fellows, of course, will be for Woodring and Landon anyway."

Dewey agreed the reduced car license fee would lose a lot of revenue but this would be offset by the truck tax he had just discovered. He reminded John that the two had been wondering where the administration found “the money to hire all this extra help, buy these new automobiles, and otherwise throw the taxpayers’ money to the birds” and he had recently found the answer. Truckers paid one-tenth of a cent per ton mile in Kansas, and 80 percent of this money went into the highway fund. Dewey tried, unsuccessfully, to discover how much money was involved because the knowledge was not being made public. He said that the secretary of the Public Service Commission told him to go to hell when he attempted to find out, adding that he would not tell Dewey until that fall when it would be too late for the Brinkley campaign to use it.⁵⁹

After the election of 1930, William Allen White denigrated Brinkley supporters as “morons” and “riffraff,” and he classified Catholics in Olpe who voted for the doctor as intellectually comparable with members of the Ku Klux Klan. In late August, Brinkley invaded his enemy’s territory, speaking in Soden’s Grove in Emporia. “No such crowd has been known there except at a Fourth of July celebration,” the *New York Times* noted. Brinkley’s Methodist pastor, Samuel Cookson of Milford, said a prayer and led the singing. There was also band music, and suddenly a record blared the campaign song, “He’s the Man.” Maude Schreffler, a pianist for radio station KFBI, wrote this corny, catchy song, which Brinkley supporters loved. John reminded the audience that they had been referred to as morons and fools. While not mentioning White by name, it was not difficult to identify him when he said, “from time to time he has had great pleasure, I suppose, in taking the skin off me. At times he has taken off my hide and my shirt and my pants—and I have enjoyed it. He helped me get elected Governor two years ago, and he is doing all he can every day now to help me get elected again.” This was followed by “prodigious applause.” A man then stepped forward waving a newspaper that carried a White editorial. “Dr. Brinkley,” he announced, “if you will accept me as a patient, I want to give you \$750.” A testimonial like this was often used in Quaker medicine shows and, as usual, the crowd loved it. “If the *Star* and the *Gazette* keep lambasting him,” the *New York Times* chortled, “our medico is sure that he will get at least 500,000 votes in November, for the more he is ‘scortched,’ the ‘madder’ his friends get.”⁶⁰

White struck back in an editorial only he could write, entitled “Save Kansas.” This piece, again, was reminiscent of “What’s the Matter with Kansas” that harpooned the Populists forty years previously:

A demagog threatens this state who may easily wreck our institutions and break down thirty years of progressive legislation. . . . This man is capitalizing on the despair and heartbreak which we are all going through. Evidence seems to point to the fact that he may be financed by the great, sinister, greedy groups that seek to prey upon the people of Kansas.

. . . He would join the long list of demagogos who are rising all over America in this crisis and whose rise always precedes revolution; demagogos in New York, Pennsylvania, California, all over the nation capitalizing on the despair of the people.

Heretofore a Kansan has been able to walk the world with a high head. Are we going to bow our heads after the election; bow in shame that the intelligent, patriotic people of this State did not have the sense or the courage to avert this disgrace? Shall Kansans be greeted with a gibing ba-a-a, the cry of the billy goat, when they walk the streets of other States?

Save Kansas!⁶¹

Part of White's anger was stimulated by his old friend, Dan D. Casement of Manhattan, who urged the editor to attack Brinkley. Originally a rancher of the open range, then a breeder of quality Hereford cattle, Casement was a rugged individualist of the frontier school who was active in conservative Republican politics in Kansas. White wrote Casement that he hesitated to denounce Brinkley because of his close ties with Landon. If Landon did not begin to fight soon, though, White agreed with Casement, the doctor would defeat him. But if White attacked and Landon lost, the Emporia editor would receive the opprobrium. On September 28, White wrote Casement that he had finally "crossed the Rubicon" and enclosed his "Save Kansas" editorial. "I am not going to take my Brinkley lying down," he said, smugly. Following the election, White told his friend that he had sent his editorial to one hundred newspapers and each had printed it. In writing the piece, he claimed he "just went to it hog wild and plumb loco"—a method he thought was his "best technique." A few days later he assured his friend, "I had the same fun fighting Brinkley that I had fighting the Klan [in 1924] and it was the same outfit, the organized moron minority, plus the despairing and the disgruntled who knew better."⁶²

White had not yet finished with the Goat Gland Doctor. "Kansas is bleeding from every pore of the vocabulary," the *New York*

Times wrote. "Sharps rifles are discharging from the well-known Emporium of White and Son [William Allen and William Lindsey], unlimited, and Bibles are closed until after election." White wrote that every town was inundated with red and purple Brinkley posters. He estimated that this phase of Brinkley's campaign would cost \$100,000, while Brinkley's telephone bill for remote control would add an additional \$100,000 to his expenses. No other candidate had spent one-tenth of that amount. "Do they think that by making a few grass widows out of a few nannie goats this man can make all this money to spend as lavishly as it is going these days? If this could be done, every butcher's boy would be wearing diamonds." White darkly hinted that Brinkley's money was coming from Henry Doherty, president of Cities Service Oil Company. "Dangerous talk," the *New York Times* warned. "If old reliable Dr. Brinkley wins, won't every butcher's boy in Kansas be able to wear diamonds?" White, of course, had no idea that Brinkley's annual income was so fantastic.⁶³

John gleefully accepted the free publicity and sent White a billy goat by crate. The goat stayed in the *Gazette* offices through a hot summer day until the editor finally found a boy to take the smelly animal home as a pet.⁶⁴

Harry Woodring picked up on White's hint. He had earlier observed that "one of my opponents came to Kansas floating on oil and God knows where the other candidate, Brinkley, came from." This attack was made to order for John and he fired back that he was unaware "one must be born an aristocrat in order to be governor." He noted that his father was a poor mountain doctor and that he had been left an orphan, who had to overcome many obstacles and handicaps "to obtain a medical education and achieve whatever modest success I have achieved." Brinkley used the occasion to his benefit, proclaiming that he was "not ashamed" of his "humble origin."⁶⁵

As governor, Woodring encountered the wrath of Henry Doherty when the Kansas Utility Commission forced a reduction in natural gas rates, a blow to the Cities Service Company that supplied many large cities, especially in eastern Kansas. The *Kansas City Star* savagely attacked Doherty for keeping gas rates high, thus encouraging the commission's decision. (He later sued the newspaper, unsuccessfully, for \$12 million in damages.) Cities Service was fighting this cutback in the courts, and Woodring now claimed that Doherty was financing Brinkley's expensive campaign. John's attorney, "a man named Smith from Topeka," Woodring charged, had received \$1,100 in a manila envelope from a Cities Service man.

James Smith wrote a public letter noting that he was “the only Brinkley attorney named Smith from Topeka” but he had never received any such sum from Doherty or one of his agents. Brinkley responded with a challenge to the governor:

I request you to meet me in public debate and present your proof that Doherty is backing me financially in this campaign; also discuss the *Kansas City Star's* ownership of yourself and a few of the highway departments transactions and 5 percent war chest commissions from fathers of hungry and scantily clad children.

I will furnish the crowd guaranteeing you a big audience.⁶⁶

When Woodring continued to press this charge, Brinkley received a favorable headline in the *Kansas City Journal*: “Woodring Needs Complete Rest to Cool Fevered Dreams.” The governor had promised the people “he would explode a charge of dynamite and then he couldn’t even produce a fizzer firecracker,” John exulted. He made the most of the Woodring story, saying, “Governor Woodring is excited. He is having nightmares and seeing spooks around the tombstone of his political graveyard. As the physician in this case, I believe that the people of Kansas should give Woodring a complete rest.” Throughout the campaign, John kept his composure and sense of humor under fire. On another occasion, for instance, a heckler yelled “ba-a-a” at him several times. “Do that a little louder,” he finally challenged. “I may be able to use you,” which silenced the lout.⁶⁷

Brinkley chose a localized adaptation of the prodigal son parable as his Scripture for a speech in Woodring’s hometown. Brinkley told the crowd a tale of how the governor went to Topeka in January 1931 with high ideals but succumbed to the charm of the Devil who—with Guy Helvering and the *Kansas City Star*—took him up on a high hill and showed him ladies’ tating societies in Washington and promised him the vice presidency if he would worship them. Woodring was too weak to respond, “Get thee behind me, Satan,” and, after the election, Harry Woodring was coming home to stay. Naturally, the crowd of supporters loved Brinkley’s parable. The doctor would go on to carry the governor’s home county that November.⁶⁸

Farm depression was a crucial issue in the election and the correspondent for the *New York Times* suggested an explanation as to why the independents—Brinkley and Bert Comer, who was running for attorney general—did not fare better on this topic. They spoke to groups in southwest Kansas, enjoying a larger crowd in Dodge City than those of Woodring and Landon combined. John

addressed the issues of cheap wheat and farm mortgage foreclosures but failed to explain how he would change these conditions. He berated Hoover's Farm Board and agricultural boards of trade in general, but presented no viable alternatives. One authority believes that this failure indicated that the Milford doctor not only did not understand agricultural problems, "but also may not have wanted to win the election."⁶⁹

Another source noted this same lack of passionate interest in politics. Hoover was in great trouble with farmers, and this dissatisfaction extended to Vice President Curtis, who was on his ticket. The possibility of continuing to preside over the Senate did not enthrall Curtis and, knowing Hoover was not terribly fond of him, the five-decade political veteran began casting about for an office where there was action. Curtis sounded out Brinkley about his running for governor: "He [Brinkley] made it understood without quibbling that he had no great desire for political office for himself but would not reject an opportunity to name or control the State Board of Medical Examiners. But he wanted guarantees. The story was about that the Democrats and a few of the Republicans had made promises they were too willing to ignore; that the Doc had been ruthlessly double-crossed. So he wanted assurances—something in writing." Nothing came of this, of course, and Curtis returned to Washington, ran again on the Hoover ticket, lost, and had no choice but to retire from political life.⁷⁰

Marcet Haldeman-Julius had written an exposé the previous year in which she implicated the vice president in a bond scandal. The American Bond and Mortgage Company, she charged, was involved in a \$100 million swindle of hotel investors during the 1920s. Curtis paid \$5.31 a day for a \$150 suite of eleven rooms in the Mayflower Hotel, which the company owned, and she believed Curtis was inculcated in the decision of the Department of Justice to delay an investigation. She concluded that this impending national scandal prompted the vice president to consider rejecting the Hoover ticket and running, instead, for a state office in Kansas.⁷¹

Increasingly the Republican leadership and Landon began to comprehend Brinkley's potential strength. Numerous county chairmen informed him that the doctor was "the man to beat," an idea that many newspapers had been stressing for several weeks. They also reported that Brinkley supporters were using anti-Catholicism to excite the fundamentalists. The fear of a Brinkley victory did much to unite Republicans behind Landon; late in the campaign they stepped up their criticism of the independent candidate. Nine days before the election, the Republicans purchased a full-page adver-

tisement in several leading newspapers in hopes of swaying independent voters away from Brinkley. "LANDON OR BRINKLEY" shouted the headline, in large letters. No Democrat had ever been reelected governor of Kansas, the ad proclaimed, predicting the impending defeat of incumbent Woodring. It went on to suggest that Brinkley's election would mean choosing "a man utterly inexperienced in government. Until his dispute over his medical license and his radio license two years ago it is doubtful that he gave much attention to politics or government." The ad then extolled Landon's virtues. He was "not a dangerous man," and industry and labor would be cared for by him, as would property rights. "Hockum and bunk will have no place in the state house with Landon as governor."⁷²

Brinkley completed his campaign of visiting all 105 county seats by speaking in "Chief" Haucke's nearby hometown of Council Grove. Then he went home to vote and await the results. On election day, workers from both parties sent out fake election returns to stimulate a defeatist psychology among Brinkley supporters so that they would stay home. Again the Milford doctor finished third. By November 10, Landon obviously had the lead but Woodring refused to concede. Then on Armistice Day, Landon was declared the winner with 278,581 votes, Woodring received 272,944, and Brinkley 244,607—again another record voter turnout. The Republicans had returned to power. Brinkley's advisers had discerned his weak areas of 1930 and strengthened them in 1932, especially in the strong Republican region of the west and parts of the southeast. But this was to no avail.

Brinkley lost two western counties that he had won in 1930, but gained eleven that he had lost in the last election by three hundred votes or less. His support in 1932 looks much like that of Lorenzo D. Lewelling in 1892, though he did not carry as many western and east-central counties as did the Populist. Lewelling carried fifty-eight counties to win in 1892; Brinkley won only forty counties, but they occurred in the same general pattern. Of the eighteen-county differential between the Populist and Brinkley, the latter lost twelve of these by three hundred votes or less in 1932.

This is not to suggest that Brinkley was a Populist, unless one accepts Richard Hofstadter's interpretation of them as Fascists. The doctor was a rich man who sought more wealth. He was demagoging to appeal to the masses for support, as the Populists had appealed to them earlier. There was at least one generational difference in voters over the forty-year span, but there is an analogy in conditions. Brinkley's support by counties suggest great mass discontent similar to that during the days of Populism, and belies the impor-



PUZZLE: WHO'S THE GOAT?

This political cartoon poked fun at the Goat Gland Doctor's failed run at the governorship. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

tance of the impact of his radio addresses. Brinkley's Milford radio station was in east-central Kansas, yet in both 1930 and 1932 he was weak in this region—although he gained some strength there in the second campaign when he was officially on the ballot. In total, Brinkley carried forty counties in 1932, compared to twenty-eight in 1930. Brinkley had learned a lot in two years and ran an admirable race—good enough in fact that the Farmer-Labor Party seriously considered him as a potential presidential candidate in 1934.⁷³

Despite renting 1,200 billboards for sixty days, buying newspaper ads, and purchasing radio time on stations other than his XER in Mexico, Brinkley filed a campaign expense account of only \$216 for remote control line charges to his broadcasting station. Mollie Vosberg reported her Brinkley clubs spent \$55,928.57 on behalf of John and other independent candidates and that \$25,210.16 of this amount was donated by Minnie Brinkley. Other sizeable donations included \$2,000 from H.D. Osborn and \$5,678.35 from Ernest A. Dewey. All of this creative bookkeeping threw Kansas politicians "into a furor."⁷⁴

John Brinkley had a great impact on Kansas and national politics. His extensive use of the radio, particularly during his Public Forum feature, his reliance on an airplane for campaign travel, and his inimitable showmanship through ballyhoo rallies revolutionized campaigning in the Sunflower State and the nation. His race in 1930 gave the election to Woodring, thereby allowing the Democrat and his campaign manager, Guy Helvering, to step onto the national stage by supporting Franklin D. Roosevelt early in the 1932 campaign. They then received appointments in the New Deal administration, as undersecretary and later secretary of war and as commissioner of internal revenue, respectively. Woodring and Helvering were richly rewarded for the extraordinary assistance they gave the Democratic candidate in 1932, a commitment far greater than the one they made to Democrats in Kansas that year, many members of the party charged. Brinkley also brought Landon to public office in Kansas earlier than the political process normally would have permitted, readying him for the national spotlight when he became the Republican presidential candidate in 1936. If Haucke had won in 1930, without Brinkley's splitting the vote, a reunited party would surely have seen him reelected in 1932, and 1934 would have been the earliest Landon could have run. In the great Democratic national landslide of 1932, Alf Landon was one of only five Republicans to be elected governor and the only Republican west of the Mississippi River to win his race. In 1934 he was the only Republican governor in the nation to be reelected, thus placing him in

the national spotlight. In 1936 he became his party's standard-bearer against "the Champ."

Bert Comer, who ran with Brinkley on the independent ticket, had some sharp criticisms for John following the election. Comer thought Brinkley had allowed his "brilliant judgment to be swayed, warped, and misdirected by a bunch of blundering moochers, who are capable of doing everything but 'thinking.'" Taking their advice, for example, Brinkley had spent \$13,000 on billboards, which Comer deemed useless because his name was already commonly known throughout the state. This mistake permitted politicians to start shouting "who is PAYING for all of these billboards?" Yet Brinkley refused to spend "a few hundred dollars" to investigate and prosecute those who had "violated the corrupt practices act and the election laws." Comer could not comprehend why he would "throw away thousands to do you harm, and then pinch dollars when it comes to something important." In addition, Comer had worked out a campaign finance report for him that he said "fully complied with the law" and "could have withstood investigation." Instead, "the slimy whisper of the boot licker again caught your ear and a report was filed that set the seat of your pants firmly in a nice tight crack." He hoped for Brinkley's sake the attorney general did not decide "to make an investigation of the various contributions enumerated in that report." This insider analysis of campaign funding highlights internally what Republicans were muttering about publicly. Comer concluded Brinkley now had two choices: "either make the best terms you can with the politicians and the M.D.s, and settle down and be a nice boy—or else keep fighting them *effectively*." Comer was certain that work was underway to ban Brinkley from the air entirely. He had some ideas he thought Brinkley should consider, but decided there was no use and refused to submit them.⁷⁵

Kansas politicians heaved a collective sigh of relief when John Brinkley moved his family and business operations to Del Rio in November 1933. On May 29, 1934, Landon announced his candidacy for governor in the Republican primary. A few days later, Brinkley foolishly declared he would run against him. H.G. Hotchkiss traveled to Del Rio, and he and Minnie tried, unsuccessfully, to dissuade him from entering the race. Hotchkiss believed John ran in 1934, not with any expectation of winning, but in order to help political ally Bert Comer's renewed campaign for attorney general. John insisted that although he was temporarily living in Texas, Milford was his permanent address. James W. Denford, a Salina Democrat, and Dan Casement immediately filed protests with the state election board on the grounds that Brinkley was not a Republican, that

he was not a Kansas citizen, and that he did not pay any state taxes. Bert Comer, running for attorney general as a Republican in 1934, represented John as his attorney. The board ruled against the charges, however, as the Republicans finally discovered they really did not want to make a martyr out of Brinkley again. It had been a hard lesson.⁷⁶

In 1934 Landon had to face the political backlash of the Finney bond scandal, especially when it later came to light that Ronald Finney had given Mrs. Landon a check for \$10,046.67. This was a legitimate return of capital and interest Mrs. Landon had made in one of his business enterprises, based on her banker's recommendation, but it was an embarrassment fraught with political potential. The *New York Times* reported that "sachems of both parties shudder when they think what he [Brinkley] might do if he jumped into the 1934 campaign as enthusiastically as he did that of 1932." Brinkley gave a radio speech in Wichita, promising he would present facts for his charge that Ronald Finney, who had managed to forge school and municipal bonds and obtain state cash for them, had delivered \$10,000 to his buddy Landon for political protection just before the scandal broke. The next evening, when John arrived to deliver another broadcast, the station manager censored two pages that dealt with the alleged check. When Brinkley's associates protested, the manager wailed: "Listen! Today a couple of tough looking guys came down here from Topeka and said, if I let one word be said about Landon and the Finney \$10,000 check, they would sue me for libel and have my broadcasting license revoked. Boys, all the money I have in the world is tied up in this station, and I just can't afford to have any trouble with Governor Landon and his men. For God's sake, boys, help me out and don't get that bunch on my neck."⁷⁷

Brinkley's efforts in 1934 were limited to an intensive radio campaign the week before the primary. Landon, for his part, ignored Brinkley, and there was little invective thrown about. Landon received 233,956 votes to John's 58,983, a humiliating defeat for the doctor, especially considering how well John had run in the two previous races. The Fox had gained complete control over an almost entirely unified party during his two years as governor. Brinkley even lost his strongholds—Wichita and Sedgwick County—convincingly. He might have made an interesting race for the governorship again as an independent, but had no luck challenging Landon in the primary while the Republican had control of a solidified party. In any case, he would have been much less successful than he had been in the economically devastated years of 1930 and 1932. By 1934, New Deal programs had begun to alleviate economic condi-

tions in Kansas with assistance to businesses, farmers, and the unemployed. Citizens no longer seemed so desperate over their leadership and, in turn, were less susceptible to Brinkley's unique appeal. Thus ended John R. Brinkley's brief but exhilarating political gambit. Brinkleyism had provided hope for the leaderless and poverty-stricken in Kansas and was as much a social as a political movement. Unfortunately for his followers, Brinkley enjoyed the tremendous publicity he received on the campaign trail but seemed indifferent to the political potential it could bring and did not pursue the office as ardently as his admirers expected or as a professional politician would have done.

Chapter 6

Hands Across the Border

When Alexander MacDonald, the *Star* reporter, asked Brinkley in the spring of 1930 what he would do if Kansas revoked his medical license, John responded that there were several qualified doctors and nurses to carry on his work in Milford. The Brinkley Hospital remained open, he administered it in between trips to Texas, and it continued to be busy and to bring in considerable revenue. There were occasional rifts, however, between the doctor and some of his staff.

O.M. Owensby, M.D., who graduated from Ensworth Central Medical College of St. Joseph, Missouri, joined the Brinkley organization in 1930 as chief surgeon but became disgruntled and moved to Rosalia—another small town in Kansas some fifty miles east of Wichita—to open up his own practice a year later. John had become increasingly concerned about Owensby because some of the staff told him that during the boss's absences from Milford the doctor accepted incurable patients, especially those with cancer, which was contrary to Brinkley policy. It was also disconcerting when patients wrote that Owensby used serums and medicines that John had not approved. When Minnie and some former patients tried to confront Owensby with these issues, he “slipped out of the hospital never to return.”¹

John was especially adamant about how his organization handled cancer patients. He examined Dr. F.M. Crume at this time and recommended that he see Dr. L.L. Marshall at the Research Hospital in Little Rock, a longtime medical friend. Crume later wrote John how pleased he was with Marshall's treatment and stated, “I believe I am a well man.” After forty years of practicing medicine, Marshall was convinced that “the knife, x-ray and radium will not

cure any cancer." Marshall claimed his process, which lasted about three months, did not include "pain or sickness" and was able to "cure" people if they received it before the cancer had metastasized too much. Brinkley was consistent, though, on which patients to refer for treatment and never accepted one himself or for his staff.²

Owensby, in turn, complained of John's prolonged absences and of his "dishonest activities," without specifying them. In addition, the Owensbys, members of the Christian Church (Campbellites), were upset by Brinkley's demands that they and all his employees attend the Milford Methodist Church. When he moved to Rosalia, Owensby was joined by Dr. Clive Herndon Dragoo, M.D., who had graduated from the University Medical College of Kansas City, and Lyman Denver, Brinkley's office manager.

Owensby and Dragoo quickly succeeded in Rosalia because they advertised the Brinkley operation for a cut-rate, \$600 fee. Their forty-five-bed sanitarium was often filled, and citizens of the Depression-ridden town were delighted with the economic upturn the new doctors brought.

Brinkley, however, was incensed over the betrayal and charged, correctly, that the two renegade doctors were exploiting his list of names and addresses to solicit patients. In October 1933, he opened a rival sanitarium on the second floor of the drugstore across the street from the Owensby hospital, advertising the "new and improved Brinkley Compound Operation" for \$200. This procedure involved his new "secret serum" treatment, which he would use henceforth in place of his goat gland operation. He hired V.H. Devine, a former Owensby associate, as his physician and surgeon. Rosalia residents, however, did not welcome John's new hospital as enthusiastically as they had Owensby and Dragoo's practice. Citing the fact that Brinkley never visited Rosalia, residents believed his hospital emanated solely out of his vengeful attempt to ruin his former employees' business. Many Rosalians also did not care to listen to the new Brinkley radio station broadcasting from Mexico, but they had little choice as a public address system "blared [it] all over town."³

This phase of Brinkley's career soon ceased. He ended the Rosalia operation after four months and moved the equipment to Del Rio, where he was concentrating his new medical practice. Two months after Brinkley relinquished this venture, the Milford Chamber of Commerce wrote to Owensby asking him to return and open a new sanitarium there. Owensby did so in February 1934, leaving Dragoo to continue operating the Rosalia office. In mid-April, fires destroyed the Brinkley hospital in Rosalia and damaged Owensby's building. Rumors were rife that both doctors had set the blazes, but

there was no motive for this because both had abandoned Rosalia by that time. The gossip was likely initiated by disgruntled Rosalians.⁴

During this period—immediately after forfeiture of his licenses in Kansas and the end of his political activities in that state—Brinkley was most concerned over the loss of his radio station. It had been his greatest vehicle for attracting patients, and in his type of practice he had to have a continuous flow of elderly gentlemen in order to prosper. It was vital to his future that he get back on the airwaves in some manner. Besides, he felt vulnerable without the powerful weapon he had come to depend upon to reach his vast audience, and he missed the thrill of power involved in broadcasting. He considered several alternatives. One was to purchase a yacht, the first *Doctor Brinkley*, and broadcast in the ocean outside the twelve-mile limit in international waters, which he publicly announced he would do. But the success of a pioneer radio station in Mexico, later called a “borderblaster,” caught his attention. This option offered considerable possibilities, even more than his Milford station or the high seas venture. Bert Comer wrote that such a station “could, so to speak, be made a veritable gold mine—not only from the point of business and profit, but also from the angle of wielding political power.” As John Brinkley perceptively noted, “radio waves pay no attention to lines on a map.” He realized he could reach his listeners from Mexico just as well as he could in the United States. As it turned out, Mexico proved to be a preferable place from which to broadcast because of its fewer regulations and higher permissible power.⁵

In October 1924, the United States and Canada had arbitrarily agreed to divide up the clear channel frequencies in North America, with the United States (population 130 million) appropriating twenty-five radio frequencies, and Canada (population 10 million) using seven. This left Mexico (population fifteen million) with only five. Needless to say, Mexico was quite displeased with this Gringo arithmetic. As a result, the country was willing to be generous with those wanting to broadcast along its northern border and was lax in its regulations of the few ether waves it controlled.

Two Texans, with the aid of some Mexican citizens who were stockholders, financed the International Broadcasting Company to build a 5,000-watt station in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, across the Rio Grande from McAllen, Texas. The station, with XED as its call letters, operated on 965 kilocycles, halfway between the Canadian clear channel 960 and channel 970 used by Seattle’s KJR and WCLF in Chicago. W.E. “Bill” Branch, a Fort Worth radio engineer, received the contract to build the transmitter. The pioneer station began broadcasting on November 9, 1930, with a regular schedule from

6:00 P.M. to midnight. It had no difficulty attracting sponsors wanting to buy advertising for that time of night. The Mexican part of the programming originated in the station while the English music and programs came from McAllen by telephone.⁶

John Brinkley discovered this unique experiment, immediately perceived its vast potential—especially as a solution to his current broadcasting problems—and in January 1931 announced his intention of building a similar station in northern Mexico. Following the court of appeals decision sustaining the FRC revocation of his license for KFKB that month, John gave his farewell radio address on February 2, 1931. He used the occasion to announce that he had officially received permission from the Mexican government to build and operate a station for a twenty-year period with a maximum of 75,000 watts on 635 kilocycles. He had met with General Juan Alamazan, who administered the republic's radio, telegraph, and telephone franchises, and received his approval to build a high-powered station anywhere he chose in northern Mexico. When his pet project, Brinkley City in the Quemado Valley, failed to materialize, he began to consider other possible locations. The Brinkleys took a three-week trip by airplane to visit Reynosa, Mexico City, Monterrey, and Nuevo Laredo to evaluate feasible sites. Immediately after John announced his intention of building, J. Reuben Clark, the American ambassador to Mexico, called on the Mexican foreign secretary to warn him of the dangerous American, but the Mexicans proved indifferent to the problems of the American Medical Association; in fact, they were happy to accommodate the doctor if it would produce some revenue for them and irritate American radio broadcasters.⁷

A.C. Easterling, head of the chamber of commerce in Del Rio, Texas, a town with a population of twelve thousand, learned of Brinkley's desire to locate in northern Mexico or southern Texas. His area was known as "The Wool and Mohair Capital of the World" and was situated across the Rio Grande from Villa Acuna. The Depression hit this area very hard—causing, among other things, one of the Del Rio banks to fail—and Easterling envisioned the Brinkley enterprise bringing great opportunities to relieve the depressed conditions of his town. He extended an invitation to visit and John, remembering Del Rio from World War I days, immediately responded by asking if there was a place to land his plane. Easterling replied that they had "a splendid flying field," whose location was marked by an arrow painted atop the six-story Roswell Hotel, the tallest building in the area. He assured the doctor that the city would support him fully, the chamber of commerce would cut all red tape that

arose, and the president of Villa Acuna would grant ten acres of land for construction of the station on the Mexican side of the river. After enjoying the gracious hospitality of the Del Rio and Villa Acuna businessmen, Brinkley announced that he would locate in "The Queen City of the Rio," as local citizens enjoyed calling their town.⁸

Brinkley contracted the Salina firm of Bushbam and Rauh and their architect, Charles W. Shaver, to build the \$30,000 station and hired Bill Branch to construct the \$175,000 transmitter. In addition, he had his own electrical engineer from KFKB days, James F. "Jim" Weldon, to supervise operations and keep him posted on developments. Weldon, whom contemporaries called "a brilliant electrical engineer," moved to Del Rio, opened a radio transmission equipment business, and also served as a trusted consultant to XER, Brinkley's station. Brinkley paid Weldon \$400 per month for his services—a goodly sum during the Great Depression—but he believed, correctly, that he was getting his money's worth.⁹

During construction of his station and continuing afterward, Brinkley experienced the same difficulties with Mexican authorities that were to plague his fellow borderblasters for a half-century. "Some Mexican officials supported the activities of the renegade radiomen, while others worked to end them," and officials from different bureaus often took contradictory actions against the stations. As his broadcasting engineer noted in a memo, XER had numerous enemies in Mexico, and "time and practise [sic] have shown us how abundant they are among the Government officials." To complicate matters, Brinkley had the hostile actions of his own government with which to contend.¹⁰

As soon as the trio of three hundred-foot towers began to rise in Villa Acuna, the American Medical Association prompted the Department of State to take action. Memos began flying between Washington, D.C., and the American embassy in Mexico City. Construction of Brinkley's station began in the summer of 1931, and Harold Wood, vice consul to the American embassy, reported to the Department of State on August 21, 1931: "What is said will be the world's largest radio broadcasting station is being erected at Villa Acuna, Coahuila, Mexico, on the Rio Grande, opposite Del Rio, Texas. The station is being constructed by the Compania Radio-Difusora, S.A. (Radio Broadcasting Company, Inc.). . . . It is said that the approximate cost will be about \$125,000 in U.S. Currency." Bushbaum and Rauh, the firm that constructed several of his buildings in Milford, had enough faith in the doctor's future to build on credit, as did Bill Branch of Fort Worth, who constructed the transmitter. Officially, XER had the 635 kilocycle band, but unofficially it broadcast on

735 kilocycles, midway between the Canadian clear channel of 730 and WSB in Atlanta and KMMJ in Clay Center, Nebraska, at 740. WGN in Chicago also broadcast in this range and periodically suffered heavy interference from the Mexican interloper.¹¹

Brinkley was determined to build the best. Branch and Weldon constructed three longwire directional antennas, which were situated in a triangular arrangement. Behind the front antenna was a flattop antenna turned as a reflector. According to Weldon, this "passive reflector gave roughly a cardioid pattern to the north," thereby throwing almost all of the broadcasting power northward and little into Mexico. Brinkley also installed the latest transmitting tubes, at a cost of \$36,000. To pay for these, Brinkley reportedly pulled out a wad of \$1,000 bills and peeled off thirty-six for the startled salesman.¹²

The station in Villa Acuna was stuccoed and had standard, thirty-gauge copper roofing. According to Weldon, Brinkley wanted "a simple strong building with a fairly neat appearance" rather than "a low rambling Spanish type." He also informed the Kansas firm that a copper screen had to be placed in the walls to enhance broadcasting. Because the screens could not be plastered over, they had to be inserted between the bricks of the walls as the building was being constructed.¹³

The American Department of State continued to apply pressure on the Mexican government during construction. As a result, the Mexican Department of Health published a story describing the revocation of Brinkley's licenses and forbade him to practice medicine in Mexico. On another occasion, a work stoppage occurred on the building site. Brinkley went directly to Vice President Charles Curtis, who owed him political favors for using his station for political broadcasting. Brinkley complained that the American ambassador to Mexico, Reuben Clark, was playing an active role in the delay. Curtis intervened and resolved the problem. The Mexican Department of Commerce, a gringo supporter, overcame another concern when it ruled that XER was owned by a group composed entirely of Mexican citizens and its erection and operation was in compliance with Mexican law.¹⁴

XER was completed and began broadcasting on October 21, 1931. While Del Rioans celebrated, as did citizens in Villa Acuna, Brinkley held no secrets about where his allegiances lay. He opened his first broadcast with "Greetings to my friends in Kansas and elsewhere. This is Dr. Brinkley talking from the 'Sunshine Station Between the Nations.'"¹⁵

The Del Rio Chamber of Commerce threw a week-long gala in

John Brinkley's honor. On his way to join the festivities, his airplane developed trouble, and he had to spend the night in Ranger, Texas. He telegraphed his thanks to the 150 people in attendance. Minnie, able to be present, gave a speech praising the hospitality of Del Rio, and her sister, Lillian Munal, presented a sample of classical ballet. Miss Rose (Rosa, Rosita) Dominguez, the famous Mexican soprano, sang, followed by dancing at the San Filipe Country Club. H.L. "Bert" Munal, Lillian's husband, was named managing director of XER and became known as "Bert the Sunshine Man." Isaias Gallo was named engineer, with Jim Weldon always present to supervise in case anything went awry.

Officials in Villa Acuna issued John R. Brinkley a visa on May 16, 1931. On September 2, 1931, the Mexican newspaper *El Nacional* carried an Associated Press dispatch that the Department of Health advised the Mexican public about the revocation of John's Kansas medical license (though he still had a Texas medical license) and radio permit revocations and asked the ministerio de gubernacion to prohibit his entry into Mexico. Brinkley had already contacted Vice President Charles Curtis about the matter and, that same day, the Department of State wired the American embassy that Curtis had been informed that it "had taken no action whatever in connection with Dr. Brinkley's medical license." Brinkley telegraphed Curtis: "You must be misinformed because Ambassador Clark asked the Mexican Government not to issue me a permit to practice in Mexico. . . . I have had [a] press association interview him and he refuses to make a statement. If he had not made the request which the Mexican government said that he did then he should deny it. Furthermore the Mexican government said the complaint against me was transmitted by Ambassador Tellez at the request of the American Medical Association and that Ambassador Clark supplemented this by his own request based on information he received from Washington."¹⁶

Meanwhile, a remote studio was established temporarily in the Roswell Hotel and, by telephone hookup, Brinkley continued to deliver his messages to his eager North American listeners. Early in 1932, a poll reported that people in every state of the union were enjoying XER, as well as those in fifteen other countries. John and his vast audience were thrilled that he was back on the air on a regular basis.¹⁷

When John leased the telephone line from the hotel to the station across the river, he believed he was within legal limits of both countries' regulations because he was broadcasting from Mexico, where the signal originated, but did not cross into Mexico, where he

had been prohibited to practice medicine. He was correct; at the time, no American regulations prohibited his action. However, two months after XER began broadcasting, the Federal Radio Commission learned of his remote system and drafted legislation to amend the Radio Act of 1927 so that: "No person, firm, company, or corporation, owning or operating a radio broadcast station, the transmitter and radiating antenna of which are located in any foreign country, shall be permitted to transfer by wire any program originating in the United States intended to be transmitted by radio broadcast stations in any foreign country without first obtaining permission from the licensing authority upon proper application thereof." A Department of State memorandum noted that this would "effectively throttle Dr. Brinkley and Co." The FRC found a senator willing to introduce this legislation in the next session of Congress and hearings were held, but nothing resulted from the effort. The borderblaster problem was too complicated to be resolved this readily.¹⁸

Brinkley experienced other difficulties with his Mexican activities. He originally leased a telephone line and broadcast from Milford for some time, but he ultimately decided that the \$100,000 annual price tag for this arrangement was too steep. His continued broadcasts out of Kansas required his spending much time flying between Del Rio and Milford, urging his prospective patients to come to his hospital, and supervising the medical activities there. In addition, there were his political endeavors in Kansas, until he lost the gubernatorial race in 1932. When he was not in Del Rio, he had his announcer read his recorded medical talks over XER, usually thusly:

XER announcer: This is XER, the Sunshine Station Between the Nations, at Villa Acuna, in Coahuila, Republic of Mexico. We have just heard the beautiful music of "Little Star," sung by Mexico's Nightingale, Miss Rosa Dominguez, accompanied by our Classic Quintette. . . Theme Song of Dr. John R. Brinkley of Milford, Kansas, helper of mankind, who addresses you at this time each day from the Hudson Gardens—another garden, a man and wife distributing fruits from the tree of life.

Then the announcer read his message.¹⁹

In addition to income from the Brinkley Clinic, XER had accounts with the Willard Tablet Company, the International Oil Heating Company, Supertone Radio, and Old Equity Insurance, which sold individuals life insurance policies for a penny a day. But much

of XER's income came from the advertisements of fortune tellers such as those known as Mel Roy, Doctor Richards, and Koran. In addition, for \$1, advertiser Major Kord (whose real name was Don Baxter) would send listeners instructions on learning to play the piano overnight. The Brinkley station sold products ranging from tomato plants and autographed pictures of Jesus to the Last Supper tablecloths and a John the Baptist doll that, when wound up, would walk around until its head fell off. One could buy stock in a gold mine or oil leases, Carters Champion Chicks, an additive to increase gas mileage, electric bow ties, or a cure for ruptures.

The targeted audience of the advertisers was Americans who enjoyed country music. During the 1930s, the music of A.P. Carter and his wife Mother Maybell, and later their daughters, came nightly to American villages and farms. The Carters urged their listeners to "Keep on the sunny side, Always on the sunny side, Keep on the sunny side of life." Roy Faulkner made the move from KFKB to XER and other famous stars, such as Leonard Slye, better known as Roy Rogers; Gene Autry; Red Foley; Eddie Arnold; Hank Williams; Tennessee Ernie Ford; the Red Peppers; Sons of the Pioneers; and Little Jimmy Dickens, graced the XER airwaves—or saturated them, according to some. They loved performing in Villa Acuna where they did not have to pay royalties to the American Association of Composers, Authors, and Publishers as they did in America. In many ways, Brinkley's stations had a great impact on the development of country music in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁰

Border performers were rated by how much mail they could "pull." Rose Dawn, Brinkley's personal astrologer, became "one of the most successful mail pullers in border radio history." Rose would read listeners' horoscopes, pray for a radio fan, or give lovelorn advice for \$1 per service—with no discounted rates for a combination thereof. Rose also offered a book that would make a personality "blossom like a flower" or vials of perfume that would affect one's own and other people's behavior in an extraordinary manner, for \$1 each. Some wags began referring to the town as Dollar Rio. Rose was married to Koran, a missionary for an occult society called the Mayan Order, and the couple was "an ethereal sight on the streets of Del Rio as they glided past gawking onlookers in their pink Chrysler trimmed in green with orchid wheels."²¹

Minnie Brinkley discovered a lucrative sideline to exploit over the airwaves and in the hospital. While on a family yachting trip, she sold some mining stock—for which she had paid \$1.50 per share—to some Canadians for \$2 per share. William Holifield wrote her husband about the transaction and suggested she might want

to handle more of his Consolidated Virginia and Andes Mines stock. "I am sure," he noted, "that many of your patients visiting the hospital would like to buy shares . . . if Mrs. Brinkley would speak to them about it." He added that, "with all the patients that visit the hospital," he thought she "might find this will be a considerable source of income to her."²²

XER had not been on the air very long when *El Nacional* carried a news story that Mexican radio fans in Coahuila had petitioned their governor, Naario Ortiz Garza, to take action against the station. They complained that the owners were American, the employees, including the announcer, were Americans, and—worst of all—English was the only language used; only rarely was Spanish spoken for a brief station announcement. The "protesting patriots" disliked this "propaganda of Yankee imperialism" and wanted it stopped. Undaunted, XER continued its practices and nothing came of the protest, at that time. The *New York Times* noted that the Mexican Department of Communications had "ruled some time ago" that XER belonged to a group of Mexicans "and its erection was strictly in compliance with the law," even though Brinkley controlled it.²³

Brinkley received welcome news in the midst of the campaign of 1932. On August 8, the Mexican government increased the permissible power of XER to 500,000 watts. If used fully, this new level would make XER the most powerful radio station in the world, with ten times the maximum wattage the United States allowed any of its stations. The *Chicago Tribune* did not print the story until October 7. A Department of State protest, the newspaper declared, led to a report that Brinkley had sold his station to a Mexican corporation, but "it is generally believed" that he "still exercises full control." The new grant of power would cost Brinkley \$15 per day, as opposed to the original tax of \$5 daily.²⁴

At this time, Brinkley decided to implement his earlier plan of renting a telephone line from Milford to Villa Acuna. Though expensive, this permitted him to supervise the hospital more closely, run his political campaign more effectively, and also broadcast his messages to his heart's content. In the spring of 1933, the Brinkleys took a vacation that lasted through June. When they returned, John suffered a heat stroke from the oppressive Kansas summer weather. This unfortunate episode persuaded them to go to Chicago and buy a yacht, which they named *Dr. Brinkley*, to take a summer excursion on the Great Lakes.

His hectic schedule began to take a toll. Soon after the election of 1932, John wrote Minnie a note to include with his Christmas gift to her. He wished he could "discontinue every business project" in

which he was involved and “start life all over again on a different pathway.” That could not be, however, as he had “so many obligations to meet, so many ways that it seems almost a hopeless thought.” He lamented that there was “so much expected of me from so many people.”²⁵

There were the people involved with XER, for instance, and the station seemed to face continuous threats, which John had to counter. In November 1932, Jim Weldon reported to him on the international radio conference being held in Madrid. Isaias Gallo had received news from a friend who was attending the meeting. There was “absolutely no spirit of conciliation between the delegates from the various countries,” he reported. The American representatives “had only one end view” and that was to dominate the proceedings. They had won the support of Great Britain and persuaded the British to propose that the convention declare, on record, that current international radio service was in an intolerable condition. The power of stations should be limited, they suggested, so as not to cross international boundaries. At the least, certain maximums on the power and location of stations should be set. This, of course, was “aimed directly at XER and other border stations which may develop.” All countries but Mexico accepted this suggestion, Weldon reported, but—fortunately for the borderblasters—the Latino cooperation was vital for such regulations to succeed.²⁶

Before the Madrid meeting, the National Association of Broadcasters as well as influential individual station owners asked the Department of State to attack “the Brinkley problem” at the conference. The announced increase in his wattage from 75,000 to 500,000 watts frightened them, and they wanted at the very least to maintain the status quo, bad as it was. But on December 21, 1932, the Mexican newspaper *El Universal* reported that the government refused to sign the Madrid accord because “certain countries interested in securing advantages among themselves” had pressed for the proposals. The United States aspired to hegemony, or “imperialism of the air,” the story noted.²⁷

When officials in the United States and Canada learned of the increase in XER’s power, it caused them alarm, Weldon noted, and they determined to prevent it. The two nations also wanted to stop Mexican stations from broadcasting in English, he warned. He called attention to an upcoming conference of North American countries on radio controls. Isaias Gallo observed that Mexico wanted to become involved in the conference because participants were going to consider “wave allocations,” and there would be pressure on Mexico to accept any adopted changes. Officials hoped the division of clear

channel frequencies would be altered in their favor. Gallo and his friends therefore recommended postponing increasing the wattage until after the forthcoming meeting, to which John acceded.²⁸

The North American conference was held in the summer of 1933 in Mexico City. According to one source, the officials of the American Medical Association and the National Association of Broadcasters “lurked in the shadows” of the American delegates. Brinkley, too, was well represented at the meeting with “sixteen city slickers” in his entourage, including Charles Curtis. The new ambassador to Mexico, Josephus Daniels, met Curtis, who informed him that Brinkley had discovered a great secret. If “Senator [Thomas] Sterling of South Dakota and two or three others in the seats of the almighty had gone to Dr. Brinkley’s hospital for treatment . . . they would now be alive,” he informed the ambassador. If he developed prostate troubles, Curtis declared, he would prefer treatment from Brinkley over any other doctor in America.²⁹

Daniels refused to give Curtis any assurances, but out of courtesy to the former vice president, the American embassy made an appointment for him to meet with the minister of communications—after first warning Mexican officials that the former vice president was not speaking for the United States government concerning anything he said about Brinkley. Curtis also wanted to meet with the Mexican president. Although this encounter never took place, he and the other Brinkley representatives managed to raise enough questions “in the minds of many delegates” to give “some legitimacy to the position of the outlaw broadcasters.” The borderblasters also were assisted at the conference by the National Committee on Education by Radio, a watchdog group that distributed literature condemning the American commercial broadcasting system because of its extensive advertising and paucity of educational programs.³⁰

Judge Eugene Octavius Sykes, one of the minority to vote to continue KFKB’s license for a probationary period in 1930 and now chairman of the FRC, headed the American delegation. Josephus Daniels, appointed ambassador by President Franklin Roosevelt, detailed Harry Norweb to represent the embassy. Daniels had served as secretary of the navy under Woodrow Wilson, with Franklin Roosevelt as his deputy. The navy controlled wireless communications during World War I and, because of this background, Daniels was most interested in the negotiations over control of radio broadcasting. The Mexicans insisted on having twelve exclusive channels, including five on the border, while the United States was determined that they would have less than a dozen and none on the border. Daniels reported that Brinkley won temporarily. An American knowl-

edgeable in Mexican affairs summarized the results of the conference, or lack thereof: "The Americans came down with an impossible ultimatum which the Mexicans understood as an attempt to dictate what they should do with stations in their country. The Americans virtually demanded that Dr. Brinkley be put off the air and insisted that Mexico should have no stations on the border that could carry messages into the United States. This demand made failure certain from the beginning." Then he added, "a weak or small nation is always sensitive."³¹

On the other hand, American radio station owners were relieved at the outcome of the meeting, the *New York Times* reported, because there would be no immediate channel reallocation by the Federal Communications Commission (which replaced the old Federal Radio Commission in 1934). They regretted the failure to control the borderblasters, but were cognizant of the situation confronting Mexico, with the United States and Canada hogging most of the clear channels. The journal *Forum* even praised Brinkley because "the worthy doctor . . . showed true American spunk by removing across the border to a country with more enlightened policies against restricting individual radio enterprise." The Department of State took solace from the fact that just before the conference began, Mexico issued new regulations which, if enforced, would "require radical changes in Brinkley's programs." These included forbidding the foreign ownership of radio stations or foreign stations broadcasting in Mexico, and outlawing all non-Spanish and medical programming without special government permission. The American delegation came away from the meeting with the impression that Mexico finally intended to start enforcing its laws and regulations against the doctor, but they were not as wise in the ways of Mexican bureaucracy as were Brinkley and the other borderblasters.³²

Brinkley's radio station was secure temporarily, but the costs he incurred as a result of the interlopers in Rosalia, Doctors Owensby and Dragoo, and the heavy expenses of continuing both the Milford and Del Rio operations led him to decide to consolidate his businesses in Texas. The *Topeka Daily Capital* headlined a story in which he listed the reasons for this momentous decision. First, his overhead in Milford was enormous. In addition to the \$13,000 per year that he owed Farmers and Bankers Insurance, which had purchased KFKB, for use of the Milford studio, it cost him over \$100,000 annually to rent the telephone line for remote broadcasting. He was ready to admit that he would never get his Kansas medical license back and that his current Milford operation was highly risky. As

John noted, if one employs doctors and receives money they bring in, the courts might determine that, under the legal definition, such activity constitutes practicing medicine—an activity he was forbidden to do in Kansas. It is interesting that officials in the American Medical Association had overlooked this possible charge against him for three years.

Second, saving this overhead meant he could pass the difference on to future patients by paying their round trip expenses to Del Rio and still come out ahead. He believed such an offer would allow him to attract more distant people, who otherwise might be concerned with both the cost of the operation and the expense of traveling there during that economically depressed period. Third, those in cold climates did not enjoy going to Milford in the winter, and Brinkley did not operate there in the summer due to the heat. In contrast, patients would delight in coming to Del Rio, where they could “recreate and have a vacation,” he would advertise. John offered his accountants another reason to move during his tax difficulties. He told them that he knew “the Radio Commission Legislation was coming along,” which would outlaw his remote control line. They had to move or risk being stuck in Milford—without a medical license or a radio station. Finally, he had a Texas medical license and could practice freely in his Del Rio facilities.³³

Officials of the American Medical Association were convinced that John made this sudden decision because of developments in his Milford hospital. Two of John’s former nurses, Anne Tressin and Myrtle Christianson, who were later employed by Owensby and Drago, testified that Dr. W.C. Purviance and Dr. A.C. Petermeyer had operated on two patients who later died. Brinkley signed the death certificates of one of the patients, listing meningitis as the cause. A later post mortem, however, gave the cause of death as peritonitis, an infection that set in following the operation. Why else, AMA officials reasoned, would Brinkley move to Texas the same day that he announced the relocation of his medical practice? He must want to get out of Kansas quickly.³⁴

The Brinkleys and their loyal entourage faced a more hostile environment in southwest Texas than what they had enjoyed in Milford. Del Rio, lying some 150 miles due west of San Antonio, has an elevation of 1,000 feet and provides a major international gateway to Mexico. Its climate is hot in the summer and quite moderate in the winter, with daily highs in the mid sixties and lows in the low forties from Thanksgiving through February. John Brinkley would tout this temperate climate in his literature and broadcasts to northerners, inviting them to come to his hospital for treatment where



This political cartoon took aim at Brinkley's forced removal from the Sunflower State. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

one could enjoy a winter vacation in the process. Del Rio is "where summer comes to spend the winter," he exulted continually. The sentiment likely seemed true to him, after having lived some 800 miles north for a decade and a half and in the even more adverse climate of Chicago previous to that.

Moving day was a wrenching experience for everyone. He established his hospital in the Roswell Hotel on October 7, 1933—exactly sixteen years to the day after he and Minnie had moved to Milford. A troop of automobiles and trucks loaded with hospital and office equipment and family possessions traveled together to the border. Ammunition Train No. 1 also made the trek, while the Brinkleys flew ahead of the caravan. Several Milford residents refused to move, but some thirty employees and their families remained faithful to the doctor and his work and relocated with him to Texas.

Brinkley's business, which had contributed so much to Milford's economy, was disappearing. Those who remained were most despon-

dent. What would they do with an empty hospital in their tiny village, which would likely shrink even more after Brinkley left? Enraged citizens, whom the local newspaper described as “almost thunderstruck” over this development, chiseled Brinkley’s name out of the cornerstone of his building and painted his huge campaign billboard at the edge of town yellow. Their feelings were further inflamed when John later bulldozed his buildings for tax purposes. The citizens erroneously maintained that he destroyed the facilities out of spitefulness so that neither Owensby nor anyone else could use them. His departure would leave Milford “hardly more than a memory.”³⁵

The Brinkleys’ welcome in Del Rio, on the other hand, included a wild celebration. The “most prominent judge” in town gave the newcomers a reception with a Mexican “tea” on November 4. “It was attended by a great majority” of the people in the area. Villa Acunans welcomed Brinkley in royal fashion. Bert Munal had alerted him that their chamber of commerce had passed a resolution to give him a huge welcome. They met the Brinkleys at the Mexican end of the bridge with the city band and escorted them to the mayor’s office in appreciation for what they had done for Villa Acuna, and would do in the future.³⁶

The American Department of State kept apprized of Brinkley’s developments. A member of the American consulate at Piedras Negras notified the secretary that, contrary to published newspaper reports that the doctor had taken an option on a hotel building in Del Rio for his sanitarium, he had only rented one room. This correction came from the manager of a lumber concern in Eagle Pass, Texas, which had a mortgage on the hotel in question. A follow-up report, however, declared that Brinkley had rented an entire floor of the hotel for his hospital and planned to use the basement for his X-ray work. In addition, Brinkley opened a drug store on the ground floor from which to sell medications. The memo added that the thirty Milford families who had moved with him were occupying many Del Rio houses that had been “vacant for some time for want of tenants.”³⁷

When Brinkley began concentrating his business and medical work in the Lone Star State, the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners joined forces with Mexican medical authorities in their attempt to curtail his medical activities, much like Kansas had done. The Texas Board began a long, and ultimately fruitless, campaign to revoke his medical license, which he had received automatically through reciprocity. Replying to an AMA inquiry in the spring of 1932, the Texas secretary stated that his board had filed a suit to retrieve Brinkley’s license and an appeal was pending. But two years

later the secretary informed the AMA that "it was impossible" for the board to continue to pursue his medical license "with the fund provided by the state for that purpose, and that the board was not able to finance the undertaking out of the pockets of its 12 members." He also complained that it was "impossible to get action against him in Val Verde County where every man, woman and child is for him," adding that the district attorney there was "his bosom friend." As he had been in Kansas, John was adept at maintaining helpful political contacts in his new home state.³⁸

XER ran into difficulties, though, soon after the Brinkleys' migration when, in 1934, control of the Mexican government changed hands. The new president, General Lazaro Cardenas, appeared determined to enforce his country's new broadcasting regulations and gain control over the unruly media. A dispatch from the American embassy in Mexico City to the Department of State reported that Ingeniero Avilez, who had headed the Mexican delegation to the North American radio conference the previous summer, had asserted Mexico's dedication to renewed attempts at enforcing its rules. The country had already imposed fines against XER for broadcasting by remote control in English and against Brinkley for violating health department rules, which prohibited him from practicing medicine in Mexico or advertising himself as a doctor when the country had refused to license him. John sought an *amparo* (injunction) against the government and continued to broadcast.³⁹

On February 14, 1934, a news story announced that the Mexican Department of Communications had ordered a thirty-day suspension of the Villa Acuna station and gave Brinkley seventy-two hours to prepare his defense against this action. The story recalled "the constant trouble this station has caused" between Mexican and American authorities by "hogging" channels assigned to weaker stations in the southwestern United States. Some Mexican authorities, of course, would have questioned who was doing the "hogging."⁴⁰

On February 25, 1934, federal forces seized XER and terminated its broadcasting. John was convinced the shutdown was caused by the interference of Federal Communications Commissioner Judge E.O. Sykes, the *Chicago Tribune*, and Chicago's WGN, a radio station that suffered repeated interference from XER. The *Chicago Tribune* reported the seizure of "the powerful radio station . . . owned and operated by Dr. John R. Brinkley, former Kansas 'goat gland' specialist." The *New York Times* observed that Brinkley's temporary injunction had been dismissed and that "unless he dismantles his station within a month the government will do so."⁴¹

Many more parties than the FCC and station WGN were in-

volved in the collaborative drive to stop XER from broadcasting. The secretary of the Texas Medical Board informed the AMA that he had recently conferred in Mexico City with that country's secretary of public health and other medical officials. (Mexico did not have a national organization similar to the AMA.) "They are with us hand and glove in the effort to get Baker and Brinkley off the border," he reported. The Mexican officials had treated him royally during his visit and had "even placed a car and chauffeur at [his] disposal." The Mexican secretary of health had telegraphed both Baker and Brinkley, ordering them to stop broadcasting their "medical propaganda." The secretary also informed his Texas visitor that "he would not make the mistake that was made before and fine the owner, who resides on this side of the Rio Grande; that he would place the fines against the station and keep adding to them until they were sufficient to confiscate the station."⁴²

The *Del Rio Evening News* interviewed John about this dispute and reported the following sequence of events. Federal troops arrived to take possession of the station, though the Villa Acuna police, resplendent in their new uniforms purchased by Dr. Brinkley, were highly reluctant to allow the federalistas to occupy their benefactor's transmitter. John watched the proceedings with binoculars and, to avoid possible bloodshed, finally stepped in and ordered XER to cease broadcasting when the confrontation appeared to be getting out of control. He expressed regret to the reporter that he had to close the station that directly and indirectly supported three thousand Villa Acuna residents and eighty-three employees who lived across the river in Del Rio. Villa Acuna officials were indignant over the federal government's action because, they said, "it was through improvements made in the town on money furnished by the doctor that much privation had been avoided this winter." Again John R. Brinkley had become a martyr, a savior of the people, roles that he relished.⁴³

Brinkley announced that he did not "anticipate being off the air long; business will be carried out in the usual manner." He hoped for "an amicable settlement with the Mexican government," adding that, because of this action, "the Mexican people will suffer." But XER was shut down much longer than he had expected. During the interim he obtained broadcasting outlets at KFEQ in St. Joseph, Missouri; KFBI in Abilene, Kansas; XEPN at Piedras Negras; KVOD in Denver; and KVOR in Colorado Springs, at higher costs, of course, than his own station.⁴⁴

Less than a week after the seizure of XER, the Villa Acuna Broadcasting Company was replaced by Cia. Mexicana Radiofusora

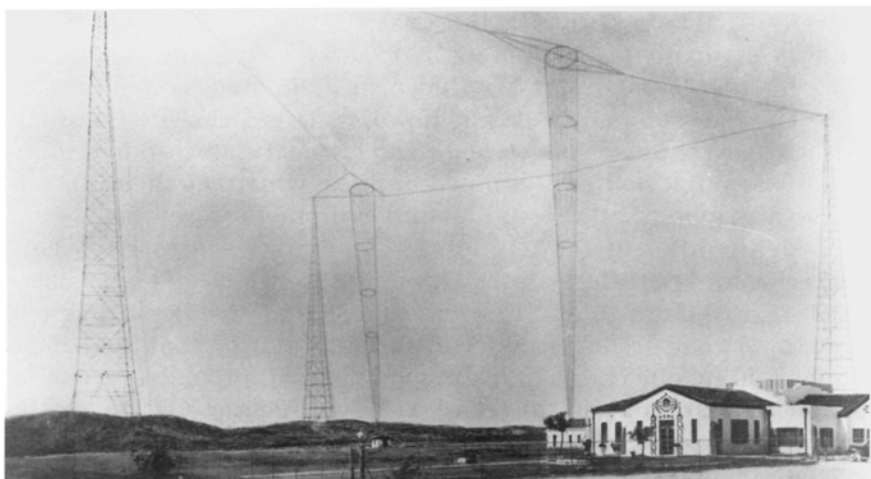
Frontieriza (Frontier Broadcasting Company) of Mexico City. Brinkley sold the company his equipment in accordance with the agreement that they would pay him when they acquired possession of the station. The new company's efforts, however, were beleaguered by the Mexican government's insistence on receiving the six hundred thousand pesos that had accumulated in fines, which, as their officials knew, was more than the station and equipment were worth.

Meanwhile, in September 1934, Brinkley attorneys Guy Helvering and Bert Comer met with a representative of the Division of Mexican Affairs to ask him to request that the Department of State take pressure off Brinkley by formally stating that the United States had no objections to his reopening XER, provided he used a wavelength that did not interfere with any American stations and did not broadcast objectionable programs. They asked that he be permitted to enter Mexico at will and be allowed to broadcast political speeches. But a Department of State memo reported a subsequent conference with Judge Sykes, head of the newly organized Federal Communications Commission (FCC), during which the department concluded that any such positive action from the FCC "was deemed highly unlikely."⁴⁵

Finally, late in 1934, Walter Wilson, a Brinkley radio employee, proposed going to Mexico City to work on the problem. Brinkley paid him \$250 per month plus expenses and promised Wilson he would make him station manager—a lucrative position, with opportunities for commissions from advertising time—if he got XER back on the air. This was an interesting agreement as John, supposedly, had no control over the newly formed Frontier Broadcasting Company, but these terms ultimately were worked out.⁴⁶

After searching a year in Mexico City, Wilson found a law firm that agreed to take the case to the Supreme Court of Mexico. Brinkley forwarded the legal fee to Wilson, and they won the case on the technical point that the fines were levied against XER, not against Frontier Broadcasting, the innocent purchaser of the station. Owners of Frontier Broadcasting then reneged on paying Brinkley for the equipment and asked, instead, that he pay them \$200,000 for recovering the station for him. Not to be outfoxed this easily, John approached Mrs. Esther O. Crosby, owner of Villa Acuna's most popular dining establishment, the Toltec Café, with his story of what had transpired. He proposed that she and some of her friends go to Mexico City and try to obtain possession of the company. Her friends included the Mexican consul in Del Rio, the state senator of Coahuila, and the mayor of Villa Acuna.

If Crosby and friends were successful, Brinkley promised he



Brinkley's XERA station in Villa Acuna, Mexico. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

would grant them ownership of the station. All the doctor required from the deal was a radio facility and free time for commercial broadcasts. The group was successful in acquiring the station, though Brinkley claimed he did not know how they managed the transfer. But after acquiring the facilities, they were required to pay for a broadcasting concession from the Mexican Radio Communications Department. They lacked the funds, so John sent the necessary money to Wilson and, in return, Mrs. Crosby, Wilson, and friends agreed that he could utilize the station freely until he had logged enough time to repay himself. In under two years, Brinkley had invested a great deal of money in his endeavors with XER, which indicates the importance of the station to his businesses. His agreement with Wilson and the others lasted for a year, until the company discovered the free-usage arrangement violated Mexican law. Afterward, Brinkley supposedly began paying cash as did other advertisers. The station opened under the new call letters XERA in November 1935. Jim Weldon made the repairs the transmitter needed from its extended period of disuse and increased its power to 100,000 watts.⁴⁷

XERA's early expenses proved to be far greater than Brinkley had estimated. In 1936 Wilson wrote him that "we will need considerably more money to completely finish the job of power increase." In addition, his electricity bills were running \$4,500 to \$5,000 monthly with the increased wattage, and he needed a new recording machine and a spare "large tube"—which cost \$3,000. Brinkley made

an arrangement for the Del Rio Bank and Trust Company to loan Wilson \$30,000. He believed this sum would carry the station through this period of change until additional advertising could be sold. "We must finance Walter until he can take care of himself," he noted to an aide.⁴⁸

A few months later, Wilson detailed some of his new accounts to Brinkley. He sold one quarter-hour daily to the Honey-Tar Cough Syrup Company for \$300 per week. He negotiated a year's contract with the O'Henry Candy Bar Company for a daily one-minute announcement at a rate of \$20 per day. If Consolidated Drug Trade resumed its advertising it would employ the Pickard family and the Carter family. In addition, Sterling Insurance would use "live talent . . . with some very good artists along with its own announcer," which would eliminate some recorded programs. Wilson had yet to "hire a small group of Mexican artists to appear on some of our Mexican time in order to get by the Labor Laws."⁴⁹

When XERA came on the air with its increased wattage, the towers emitted luminous green emanations called coronas. People living near Del Rio did not need a radio to receive XERA, especially later when the wattage was pumped up to 1,000,000 watts. Nearby ranchers heard country music on their fences, and children's dental appliances got good reception. Del Rio citizens talking on the telephone occasionally heard Brinkley asking if they suffered from "gas, indigestion, bloat, and belching." At 840 kilocycles, it overwhelmed the signals of WWL in New Orleans and KOA in Denver. People in New York City could hear it and "a Philadelphia resident complained that he had trouble getting anything but Dr. Brinkley's station on his family's radio set."⁵⁰

Brinkley personally broadcast twice every evening, and his Sunday night presentations were devoted to his philosophy of life. He later collected some of these talks and published them as *Roads Courageous*. These three-to-four-minute monologs addressed topics such as motherhood, optimism, fame, determination, and honor. Brinkley dedicated one to Bohemians in America, who refused to go on relief during the Depression; another to the country doctor as "one of God's field hands"; and a third to the home as "the foundation of our whole system of government, morals, economics, and religion." In his talks, he also included his usual pitch to the rural folks: "If these talks I give you, ladies and gentlemen, these Sunday nights over this station are worth anything to you, I'm always glad to have a letter from you. Everything I say on these Sunday evening talks is intended to raise men and women and boys and girls to a higher level. Mrs. Brinkley and John and I need you in our hospi-

tals, to help us carry on. Come to see us. Let us examine you and treat you. . . . And tell your neighbors to come too. Goodbye."⁵¹

Brinkley made offers of free books, coupons, and various giveaways to entice listeners to write him. They merely had to send their name and address to receive a book describing his services in Del Rio. Each volume contained questionnaires, one for men and one for women, to be filled out and returned. He promised to write and tell them what they should do about their medical problem "the very same day I receive your blank." Often his advice for serious problems, of course, was to come and see him for an examination.

John pioneered in recording his messages on sixteen-inch records in his home or studio. These electrical transcriptions were played from the inside groove outward at 33 1/3 rpm. The disks were cheap and simple to make and became a radio industry standard in the 1930s. Villa Acuna residents found these silver disks "made excellent shingles, and soon the roofs of homes near the station glistened with the doctor's messages of mercy."⁵²

John repeatedly touted the charms of his city in his broadcasts. The Queen City of the Rio offered golfers "one of the sportiest, most picturesquely beautiful courses in America." This county seat of Val Verde County let hunters pursue deer, bear, mountain lion, coyote, fox, opossum, racoon, and javalina, or wild hog. Anglers could go for robaldo, sardines, catfish, trout, and other varieties of pisces. "Over there in the hills," he informed the curious, "you'll find Indian villages where the redskins live entirely by hunting and fishing just as they did a thousand years ago."⁵³

Brinkley could wax eloquent about his adopted state. The Texas sunsets "are as glorious as those that kiss the bounding billows of the Mediterranean into a flame of gold," he enthused. "Her landscapes are painted with the broken ends of the rainbow and thrown across a thousand purple hills. Her prairies burst into unforgettable fields of royal bluebonnets." He viewed the Lone Star State as "an empire of opportunity glistening before our eyes like a crystal palace bathed in the glory of the morning . . . a land of treasured memories, with history running through the mists and glamor of centuries."⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the troubles with the XER shutdown had prompted John to buy a second yacht, which, unlike his first, could be used at sea. He named it *Dr. Brinkley II*, and kept it in a Florida port, ever-ready to put to sea so that the doctor could broadcast in international waters, if necessary. In 1932, he also had purchased XED, another Mexican radio station in Reynosa, for insurance in case an emergency should occur with XER.

XED, the first borderblaster station had become involved in financial difficulty, and Will Horowitz had gained control of it. He soon had it operating in the black again by introducing American and Mexican listeners to the Tamaulipas State Lottery. For \$6 per ticket, listeners could buy a chance at a monthly first-place prize of \$1,500 or other smaller prizes. The typical human urge to wager a small amount of money in anticipation of a large return was stronger during a depression. Gambling was illegal in the United States, but all ticket orders and prize checks went through the Mexican mail, leading Horowitz to believe that his enterprise was beyond the reach of U.S. postal authorities. Soon, however, the U.S. Post Office was returning ticket orders to American senders, and in May 1932 authorities arrested Horowitz. In addition, the post office put a "fraud order" on all American mail addressed to station XED.⁵⁵

Brinkley sent H.L. "Bert" Munal, Minnie's brother-in-law, to investigate the possibility of purchasing station XED. J.E. Pate, the current owner, wanted to sell his 194 shares of stock in his company, the International Broadcasting Company, S.A., for \$32,000. Munal sent an agent to Mexico City to legalize the radio concession and to make sure it conformed to current Mexican laws. XED was authorized to use 10,000 watts with permission to go as high as 50,000. The license fee, Bert reported, was 1,000 pesos annually, the same as XER's. Because the station had a Western Electric 78 rpm turntable that Horowitz wanted to keep (these turntables could not be purchased in the United States as Western Electric would only lease them) Bert informed Brinkley that they would have to use the amplification system from Ammunition Train No.1 if they purchased the new station. Under the arrangement proposed to Munal, Brinkley would get 194 shares of the company, and six would go to the man who owned the land the building was on, as he had never received any money for it. When Bert got the price down to \$24,600, Brinkley instructed him to proceed to buy XED, but he insisted that they keep Ammunition Train No. 1 intact because he was never sure when he would need the unusual contraption. There was also a bit of nostalgia involved here, as the truck would not be too difficult to duplicate if needed.⁵⁶

After receiving the proceed order, Bert contacted J.W. Adamson, the chief postal inspector at Austin, requesting a lift on the mail ban on XED. "I intend to operate this station so that there will not be anything of an offensive nature to either the United States or Mexican governments," he assured Adamson. He emphasized that those guilty of the mail fraud had already been convicted and asked that Adamson recommend to the postmaster general that the order be

lifted. The official discovered no other option and Munal's request was granted.⁵⁷

XED was changed to XEAW, and Jim Weldon and his engineering associate, Nestor Questa, updated the transmitter by installing \$75,000 worth of Western Electric's 320A triodes, the same type that he later used to increase XERA's power to 1,000,000 watts. Among other activities, Brinkley's new station XEAW in Reynosa advertised the clinic he had recently opened in San Juan, near McAllen, Texas. The specialties of this clinic were treatment of "piles, fistulas, fissures, colitus and diseases of the male and female rectum." His letter announcing this new service asked people on his mailing list to "please get this thought in your mind—that we are offering guaranteed treatment of your two sewers—your waterworks and your garbage." On the radio he often repeated, "remember, Del Rio for the prostate and San Juan for the colon."⁵⁸

Brinkley promoted the opening of XEAW with mailings to his list of prospective patients. "Our BIG PRIZE night should begin midnight Saturday, September 7th and run through without stopping Sunday 8th and Monday 9th," he said. He would award prizes for "the longest distance reports and telegrams sent in." He reminded listeners that they enjoyed good reception with XER and would have even better reception with XEAW. In case they were curious, he explained, "we fly to and from Reynosa. That is why we can be on an evening program and be in our Del Rio hospital the next morning to serve you."⁵⁹

Brinkley soon acquired another borderblaster, XEPN, which broadcast out of Piedras Negras but had a station office in Eagle Pass, Texas. The Mexican Department of Health closed the station, however, on November 29, 1936, "for alleged violation of the sanitary code," according to a United Press story. Yet a few days later, the American ambassador cabled the secretary of state that the Mexican government denied any knowledge of a proposal to shut it down. This would appear to be another instance of the various Mexican government agencies following divergent courses of action with the border stations, without informing each other of their decisions.⁶⁰

In January 1936, a member of the Canadian embassy in Washington talked to a representative of the Department of State about the problem of interference from a Brinkley station. The American bureaucrat suggested summoning a regional radio conference at which time the issue of the border stations could be discussed. Both men agreed it would be desirable to hold this meeting before the next international telecommunications conference met.⁶¹

Norman Baker used his station, XENT in Nuevo Laredo, to pro-

mote his cancer cure, Brinkley's stations continued to aggravate American officials, and other borderblasters in northern Mexico were learning Brinkley's techniques for inundating American airwaves. *Variety* magazine reported in February 1937 that Mexico was preparing to "clean up" the border stations to please the American government, in order to lure American tourists to Mexico for vacations. On September 23, 1937, the government in Piedras Negras embargoed all the property of the company (Brinkley's) that owned XEPN. Beginning October 1, 1937, a representative of the government would direct its operations until it had recovered about forty-five thousand pesos in fines, plus interest. Brinkley ironed out this difficulty, and no further report was made to the Department of State about it. But the borderblasters were creating unmanageable problems for American stations. Brinkley's XEPN was drowning out WOW in Omaha, KNJ in Fresno, and WIBW in Topeka, and Baker's XENT was emitting a heterodyne whistle in stations in Texas and Virginia.⁶²

Because the borderblasters were causing such havoc with both Canadian and American broadcasters, representatives from North American nations agreed to converge in Havana to resolve some of the disputes. In the North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement (or Treaty of Havana of December 13, 1937) Canada, Cuba, the United States, Haiti, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic finally agreed to agree. Mexico's adamant attitude mellowed when a prominent Mexican radio man named Emilio Viadurnette Azcarragua "threw his weight on the pro-agreement side." Don Emilio, as he was called, was Mexico's most influential broadcaster and was ready to expand his operations to reach North American listeners by the mid 1930s. Brinkley and the borderblasters, he correctly believed, needed to be brought to heel first. In addition, President Lazaro Cardenas had long been convinced that American hostility to border stations "had a more legitimate basis than merely the gringo's standard insolence," and was willing to discuss the problems. Prior to the meeting, T.M. Craven, head of the FCC, met with Gomez Morentin, representing the Mexican government, and the two discussed the parameters of the proposed agreement, "no doubt with strong guidance from Don Emilio," as one observer noted. The subsequent arrangement gave Mexican and Cuban broadcasters rights to their own wavelengths. For the first time, the United States accepted XEG from Monterrey, XELO from Ciudad Juarez, and XERA from Villa Acuna as clear channels, which gave them priority for nighttime broadcasting.⁶³

The four nations immediately concerned—Canada, the U.S., Cuba, and Mexico—had to ratify the arrangement before it could go

into effect. The United States Senate quickly approved it on June 15, 1938, followed by Cuba on October 3 of that year, and then Canada. Mexico was hesitant, it appeared, because the engineering problems of frequency allocation and power interference had to be resolved. But on August 23, 1938, Mexican officials agreed to work under a special arrangement with the United States to clarify these issues. One result was that each country would retain three Class A clear channels. On the border, other frequencies of Class IV would be assigned to stations serving local or contiguous areas. As the assistant secretary of state observed, however, this arrangement still did not directly address the problem of the rogue borderblasters.⁶⁴

The political clout of the borderblasters was strong enough to prevent the Mexican Senate from ratifying the treaty until 1940, and there is still uncertainty as to whether or not the country actually ever gave its approval. In any case, Mexico and the United States signed an agreement that year to implement the Treaty of Havana. But, as usual, enforcement was erratic or nonexistent for several years. For example, the border stations were to serve the Mexican people, but the only concessions the broadcasters made to Mexican culture were “station identifications in one sentence of rapid Spanish” and an occasional station-break suggestion that Americans wanting to visit Mexico should check first with the Mexican tourist bureau. Mexico also banned medical talks and astrology from the air waves, the worst offenses of the buccaneer broadcasters.⁶⁵

On the other hand, the Mexican government had instituted *La Hora Nacional* in the spring of 1937 and required every station to broadcast it every Sunday night. It was produced by the autonomous Department of Press and Publicity. Also, the government insisted that radio programs contain at least 25 percent “typically Mexican music.” But enforcement, of course, posed a continual problem.

The new regulations were to take effect on April 1, 1941. Americans waited eagerly for the changes, but the monitoring reports indicated little difference from previous practices. When station XEPN burned in December 1939, Bill Branch rebuilt it as station XELO, and it continued to blast out of Plaza Rosarito, as did XEAW from Reynosa, and Norman Baker’s XENT from Nuevo Larado—although Baker would soon serve a four-year prison term for mail fraud. The borderblaster leader, XERA, was silenced permanently by the Mexican government in 1941. By that time Brinkley’s political clout was nil. He had lost his libel suit against the American Medical Association; and the Texas Medical Association, after numerous faltering attempts, had revoked his medical license, leaving Arkansas as the only state in which he could practice legally. He also was nearing bankruptcy.⁶⁶

Brinkley's XEAW was required to move to 1570 kilocycles, but by that point in his bankruptcy proceedings he had sold the station to Carr Collins of Mineral Wells, Texas. Carr used it to advertise his "Crazy Water Crystals" and to provide a venue for his friend Governor "Pappy" O'Daniel to deliver his political fireside chats. Soon afterward, the British military forces found themselves in desperate need of a transmitter powerful enough to reach their submarines from Iceland across the Atlantic Ocean. There was only one such transmitter in the United States: WLW in Cincinnati. But because the Office of War Information (OWI) had other wartime broadcasting plans for WLW, it recommended XEAW in Mexico instead. Carr, meanwhile, had transferred half his interest in the station to Baylor University in Waco. He offered to give his transmitter to the British in exchange for a 50 kilowatt station in Corpus Christi, which he named KFBU. But only two men possessed the expertise to break down his transmitter, crate it to Iceland, and reassemble it again. One was Jim Weldon, who currently was engineering director for the OWI, and the other was Nestor Questa, a Mexican national. As a result, the powerful transmitter remained at Corpus Christi.⁶⁷

On June 14, 1941, a telegram to the *Del Rio Evening News* described the front-page story of the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior*, which reported that the current president, Manuel Avila Camacho, had ordered the expropriation of the Villa Acuna broadcasting station XERA. The station, the telegram stated, had been transmitting "news broadcasts unsuitable to New World" and was owned by "foreigners sympathetic to Nazi cause." On the back of the telegram, Minnie Brinkley wrote a note with a diametrically opposed interpretation of the events. She denied that XERA had broadcast Nazi propaganda and labeled the Associated Press story untrue. She declared that President Camacho had ordered the expropriation of the radio equipment because his government needed that type of transmitter and was unable to purchase one in the United States because of the demands of the war preparedness program.⁶⁸

Brinkley made several attempts to rescue XERA. He traveled to Mexico City immediately after the expropriation to strike a deal with the government. He persuaded key officials—for what price he did not say—to rescind the confiscation order, permit the station to resume broadcasting at 800 kilocycles, allow him one and a half hours daily for commercial broadcasting, and give him 25 percent of the gross receipts from commercial advertising. "This deal was ready to go through," he reported, "when some enemies put in some monkey wrenches and wrecked my plans."⁶⁹

In a very short time, he had an additional motive for reopening

the station—his bankruptcy and desperate need for money. Carl Rice, the Kansas City attorney John kept on annual retainer, wrote that he had a scheme to get XERA back on the air, at no cost to Brinkley, if he had physical possession of the company stock. John responded that Mrs. Esther Crosby had all the stock and had invested considerable money after its confiscation, through court costs and legal fees, to get the station reopened. He could get the stock from her for Rice, but he would have to “offer she [*sic*] and her brother some money in return for her investment.” With his back to the wall, John guaranteed Rice possession of the stock if he was successful in getting the Mexican government to make several key provisions: to revoke its confiscation order; authorize the station to operate at its present location at 800 kilocycles and 100,000 watts; and give Brinkley half-hour slots from 5:00 to 5:30 A.M. and 7:15 to 7:45 and 8:15 to 8:45 P.M. daily. He reminded the lawyer that from 1939 through 1941 he “had spent through Walter Wilson about \$200,000 to assure the continuation of XERA.” At that point, Jim Weldon estimated it would cost at least \$50,000 to \$75,000 to rebuild the station after months of idleness, concluding that “unless we can get a little time from the station for Mrs. Crosby and her friends, as well as something for ourselves there is no use for us to go further.” Whatever plan Rice had to recapture XERA, it was too late and his scheme failed to materialize.⁷⁰

XERA later became the powerful XEWA, called “La Voz de la America Latina,” in San Luis Potosi, four hundred miles northwest of Mexico City. Thus, John Brinkley’s radio empire ended with only three concrete pylons to mark the spot of its beginning. At last the Mexican people had Brinkley’s powerful transmitter to promote Mexican interests, and American broadcasters were free of interference from that station. The borderblaster problem would continue, as other broadcasters had learned their lessons quite well from the master teacher, John Brinkley.

Chapter 7

The Old Cocklebur

The first four years following the Brinkleys' move to Del Rio marked the apogee of John's medical career, political influence, annual income, and enjoyment of his wealth. Before 1933, he had changed his medical technique considerably and thenceforth specialized in the treatment of the prostate, that "troublesome old cocklebur," as he called it. Ironically, in his later career he no longer used goats or the Four Phase Compound Operation—unless the patient insisted. He had so publicized this procedure during the Roaring Twenties that he was forever known as the Goat Gland Doctor. As a result, many elderly gentlemen came to Texas for his new method in the belief that it would rejuvenate their sex life, a conviction he did all he could to encourage. He stressed that his treatment of the prostate did not increase "sexual vigor," but would "maintain" or "restore" it, trying as always to downplay the sexual results of his methods, at least on the surface.¹

During one of Brinkley's numerous court encounters, an associate described for a jury John's new surgical technique. Promoted as a treatment for an enlarged prostate that resulted in helping to empty the bladder, the operation sounds much like a modified Steinach Method—a procedure that Brinkley had denigrated a decade earlier:

Make an incision on the anesthetized scrotum and examine the fifteen to twenty vasa efferentia or ducts going into the testicle. If any are diseased they are ligated or cut and tied off. The artery running along the vas deferens is also ligated. The vas deferens is injected with about five centimeters of a 2 percent mercurochrome solution, which

passes into the seminal vesicles, a storehouse by the prostate for seminal fluids. If the vas deferens is blocked, the blockage is cut away. If there is blockage in the enlarged prostate, it is also cut away through a transurethral resection. No incision is made as the cutting is performed through the sheath of the instrument. This costs \$275 or more. If the patient still cannot empty his bladder properly, the guarantee provides for a free transurethral resection.²

The Wood biography describes the reported results of John's new method with unabashed enthusiasm: "In practically one hundred percent of the cases under the new technique, he has reduced high blood pressure, reduced enlarged prostates, cleared the infection out of the entire human body, greatly increased the sexual powers of men and women, overcome depressed mental conditions. . . . He has, as a matter of cold sober fact, changed the color of patients' hair, smoothed the wrinkles out of their faces, and turned their complexions from a sickly pallor of old age and disease back to the ruddy glow of health." All this from a partial vasectomy and for only \$275! Some believed he also gave his patients an injection of testosterone during the operation. John later confirmed this fact during a movie about his work, shot in the Del Rio hospital circa 1938. Brinkley recommended that patients take fifteen milligrams of testosterone daily for thirty days following the prostate operation. He later began adding five post-operative ampules to the procedure—to be injected by a local doctor—at a cost of \$100. Not wanting to inject patients with an unknown fluid intravenously, several physicians sent Brinkley's ampules to the American Medical Association for analysis, at which time it was discovered that they contained one part bluing to one hundred thousand parts water.³

Brinkley rented the mezzanine floor of the Roswell Hotel for his medical practice. Patients, and their relatives, rented rooms in the hotel until they recuperated enough to return home. A pamphlet advertised one hundred rooms with bath and ceiling light. Singles cost between \$2 and \$2.50 daily, and doubles were \$3 and up. Brinkley would pay the patient's room and board for up to seven days.

Instructions were sent to incoming patients on the best way to get to Del Rio. Highway 90 ran from Jacksonville, Florida, through "The Queen City of the Rio Grande" to Van Horn, Texas, or better yet the Union Pacific offered service in both directions. The Painter Bus Lines also served the area. In a neighboring town, a sign that still stands today boasted, "This is God's Country—don't drive like hell



Brinkley's hospital in Del Rio, Texas. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

through it." When patients arrived in Del Rio they found a pleasant south Texas town of more than 10,000 souls that had palm trees, quaint shops, an agreeable climate, and sparkling hotels situated along shady avenues. For a fifteen-cent fare, visitors could walk across the international bridge and view the picturesque Mexican village of Villa Acuna, population 7,179, with its shady Hidalgo Park and band shell. The town had electricity and a water system—amenities about which a small Mexican village would boast at that time—plus the usual entertainment provided by cabarets, two movie theaters, a casino, and a bull ring. In the curio shops, tourists could purchase picture postcards of John, Minnie, and Johnny Boy. In the background of these photos sat his airplane, station XERA, or his yacht. Pictures of his mansion also were available with an inset of a log cabin, indicating how far he had risen in the world since leaving Sylva, North Carolina.

With the move to Texas, Brinkley added a new feature to his medical practice: round trip expenses to and from Del Rio were deducted from the bills of patients receiving his full prostate treatment, with the remainder payable in advance. For people living at a great distance, this was an important incentive, and Del Rio soon



Postcard photograph of the “Beautiful Home of Dr. J.R. Brinkley, Del Rio Texas, Lippe Studio.” (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

swarmed with customers. As the town offered employment for all who wanted to work, it quickly recovered from the Depression. Brinkley had an estimated \$20,000 monthly payroll, a tidy sum for one business in a town of twelve thousand people. Records for December 1937, for example, show the hotel employing twelve bell-boys, six maids, two cashiers, two telephone operators (the number was Del Rio 74), five office employees, seven cooks, eight waiters and waitresses, an engineer, and a housekeeper. One department store estimated that the Brinkley presence contributed \$1,000 per month to its income. Another businessman noted after John moved his business to Arkansas that Del Rio had suffered its greatest loss.⁴

Soon after the Brinkleys arrived, the manager of the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce corresponded with his counterpart in Los Angeles. Responding to what may have been a contrived inquiry, the Del Rio manager’s letter evinced his organization’s endorsement of the doctor, not only in regard to his financial reputation, but also for his professional activities. Since he arrived the previous October, he had examined or operated on 613 people, with “not a few” of his older patients coming back for a checkup. The chamber had interviewed many who insisted he had “saved their life.” They believed the American Medical Association opposed him because of

“ethics” and not from his results. “They have distorted facts to discourage Dr. Brinkley and his reputation,” the chamber representative noted. In addition, Brinkley “never owes a bill longer than 48 hours,” and his civic life was outstanding, as he “does more than his share to foster the interests of Del Rio.” The chamber of commerce man maintained this high opinion of Brinkley until his death.⁵

A local newspaper called attention to Dr. John R. Brinkley’s purchasing an iron lung for “the needs of the community.” The iron lung was being used increasingly at that time to treat victims of infantile paralysis, or polio, which especially attacked young children. The machine, costing \$1,385, would be set up in the Brinkley Sanitarium and Hospital, and would be “available to children in Del Rio and vicinity.” John carefully cultivated newspapermen such as A. Travelstead of Del Rio and they, in turn, gave him favorable coverage. A picture of Brinkley in his naval uniform, complete with huge epaulettes, gold braid, bicorne hat, and ceremonial sword, hung in Travelstead’s office with the inscription “To Warrior Travelstead from Fighting Admiral Brinkley.”⁶

Despite his heavy schedule, Brinkley kept close tabs on daily details. In one instance, he noticed a slight discrepancy between the number of operations indicated by deposits and that listed on his business manager’s report. Though Brinkley’s deposit records showed that in two days they had performed twelve operations, only eleven were accounted for. But after checking with Osborn, he found the discrepancy arose from the fact that one patient’s check was processed later than the rest. “So it all works out and the report balances,” the meticulous doctor noted. On another occasion, he sent his manager a renewal notice for a subscription to the *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, asking him to mail a \$3 check immediately “so I will get the three extra months without additional cost.” At one point, he railed at the bookkeeper because Dwight Osborn had depleted the supply of his Doctor Books and had a few expressed to Del Rio at a cost of \$53. Why did he not check this earlier, John demanded, and discover the supply was low, and have a larger number freighted in at a much lower cost? In November 1937, a patient from Briggsdale, Colorado, was admitted. His operation would cost \$600 but he only had \$55 in his checking account. John accepted his check for \$55 and held another one for \$545 until it cleared the bank. “(No operation till ck is good),” John noted at the bottom.⁷

Brinkley continued to use radio broadcasts to lure patients. “You men,” he pleaded, “why are you holding back? You know your prostate’s infected and diseased. . . . Well, why do you hold back? Why do you twist and squirm around the old cocklebur . . . when I

am offering you these low rates, this easy work, this lifetime-of-service plan? Come at once to the Brinkley Hospital," he cautioned, "before it is everlastingly too late." On another occasion he warned that "delay is, oh, so dangerous." They should come to him "before the last ride. The cold undertaker's slab may be your portion prematurely. Many untimely graves have been filled untimely with people who put off until tomorrow what they should have done today." In sepulchral tones that would make the healthy feel a bit queasy, he concluded that, "it is, you know, your health or your funeral." He made a special plea to North American listeners during the winter months: "Now that it is getting cold up there, ice and sleet, this is the time of year that old prostate will give you a lot of trouble. Yes, I know it is hurting a lot. You are sitting down there squirming, squirming, and squirming around on that old cocklebur and yet you won't come and have that old cocklebur treated. . . . Stop letting your doctor two dollar you to death. If you go ahead and go to the doctors there and have your prostate gland removed you will be just the same as a castrated man or an old steer and good for nothing. . . . Wishing you a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year."⁸

Brinkley used both the stick and the carrot. Sometimes he proffered a prize larger than a radio. In 1938, in the form of a day-letter telegram, he announced a contest for a new 1938 Oldsmobile. The odds of winning a Brinkley car were one in ten. For a special \$950 treatment, the patient could write a letter of praise or condemnation to be used by him in advertisements. The entries would be evaluated by "disinterested" persons. This was followed by a missive warning that too many people wait "until it is too late . . . act now." His letter concluded that he would feel repaid for his efforts if the sufferers came to him for relief. Of course he would be repaid, with ten patients paying an additional \$165 each, he could easily afford to give away an automobile that retailed for under \$1,100 to one out of each ten applicants.⁹

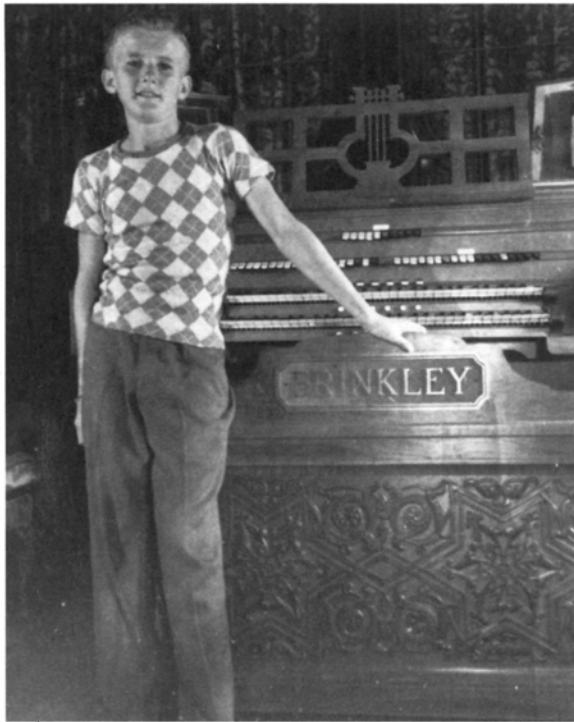
John did not limit his advertising to radio; he also made a promotional movie. He opened it with his traditional "Hello, my friends in Texas, Kansas, and everywhere. This is Dr. Brinkley speaking to you from my lovely home in Del Rio, Texas, where summer spends the winter." Looking professional and serious, he expounded on the dangers of high blood pressure, encouraging viewers to watch their diet and avoid eating salt. Possibly the only motivation they needed was Brinkley's warning that "most people with high blood pressure die during sexual intercourse." He continued to lecture, now intimate and relaxed, now austere, and then said, "oh, look who's here." Minnie came on from stage left, pecked him on the cheek and sternly

admonished, "you'd better listen to doctor, or you'll be much worse off than you are now. . . . But excuse me, I have to go to the kitchen and cook our Sunday dinner." John fondly watched her exit, stroking his goatee with a faint smile. "You can trust what Minnie says, folks. After all, she just came from communion."¹⁰

The Brinkleys began to enjoy their great increase in income in Del Rio. Legal fees, political campaign costs, building expenses in Milford, and other multitudinous costs had consumed much of their earnings in Kansas. Minnie was in charge of the bank accounts, and there were many who argued that she was the financial brains of the family. She moved some \$54,000 from the Milford bank to Del Rio through regular channels and then divided the sum between the two banks there to help them survive the Depression. Another \$20,000 went to purchase their first yacht. In addition, as the New Deal administration devalued the dollar in attempts to inflate the economy, Minnie had their pilot fly \$100,000 to a bank in Toronto, "until 1935 brought calmer times."¹¹

The Brinkleys quickly recouped their Kansas losses in Texas. One doctor estimated that from October 1933 to January 1, 1938, John and his staff operated on some sixteen thousand patients, earning approximately \$12 million. In the summer of 1937, for example, while the Brinkleys were on vacation, Dr. Osborn hoped "to average \$1,000 per day during May, June, July, and August or \$30,000 per month." He also planned to send out "one of those credit coupons worth \$50 for August only" to make certain business remained brisk during that slow, hot month. This income pertained just to the hospital work, which increased significantly during the nine months John was operating, and did not include Brinkley's income from other sources, such as the radio stations and his many investments.¹²

The Brinkley family reveled in this increased wealth. They purchased a mansion from Paul Edwards on Hudson Drive, a stone's throw from the Rio Grande, soon after they moved to Del Rio. Newly built on a sixteen-acre estate on the south side of town, the mansion—which they named "Palm Drive in Hudson Gardens"—was outside the city limits and had no running water. John built water and sewer systems to the acreage and donated them to the city of Del Rio. They remodeled the house to make it one of the showplaces of Texas. There were eighteen rooms with five baths and two lavatories. The east wing had a library, John's office, and a hallway. The west wing contained John's pride and joy. There, the devotee of organ music built a two-story addition to accommodate an elaborate organ, which reached the ceiling of the lavish music room.



Johnny boy beside his father's Reuter organ. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

The Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence, Kansas, specially built the music room and organ from March 1934 to February 1935. The organ freight bill listed its weight at 22,721 pounds.¹³ Brinkley wanted V.C. Verney of Reuters to supervise the final installation, because John knew him personally and, were it not for Verney, probably would have bought the organ elsewhere. Instead, company president A.G. Sobel himself came to Del Rio. This was an important contract, as the organ alone cost \$7,725, without the expensive paneling and other touches. The wooden symphony pipes from Holland were believed to be unduplicated anywhere. The forty-by-sixty-foot music room had ornate walnut paneling with a beamed ceiling, ten chandeliers from Czechoslovakia—three hanging from the ceiling and seven jutting from the walls—and a grand staircase with cathedral windows at the landing. John used the organ music as a background for his radio broadcasts, which he delivered from the music room. He employed Joe O'Toole, who had made his reputa-

tion at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles, as a full-time organist.¹⁴

John had thousands of rolls of organ music for use in his broadcasts, but he also enjoyed it immensely for relaxation. One retired air force pilot in San Antonio recalled his occasional trips to supply Brinkley with alcohol in the dry city of Del Rio. Once, when the pilot arrived to replenish Brinkley's stock of Lone Star Beer, John discovered the flyer could play the organ and—more importantly—knew his favorite song. As a result, “there was Lone Star and Red Wing until wee hours, when the slightly tipsy flyer” headed back home.¹⁵

The main dining room could seat twenty-four people and also served as a ballroom. It displayed the doctor's fishing trophies, the gold cup won by KFKB, and numerous pictures of John R. Brinkley, including an almost-full-length one in his admiral's uniform, one in his airplane, and one in his yacht, as well as one taken at ten years of age. Next to this was a picture of the old mountain cabin. “Dr. Brinkley” was carved at each table setting, and a set of china had his North Carolina home reproduced in the center of each piece. On Sunday evenings, the Brinkleys dined on gold service. A tap room that could accommodate 250 people was located below the dining room. The game room had pearl inlay game tables from Jerusalem and a rosewood piano that once belonged to Norma Talmadge. There were two bedrooms with separate baths on the main floor. Upstairs, two large bedrooms, paneled in bird's-eye maple, had their own baths and overlooked landscaped gardens. Also on that floor, there was another office for John, a large powder room, cedar closets, and numerous elaborate, beveled mirrors. The house was furnished and decorated with items the Brinkleys had collected during their world travels, such as Persian and Chinese rugs, a hand-carved cedar table from Panama, glassware from Vienna, ebony elephants, and imported French furniture. Four Swiss grandfather clocks chimed the time. The mansion had four fireplaces, one finished in Italian tile. It was truly a showcase home.

The outside was landscaped in a gaudy fashion. The estate was surrounded by an eight-foot brick and ornamental iron fence with two entries to the curved driveway. The main gate had “DOCTOR BRINKLEY” emblazoned across it. Entering motorists encountered a large, twelve-foot-tall statue of Romulus and Remus suckling the she-wolf, a replica of *Winged Victory*, purchased in Naples, that John had chosen to mark his gravesite, the Three Graces monument for Minnie's grave, and other imposing statuary. Three fountains sprayed water thirty feet in the air, and colored lights were turned on the main one—which had his name spelled out—when Brinkley was



The Brinkleys pose for a family portrait in their Del Rio home. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

broadcasting or for other special occasions. John spent \$14,161.91 on the swimming pool, which connected with the house. It had a fourteen-foot-high springboard, two chrome ladders, and was tiled with tiny swastikas and black replicas of the Iron Cross, reflecting John's current political philosophy. The pool and tennis court were surrounded by shrubbery, twelve Italian cypress trees, numerous palms, and some eight thousand rose bushes.

There was also a verandah and a four-car garage with living quarters above. Galapago turtles and flamingos wandered about the grounds, until the latter perished during a cold snap. Occasionally the turtles were out when John drove home, and Minnie reported his impatience over their slowness in crossing the driveway. John's name or initials were everywhere—on the main fountain, the staircase, his organ seat, his twelve automobiles, the three yachts, and the airplanes. Several observers counted his initials thirteen times on his favorite red Cadillac. Minnie later told an interested buyer that the estate cost \$250,000 “during the depression times and la-



A grown Johnny boy by the pool in Del Rio. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

bor was cheap." By contrast, Buster Keaton's fabulous Italian Villa in Hollywood cost \$200,000 in 1926, during the prosperity and inflated values of the Roaring Twenties.¹⁶

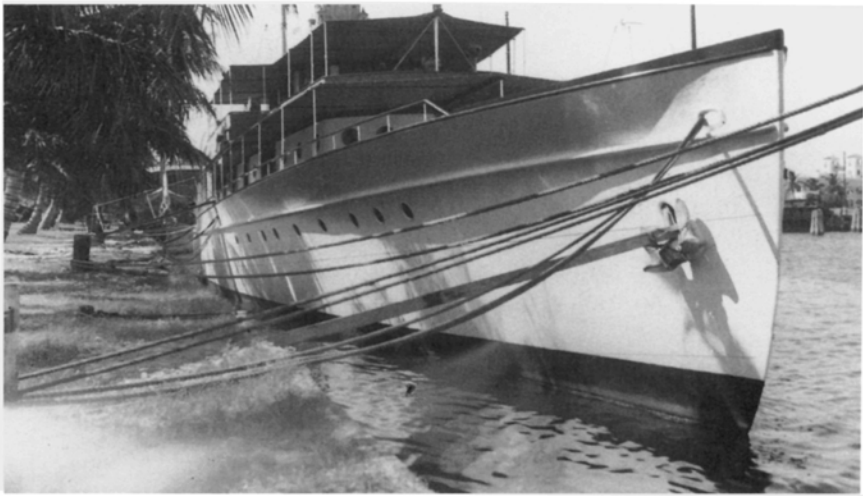
The Brinkleys alternated their color schemes. When the house was painted pink, all the automobiles were fire-engine red. Later, when they repainted everything apple green, the autos were emerald—including Johnny Boy's, which sported a license plate bearing the imprint "John R. Brinkley III." Another period brought a red, white, and blue motif: white stucco, blue paths, red front door. The grass, shrubs, flowers, and trees stayed green, but in this semi-arid country it was a major undertaking to keep them watered.

The Brinkleys were generous with their manor. They invited both rich and poor from both banks of the river to their parties, in one instance hosting over 1,300 people. They had a large fireworks display on the Fourth of July, when they were not on summer vacation, and lighted up the fountains for all to see. During the Christmas season, the area children were invited in to view the fairyland and were given sacks of candy, nuts, and fruit. The Brinkleys also delivered toys to children in impoverished neighborhoods, and John always had a truckload of apples, bananas, and oranges parked in

Greenwood Park to mete out to the poor during the Yuletide season. Minnie later recalled that John was so generous and gave away so much that she occasionally had to protest. Brinkley had a charge account at the Guarantee Department Store that was open to any youngster who needed shoes or a winter coat. Brinkley was benevolent to numerous charities, but the Shriners' Children's Home in Kansas and Father Flanagan's Boys Home in Omaha were his favorite philanthropies.¹⁷

When John discovered that Del Rio High School lacked proper equipment for business education, he purchased typewriters, desks, and other items to rectify the need. He belonged to Rotary and once offered to match dollar-for-dollar the club's student loan fund. At one luncheon, the members raised \$800, and he good naturedly donated a similar amount. He was always thoughtful of children on both sides of the border. Border musician Juan Raul Rodriguez, who grew up in Villa Acuna, described the radio station as "something amazing." He recalled that he and his friends never left the area. They slept there, they played there. Big cars came and left, beautiful music wafted everywhere, "and you saw flashing lights dancing along the wires, just like the angels in heaven." Near the station, the boys played baseball using a piece of wood for a bat. One day the doctor drove up, came over, examined the "bat," shook his head, and drove off. The boys were afraid of what he might do to them, but the next day a man came out of the station and gave them a new ball and bat. "Dr. Brinkley was always generous with us," Rodriguez recalled.¹⁸

The Brinkleys especially enjoyed their summer vacations, and these were enhanced when they were on their yacht. They ultimately owned three, each successively larger and more splendid than the previous. The first, originally called *The Amazon* but renamed *Dr. Brinkley*, cost \$20,000 and was 115 feet long. The family used it for cruising the Great Lakes. *Dr. Brinkley II*, purchased on March 13, 1934, was 150 feet long, had a 2,500-horse diesel engine, and a crew of fourteen. Brinkley sold this vessel to the president of Venezuela before buying *Dr. Brinkley III*. Built in 1926, it had known several owners. John acquired it from Joseph M. Schenck, the movie producer. Requiring a crew of twenty-three men, the 171-foot-long, \$500,000 yacht had twin diesel engines that powered it at fifteen knots. The crew, of course, had the name of the ship emblazoned on their uniforms. Its luxuries included an Ampico A model 1927 piano that John had constructed and installed according to specifications. It had a handcrafted cabinet that required two years for the Hofstader Brothers of Long Island to build. They only made "one of



The 171-foot *Dr. Brinkley III*. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

a kind” pianos and, in 1975, a catalog listed the sale price of this one at \$16,700. John first moored the yacht at Corpus Christi, but was annoyed by the numerous drawbridge delays when putting out to sea, so he moved it to Galveston. In the 1930s, Governor Walter A. Huxman named John R. Brinkley “Admiral, the Governor’s Staff, State of Kansas.” John loved to wear his admiral’s uniform—the gold buttons of which cost a reputed \$1,500—and sword while in command on his yacht. Through their yachting, the Brinkleys became friends of the duke and duchess of Windsor. Minnie recalled taking the yacht to Nassau occasionally to visit them. “I’d go out to the country club in the afternoon—they had a box there—and I’d sit in the box with the duchess while the duke played polo.”¹⁹

In the summer of 1935, the Brinkleys made a yacht trip to Canada, taking the Munals and the Osborns with them. Margaret Bird Osborn kept a diary of the voyage:

- 19 June—she and Minnie rose early for a shopping trip and luncheon at the Waldorf Astoria—“New York City’s Finest”
- 21 June—the yacht left at daybreak for New London, Connecticut. Yale and Harvard were having their annual rowing race—saw M/M Franklin Roosevelt
- 23 June—to Boston
- 26 June—went cod fishing at Portsmouth, N.H.

- 28 June—toured Portsmouth
- 29 June—Johnny Boy's nurse sick—played bridge till midnight
- 1 July—Nova Scotia yacht went aground (in a fog at Cheboque Point)
- 4 July—sheriff came on board, arrested Dr. B
man wants \$5,000 for pulling us off the rocks
- 6 July—in drydock to repair damage
- 9 July—Dr. B and crew in courthouse with Dr. B's lawyer foggy so took train to Sidney while the yacht sailed there
- 12-13 July—deep sea fishing at Sidney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia
bridge in evening
- 18 July—went to movie—saw our yacht on newsreel at New London watching boat races—footage also showed the President and First Lady
- 23 July—Gaspé—men went trout fishing
- 24 July—expensive fishing—\$30 for license and \$1.50 every time you cast
Dr. Brinkley didn't mind the cost—he wanted fish
- 30 July—on island once owned by the Chocolate King of France
He paid \$30,000 for it, sold it to the government for \$60,000,000
His home like a palace—a Dr. Cooper and the governor here for lunch
Men went deer hunting—a store here like Abe Foleys in Milford
Men got 150 pounder—crew pulled it up on ropes and dressed it
- 29 July?—in gulf of St. Lawrence River—have to pick up guide now
Going to Quebec City for touring
- 31 July—on way to Montreal
- 2 August—Mrs. B and I went to Bank of Montreal—largest in the world
Mrs. B cashed \$1,000 check—bank president Sir Charles Garden came to yacht for lunch—has one like it in Scotland
- 3 August—went to “Black Horse Beer” brewery
Saw Mae West in “Going to Town”
- 3 August—on return trip—saw white whales for first time

- Dr. B tried to get permission to shoot another deer but Big Boy that owns the island would not permit it
- 7-8 August—anchored at Liverpool
Dr. B says he'll stay until Christmas if necessary to get a big tuna
- 10 August—Dr. B caught 690 pound tuna
Will mount it and give it to Del Rio High School
- 11 August—Dr. B calls Dr. Minal to join party in Portland
- 12 August—taking Minal's car across Maine while yacht goes on

They caught up with the yacht and sailed to Washington, D.C. There, John renewed acquaintances with Charles Curtis and former Congressman James Strong who was currently a member of the Federal Home Owners Loan Corporation. During this visit, John also held a news conference in which he disclaimed interest in politics and criticized the Roosevelt administration for excessive spending. When asked his opinion of Senator Huey Long's "share the wealth" plan, he responded, "I am just like any other rich man." The Brinkleys sailed down the Potomac, drove their car to Memphis, then continued on home to Del Rio.²⁰

The following year, the Brinkleys had a film made of their voyage to the South Seas. Johnny Boy wrote an essay for his English class describing the cruise from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It began in early May and their fee to go through the Panama Canal was \$241. They fished around the isle of Cocos, and Johnny Boy was proud that he had caught a sailfish that gave him the title of boys champ for the Pacific. His paper earned him an A+ for "interest" and a B+ for "punctuation." When they returned home, they traded their Lockheed Orion for a Lockheed Electra, the most modern twin-engine plane available.²¹

John Brinkley was proud of his prowess as a deep-sea fisherman. He had a court official in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, attest to his having caught the 690-pound tuna. The following year he caught a tuna weighing 788 pounds, thus breaking the world's record set by Zane Grey, the famous Western novelist. There was a sour note on the return home, however, when someone stole \$1,500 from John's jacket pocket during their stop in Jamaica.²²

In 1937 the Brinkleys made an extensive tour of Europe after the Rotarians chose him as a delegate to attend their international conference in Nice. Before they left, they hosted a party for 1,350 people from Del Rio and Villa Acuna as a bon voyage reception. The gardens at their mansion were converted into a huge Japanese fairy-

land. A special platform was erected for the Gunther Hotel orchestra featuring blues singer Mary Healy. James O. Weldon served as master of ceremonies. Mrs. Weldon provided Japanese umbrellas as a favor for the ladies, who could have their fortunes told in one of the "mystery" booths. Prizes for the guests were drawn periodically. Twenty girls from the local high school in elaborate geisha costumes and a cigarette girl served the guests. Every five minutes from 5:30 to 11:30 P.M., a fireworks specialist from Dallas sent up aerial displays that reportedly rivaled Texas's centennial display the previous year. At 8:00 John delivered a five-minute speech and at 9:00 Minnie and Johnny Boy talked to the guests for five minutes. At 11:30 a sign was lighted saying "good night." Meanwhile, the guests had consumed 12 hams, 192 chickens, 70 pounds of canapes, 2 cases of eggs, 250 gallons of punch, 40 gallons of fruit cocktail, 15 crates of oranges, and 6 gallons of olives, in addition to untold amounts of ice cream. It was the greatest party ever given in southwest Texas at that time.²³

When the Brinkleys arrived in Liverpool, England, aboard the *Queen Mary*, they received a royal welcome "with a blare of waterfront whistles and sirens." "Thrice welcome," wrote the *Liverpool Advance*, "you are more welcome than the flowers in May." Minnie later described over the radio their adventures in motoring across Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Holland, England, Scotland, Ireland, and several other countries. They had left Del Rio on May 1, then drove to Memphis, on to Sylva, North Carolina, and then to New York City, where their cruise departed. They returned to the States on board the *Normandie* on September 3.²⁴

Dr. Morris Fishbein was a fellow passenger on board the *Normandie* on the return voyage. Although he, too, had been a delegate to the Rotary convention and the two club members had seen each other on board, they did not speak to each other. Lowell Brown, Johnny Boy's tutor, said his charge had played with the Fishbein boy for "two or three days until they knew whose sons they were." Brown visited with Fishbein's daughter and played ping-pong with her. On the second or third day he "casually" asked her if she knew who his boss was and told her. "She was interested in what kind of man Dr. Brinkley was," Brown reported. Fishbein believed he already knew what kind of man he was and pointedly ignored the Brinkleys.²⁵

The Brinkleys' wealth and notoriety allowed them to enjoy other special occasions, such as joining "hordes of celebrities" in attending the premiere of *Gone With the Wind* in Atlanta in 1939. As one writer noted, John "might well have been mistaken for a Hollywood



J.R. Brinkley in 1939. The photograph is signed, "To my only son John, John R. Brinkley, MD, Oct. 23, 1939." (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

character actor specializing in physicians roles." His attire, glasses, goatee, and appearance fit the stereotype.²⁶

John remained active politically, though by this time primarily as a financial contributor. He sent a memo to Dwight Osborn in 1938 that he had just returned from Dallas, where he had a conference with Karl Crowley, who was the Roosevelt administration's candidate for governor. He believed this had been "a good expense of time and money." If Crowley won his race, well and good, but if he did not, he would return to Washington as solicitor in the Post Office Department. "This will be a mighty good friend for us up there," he added, "in the department where we at all times need friends." As a shrewd businessman, Brinkley hedged his bets. Although he detested the New Deal with its vast expenditures, high taxes, and liberal bureaucracy, he was aware of the political importance of

supporting candidates of whichever party was in power, especially in his line of work. He donated \$2,000 to help reduce the party debt from the 1936 campaign, a substantial sum coming from an individual. In March 1938, he donated \$500 to the Democratic National Committee, and another \$100 later that August. As a faithful and generous supporter, he was invited to the Jackson Day Dinner in 1940, where he rubbed elbows with a thousand Democratic celebrities, including George Allen, Joseph Davies, James Farley, Cordell Hull, Sam Rayburn, Mrs. John Hay Whitney, and Harry Woodring. Of course, he was expected to make a big contribution again that year.²⁷

Meanwhile, Brinkley continued his fascination with, and support of, the American Fascist movement. In fact, his interest in the faction increased as war clouds gathered over Europe, although he was more discrete about it than he was with his contributions to the Democratic party. His Wichita friend Gerald Burton Winrod was enthusiastic over Hitler's Nazi movement. In 1934 Winrod received an invitation from the Third Reich to tour Germany. Thereafter he served as a relay station for the World Nazi Service and associated Fascist agencies. In 1938, Winrod "made the strongest bid of all the Native Fascists who ran for high political office" by challenging Clyde Reed in the Kansas primary for his U.S. Senate seat. Winrod distributed more campaign literature than any other candidate in that race and expanded his mailing list to 150,000 by using Brinkley's rolls. He received 52,000 votes to Reed's 104,000. During 1940, the Dies Committee, or House Select Committee on Un-American Activities, investigated domestic Fascism, including Winrod, E.J. Garner, editor of *Publicity*, and William Dudley Pelley, leader of the American Fascist party. In July 1942, the U.S. government indicted twenty-eight American Fascists, including leaders Pelley, Winrod, and Garner. They were brought to court in 1944, but the judge died during the proceedings, so a mistrial was declared.

Pelley had organized his Silver Shirt Legion in 1932 in Asheville, North Carolina, just fifty miles east of Brinkley's birthplace. He published his magazine, *The New Liberator*, there and by 1936 had enough followers to justify announcing his candidacy for president of the United States. By that time he and his men were quite active in distributing Nazi propaganda. In 1938 alone, the Dies Committee discovered, he had dispersed "a million pieces of literature over the country." His work was expensive, and Pelley testified that John Brinkley had "loaned" him \$5,000 for his Silver Shirts' activities.²⁸

While Brinkley allotted much of his wealth to yachts and traveling, he also invested a good deal of money in various enterprises.

In addition to holding stock in General Motors, Bendix, Libby Owens, and Ford, municipal bonds, and other investments, he purchased two citrus groves in San Juan. The local lumber yard in Del Rio proved to be an excellent investment. He also purchased a ranch in Texas. In addition to his radio stations, he owned a farm in Musquiz, Mexico; a goat farm in Oklahoma; a partnership in a Del Rio finance company; and Texas oil wells. He also founded the Brinkley Oil Company in Caldwell County, Texas, and held an interest in an Arizona gold mine.²⁹

John also made a major investment in his home area of North Carolina. In the summer of 1936, Laura Wike asked William H. Smith, an old school chum of Brinkley's, to inquire if John would be interested in purchasing their family farm, which they needed to sell because of financial setbacks. John replied he did not want "a damn thing" to do with the Wikes, because of the way the family treated him after he and Sally separated. After thinking about it, though, nostalgia set in and he changed his mind. He decided it would be interesting to become involved again in the old home area, and three weeks later he closed the deal. He hired "Will" Smith to operate the farm for him and gradually expanded his investment until he owned over seven thousand acres in the North Carolina mountains. He built a comfortable summer home on the Wike farm, and the Brinkleys returned there annually to spend part of their summer vacation. Will Smith's son, Bill, was the same age as Johnny Boy. He recalled that when the Brinkleys vacationed there in the summertime, Johnny Boy, of course, wanted to play with the fellows. He always carried a sack of dimes, and Bill and his friends soon discovered they could make young Brinkley pay each of them ten cents to join their games. A dime in the Depression was a nice sum for a ten year old, and a sackful seemed like a fortune. Soon after John's involvement in his home area, he erected the monument to Aunt Sally. He always lamented the fact that he became interested in his native territory too late to save the cabin in which he and Aunt Sally had lived.³⁰

With Brinkley's increased wealth came tax problems. The Internal Revenue Service, along with several other federal agencies, kept a close scrutiny of his activities, searching for a misstep. The Brinkleys used the Kansas City CPA firm of Baird, Kurtz & Dobson as their tax accountants. W.E. Baird reported in August 1936 that he had negotiated a settlement with the IRS for their 1934 tax return. After the Mexican government closed XER, the loss of their Villa Acuna radio station stock was divided between John and Minnie for their joint return, rather than computing all the stock as belong-



The Brinkleys' summer vacation home in North Carolina. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

ing to Minnie, as it was shown on paper. (John was always careful to make Minnie the majority owner of these properties, so he could disclaim ownership if necessary.) This allowance reduced their deficiency payment from over \$30,000 to \$8,000. But the IRS agent balked at agreeing to a large writeoff for the abandoned properties in Milford.³¹

When the Brinkleys left Milford, they moved the contents of the drugstore with them. The loss of this account, plus the significant Brinkley deposits, forced the Milford State Bank to close its doors. The Brinkleys donated their First National Bank certificate to their friend, Lee McChesney, the State Bank cashier, to help him "get out of trouble with the Banking Department." McChesney followed his friend to Del Rio and established roots there, with John employing his wife. Milford no longer had bus or railroad service, and "the town is so dead and so isolated . . . that no organization would want to go there," Brinkley notified his tax agent. He had stripped both hospitals and the apartment house of all useable equipment and could not find a buyer for the properties nor any organization that would accept them as a gift. "The Shriners' Home for Crippled Children would not accept the property," he asserted, "be-

cause they must locate in a city where capable medical men are to be had to act on their staff.”³²

Brinkley hired Howard Wilson to handle the abandoned property for him. Wilson had been his business secretary but did not want to move to Del Rio, so he remained behind to manage loose business ends. Wilson sold Dwight Osborn’s house to a friend and leased the Brinkley house, although he later evicted the family who rented it “because they were practically worthless.” Meanwhile, since the Brinkleys were not paying taxes on the hospital and apartment buildings, the county was preparing to auction them off for back taxes. Something had to be done soon. When doctor Owensby moved his medical practice from Rosalia back to Milford, Wilson approached him about purchasing the properties. Owensby declined because he was uncertain about the future of his practice and reasoned that if he decided to buy the buildings, he could get them from the county for the price of the back taxes. Brinkley could not find a purchaser and lamented that no one would accept the hospital as a gift, “unless it might be the Geary County Commissioners for a poor farm.” (The State of Kansas continued its disgraceful poor farms system through much of the Great Depression.) One woman offered to pay Brinkley \$2,000 to give the hospital to the county because she believed the local government might hire her to run the institution. Her offer, he told the CPAs, “was too absurd to consider.” He had shown his good faith “in wrecking the old hospital, the barn, and some of the residences,” and now he wanted a write-off for the new hospital he had never used, so it could be razed and the land cleared.³³

The Brinkleys had just returned from their summer vacation, he added in his letter to the accountants, and he had performed twenty-three operations the previous week. He also informed them that he and Minnie had made a gift of their mansion to Johnny Boy in 1936 and also a 310-acre farm in Jackson County, North Carolina, the old Wike property. This is what the Brinkleys later termed the “first trust.” When Brinkley received clear title to another 7,000 acres there, he noted that he expected to make those lands a gift to Johnny Boy as well.³⁴

Baird, Kurtz & Dobson soon reported on a conference they had with an IRS representative concerning the Milford property. Costs were high when the Milford buildings were constructed in 1930, plus John had paid a premium to have them completed at the earliest possible date, and he was asking for a write-off of \$95,000. The hospital had cost him about \$77,000 and the apartment building \$27,000, but he had depreciated them a few thousand dollars in his estimates, which accounted for the difference of \$10,000. The IRS

agent insisted the buildings had a salvage value of \$30,000 and \$10,000 respectively, sums that Mr. Baird thought were “ridiculously high.” Yet Baird believed they would allow “some amount” of a write-off for the remaining value of the buildings if John was willing to make a gift of them to a charitable institution in 1936. Finally, the Brinkleys thought, the ties to Milford would be broken completely—except for some land that Minnie would sell to the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1960s as part of the construction of Lake Milford.³⁵

The U.S. government at this time was preparing to attack the borderblasters through the IRS. Norman Baker wrote Brinkley to determine if he, too, had received notice that the IRS was considering his sales of airtime to advertisers in the United States as U.S. taxable income. Upon receiving this letter, Brinkley immediately contacted Baird, Kuntz & Dobson. They responded with a lengthy interpretation of IRS policy on taxing income from U.S. sources by foreign corporations and vice versa. “The income from a sale is usually located at the point the sale is made,” the CPAs concluded. These included the place where the sale is made, the place where the title changes hands or service is performed, and the place where payment is made. If a Mexican corporation provided transportation from Mexico to the United States, or if a foreign corporation shipped and sold commodities to a point in the U.S., these would be sales and thus taxable. “Radio broadcasting service,” Baird reasoned, “is hardly the same as items of tangible personal property.” In Brinkley’s case, the contracts were in Spanish, dated and signed in Mexico, “and the Mexican station [XERA at that time] had no office or agent in the United States.” Baird reminded John that “the Treasury Department tried to assess all the income to you [earlier], but finally admitted that it was doubtful if it [XER] had any income in the United States.” He believed that, in Baker’s case, the IRS was “trying to extend the taxing power further than it should.” In the instance of radio, the service of the station is “simply to broadcast electrical energy on the air and any person who desires to and has the mechanical facilities can pick it up.” XERA contracts were made in Mexico, the service was performed in Mexico, and it was the advertiser who obtained income in the United States, not the broadcaster; thus the advertiser would be liable for income taxes, but not Brinkley.³⁶

In 1937 Brinkley’s stock broker approved his plan to switch some of his stocks that had been losing money to better investments. Such a move would allow Brinkley to establish capital losses to offset his capital gain of \$36,000, made on the sale of his yacht, *Dr.*

Brinkley II, that year. Babson's Reports specifically recommended numerous of his holdings in stocks and bonds be changed for that purpose and also for expected future gain in value of the new investments. By that time the Brinkley income was enormous. John asked his banker for a temporary loan with his stocks serving as collateral. He needed \$50,000 for his fourth installment on his 1936 federal income tax, and he required a loan to pay his "extra assessment." Even with Brinkley's monstrous overhead and tax deductions, his federal income tax bill was immense, averaging \$200,000 annually, plus an "extra" payment.³⁷

John continued to keep abreast of his businesses' financial details. In October 1938, he wrote his business manager to buy air time from Walter Wilson for the remainder of 1938 and all of 1939. The rate of exchange was currently five pesos to one dollar, and he believed the Department of State would soon settle the "appropriated land" issue with President Cardenas. The peso subsequently would become stronger, so he wanted to purchase \$70,000 or 350,000 pesos immediately before its value rose.³⁸

This forced attention to minutia was beginning to exasperate John, especially as his health began to deteriorate. When he discovered Osborn's "wastefulness" in using express rather than freight rates on the book supply, he thought this "just another case of nobody willing to use their head." Brinkley was "just tired and played out" from doing his employees' thinking and work and claimed he was "going to shake loose from it," although he did not elaborate on this threat. On another occasion he chastised Abe Johnson for not accepting the responsibility of policing these details for him. He added that his health was "just about gone now and when you folks lose me, you are going to lose a mighty good friend and I can't help it if business kills me off by worry." When Johnson forgot to put his notary seal on federal and state forms for Minnie's liquor license, Brinkley asked, "Abe, are you developing loss of memory? That is a sign of prostate trouble." Yet when Johnson did not take his usual two-week vacation because of the press of work, John told him to write himself a check for an additional half-month salary as a sign of his "appreciation for your loyalty and good work."³⁹

Brinkley continued to buy diamonds, his favorite jewel, until he had invested an estimated \$100,000 in them. He informed Abe Johnson that he had recently bought a twenty-two-carat diamond ring for himself. Then he purchased a three-and-one-half-carat solitaire for Minnie. He asked the business agent to have the latter insured for \$2,000. His income also was rising. The Brinkley Hospital and drugstore brought in \$399,448.85 in 1936. This declined to

\$298,969.12 in 1937, showing the effects of the new competition he was encountering in Del Rio. Then in 1938 it jumped to \$458,499.95, with the revenues of the last nine months of the year coming from Arkansas. By contrast, the average physician of the period earned between \$3,000 and \$3,500 annually, and specialists made perhaps double that amount.⁴⁰

Brinkley began experiencing keen rivalry in his prostate business in the late 1930s. One of Del Rio's regular physicians, James R. Middlebrook, saw the enormity of John's business, decided there were enough patients for two practitioners, and—according to one observer—“went off the ethical rails.” He began performing the Brinkley operation at a cut rate. He advertised over station XEPN and soon had a booming business. The Middlebrook Hotel was packed with patients, while Brinkley's Roswell Hotel was experiencing increasing vacancies. For \$5, Dr. Middlebrook even offered a Special Prostate Package for Home Treatment. Soon Middlebrook had high-pressure men boarding the incoming trains to Del Rio, searching for elderly men who appeared to be prospects for the Brinkley Operation, and persuading them to choose his cheaper procedure. In retaliation, Brinkley hired representatives to waylay the backsliders and convince them to continue on to the Brinkley Hospital. These shenanigans undoubtedly startled the accosted train passengers bound for a different destination or purpose. Middlebrook agents also inspected the Roswell Hotel guest registrations to contact Brinkley patients. John reproached the city fathers for not preventing this, but to no avail. Merchants welcomed the competition, because they believed it increased the number of visitors to their city. John warned radio listeners that no doctor in Del Rio had seen his operation performed, so no one else could duplicate it. He also made derogatory remarks in his talks about the “one eyed skunk,” a reference to his competitor's physical disability. In his radio talks, Brinkley alerted prospective patients that, upon their arrival in Del Rio, they might be approached by a stranger who tells them another doctor is performing the Brinkley operation. Get the name of the doctor,” he urged, and ask about him at the banks and among the town lawyers. “Your health is your most valuable possession and don't let imitators tinker with it. Some men have been led astray . . . some have died,” he warned ominously.⁴¹

Often these two groups of enticers got into gang fights. On one occasion, Henry “Coonie” Crawford was driving a taxi in Del Rio, and a Middlebrook thug tried to steal his fare at the Roswell Hotel. “He approached me and I just floored him and he slid halfway under the car,” Crawford related. Brinkley was so impressed with his physi-

cal prowess that he hired Crawford as Johnny Boy's bodyguard. John also pressured local merchants without qualms. He sent a memo to Abe Johnson, Walter Wilson, and Mrs. McChesney that although the Morris Tire Shop professed friendship, Brinkley had the owner interviewed "by strangers twice . . . and he is plugging for Middlebrook. Kindly discontinue giving him any of your business and if he asks why, just tell him why."⁴²

John always insisted on having a monopoly, and now the competition was becoming too keen. On January 31, 1938, he announced he had purchased the Shriners Country Club on the Arch Street Pike, sixteen miles south of Little Rock, and would move his medical practice there. Most of his staff moved to Arkansas with him. Dr. Kline, his specialist in rectums, opened a practice in San Antonio and began advertising that, because of his experience with Brinkley, he could perform the prostate operation at a cut-rate. Kline was the only exception to an otherwise loyal staff⁴³

By March the Brinkley transfer had been completed. John also bought the old St. Luke's Hospital at 1908 Schiller in Little Rock. This facility accommodated forty to fifty patients, and the operations were performed there. The Country Club south of Little Rock, located in Saline County, was built of native stone and faced a 100-acre lake. The Shriners had developed a 350-acre golf course there in the 1920s, but it suffered financial difficulties during the Great Depression and had to close. John turned it into the Brinkley Country Club Hospital. It could house fifty people, and the patients were transferred there from the city for convalescence. It was "The Most Beautiful Hospital in the World," John advertised. As usual, though, his patients could only stay there for a maximum of six days because they had to make room for the next week's arrivals.⁴⁴

As a commuter again, John was busier than ever. Each Monday he flew to Little Rock, then usually on Thursday or Friday he returned to Del Rio. He performed little of the actual surgery, but devoted most of his time to recruiting, public relations, and supervising his businesses. Dr. Dwight Osborn headed the surgical staff, assisted by Drs. A.C. Petemeyer, J.H. Davis, J.F. Hilburn, and the chief surgical nurse, Vera Wederbrook. Davis and Hilburn were native Arkansans. The members of the Texas Medical Society breathed a collective sigh of relief over these developments, but most of the citizens of Del Rio were dismayed at his departure. They especially disliked hearing the new message over XERA that the time of day was brought to them "courtesy of the Brinkley Hospitals in Little Rock, Arkansas."⁴⁵

Supervising the Arkansas activities from a distance was diffi-



J.R. Brinkley's hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

cult, however, especially during extended Brinkley family vacations. He wrote Dr. Osborn that he should continue to keep his hand in operating, which he was neglecting, reminding him that:

I used to do all my own surgery, appear on the radio station every night, dictate all my own mail. . . . The reason I was able to do this was I refused to have my time taken up by people coming around and talking with me. You must get yourself so organized that people can't find and see you to talk to you. A lot of your time is taken up with needless conversation.

When I was down there, I noticed men coming into Abe's [Johnson] office, talking and discussing stuff that he has no interest in. This should not be permitted.

John never wasted time in what he considered useless conversation. In fact, he talked to his patients as little as possible, observing

once that he “never thought talking to people helped them get well.” He also insisted that Osborn write him a letter once a week, so that he could be kept apprized of developments in Little Rock while he was away.⁴⁶

As he had done in Milford and again in Del Rio, Brinkley was careful to cultivate good relations in his new environment. His staff bought food for the kitchens from local producers. He hired numerous locals, and the hotels and tourist courts prospered from the patronage of prospective patients and their families. Little Rock taxi drivers were particularly enthusiastic about the new business because the town hospital was a good distance from the railway station. One estimate held that his practice brought in about \$25,000 in new money to Little Rock each week. Like the previous towns, Little Rock inhabitants enjoyed his presence because it helped to alleviate the poor economic conditions they were experiencing as a result of the Great Depression. John, however, did not become as active in Little Rock civic life as he had been in Milford and Del Rio. Little Rock was the largest center for a base of operations that Brinkley had ever had, and its sheer size precluded his dominance in the life of the city.⁴⁷

Brinkley purchased a drugstore at Twelfth and Schilling and renamed it the Romulus Drugstore. “Acid-stomach pills were mailed out at five dollars for a hundred and a laxative at three dollars for six ounces,” one source claimed. It required a staff of thirty-five to handle the two thousand pieces of correspondence that arrived daily in response to the doctor’s broadcasts. The letters poured in, often written with pencil on lined tablet paper. Wives of prostate patients were given a special offer of receiving a thorough examination for \$50 while they waited during the husband’s convalescent period.⁴⁸

Knowing the importance of political influence, it seemed natural for Brinkley to become active in Arkansas politics. The first step, of course, was to register to vote. But before paying the state poll tax, however, he consulted with Baird, Kuntz & Hobson. He was informed that such a move would preclude his right to make a community property tax return in Texas. This, in turn, would greatly affect the Brinkley federal taxes because they would be unable to file a joint return. Consequently, he maintained his voter registration in Texas.⁴⁹

On the days spent in Del Rio, John continued radio broadcasting; on the other days, his talks came to listeners by electrical transcript. Following a few bars of “America,” he read testimonials of the curative powers of his treatment, followed by the message that John Smith of Pinehollow, Kentucky, or Joe Brown of Wiggins Gap, Mis-

souri, or whoever happened to give the testimonial that day, sends “love to the kids,” is “feeling fine,” and “will be home soon.” As the international crisis worsened in Europe and Asia, America’s sentiment in favor of isolation quickened, at least in Congress and certain parts of the country. Brinkley, an ardent isolationist and Anglophobe, increasingly devoted his Sunday night messages to the looming European war and America’s danger of being drawn into it.

Midwesterners, especially many Kansans, were strongly isolationist at that time. Brinkley’s old opponent, Harry Woodring, had been secretary of war since 1936. He was as avid an isolationist as the doctor, and his service in this cabinet post had made him a controversial figure. His outspoken opposition to helping the British buy American armaments finally forced the president to ask for his resignation in June 1940. Woodring thus became the only member of Roosevelt’s cabinet to be fired.⁵⁰

“With fear and trembling I come before you this evening,” Brinkley began a chat in early 1940. “[Under Secretary of State] Sumner Welles is going to call on [British Prime Minister Neville] Chamberlain, Mussolini, Hitler, and that feller ‘Deeloddy-ay’ [French Prime Minister Edouard Daladier],” he warned, and interfere with events that were not of concern to Americans. Only “racketeers,” he warned darkly, wanted America to become involved in European affairs. The Kansas weekly *Publicity* regularly reprinted these talks, with the plea to send money to the doctor in Del Rio to help him continue his fight for righteousness. He particularly singled out Communists in his attacks. “War is the Communist’s delight,” he warned, “he mixes its bitter broth for the lips of your sweet boy.” But no matter how foreboding his message each day, he always ended with a cheery commercial: “Now if Doctor Brinkley has been of any help to you mothers and fathers, I hope you will come to see us and be our patients.” Just to keep his political fences mended, though, he allowed Minnie to broadcast for the candidacy of John Nance Garner, their Uvalde neighbor, for the presidency in 1940.⁵¹

John managed to turn the military situation in China to his advantage. On his trip to that country in 1923, he had operated on a Mr. Chui of Shanghai and a Captain Yung. He corresponded with Chui over the years, and in 1938 Yung wrote asking for a loan of \$500 to help him weather his current business crisis. John told his secretary to retrieve Yung’s last letter and picture and those of Chui and prepare a four-page brochure for advertising. “Everyone is interested in the Chinese situation,” he noted, and “besides, they make a good reference.” He instructed her to write the following message for the pamphlet:

These letters from former patients in China are interesting. They bring us a glimpse of what they have been suffering. However, in spite of this, they both have perfect health and they attribute their fifteen years of good health to Doctor Brinkley's Surgical Technique.

Even in far away war torn China Doctor Brinkley's work stands up like the Rock of Gibraltar.⁵²

Soon after the move to Arkansas, threats began to loom on the medical horizon. Brinkley had been charging patients \$100 for his post-operative injections of formula 1020—so named, he said, because the solution contained one thousand parts of distilled water with one part of hydrochloric acid captured in one, 20cc ampule. After several doctors sent samples to the American Medical Association, however, their chemistry department analyzed the contents and determined that the mixture consisted of water with a dash of indigo dye. The discovery that Brinkley's injections actually consisted of one part dye to one hundred thousand parts water was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. While doctors read this report, the general public remained unaware of—and probably uninterested in—the fraud. This mixture, Morris Fishbein remarked wryly, was “about what you would get by throwing a bottle of bluing into Lake Michigan.”⁵³

Growing weary of the constant pressure from the AMA, John decided on an audacious undertaking in 1936. He sent out a dozen men to organize doctors who were dissatisfied with the AMA into an opposing medical group. The Texas Medical Board learned, for example, that he had offered W.D. Bernard of Dallas \$350 per month and an automobile to travel the country, promoting the rogue organization. Brinkley envisioned gathering in both doctors who agreed with his thinking about the “Amateur Meat-Cutters Association” and also those who opposed the American Hospital Association. He would, of course, use his radio stations to promote the drive and had even established an insurance company to protect his members at a nominal fee. The AMA, however, had thoroughly destroyed most of its opposition and sufficiently cowed the remainder over the previous four decades, and the grand scheme failed to develop.⁵⁴

For his part, John's old nemesis Morris Fishbein was not finished in his long struggle to demolish the “quack.” In early 1938, Fishbein published an article in *Hygeia* that denounced John Brinkley, stating that in him “quackery reached its apotheosis.” He briefly reviewed Brinkley's life and his questionable medical training with scathing terms and a biting tone. He even noted that, when

on ocean voyages, unlike other passengers, John kept to himself and refused to mingle with fellow travelers—likely, Fishbein speculated, because he was ashamed of his work and wanted his identity to remain unknown. Brinkley had “consummate gall beyond anything revealed by any other charlatan,” Fishbein marveled. He expressed mock admiration for Brinkley’s continued astuteness in “shaking the shekels from the pockets of credulous Americans, notwithstanding the efforts of various governmental departments and agencies.” For the charlatan, “the money rolls in, which proves that the wages of sin is not always death.” Fishbein demanded action on this problem from the U.S. Post Office.⁵⁵

John Brinkley had filed numerous lawsuits over the years against editorials or descriptions he disliked, including one almost a decade earlier against Morris Fishbein. He won only one of these, receiving \$1,000 from *Radio Guide* for a derogatory article it had published about him. Most of the others never came to trial or he withdrew them before final decision. The Fishbein article in 1938, though, offended him so deeply that he decided to sue the AMA official for libel—again. It was the greatest mistake of his flamboyant career. Needless to say, John’s patients would not have read *Hygeia* and discovered he was a quack. Fishbein believed that had Brinkley not done so, “he might have enjoyed his brand of success for several years more.” The question is why John Brinkley made this terrible error. One possible answer is that he had been declining in health, knew he had cancer, and believed he had little to lose or long to live. If he had known of the financial difficulties that would follow, however, he surely never would have committed such a blunder, regardless of the provocation. It was likely that being such an egotist, though, he could not begin to imagine his looming legal woes.⁵⁶

Chapter 8

Decline and Fall

On a late winter day in 1938 in Dallas, Morris Fishbein was handed a summons to appear in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas at Del Rio to defend himself on charges of libel for the article he published in *Hygeia* the previous month. His defamation of John R. Brinkley, the suit alleged, would result in injuring the doctor's reputation and medical practice to the extent that his income would drop one-quarter of a million dollars annually, from \$1,150,000 to \$810,000, and John sought \$250,000 in damages as a result. These sums had to include total income because his two Arkansas hospitals only grossed \$792,656 in 1938 and the Romulus Drugstore's income was \$7,394.02. His medical business also had a huge overhead of \$341,105.93 that year. But the money was immaterial. Brinkley sought vindication and the sweetest revenge possible: a public verdict against the hated American Medical Association and Morris Fishbein. This suit he would pursue to the Supreme Court, if necessary.¹

The case of *John R. Brinkley v Morris Fishbein* was tried in the small courtroom of the federal building in Del Rio, beginning on March 22, 1938. Judge Robert J. McMillan allowed no standing in his court, so there was a constant crowd outside impatiently waiting for news of the proceedings. The civics class of Del Rio High was in attendance to witness first-hand how the American judicial system functioned. While the students might have come away a little overwhelmed by the proceedings of the third branch of government, they certainly received excellent instruction in the physiology of certain sections of the human body, with the room filled with charts, pictures, and graphs of the male anatomy not normally viewed by high school students of that era. The jury was composed of twelve

men tried and true, over half of them neighboring ranchers and the remainder area businessmen. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* devoted an unprecedented four issues to reporting the trial verbatim. It was important for the AMA to win this case as five of its officers, including Fishbein, had just been indicted in an anti-trust suit.

Brinkley was well represented by Moriss and Moriss of San Antonio and Phil Foster of Del Rio. Fishbein was defended by the finest lawyers the AMA could find from the Chicago firm of Loesch, Scofield, Loesch and Burke, and the Del Rio office of Boggess, LaCrosse and Lowrey. His defense team was headed by Clinton Giddings Brown, one of the most capable corporation lawyers in Texas. Brown believed his case was hurt by having five lawyers, a claims agent, and the defendant at their table, while John had only himself and his two lawyers. On the other hand, Brown concluded this handicap was balanced by the fact that the goat ranchers on the jury knew "the proclivities of a billy goat as well as anybody in the world," an observation that proved to be a perceptive point.²

Plaintiff and supporters put on a colorful spectacle for the town. John drove up each morning in his fire-engine red, custom-built Cadillac with his name in thirteen places, gave Minnie a peck on the cheek, and entered the courtroom. Rose Dawn also showed up every day in her pink Chrysler, as she was very concerned about the outcome of the trial of her good friend. The locals obviously were rooting for their goat gland doctor."

The defense team viewed the qualifications of the witnesses as crucial. Would the judge allow Brinkley to put an elderly man on the stand to testify that he had received the Compound Operation and the billy goat glands made him a new man? If so, then Fishbein could produce another witness to testify that he paid a large fee only to be cut up and ruined physically for life. They concluded that this would amount to the witnesses diagnosing themselves and expressing a medical opinion. Sure enough, the plaintiff had "some twenty old men" sworn in. When the first man was called, he came forward and "cut a pigeon wing with his right foot" before he sat down. Brown allowed him to begin, then stated his reasons for objecting to the witness. Judge McMillan excused the jury, cleared the courtroom, conferred with the lawyers on legal interpretations, and ruled that the evidence was inadmissible. During the following recess, the witness told the other old fellows about the ruling, "then the whole bunch of them went down the steps together, some with heads bowed and all walking as if they were going to a funeral."



Brinkley's red Cadillac, complete with personalized hubcaps. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

Although this came later in the proceedings, it was indicative of the atmosphere of the trial.³

For the next ten days, the jury heard testimony from medical doctors, six for the plaintiff, four for the defense. Each had his own set of charts, graphs, and pictures "of the usually censored parts of the male anatomy" to display on the walls. A Del Rio newsstand owner, Effie Kelly, began the proceedings by stating that the offending issue of *Hygeia* had circulated in the city—a fact that John had personally insured so he could make a case for how deeply the article had embarrassed him with his fellow townsmen. She was followed by Dr. A.C. Petermeyer, who had been on Brinkley's surgical staff since October 1933, and moved with him to Del Rio, then to Little Rock. Petermeyer described in detail the methods Brinkley currently used in treating the prostate. The plaintiff next introduced the offending issue of *Hygeia* and called Lowell Brown, Johnny Boy's former tutor, as a witness. Johnny Boy currently attended military school in San Antonio and Brown was presently teaching in Council Grove, Kansas, public schools. Questions at this point concentrated on Fishbein's charge that the Brinkleys shunned fellow travelers on their ocean voyages. Brown testified about his contact with Fishbein's daughter on the trip and the two sons' playing together, until they discovered each other's identity. Brown also stated

that there was a group photograph of the Brinkleys in the ship's dining room, surrounded by other diners, proving that John did not continuously isolate himself from other passengers on the trip. He was quizzed about John's "fine" yachts and the quality of the ship accommodations on the trip to Europe, which he admitted were excellent.

For the defense, Dr. Eugene W. Schoeffel declared that he was the chemist who had analyzed prescription 1020 for the American Medical Association. Dr. Benjamin Weems Turner and John Manning Venable insisted adamantly that successfully transplanting goat glands into human testicles was impossible. The transplants, blood, and nerves would never anastomose, or grow together, as John R. Brinkley had claimed, and the tissues would die. The defense also entered the deposition James Crawford had given the American Medical Association concerning his partnership with John Brinkley in South Carolina, and the jury appeared impressed that the pair had made money by injecting colored water into patients.⁴

Brinkley's medical testimony came from Drs. J.H. Davis, who had been an associate of his since 1933, Leslie Dye Conn, who discussed his work with the "rechecks" and reported that about 90 percent of the patients had shown improvement, and Orville Barnes Chandler, who was in charge of the X-ray work. In addition, several Del Rio businessmen, ranchers, a dentist, and a newspaper editor attested to John Brinkley's good character, but the fact that he was a customer or friend diminished their effectiveness.⁵

Morris Fishbein, of course, was put on the stand to defend himself. He declared that the evidence for his article in *Hygeia* came primarily from the extensive files of the AMA's Bureau of Investigation, which were gathered principally from people voluntarily submitting medical information. For example, when patients brought prescription 1020 to their local doctors, complaints were often sent to the AMA, and they tried to respond and record the information. In addition, he used transcripts from the hearings of Brinkley's license revocations. When asked about his attitude toward Dr. Brinkley, he asserted that he "personally" had no "animosity," but from a scientific point of view, he was quite "negative." Fishbein had stressed in his article that the Brinkleys were antisocial on the voyage. John's attorney asked if he remembered the Brinkleys approaching him on deck while he was reading. John circled him, walked in front of him, and waited to be recognized. Dr. Fishbein looked up, recognized him immediately, and returned to his book without acknowledgment. He had other opportunities to meet Brinkley when they docked at New York City and on arrival at the Waldorf Astoria

Hotel, but he deliberately refrained from doing so. When asked directly, he responded he did not wish to meet John Brinkley. Within weeks of the European trip, Fishbein began writing his article for *Hygeia*.

The Brinkley attorneys emphasized Fishbein's recent difficulties. Morris A. Beale had written an indictment of him and the AMA's dictatorial control over all American medical activities in an article entitled "The Mussolini of Medicine in America." This story led to the Department of Justice bringing charges against Fishbein and several other doctors for violating antitrust laws. The AMA argued that medicine is a profession and therefore the antitrust laws did not apply, but the Supreme Court ultimately ruled against them. Judge McMillan ruled, however, that Fishbein was on trial in Del Rio on a quite different count.

The defense emphasized the fact that John had once been a member of the American Medical Association, but that his membership had been terminated because he advertised his practice. Fishbein delivered an interesting definition of a "quack," considering his extensive use of the term over the years: "a person who makes extravagant or blatant claims as to his ability in the field of medical science and in taking care of the sick." Certainly one of the worst offenses a medical professional could make was to advertise his ability, the AMA emphasized, because such ads are usually deceptive. Morris Fishbein had recently published a book entitled *Modern Medical Home Remedies*, a how-to reference book for rural and isolated people to "doctor" themselves. On cross examination, Brinkley's counsel noted that Fishbein had advertised the book in several sources and asked if there had not been "considerable furor and criticism" of this book from a number of medical doctors. There was "some excitement, yes, sir," the doctor acknowledged, but this was a different kind of advertising. Finally, plaintiff's counsel forced Fishbein to agree that it had taken many years for the medical profession to accept the theories of Harvey, Jenner, Koch, Semmelweis, and other medical giants. John Brinkley was ahead of his time and the allopaths would not accept his theories, Brinkley's counsel suggested.⁶

When John took the stand, Judge McMillan warned his lawyer that "a man that comes into a libel suit practically puts his entire life in issue." John's lawyers argued that his early medical practice was not pertinent, but Judge McMillan responded that the defense "was entitled to show anything with regard to his practice that will throw light on the matter." The judge's warning proved prophetic, and his "entire life" became the issue as Clint Brown led him through

a reconstruction of much of his existence. He asked about his background, training, medical practices, and association with James Crawford. He questioned when Brinkley began advertising, what his current popular treatment achieved, and why he had quit using goat glands. John's response to the latter was that after 1933, a doctor could purchase commercial glandular preparations and inject them, which was more effective. Brown quoted extensively on some of the outrageous claims made in the Wood biography, such as he "is the most learned doctor in America," and he "was gifted beyond the ordinary run of doctors." When asked if he agreed with these assessments, Brinkley responded negatively, but added that "some people might." When details of the divorce and second marriage were being exposed, John's counsel objected, and the judge sustained because he saw no purpose "in retrying the divorce case."

Brinkley brazenly continued broadcasting his new radio competitions during the trial. In making his case against Brinkley, Brown noted that the advertising doctor offered listeners prizes for the best essays on the topic, "I consider good health to be my most valuable possession because. . . ." Competitors also had to submit the names of "two sick people they knew who could afford to travel to Little Rock" for treatment. In another contest, he offered \$500 worth of prizes for the best essays on the theme of, "I consider Dr. Brinkley to be the world's foremost prostate specialist because. . . ." Brown demanded to know if such activities did not constitute practicing medicine and advertising it.

Next, they quizzed him about his income and his expenses. What was the value of the diamonds that he was wearing? How many automobiles did he own? John answered: "Well, now, you will pardon me until I figure up a little bit, will you? Over on the farm in North Carolina I have a couple over there and down at the citrus groves I have a couple down there. That is four. At the hospitals we have three or four. Well, that is eight. I am not sure and I think we have four here at home, something like that. I guess about a dozen." What was his personal fire-engine red car? "That is a Cadillac sixteen-cylinder coupe." How many times is your name on it? "I never counted, I don't know," the doctor responded. About thirteen or fourteen times? "I never counted, I don't know."

Brinkley ironically became his own most damaging witness. His attorneys emphasized that his goat gland procedure of the 1920s was immaterial to the libel suit, but Brown successfully clung to this issue like a pit bull. The lawyer engaged Brinkley in a discussion of the Compound Operation and managed to trap him into discussing the results:

With reference to whether I claim that that little testicle of a young goat lived and grew after I implanted it in a human testicle, some of them seemed to grow and enlarge and others, the majority of them, went through a process of absorption, they were gradually absorbed. . . .

I don't mean to say that the little thing lived and was just like a part of the human testicle, and it was living in there after I put it in there. I don't conceive of it as being a part of the human testicle. As to why it wouldn't just get rotten in there, if it became infected, it would, it would spoil.

Brown got him to admit, in other words, that the Compound Operation did not and could not rejuvenate a man by itself and that his advertisements claiming this ability during the previous decade were false.⁷

Brown's summation to the jury was a telling one: "Gentlemen of the jury: If you will excuse me the first thing I want to say is something a little personal. I never worried about myself before. I just figured it was a simple proposition. But since I have listened to these experts for the biggest part of ten days, and have looked at these pictures and charts hour after hour, and have learned about all the complicated technical gadgets I am supposed to have in me, if this thing lasts much longer I'm afraid somebody may have to operate on *me*." Then he concluded that the doctor's latest radio competition should be reworded to read, "Dr. Brinkley is the foremost money-making surgeon in the world because—he had sense enough to know the weaknesses of human nature and gall enough to make a million dollars a year out of it." Later the judge, who had been a classmate of Brown's in law school, told him it was the most effective summation he had ever heard.⁸

Judge McMillan instructed the jury at great length to understand that this type of case differed from the usual kind of jury trial. In a libel suit such as this, it was in the judge's province to assist them by explaining and commenting on the facts or evidence they had to weigh. He recapped the trial for them, explaining that the defendant's response was two-fold: first, that the article was true and, second, that if it was in error in any way it related to a matter of public concern and, as such, was considered privileged. In other words, truth is a defense and had been in America since the John Peter Zenger trial in 1636. The entire article and the portions the plaintiff complained about constituted "a fair and reasonable comment and criticism of matters of public concern, published for gen-

eral information," the judge noted. It was unnecessary for the defendant to show that every word of the article was literally true. In this case, Brinkley's medical practice had become a public concern and "it has always been considered unethical for physicians to advertise." As determiners of fact, the jury had to decide if Fishbein's article constituted "a fair and reasonable comment of Dr. Brinkley and his activities."

If the jury decided the article was libelous, the judge further expounded, there was no "exact yardstick" by which to determine the amount the plaintiff was entitled to recover. His reputation must be the one consideration. The Wood biography had deplored the opinion of the Kansas Supreme Court as being partial in holding that Brinkley was "an empiric without moral sense, and having acted according to the ethical standards of an imposter; the licensee has performed an organized charlatanism. . . ." This part of the book was offered as evidence against Brinkley's character, and the judge tellingly asked why "would he in a book of his own copy a thing like that said about him and give it currency?"⁹

The jury deliberated for four hours and returned a verdict for Morris Fishbein. John's attorneys appealed, but the Circuit Court in New Orleans concluded that "there is no doubt whatever that the plaintiff by his methods violated acceptable standards of medical ethics—the plaintiff should be considered a charlatan and a quack in the ordinary, well-understood meaning of those words." The Supreme Court denied further review. Thus it was determined that the AMA would control the medical profession in the United States. John R. Brinkley was now publicly labeled a quack, and the results of that blow were immediately apparent.¹⁰

Morris Fishbein left Del Rio before the jury rendered its verdict. He heard the news after arriving in Kansas City aboard a Braniff flight and was being rushed to Union Station to catch a train that had been held for him. When reporters quizzed him about the decision, he responded, "If we could beat him down there among his friends we can beat him anywhere . . . the decision is a great victory for honest scientific medicine, for the standards of education and conduct established by the American Medical Association." Fishbein was quoted as saying, "We've cured that fellow of bringing any more suits."¹¹

John quickly showed he had lost none of his brashness. Soon after the trial, J.C. Furnas wrote an article about his activities for the *Saturday Evening Post* that was so critical the editors worried about a lawsuit. John took to his microphone, instead, and read selected passages to his audience, knowing that they were aware of

the magazine's good reputation, but also certain that almost none of his listeners would read the complete article and judge for themselves. He thus interpreted it for them and boosted himself with an event that should have been harmful to his reputation.¹²

Brinkley had been sued previously for malpractice, once as early as 1930 by William Fuhrman and again in 1938 by Eleanor Harris Billingslea, and had always brazened through it or settled out of court. But the Fishbein libel case legally branded him as a charlatan, and wrongful death suits against him and his colleagues—claiming more than \$3 million in damages—multiplied rapidly in the following year. In 1940 a dozen more suits were brought against him. One by Charles F. Allen for the estate of J.F. Crenweldge for \$264,271 in damages resulted in a jail sentence for Dr. A.C. Petermeyer on the charge of perjury. He was licensed to practice medicine in Texas and not in Arkansas. Dr. Osborn was licensed in Arkansas and not in Texas, so they alternated in the surgeries, depending on which state they were in, and the credit for who did the surgery was largely determined by the individual who claimed it. Petermeyer insisted under oath that Osborn performed the surgery on Crenweldge in Arkansas, but the plaintiff proved that Petermeyer did the surgery with Osborn in attendance. Even a staff member, W.O. Bernard, the business manager for the Little Rock hospital, sued Brinkley for inaccurate diagnosis and treatment. The numerous legal actions forced John to move to a hotel in Memphis and direct his hospital business from there, thus eluding Arkansas process servers. Some \$900,000 in three suits were settled out of court for an undisclosed amount. When John managed to stay out of Arkansas courts by remaining in Tennessee and refusing to give depositions, though, Federal Judge Thomas C. Tremble was forced, finally, to invoke a law of 1934 and award judgments against him by default.¹³

To complicate his financial woes, the IRS was demanding \$115,000 in back taxes, including disallowances for requested tax write-offs in Milford. With the worsening diplomatic crisis in Europe and the rise of President Franklin Roosevelt's military preparedness program, Brinkley made one last major investment. He had been advertising the Dilley Aviation School at Fairfax and Funston Streets in Kansas City, Kansas, on his radio for some time. He decided the school, which taught aviation mechanics, sheet-metal work, and welding would be a good investment, and he purchased it in Johnny Boy's name. Station XERA urged prospective students to send \$25 in advance, and a folder they subsequently received read, "Which Do You Choose For America—This or This?" with one illustration of

soldiers marching into battle and one of an airplane factory. Soon complaints began mounting from students who were denied a refund if they proved to be unqualified for admission, or if they became dissatisfied with the training and left. In addition, John forgot to inform the students that this training did not automatically defer them from conscription, which had been instituted in September 1940 as a part of Roosevelt's preparedness program. With Brinkley's other financial problems receiving widespread news coverage, the Kansas attorney general decided John was exploiting the school for his own financial purposes and placed it in receivership. Eventually it was sold to United Aircraft Training of Wichita for a down payment and monthly installments for two years. Most of the money went to repay a loan from Jamie Chase, Minnie's brother-in-law.¹⁴

John and Minnie tried to salvage what they could of their rapidly dwindling resources. They decided to liquidate the Arkansas businesses and sold the country club to H. Dwight Osborn in October 1940, subject to the following mortgages: G.A. MacDonald, \$3,000; Joe E. O'Toole, \$2,500; John and Minnie Brinkley, \$34,500—the last a cover intended to prove that they were not trying to cheat creditors. In effect, their scheme would give Osborn title to the property, with an option to buy later. The ploy did not work. A judge eventually placed the disputed property in receivership for a claim brought against Brinkley in a sterility suit. It ultimately served as a convalescent home for the Baptist State Hospital and the Marylake Carmelite Monastery.¹⁵

Johnny Boy was attending Peacock Military Academy in San Antonio, and the Brinkleys maintained a house in that city. They transferred some of their stocks to him, as well as the sizeable acreage in North Carolina, all in trust, which they called "trust number one." One automobile went to O'Toole for his and Johnny Boy's use. The H.D. Munals, who were managing the citrus groves, needed to purchase a new car, so John gave them one of the Cadillac coupes. He sold the Lockheed Electra to the British for \$42,000 to be used by the Canadian government for pilot training, and the proceeds went toward paying some back taxes. He stripped the *Brinkley III* of movable valuables, such as the piano, and sold it to the United States Navy for \$110,000 to pay off its \$75,000 mortgage and other indebtedness. All the other Brinkley properties were liquidated and turned into cash, wherever possible. XEAW was sold to Carr Collins, and of course the Mexican government confiscated XERA. The latter was a terrible blow to John. As he wrote Minnie, "It seems my heart will break since you phoned XERA was being torn down." His physical condition was declining badly at that time, and he added,

"My health is gone. I am ready for the bed and out." Finally, he cleared \$345,000 worth of life insurance from loans and due premiums and prepared to start over financially. Under Texas law, his life insurance could not be touched, nor could his home or wearing apparel—such as jewelry—in state courts.¹⁶

The exemption on insurance did not apply to federal agencies, however, and the IRS succeeded in using the cash surrender value of his policies to apply to his back taxes. His San Antonio lawyer wanted to be paid a long-overdue fee and reminded John that "we were successful in having the court hold that certain policies with a cash surrender value of approximately \$80,000 should be delivered by the trustee to the Doctor." John, therefore, could borrow on these to pay some of his bills, such as this legal fee.¹⁷

Even these supposedly simple transactions proved complicated because John's and Minnie's finances were so intertwined that it was difficult to determine who owned what and when. A trustee later ruled that their payment of \$65,000 on insurance policy loans must be returned. The Brinkley lawyers fought for this because \$21,000 of this sum was Minnie's, not community property, and a bankruptcy judge had ruled that only the Brinkleys' joint funds could be considered, not those belonging solely to Minnie. In this case, her money should be exempt from the clutches of the bankruptcy trustee, as she was the beneficiary of the policies. When the policies matured upon his death, the total loss of \$65,000 "would fall upon her" if the trustee's ruling should hold. The lawyers were also preparing "a short brief . . . on the subject of Mrs. Brinkley's jewelry."¹⁸

John made one last fantastic effort at a comeback. Incredibly, the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce invited him to return with his business. On April 8, 1940, the city enacted the following ordinance:

No doctor shall have in his employ any person for the purpose of soliciting or trying to divert any person from going to the doctor of his or her choice or for the purpose of carrying over the city streets around in conveyances of any kind or for transporting patients from one place to another within the city limits of Del Rio or from points without the city of Del Rio to points within the city limits . . . or conversation [in which] one doctor is lauded or boosted or puffed-up or in which conversation prices charged by any doctor or doctors is discussed for the purpose of inducing or trying to induce any patient or prospective patient to go to any doctor shall be prima facie evidence of violation.

Violators would be punished by fines of not less than \$100 and not more than \$200. If they had enacted this ordinance two years earlier, John would have listened to Minnie and not moved to Arkansas. This ordinance was accompanied by a petition signed by the mayor, county treasurer, bankers, and assorted civic leaders on April 15, 1940, which declared:

We the undersigned invite and urge Dr. and Mrs. John R. Brinkley to come home to Del Rio, Texas, with their hospital and fine staff of doctors and nurses and technicians where full confidence in them prevails and where they are respected and loved.

We have heard of the lawsuits that have been brought against you and the other difficulties that have been created for you. Knowing the good you have done and are doing for suffering humanity, we invite you back to Del Rio to resume your valuable services to the sick and the needy.¹⁹

John stripped the Little Rock hospital and moved the contents back to the Roswell Hotel. The Arkansas building was later sold to satisfy creditors. A number of Del Rio businessmen incorporated the Brinkley Hospital and bought his Little Rock equipment, furniture, and business automobiles. Brinkley prepared one of his favorite kinds of advertising, a form letter, that read, "Announcing the location of the Brinkley Hospital, Inc., in the beautiful Roswell Hotel in sunny Del Rio, Texas, near the silvery Rio Grande and romantic Old Mexico." Unfortunately for the Brinkleys and Del Rio merchants, this effort came to naught as John was close to bankruptcy and his health by then was failing so badly that he did not have sufficient time or strength to get the business reestablished.²⁰

Unbelievably, in the face of his enormous difficulties, in May 1940 John Brinkley announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate seat of Morris Shepherd of Texas. He planned a campaign similar to his Kansas ones with Ammunition Train No. 1, although he admitted he was broke. As he was rapidly approaching his bankruptcy decision and could not finance his race, he acknowledged that his campaign would have to "be a free will offering from the people of Texas who love and trust me." John ran as a Democrat, as one had to do at that time to win in Texas. Minnie declared publicly that he had intended to challenge John Connally for his seat but "decided not to seek the office at the request of many of Connally's friends." He would campaign for the Shepherd seat by urging "old age pen-

sions, hospitalization for the poor, and cooperation with the labor movement." William Allen White of the *Emporia Gazette* warned that John Brinkley would again be "irresistible to the moron mind and Texas has plenty of such." Texans proved ungenerous in their support of this bizarre candidacy, and his campaign fizzled before he got it off the ground. He later threw his support to W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel, stating that "Mrs. Brinkley and I have made a private poll of 50,000 of our friends in Texas and found them overwhelmingly in favor of you as their next Senator." O'Daniel, another Kansas carpetbagger who currently owned station XEAW with Carr Collins, had effectively used the radio in the Brinkley political style to be elected governor in 1938. He now defeated the up-and-coming young Lyndon B. Johnson by 1,311 votes for the Senate seat.²¹

On February 1, 1941, concurrently with the opening of the Del Rio hospital, John R. Brinkley declared bankruptcy. Interestingly, only the week before the Brinkleys had been guests for tea at the White House. On March 24, John appeared in district court in Del Rio, where he had appeared three years earlier to face Morris Fishbein, and took the stand. He "ruefully but good naturedly" explained that his financial empire had collapsed. He listed his liabilities at \$1,625,565.23 and his assets at \$46,845.16, six head of horses, ninety head of cattle, one sow, six geese, two guineas, forty ducks, fifty chickens, and one harpoon gun. The livestock were on his farm in North Carolina. Claims against him ranged from \$2.50 for a linen bill to \$113,000 from the IRS for back taxes. He retained his \$365,000 of life insurance and a \$43,000 policy on Johnny Boy. His comment that he never did have much money on deposit—"just \$15,000 or \$20,000"—brought startled grins to the faces of listeners. How far the mighty had fallen! Two years previously he brought suit because his annual income had declined under \$1 million and now his earnings were a relatively meager \$250 monthly from his advertising company and \$100 weekly for radio broadcasting. In addition, Minnie was paid \$300 per month as a hostess in the Brinkley Hospital in Del Rio. A short time later, Minnie had to declare involuntary bankruptcy as their finances had been too closely intertwined to settle John's financial problems without her taking this action.²²

John was bitter over Minnie's subsequent treatment in the Arkansas courts. The judges were dealing unfairly with her and "they go way around Robin Hood's barn" to try and hold adverse decisions against her. Brinkley pointed to Frank H. Dodge as an example. Dodge had decided in the chancery court of Pulaski County that it was legal for an administrator to handle "an estate of a man

who died in another state, a man who has no property in Arkansas,” but who had a claim against the Brinkleys. If Judge Dodge had ruled as Brinkley thought he should, “all of these cases would have been thrown out of court.” Dodge’s ruling hurt Brinkley deeply, because the “lawsuits are announced over the radio stations in the United States, they are played up in the newspapers . . . and you know that doesn’t bring any business to us.”²³

John’s lawyer in Kansas City, Carl V. Rice, sent the details of these legal proceedings to H.W. Green, the Brinkley counsel in San Antonio. Minnie lost her appeal, and a judgment of \$20,000 was awarded in both the McKibben and Crenweldge cases. In other cases, Dr. Osborn was served with papers as an employee of Minnie’s, and despite their affidavits declaring that he was not her employee, the courts sustained the serving. The Brinkleys were appealing this judgment, and in the meantime Rice—who was on a \$10,000 retainer only for federal litigation—encouraged them to retain Texas attorneys to handle their current litigation. While John was in Kansas City in the hospital, Rice felt that “it was easy to consult with him,” but now that he had returned to Texas, Rice felt that Brinkley would be best served by representation from local lawyers.²⁴

The most crushing blow of all fell on September 22, 1941, when a grand jury in Little Rock indicted John, Minnie, and six of their former employees—A.C. Petermeyer, H. Dwight Osborn, J.H. Davis, Orville B. Chandler, A. Lewis Kline, and nurse Vera Westerbrook—on fifteen counts of using the mail to defraud. At this time, Petermeyer was serving a sentence for his perjury in the Crenweldge case. The AMA had been pressuring postal authorities for years to take action against Brinkley. As late as the summer of 1939, the chief inspector reported to Morris Fishbein that the postal service’s inspection had turned up too little evidence to convince the Department of Justice to take action. But two years later, the postal authorities decided they had sufficient evidence for action when, according to the charges, John made one last shipment of literature from Little Rock to individuals in nine scattered states.²⁵

The postal complaint alleged that Brinkley had treated some 16,000 persons at \$750 each for a total of \$12 million. Though he and his staff “were not physicians of character and good standing,” they “did falsely pretend that John R. Brinkley was a great surgeon and scientist, and physician, that he, while visiting medical centers in Europe, had found a substance which would restore normal sex vigor to sexually weak men and women, and that the Brinkley treatment would cause men and women to live to be one hundred years old.” Such claims had been made in letters and advertisements, it

was charged, and “the United States mails were used to promote this fraud.” On the basis of these complaints, John’s bond was set at \$15,000, and Minnie’s at \$5,000.²⁶

Sam Rorex, federal district attorney for the Little Rock area, wired Maurice Milligan, district attorney of the Western District of Missouri, about the charges. Milligan immediately obtained warrants, and U.S. Marshall Henry L. Dillingham served them on Minnie and John in Kansas City’s Research Hospital, where he was a patient. He had traveled to Mexico City to try and save XERA, but failed. Losing XERA did literally “break his heart,” as he suffered a coronary occlusion soon after he returned to the United States. His doctor ordered him to rest for eighty days, but he would not curtail his activities because of pressing problems. A clot near his heart broke away subsequently, and wound up in his left leg. Gangrene attacked the leg, and it had to be amputated just above the knee on August 29. When John was handed the summons on September 24, he looked at his missing leg and wryly said, “Well, I guess I am not going to run away.” His trial was set for April 6, 1942, but due to ill health he was unable to appear.

John eventually was able to return to the mansion in Del Rio, but his condition failed to improve, and he entered the hospital in San Antonio. In January 1942 he itemized his woes in a letter to Wallace Davis, his Little Rock attorney:

1. The Mexican government confiscated station XERA.
2. I am in bankruptcy and everything I own has been sold.
My brother-in-law in Memphis mortgaged his property to put up a \$20,000 bond for the mail fraud trial. Otherwise, Mrs. Brinkley would be in jail and I would be dead.
3. Mrs. Brinkley is in bankruptcy and all of her property is tied up.
4. My brother-in-law is supporting me and my wife. Since the indictment people have stopped coming to the hospital in Del Rio, which stopped the salaries of Mrs. Brinkley and Dr. Osborn that they were receiving from the Incorporation [*sic*].
5. Two years ago we rented the house [507 West Magnolia in San Antonio] for Johnny to live in and go to school. We had paid the rent in advance so now I can stay there for treatments. My doctor treats me free of charge.
6. I have been in bed since August 23. My weight fell from

- 175 to 130. The amputated bone is diseased . . . and I am in constant pain. It is a day's work for me to go to the bath room.
7. My doctor says I am living on borrowed time and that it is unusual for a man to live as long as I have from this kind of heart attack.
 8. On December 22 my heart failed and I was rushed to the Nex hospital here and almost died.
 9. Wallace, you may like others believe that Mrs. Brinkley and me [*sic*] have some money hid away. You may forget that I paid Uncle Sam \$550,000 income taxes for 1939 and 1940. . . . When I went into bankruptcy in January 1941 I had \$7.00 in cash. Mrs. Brinkley had a few thousand dollars, so did Dr. Osborn. But, this has all been used up in attorney fees and legal expenses.
 10. Until we were indicted, we could borrow money, but since the indictment even our personal friends will not take a chance.
 11. I have some cash reserves on insurance policies, but Uncle Sam has a lien on these.
 12. Mrs. Brinkley had to borrow the money to make her appearance in Little Rock. Unless we get some relief we will not be able to educate our son.
 13. I believe you have suffered the agony of a Federal Indictment and trial.
 14. In days gone by, I paid you every cent you charged me. One time I had to borrow the money, but you were paid. I am flat on my back and helpless and I am asking for a little mercy. I have looked on you more as [*sic*] an attorney. I have considered you a personal friend and I don't mean a fair-weather friend. I think you know me too well to believe that I am lying to you, especially when I may face my God any day.
 15. Mr. Maury Hughes [of Texas] is a stranger to us. We appealed to him to take our case to try and save us from the pen because we know if we go to trial no lawyer can save us from the pen. . . . Mr. Hughes took our case without us paying him a cent. . . . We have not even paid him his expenses on his last trip to Washington [to plead with Senator John Connally to persuade Attorney General Francis Biddle to dismiss the indictment.]

16. All we ask is that you take your friend [Sam Rorex] to Washington and stay with him until he complies with the request made. Dr. Osborn has promised he will pay your expense . . . and I believe the angels in Heaven will smile on your good deed.
17. In the future if I can pay you I will.
18. Mr. Hughes is ready to go any day that you and your party will meet him in Washington. He might be able to get the job done without your going, but your refusal would upset all his plans.

John wrote a note to Osborn that Hughes said this letter was “a better job than he could do and he does not believe Wallace will turn us down.”²⁷

Wallace Davis was a friend of Sam Rorex, the district attorney in Little Rock, and the former was convinced John had stashed away a lot of cash. He led the Brinkleys to believe that—for a fee of \$6,000—he could persuade Rorex to have Attorney General Francis Biddle quash the indictment. The Brinkleys could not borrow this amount of money, given their bankruptcies, but Davis continued to stall, believing they were not being honest with him.

Two weeks after John enumerated his problems, Minnie wrote Maury Hughes that Dr. Brinkley was now convinced Davis would do nothing for them. Minnie was certain that if they could pay his exorbitant fee, “he would take Roark [sic] and be on the first train to Washington.” Perhaps Wallace Davis was unable to exert the influence he thought he could with Rorex, though, as he was with the D.A. on the afternoon the indictments were issued, and lawyer Davis was unaware they were coming. Minnie’s brother-in-law, “Mr. Chase of Memphis,” had used his life savings to put up the Brinkley bail bonds, she said. This was not quite true. Chase had loaned them bond money, but he had not depleted his savings. To make matters worse, if that was possible, the Treasury Department had filed a lien against John’s insurance policies, so he could not borrow against them. Minnie added that “if Mr. Brinkley is alive when this case comes to court he will be on a stretcher because he hasn’t been able to sit up for four weeks. Dr. Osborn may not pull out of his present illness.”²⁸

Hughes responded that he had contacted Sam Rorex because “all others concerned assured me that Rorex did not want to prosecute this case.” Hughes discussed the matter with Attorney General Biddle, but was unsuccessful and “was assured by everyone concerned that another person who had it in for the Doctor was a

stumbling block." This likely referred to someone at the AMA. John's attorneys failed to get the indictments dismissed.²⁹

Minnie and the former employees stood trial for mail fraud. She pleaded no contest and received a \$5,000 fine and three years probation. Petermeyer received a stiffer sentence of one year and a day, because he had already been convicted of perjury. Chandler, Davis, Kline, Osborn, and Westerbrook all received suspended sentences and three years probation. At the same time, postal authorities were successful in their suit against Norman Baker, who in January 1940 received a four-year sentence.³⁰

John had been diagnosed as having cancer before he moved to Texas. His huge policies endangered the Manhattan Mutual Company's financial standing, and they desperately needed a large company to take over their reinsurance to prevent the firm from collapsing during the Great Depression. Companies they approached, however, would reinsure all their policies except those on John Brinkley. Finally, the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company of Fort Wayne, Indiana, agreed to assume all their policies, including the large Brinkley ones. When John died, the Indiana company paid out to Manhattan Mutual. The latter, in turn, worked out an agreement to pay Minnie, his beneficiary, over a twenty-year period with interest. Spreading this large settlement over an extended period of time helped the Manhattan Company immensely.³¹

As the Brinkley financial crisis continued, Minnie's brother-in-law Jamie Chase, who owned the Chase Bottling Company in Memphis, wrote her with some suggestions. She should let John and Mr. Green, their San Antonio lawyer, know as little as possible of her finances and ability to raise money. In the future, she should send any jewelry she had to part with to him and he would find a buyer, as he thought she was not receiving proper value from what she had already sold. He advised Minnie that if "Dr., Mr. Green and others do not have in the back of their head the fact that you can sell it and raise money, they will make some effort to get along with less." He noted that she believed the lumber yard had an inventory of \$37,000. He warned her to watch the stock on hand closely or she might find it had dwindled to practically nothing and then the yard would be practically broke. He assured her he was not strapped for cash and would lend her \$2,000 whenever she needed it. He concluded with the observation that her job was "a tough one," and she was going "to have to be a bit tough yourself in your dealings with everyone, including doctor." Incidentally, he suggested the Brinkley expense of \$300 monthly for food was a bit extravagant.³²

During his extended convalescence, John took correspondence



The grave site of Dr. John R. Brinkley in Memphis, Tennessee. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

lessons with the expectation of becoming an ordained minister and using radio to preach his messages, much like Oral Roberts would do a few years later. But John soon had other concerns than money, frugality, or a ministry over the air waves. On March 17, he was reported in a coma after suffering a severe heart attack. Relatives were summoned; he rallied but remained in a weakened condition. On May 6, he wrote Minnie from the San Antonio hospital that his vital signs were normal, though noting ominously "I continue to grow weaker." Additional amputation of his leg was contemplated. He worsened and at about 2:30 A.M. on May 26, 1942, he asked his nurse for a glass of water. He was reading his Bible when Minnie heard the glass crash. When she got to him, he was dead. He died of heart disease, combined with the complications of his amputated leg. Death and Morris Fishbein were enemies Brinkley ultimately could not thwart. Minnie and Johnny Boy were with him at his passing. In addition, his three daughters, Wanda Shattuck and Naomi Groth, both of Chicago, and Beryl Palmer of Fort Worth, survived him.

L.C. Beasle, his former minister who currently lived in Austin, conducted the funeral services at the Del Rio Methodist Church. John R. Brinkley, M.D., Ph.D., M.C., LL.D., D.P.H., Sc.D., member of the National Geographic Society, former member of the Social Science Association, was buried in the Jones family area of Forest Hills cemetery in Memphis with his *Winged Victory* statue marking his grave. A headstone read "Daddy—John R. Brinkley, M.D., 1885–1942" with a Masonic emblem. Respectability at last.³³

Chapter 9

Postscript

With John Brinkley's death and the breakup of his medical empire, Arfie Condray returned to Milford, H.D. Osborn operated a drug store in Del Rio, Lee McChesney purchased a business in Del Rio, Bill Stittsworth became a businessman in Wichita, and L.D. Brown opened an insurance business in Junction City. Jim Weldon established Continental Electronics, a broadcasting firm, later designed the original Voice Of America transmitters, and built a 2,000,000-watt station in the Saudi Arabian desert to broadcast Islam around the world. Station XERF obtained a powerful night-time range. During the Korean War it provided a link to overseas American military personnel, and agents of the Soviet Union's KGB polished their English by listening to Paul Kallinger intone "from down alongside the silvery Rio Grande, where the sunshine spends the winter."¹

It was left to Minnie to resolve the numerous problems of finalizing her bankruptcy and settling what remained of the Brinkley estate to salvage something on which she and her son could survive. Hubert Green, her lawyer in San Antonio, worked on the Arkansas negotiations and wrote her that he expected to complete this process by the end of 1942. He also reported he "had splendid success in the tax matters and believe that I will be able to save you a substantial amount of money before we are through." Three weeks later he sent her the new tax forms of settlement for her signature.²

Her attorney in Sylva had a buyer for the large North Carolina acreage not included in the Wike farm. The Cherokee Nation had taken steps to purchase the land just before John bought it in 1936. They still wanted to add it to their reservation, and the lawyer began negotiating with the Indian representative. The land was worth \$60,000 dollars when John obtained it, an amount the Cherokees had been willing to pay, but he had already finalized the transaction. Since that time, though, Brinkley had harvested \$10,000 worth

of timber, and they were now willing to pay only \$50,000 for the land. This sum would have to be "deposited until the termination of the litigation," the lawyer noted, or until the North Carolina creditors were satisfied. It was not until March 1945, though, that the financial matters in North Carolina were closed.³

On November 22, 1937, the Brinkleys had executed what they called "trust number two" in Arkansas for Johnny Boy. This trust was involved in the bankruptcies and, in mid 1950, the Little Rock lawyer informed Minnie that it and the remainder of the Arkansas litigation would be resolved in about two weeks.⁴

Minnie lived in the house in Sylva occasionally, until it was sold, and in the Del Rio mansion most of the time. It was too large for her, though, and in 1949 she decided to dispose of it. She placed an advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* and received several responses. She wrote one prospective purchaser that it was constructed "during the depression years of 1934 and 1935 at an expenditure of approximately \$250,000, which as you know were depression times and labor was cheap." But her asking price of \$375,000 was too high and it failed to interest a buyer.⁵

She placed it on the market again in 1962, as the upkeep was becoming too expensive for her resources. The Bandera Realty Company convinced her that the acreage was too large and that it should be subdivided. The company planned to develop the "back" nine acres into "smaller houses at first," then larger ones at "the front on better tracts." She listed the remaining seven acres with the mansion at \$150,000. Again, her plans failed to materialize. As Minnie noted, "there is just no demand for such a magnificent home here." It was not until 1978 that Murray and Jolene Burnham bought the estate for \$155,000 and over half of the acreage was developed into a housing project. The Burnhams restored much of the mansion and the reduced acreage. It still stands behind the fence, surrounded by smaller housing, as an attraction for an occasional tourist.⁶

In 1962 the Army Corps of Engineers began construction on the Milford dam, which inundated the old town. Minnie and Johnny Boy received \$1,000 for the land they still owned there. She asked for permission to place a buoy in the lake marking the location of the Brinkley Hospital, but the corps routinely refused her request, as it did all similar applications.⁷

Meanwhile, Minnie had to provide Johnny Boy with an education. While attending Peacock Military Academy in San Antonio, he made the local papers when he brought a deer home from Mexico as a treat for fellow cadets. Officials then confiscated his car because, they said, he had imported the animal illegally. Mr. A.P. Cummings

of the Houston office of U.S. Customs was sent to Del Rio to investigate the matter. When Superintendent Wesley Peacock refused to let him talk to Johnny Boy, Cummings responded that "he would resort to court action to see him in Del Rio," if necessary. Cummings informed Major Peacock "that he had received instructions from the East, meaning Washington, to run down this case." His father's lawyer, though, found a Juan Diego who swore he had not brought Johnny's deer from Mexico and, instead, had left another one legally killed in the United States at "the ice house" for him to take to the academy. Following completion of the preparatory school, Johnny graduated from Del Rio High School.⁸

Despite his father's fondest desire, Johnny early decided against a medical career. Instead, he graduated from Yale University with a degree in psychology and Spanish. Then Johnny spent a year in Mexico City with a tutor, refining his competence in the language. Finally, he took a degree in law from the University of Texas, the study of medicine consistently failing to attract his interest.⁹

As with many young men in the early years of the Cold War, he was subject to military service. He had a tour of duty with Army Counter-Intelligence in Germany and, while stationed there, had the thrill of being photographed with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, a picture he always treasured. He later served with the CIA in Cuba, where he utilized his competence in Spanish.¹⁰

Johnny went to Cuba as a photographer to document the revolution of Fidel Castro, spending a month in the insurgent camps. The Cubans had never seen a "ready in a minute" camera. All the rebels wanted their picture taken, and the first day he used ten rolls of his precious film to please them. Castro's movement, badly needing publicity, welcomed Johnny and his equipment. He became well acquainted with Fidel's brother, Raul, who assured him the Castro revolution was not motivated by Communist theory. Johnny undoubtedly passed this information on to the CIA when he returned home. With obvious bravado, he later wrote a Cuban friend that when he returned to the U.S. he had seen an American B-26. He had carefully memorized its fuel routings so that "if I ever got back I could tell you what to shoot at."¹¹

Johnny was never successful in practicing law, but pursued his hobby of photography to the extent that he opened his own studio in New York City. He failed in this endeavor, however, just as he did in his attempt at matrimony. On September 24, 1959, he married Sandra Rose of Del Rio, the daughter of a local, wealthy rancher. The couple and Sandra's daughter from a previous marriage made their home in Fort Worth. The union was complicated by the fact

that Sandra's divorce from her first marriage was not finalized until December 1960, and her parents gave the young couple "considerable trouble," according to Abe Johnson. The marriage proved to be an unhappy one, and she left Johnny just before giving birth to their daughter, Angela, on September 11, 1960.

Johnny eventually received custody of his daughter¹² and they returned to live in Del Rio for a while with Minnie, who was happy to help raise her granddaughter. During this period, Johnny held a number of positions, including managing the Brinkley lumber yard. Seeing the movie *Jaws* in a Del Rio theater brought back sharp memories of deep-sea fishing with his father. Afterward, he wrote an article for the local newspaper about his youthful experience, which also debunked common shark myths. He began by noting, incorrectly, that a shark does not have a brain, but harbors instead only a bundle of nerves that run one-third of the way between its nose and dorsal fin—a characteristic, Johnny claimed, that made the animal difficult to kill.

Pater caught one off the Cuban coast that kept him on the pale for eight hours. He was a small man physically, but a giant when he sensed a record fish. When they finally got it up to the boat within shooting distance that shark took a hundred rounds from both 30-06 and 12-gauge [slugs] and was still twitching its tail. Nobody was in a hurry to put a gaff in its mouth, to say the least. Finally some natives who had been watching asked if they could have the fish and the last thing we saw they were hitting it on the head with baseball bats and the giant tail and fins swishing in the water.

Our boat that day was a 22-foot inboard and the shark was six feet past the bow and stern—34 feet, about the size of *Jaws*. . . . One day Pater, myself, and a sailor boarded the "Johnny Boy," a twenty-foot hand made mahogany launch powered by a 350-horse Chrysler marine motor. We were going ashore Cocos island, a tropical paradise for shell hunting.

At that time I was limited to a single shot 22 caliber bolt action and when we left the yacht a four foot shark was right beside us. I peppered him as fast as I could cock and fire, cock and fire, and he, too, had a nice streamer of blood, but no other shark bothered him (contrary to myth about blood attracting them.) As we got ready to beach, I gave up on the shark and got ready to jump, did so, and

heard a snapping behind me. After I was ten feet on the beach—you guessed it—in a single final burst of speed that shark was five feet up and out of the water. I had always been told by our guide Herman Gray to run when beaching and that time it paid to remember.¹³

Daunted by repeated failures, Johnny turned to alcohol and, finally overwhelmed, took his own life. On October 23, 1976, police found the body of John R. Brinkley III in his home. A 9mm German Luger was in his left hand. A bullet had pierced the left side of his head and exited behind the right ear. He was buried in Forest Hills cemetery with his father and Minnie's relatives.¹⁴

In the spring of 1976, shortly before Johnny's death, Topeka (Kansas) West High students assembled a series of oral history projects. Students Kevin Roberts and Tim Barnes spent two days in Del Rio interviewing Minnie about her husband's career. In April, when the pupils presented their findings, Minnie and Angela witnessed the Brinkley project and were special guests at a reception. This rewarding experience, fortunately, persuaded Minnie to deposit the Brinkley papers at the Kansas Historical Society in Topeka.¹⁵

Minnie continued to raise Angela until she was twenty-four. On June 23, 1984, Angela married Charles R. Womach Jr., of Ozona, Texas. Minnie lived to the ripe old age of eighty-seven. She died in 1980 and was buried alongside her husband and son with the Three Graces adorning her plot.

Chapter 10

Conclusions

Perhaps this book should be subtitled “The Con Man,” because this term describes John R. Brinkley as aptly as “quack” or “charlatan.” The dictionary definition of a quack is “an ignorant or fraudulent pretender to medical skill.” Morris Fishbein and his colleagues had their own definition of a quack as one who practices medicine without regard to the standards, traditional ethical practices, and customs of their profession. Not for his lack of surgical ability did the AMA determine to drive Brinkley from their ranks, but because of his unorthodox practice and advertising. He had obvious medical skills and, with his instruction for three years at Bennett and his post-graduate courses in surgery, he was well trained for his time. Observers of his operations conceded that he was an extraordinarily adept surgeon and could have contributed much to the study of glandular medicine and transplantation, had he focused his career in those channels instead of fleecing old men.

Yet he gave many of those elders what they wanted: a belief that they had been sexually invigorated. Phineas T. Barnum observed that there was “a sucker born every minute.” Joseph Jastrow of the University of Wisconsin refined this classic by adding, “and a crook born every hour to take care of the sixty.” Thus, a cynical person could conclude that if Brinkley had not treated the sexually impotent, some other con man would have—perhaps with more fatalities. As far as can be determined, he had a successful record in terms of rarely losing a patient—compared to a quack or even to the average family surgeon of his day—but his procedure was a simple one unless infection was involved. Then, too, he had more experience with his particular operation, having performed the procedure thousands of times, than the run-of-the-mill doctor; but that proficiency contributed to his downfall in the end.

Brinkley aroused the ire of the AMA with his arrogance and contempt for the organization, his luring of patients away from the

“regulars,” his skill in advertising his medical and pharmaceutical practices, and his staggering financial successes. Until very recently, it was considered unethical for lawyers to publicize their services. This precept has been revoked without undue damage to society, leaving the layman to question the validity of the ban on medical advertising. Currently, with the growing power of Health Management Organizations (HMOs), doctors and nurses are feeling an increasing need to protect their independent practice and are joining unions—a concept unthinkable during the Brinkley era, except for his futile attempt to organize dissident doctors into a cartel similar to the one he had established for pharmacists. An estimated 35,000–45,000 physicians out of a total of 680,000 doctors nationwide are organized in some type of association, and the number is growing.¹

When the AMA met in national convention in 1999, the delegates voted their approval for members to organize national associations to give physicians “more leverage with managed-care companies.” By six votes, the House of Delegates also refused to disapprove the for-profit sale, by doctors, of health related items such as vitamins, dietary supplements, over-the-counter medications, safety devices, and skin creams because in some areas these items were unavailable except through local physicians.²

The AMA’s campaign to revoke Brinkley’s licenses, though highly organized and resolute, was also at times unethical—as evinced in the shameful treatment of James Crawford, the leaking of information to reporters, and a host of unprofessional (or perhaps foolish) decisions, such as their basing their case for withdrawing Brinkley’s medical license on issues of “gross immorality.” Admittedly, Crawford was a convict serving a sentence; yet he was also a human being to whom a promise had been made, but not kept. Most of the charges and conclusions by the state medical board against Brinkley, if applied to regular doctors, would have been deemed “silly,” as a judge reasoned in Brinkley’s case. Moreover, the members concluded that his license should also be revoked because of “unprofessional conduct.” Yet much of this unprofessionalism involved his education, which was as good as—and perhaps better than—some of the regular doctors of his age, who conformed to standards and thus escaped the wrath of the AMA. The message seems to be that so long as a doctor conforms, other physicians will support him or her, often regardless of the bizarre behavior he or she exhibits. Finally, all counts pertaining to Brinkley’s actions prior to 1923 were professionally irrelevant, as the law was not retroactive.

This left the Compound Operation and advertising charges, which were justified, although at that time Brinkley was well on his

way to abandoning the goat gland approach in favor of treatment either through a non-surgical method or through minor surgery, and he promised the FRC to stop prescribing over the air. Brinkley's major offense, and the charge that carried the most gravity, was his prescribing by radio. Today, numerous patients of current HMOs never see their physician but receive prescriptions after describing their symptoms over the phone. Prescribing over the radio was vastly different, of course, because it permitted millions of listeners to "diagnose" themselves, without the use of necessary records and tests, and conclude that they had symptoms and needs identical to the cases broadcast on the airwaves.

Even though many of Brinkley's prescriptions were placebos, these too play a role in medical treatment because at times they can produce beneficial results in psychosomatic cases, as medical doctors will attest. There is no doubt, from the number of testimonials of his patients, that he gave relief to many of this type of sufferer. Many were convinced that he relieved their impotency and other normal ailments of old age, such as rheumatism or arthritis.

Brinkley's search for operations to rejuvenate aging men was part of an effort as old as man to discover the Fountain of Youth. It still continues. The Small Carrion prosthesis, implanted penis stiffeners, and "pump-up" insertions have enjoyed widespread use in recent years. Ponce de Leon would applaud Robert Dole's unabashed touting of Viagra in television commercials in 1999. The quest will never end.

A recent issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* described a current medical trend that could well apply to John Brinkley's "radio patients" almost seven decades earlier, except for social classification. Entitled "Why Patients Use Alternative Medicine," the report concluded that those involved were more educated and suffered "poorer health" than the average citizen. The majority appeared to be using alternative medicine approaches "not so much as a result of being dissatisfied with conventional medicine, but largely because they find these health care alternatives to be more congruent with their own values, beliefs, and philosophical orientations toward health and life." This was not entirely true. Many believed physicians were too brusque and uncommunicative, too rich and arrogant, too unconcerned with the patient's holistic well-being. Brinkley's advice over the airwaves better suited his rural listeners' "values, beliefs, and philosophical orientations" than did that of regular doctors of his time.³

The popularity of alternative medicine among the Baby Boomer generation remains—as well as efforts to establish its legitimacy. In

1991 Congress ordered the National Institutes of Health to establish an Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM). Its first director, Joseph Jacobs, had confidence in the office's possibilities, but he faced the opposing forces of those who, on the one hand, believed the OAM would become a haven of quacks and those, on the other, who believed he was too cautious in his insistence on field investigations to prove a treatment's legitimacy. During his tenure, studies were made of cancer, AIDS, asthma, cystic fibrosis, depression, and Parkinsonism using treatments of acupuncture, electrochemical current, homeopathy, hypnosis, macrobiotic diet, massage, musical therapy, and intercessory prayer. These experiments especially upset the traditionalists, and he resigned in 1994 in frustration over criticism from both sides. He was replaced in 1995 by Wayne B. Jonas, who was "persuaded of homeopathy's efficacy in primary care practice" and who collaborated with Jennifer Jacobs in writing *Healing with Homeopathy: The Complete Guide*. Conventional practitioners continue their opposition to this unscientific approach and, as James Harvey Young expresses it, "whether sound science can master the challenge of hazardous alternatives and reveal what utility they may possess looms as a major health challenge for the new millennium."⁴

Minnie Brinkley asserted that her husband was "ahead of his time." Perhaps if his sense of ethics had been stronger than his desire to make money he might have been a pioneer in legitimate glandular study—instead of the quack the AMA insisted he was. His friends and supporters in Milford and Del Rio did not think he was a charlatan and resented his being labeled so because of the great amount of good that he did in their communities. In any case, the AMA's successful campaign to revoke Brinkley's Kansas license and its victorious libel defense of Morris Fishbein determined conclusively that the organization would govern the medical profession, at least in the immediate future.

The Federal Radio Commission was justified in revoking Brinkley's license for unethical medical conduct in advertising because he used the station to further his personal interests, not the public's. In so ruling, they established important precedents for future broadcasters and their obligation to society. Nonetheless, because most broadcasters still do, to some extent, promote their own interests—although perhaps more unobtrusively since the Brinkley case of 1930—the issue remains one of interpretation and application. The enormous popularity of KFQB indicates that the public thought his station operated in their interest, and certainly the farmers, who relied on the Milford station for weather and market news, believed this to be true. The majority of the FRC members, however,

decided to define the "public interest" on the basis of their own standards and predilections, which was their prerogative. It is significant that they made their case against an independent broadcaster, while ignoring the activities of the giants such as RCA or the national networks, in their exploratory efforts to regulate the airwaves. Brinkley undercut the commission's official reasoning for not renewing his license when he promised not to prescribe medicines over the air. But the forces combined against him proved to be too powerful. When Morris Fishbein promised to bring Brinkley down, he declared the AMA would use the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Radio Commission, Better Business Bureaus, the U.S. Postal Service, and "all other agencies." Ultimately, it took these and more to "get" the Goat Gland Doctor.

One can observe that John R. Brinkley was ahead of his time in another sense. The Postal Service described one of his medical pamphlets as "lewd, lascivious, obscene, and suggestive," and the FRC censured his radio broadcasts on the prostate as obscene. Yet today Dr. Ruth Westheimer discusses the penis, masturbation, and sexual intercourse in the same matter-of-fact manner that Brinkley once used to describe that "troublesome old cocklebur." In our day, Howard Stern "has become the loudmouthed master of a trend known as blue radio." John Brinkley's talks today would sound old-fashioned, archaic, humdrum, and a bit earthy, if competing with these performers.⁵

Brinkley truly pioneered during the infancy of radio. He was among the first to use live talent, the first to offer college credit courses over the air, the first to transcribe and broadcast by telephone, the first to use a longwire directional antenna to send signals a certain direction, and one of the first to use electrical transcriptions to record his messages. Modern radio stations rely on techniques of prerecorded music and syndicated programming that Brinkley developed. His advertising techniques pointed the way for later broadcasters. His stations were immensely important in promoting the popularity of country music. He preceded Arthur Godfrey by many years in his successful use of radio on a "one on one" basis. Though he seemed reserved and introverted around people, when he sat before his microphone he became personable, gregarious, even loquacious. His Open Forum, an experiment during his political campaigns that allowed the public to air their grievances and ask civic questions, was a first.

Finally, and most significantly, his "borderblaster" operation led to the Treaty of Havana, an agreement to regulate the air waves in the Western Hemisphere. Nothing is achieved by speculating on

the question of whether Brinkley would have moved his operation to Mexico if the FRC had ruled differently in 1930. If he had not, the dissatisfied Mexicans would have allowed—and did allow—others who wished to operate a “borderblaster” south of the Rio Grande to do so, until the governments involved became concerned enough to agree on regulations. Indisputably, though, Brinkley’s imagination originated many of the borderblaster techniques used by imitators.

John Brinkley was a leader in Kansas politics in several ways. His style of campaigning certainly revolutionized the techniques of future Sunflower politicians. His showmanship, his employment of live, popular entertainers, his use of radio and an airplane, his Ammunition Train No. 1 with its carnival aura, and his ballyhoo approach mesmerized the rural as well as urban voters and made certain that, thereafter, successful politicians would have to abandon the older, more sedate campaigning manner. This was true for campaigners in other states as well. His style served as a model for Louisiana’s Huey Long and for the Texas demagogue W. Lee “Pappy” O’Daniel. Even Jimmie Davis, running for governor of Louisiana, sang to the tune of “‘Organ Grinder Blues’: Gonna Get Me Some Monkey Glands, Be Like I Usta Wuz.” Brinkley was a master of combining religion, Populism, and a midway carnival atmosphere in his political rallies. His campaigns of 1930 and 1932 brought both Harry Woodring and Alfred Landon to national prominence earlier than the normal political process in Kansas would have permitted. His write-in race in 1930 resulted in Woodring’s being elected governor. This, in turn, allowed Landon to move in, heal the breach between the two wings of his party, be elected in 1932, and reelected in 1934. Woodring used the office to promote the candidacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt, thereby rising to prominence in Democratic national party circles. Landon’s national renown enabled him to win the Republican presidential nomination and to run fruitlessly against “the Champ” in 1936. Franklin Roosevelt gave him one of the worst political drubbings in presidential history, but Landon remained the titular head of his party until the emergence of Thomas E. Dewey in 1944. Unfortunately, Brinkley’s support of world Fascism and William Dudley Pelley and his Silver Shirts in America was a black mark against his positive political achievements.⁶

Despite his arrogance and crafty nature, Brinkley had a likeable personality. Many people have been poor like he was, and risen to great wealth as he did, but few are as garish in displaying their wealth as the nouveau riche John R. Brinkley. He was paranoid in his concern over enemies who were “out to get him,” but in the case of the AMA and the *Kansas City Star*, his fears had substantial foun-

ation. His political rhetoric was not completely demagogic, as he was a great community builder and a champion of the poor. People who knew him, both casually and closely, found him to be highly intelligent. L.R. Brown, Johnny Boy's longtime tutor, recalled that John could read a page and remember the contents long afterward. He was cunning, quick to perceive his enemies' weaknesses, and also perceptive in trends and possible opportunities. He had within him a burning rage against his opponents, an uncontrollable desire to antagonize his adversaries, an egocentrism with brazenness almost beyond belief. He was a flawed genius who carried the accompanying, often fateful, baggage of that genre.⁷

His feelings of grandiosity as part of a paranoid personality disorder broke through occasionally during his travails with authority and surfaced frequently in his authorized biography. The book abounds with references to his being a "genius" and, at the same time, "modest." He appeared to be convinced that he was placed on earth for a certain great purpose, and that was to be "the world's greatest doctor." His protracted struggle with his great nemeses, Morris Fishbein and the American Medical Association, appears, in hindsight, to have been inevitable, as though he sought persecutors deliberately. California, he claimed, had persecuted him just as Jesus had been by the Jews. It "was an attempt to jail a great man," the Wood biography proclaimed. He often compared himself with Saint Luke, and he occasionally sincerely believed, or at least attempted to convince his audiences, that he was being martyred on the rood of AMA ethics, just as Jesus had suffered on the cross for humanity. "I know how Jesus felt," he once cried out to a political gathering. During the period when his medical and radio licenses were being withdrawn, he claimed that he "was being persecuted even as Jesus Christ was persecuted," and "he spoke of one of Christ's apostles, Dr. Luke, and said: 'If I am a quack, Dr. Luke was a quack too, for he did not belong to the American Medical Association.'" He was so obsessed with legitimacy that he added Dr. or M.D. to his name everywhere, on letterheads, in bronze, in granite, on driveway entrances, in colored lights, on baseball uniforms. This more likely indicated a deep-seated feeling of insecurity stemming from his impoverished boyhood of illegitimacy. The gregarious Jim Weldon recognized his inferiority complex when the engineer noted that "he did not enjoy meeting people for the first time."⁸

The extreme poverty of Brinkley's boyhood stimulated an intense ambition for wealth and fame. His career choice from the beginning was determined, not for service to mankind as he incessantly reiterated, but to amass money. He was able to pull himself up out

of mountain poverty, but never far enough to achieve the social status and acceptance he so desperately wanted. He failed to climb high enough because he could not bring himself to conform to the code of ethics of his profession, a submission that would have foiled his pursuit of the wealth he desired. He was a born maverick who could not conform. His repeated escapes from the snares of his foes made him increasingly audacious, eventually leading to his destruction and death.

John R. Brinkley III had to live in his father's shadow long after the Goat Gland Doctor died. At first the son was defensive, then he gradually accepted a more realistic attitude toward his heritage. When *Stag* magazine published a story about the doctor, Johnny wrote the author, informing him that he had about 50 percent of his facts wrong, due to his reliance on newspaper sources. A few years ago "you would have had a lawsuit on your hands," he wrote, but not now. He had "long lived in the knowledge of the good and the bad in my father. I find the good rather more extensive than the bad." He continued, "I have two well established cousins that are riding on medical parchment of the highest order. I doubt that either of them has one tenth the brains my father had. I regard the medical profession as he did: business under a halo."⁹

The life of John R. Brinkley is replete with "what ifs." What if this talented surgeon had expended the time and energy to obtain what his peers believed was the legitimate medical education and degree? What if he had been more interested in serving humanity than in making money? What if he had become truly engrossed in his political success and sincerely sought to help his fellow man? What if he had explored more legitimate uses of radio, rather than using it to promote his own ends? The possibilities are endless. There are many in history to whom this question can legitimately apply, but in his case, the number of instances is far larger than usual. Years later, Morris Fishbein wrote an epitaph in his *Journal of the American Medical Association*: "The centuries to come may never produce again such blatancy, such fertility of imagination, or such ego."¹⁰

When John Brinkley died, his political nemesis, William Allen White, summed up the man rather well when he said:

No one can be sure whether he fooled himself by his own vociferous egotism or whether he knew how cheap was all his blather and palaver and kept it up because it paid. . . . Was he a conscious knave or just a poor bedeviled and bewildered fool? . . . What a little tinkering with his char-

acter[,] a little more honesty here, a little more intelligence there—would have made him a real leader of men.

“Poor Brinkley!” White concluded, “if only his head and his heart had been screwed on right!”¹¹

Notes

Abbreviations

AMAA	American Medical Association Archives, JRB File
JRB	John R. Brinkley
JAMA	<i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i>
KSHS	Kansas State Historical Society
WMM	Whitehead Memorial Museum

Preface

1. This discussion of male menopause is taken from Anthony L. Komaroff, ed., *Harvard Medical School Family Health Guide* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999): 1095–1110.

2. Martin Gardner, *In the Name of Science* (New York: Putnam's, 1952), 244, on Graham; James Harvey Young, *The Medical Messiahs* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), 138, for the electricity quote.

3. Patric Brophy, "The Weltner Institute and Magnetic Healing in Nevada, Missouri," in *Mystic Healers and Medicine Shows*, Gene Fowler, ed., (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1997): 111–26.

4. Young, *Medical Messiahs*, p. 139–40, calls this the "Rube Goldberg Sequence;" Morris Fishbein, *Fads and Quackery in Healing* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1932), chap. X. Professor Young uses Jack Dempsey and Babe Ruth as examples; I have updated his analogies slightly.

5. "Sheep cells" quote from Helen B. Branyan, "Medical Charlatanism: The Goat Gland Wizard From Milford, Kansas," *Journal of Popular Culture* 25 (summer 1991): 131; *Modern Maturity* (January-February 1999): 51.

6. James T. Patterson, *The Dread Disease* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), 17. The "fifty-fifty chance" quote is from Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Time to Heal* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 5.

7. Martin Gardner, *Name of Science*, 186–87; Morris Fishbein, *Fads and Quackery*, 2.

I. Humble Origins

1. Clement Wood, *The Life of a Man* (Kansas City: Goshorn Publishing, 1937), 11–14; J.S. Burnett to JRB, Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box. 107.1, KSHS.

2. The college archivist of Davidson College reported no record of a Brinkley attending there in the nineteenth century.

3. JRB Papers, Box 107.1, File of Minnie Brinkley's Correspondence, KSHS; quote from Wood, *Life*, 14-17.

4. Some of this biographical material came from a letter he wrote to his one year old son in 1928 about his family and boyhood, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box. 107.1, KSHS. Jackson County did not record births until after 1913 unless the individual requested it and provided proof of parentage. Obviously, illegitimates did not do this and there is no birth certificate for John Romulus Brinkley. The county records show his father married Mary Buchanan there in 1854 and Sarah Mingus on January 2, 1870. Wood, *Life*, 18-19; Francis W. Schruben, "The Wizard of Milford," *Kansas History* 14 (winter 1991-1992): 228. William S. Powell, "John Romulus Brinkley," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 1, 228-29, erroneously spells his mother's name Barnett.

5. Wood, *Life*, 24-25.

6. *Ibid.*, 26-28.

7. JRB to John R. Brinkley III, 2 December 1928, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box. 107.1, KSHS.

8. Wood, *Life*, 26-28.

9. JRB to H.D. Osborn, 4 April 1938, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box. 107.1, KSHS.

10. John Parrish, "A Mountain Medical Maverick," *These Storied Mountains* (Asheville, N.C.: 1922).

11. Wood, *Life*, 41.

12. During the medical hearings of 1930, Brinkley employed C.N. Welsch, a Pinkerton detective, to gather testimonials from his former schoolmates, attesting to the high school education they received from Dawson. Brown was one of these students. JRB Papers, Box 107.1, KSHS.

13. Wood, *Life*, 23-24.

14. *Ibid.*, 47-48.

15. *Ibid.*, 50-52.

16. *Ibid.*, 56.

17. Donald Copper, "Dr. Brinkley's Own Story," *Radio Stars* (August 1933): 46.

18. Wood, *Life*, 55-58. The Jackson County records spell her name Sallie but her marker in the Wike cemetery reads "Sally Wike Engren."

19. Gerald Carson, *The Roguish World of Doctor Brinkley* (New York: Rinehart, 1960), 18.

20. James Harvey Young, *The Toadstool Millionaires* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), 166-70, 186.

21. Albert J. Schneider, "That Troublesome Old Cocklebur: John R. Brinkley and the Medical Profession of Arkansas, 1937-1942," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 35 (spring 1976): 28; Chicago quote from Thomas Neville Bonner, *The Kansas Doctor* (University of Kansas Press, 1959), 80.

22. Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York, Basic Books, 1982), 45, 60, 63-64, 85.

23. *Ibid.*, 90–91.
24. *Ibid.*, 96–99; Bonner, *Kansas Doctor*, 72–73; Martin Gardner, *Name of Science*, 187–203. Gardner refers to homeopathy, naturopathy, osteopathy, and chiropractic as “cults.” Morris Fishbein, *Fads and Quackery*, chap. 3, is good on the rise and fall of homeopathy. Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Learning to Heal*. (New York: Basic Books, 1985), discusses proprietary teaching, pp. 13, 47–48, 61–62.
25. Ferenc M. Szasz, “Francis Slatter,” in *Mystic Healers*, 25.
26. Starr, *Transformation*, 104.
27. Wood, *Life*, 58–59; *John R. Brinkley v J.F. Hassig*, federal district court of Kansas, 1930, microfilm copy, KSHS.
28. Brinkley attested to these complaints in his divorce suit in 1915.
29. P.M. Price to Pinkerton detective C.N. Welsch, JRB Papers, Box 107.1, KSHS.
30. *JRB v J.F. Hassig*, microfilm copy, KSHS.
31. Wood, *Life*, 60–70.
32. James Crawford deposition, AMAA, Box 0096, Folder 05.
33. Wood, *Life*, 71–72.
34. *Ibid.*, 72–73; John D. Price, “Sunshine Stations Between the Nations,” *Superpowers and Border Stations*, Part II, p. 15, KSHS; Schneider, “Cocklebur,” 29.
35. James Crawford deposition, AMAA, Box 0096, Folder 05; *Greenville News*, 9 December 1919, clipping in Gerald Carson File, JRB Papers, Box 108.1, KSHS.
36. Crawford deposition.
37. Schneider, “Cocklebur,” 26; Don B. Slechta, “Dr. John R. Brinkley: A Kansas Phenomenon,” M.A. thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1952, 4.
38. Wood, *Life*, 75–76.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 77; *Indianapolis News*, 9 October 1940, clipping in Gerald Carson File, KSHS.
40. “The Brinkley Decision,” *Journal of Kansas Medical Society* 36 (August 1935): 343.
41. Wood, *Life*, 81.
42. *John R. Brinkley v Sally M. Brinkley*, divorce case #4850A, Wyandotte District Court, Kansas City, Kansas. The Wood biography, p. 316, asserts that in 1913 he “permitted” Sally to secure a divorce.
43. *Brinkley v Hassig*, microfilm copy, KSHS.
44. *Axtell Standard*, 27 September 1927; *Marshall County News*, 18 April 1930, “Sources on Brinkley Before Moving to Milford,” KSHS.
45. Jack D. Walker, M.D., “The Goat Gland Surgeon,” *Journal of the Kansas Medical Society* 57 (December 1956); Brinkley Diplomas and Certificates, KSHS.
46. Wood, *Life*, 85.
47. *Ibid.*, 87–88.
48. Office of the Surgeon General to Arthur J. Cramp, 11 November 1924, AMAA, Box 0096, Folder 04.
49. Wood, *Life*, 89; *Junction City Union*, 16 August 1917.

2. Toggenberg Goats

1. Arfie Condray interview, March 1988, Milford Booster Club; Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 126.
2. See *Junction City Union*, 14 March 1918, for example, for his out-of-town calls.
3. Minnie Wilson Notes, Root Collection, Federal Writers Project, JRB Papers, KSHS.
4. Wood, *Life*, 93-100; *Kansas City Star*, 6 March 1977.
5. Wood, *Life*, 126-27.
6. JRB to Dr. Arthur J. Hyde, 21 March 1924, AMAA, Box 0099, Folder 06.
7. Wood, *Life*, 93-101.
8. Jesus quote from Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday* (New York: Bantam Books, 1950), 127.
9. *Junction City Union*, 6 May 1968; *Salina Journal*, 17 April 1977; Arfie Condray interview.
10. Wood, *Life*, 110-18; Ralph Titus, "John R. Brinkley, the Radio, and the Promised Gland," *Prairie Scout* 5 (1985): 4.
11. Wood, *Life*, 119-20.
12. *Ibid.*, 120-21; Ansel Harlan Resler, *The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Broadcasting in the United States* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1958), 60.
13. Minnie Wilson Notes, KSHS; *Junction City Union*, 16 May, 25 July, 1 August, 12 September 1918; *History of Milford, Kansas 1855-1921*, n.p., KSHS.
14. *Junction City Union*, 25 March, 9 July 1920.
15. Minnie Wilson Notes; *Junction City Union*, 14 August, 28 August, 25 September 1919.
16. *Junction City Union*, 26 August 1920, 1 September 1921.
17. Interview with Ray Heard, 24 September 1998; interview with A. Thornton Edwards, 18 September 1998.
18. JRB to H. R. Reaume, 15 January 1927, copy in Geary County Historical Society.
19. Wilson Notes; *Junction City Union*, 9 June 1926; Anita Grimm Taylor, "Persuasive Techniques in Selected Speeches and Writings of John R. Brinkley" (M.A. thesis, Kansas State University, 1952), 83.
20. Max Thorek to Dr. Erastus S. Egerton, 24 April 1930, testimony in *Brinkley v Hassig*, U.S. District Court, copy in KSHS. In this letter, Thorek also claimed to have written authorities at the University of Pavia to have Brinkley's degree revoked.
21. Wood, *Life*, 136-37; Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 65.
22. Gerald Carson Files, JRB Papers, Box 108.1, clipping dated 6 August 1920, KSHS.
23. JRB Papers, Legal Documents, KSHS; Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 57-58.

24. Price, "Sunshine Stations," 16.
25. Many of these instances of violence are detailed in the Hassig case, KSHS; *Junction City Union*, 10 March 1921.
26. *Kansas City Star*, 11 June 1950.
27. John R. Herman, M.D., "Rejuvenation: Brown-Seguard to Brinkley," *New York State Journal of Medicine* 82 (November 1982): 1731. Herman describes Brinkley as "indeed a genius," p. 1738.
28. David Hamilton, *The Monkey Gland Affair* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1986), 26, 35-36. Hamilton was a transplant surgeon at Glasgow University and his study is an excellent source. He admires Voronoff's work but labels Brinkley a quack.
29. *Ibid.*, 41-42, 55-57.
30. *Ibid.*, 44-46.
31. Gerald Carson, *The Roguish World of Doctor Brinkley* (New York: Rinehart, 1960), 59-60.
32. *Junction City Union*, 14 August 1924.
33. For an account of the Blue Book series, see Mark Scott, "The Little Blue Books in the War on Bigotry and Bunk," *Kansas History* 1 (autumn 1978); E. Haldeman-Julius to Arthur J. Cramp, 12 April 1926, AMAA, Box 0096, Folder 05.
34. Carson, *Roguish World*, 66-71, discusses the PR men. The medical stories are in *Junction City Union*, 2 March 1922, 11 January 1923, 12 June 1924, news clipping dated 17 September 1921, in Gerald Carson File, Box 108.1, JRB Papers, KSHS. For another story on Brinkley's animal eye experiments, see news clipping cited in Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, p. 62.
35. News clipping, 19 March 1923, AMAA, Box 0097, Folder 05.
36. Wood, *Life*, 131-33.
37. Taylor, "Persuasive Techniques," 74. For the *Record* story and picture, see Helen D. Francis, "The Goat Gland Man," *Kansas Quarterly* 8 (spring 1976): 63.
38. Taylor, "Persuasive Techniques," 149-50; Carson File, Box 108.1, JRB Papers, KSHS, clipping dated 19 June 1922.
39. *Junction City Union*, 1 May 1919, 22 September 1921, 5 July, 2 September 1922, 15 February 1923. The filmed operations are cited in Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 63.
40. *Brinkley v Fishbein*, JAMA, 112, June 1939, 2146.
41. *Ibid.*; JRB Papers, Legal Documents, KSHS; Wood, *Life*, 158-60, 166-73, 191-93.
42. Wood, *Life*, 175-78.
43. Morris Fishbein, *Fads and Quackery*, 40-41; Herman, "Rejuvenation," 1735.
44. The *Star* exposures were reprinted in the *Junction City Union*, 6 August 1931, to expose Sachs, currently in Geary County trying to establish a rival newspaper.
45. Gerald Carson File, Box 108.1, JRB Papers, KSHS, clipping dated 30 October 1923.
46. Carson, *Roguish World*, 51; Wood, *Life*, 198; *Junction City Union*,

30 April 1925; Fishbein's charge from Schneider, "Troublesome Old Cocklebur," 40.

47. Folder of Diplomas and Certificates, JRB Papers, KSHS.

48. Wood, *Life*, 200-04; *Junction City Union*, 13 August 1925.

49. JRB to AMA, 14 March 1927, AMAA, Box 0097, Folder 07; Secretary to Arthur J. Cramp, letters in AMAA, Box 0097, Folder 11.

50. Gerald Carson newspaper clippings, KSHS.

51. John L. Baeke and Lynn Payer, "The Apotheosis of Quackery," *MD* 3, no. 28 (August 1985): 90.

52. The Brinkley-Jones Hospital Association, copy at KSHS.

53. *The Story of Paw and Maw*, JRB Papers, KSHS.

54. Jack D. Walker, "The Goat Gland Surgeon," *Journal of the Kansas Medical Society* 57 (December 1956): 754.

55. William J. Fielding, *Vitality Again* (Milford: Scientific Press, 1926), 23-24.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27, 82.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30; *JAMA* 90 (14 January 1928): 137.

58. *JAMA* 112 (May 1939): 1952-58.

59. Morgan, *Monkey Gland Affair*, 96-99.

60. John W. Gunn, "Dr. Brinkley, Kansas Surgeon, is Made Target for Unfair Attack by Ford's Newspaper, the Dearborn Independent," *Life and Letters*, Girard, Kansas, November 1924, copy in KSHS.

61. For T.L. Jones' move to Wakefield, marriage to Louise Poe of Rushville, Indiana, and move to Milford, see *Junction City Union*, 8 May, 13 November 1919, 21 January 1926; Ray Heard interview, 24 September 1998.

62. Helen D. Francis, "The Goat Gland Man," *Kansas Quarterly* 8 (spring 1976): 60.

63. *JAMA* 90 (14 January 1928): 136.

3. Radio Advertising

1. Clement Wood, *The Life of a Man* (Kansas City: Goshorn Publishing, 1937), 155; John D. Price, "Superpowers and Borderblasters," *Broadcasting, Programming & Production*, Part II, 1979, 5, KSHS.

2. Ansel Harlan Resler, *The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Radio Broadcasting* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1958), 12-16.

3. Francis W. Schruben, "The Wizard of Milford," *Kansas History* 14 (winter 1991-1992): 229n; *Junction City Union*, 24 May 1923.

4. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 67, 71; Francis Chase, Jr., *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Harpers, 1942), 66.

5. William H. Avery interview, 6 October 1998.

6. Max R. Williams, ed., *The History of Jackson County* (Sylva, N.C.: Delmar, 1987), 356-57.

7. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 15 July 1930.

8. Quote from Harold Mehling, *The Scandalous Scamps* (New York: Holt, 1959), 38-39.

9. *Junction City Union*, 10 January 1929.
10. Gerald Carson, *The Roguish World of Doctor Brinkley* (New York: Rinehart, 1960), 91–92.
11. Women quote from Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 249; Ralph Titus, “John R. Brinkley, the Radio, and the Promised Gland,” *Prairie Scout* 5(1985): 8–9.
12. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 22, 25–28.
13. Wood, *Life*, 221.
14. Titus, “Promised Gland,” 9.
15. Chase, *Sound and Fury*, 64.
16. Souvenir of the KFKB Broadcasting Association, copy in KSHS.
17. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 75–76.
18. *Ibid.*, 79; *Kansas City Star*, 16 April 1930.
19. Carroll D. Clark and Noel P. Gist, “Dr. John R. Brinkley: A Case Study in Collective Behavior,” *Kansas Journal of Sociology* 2 (spring 1966): 55; Chase, *Sound and Fury*, 65.
20. Wood, *Life*, 210.
21. *Ibid.*, 212.
22. Ray Heard interview, 24 September 1998.
23. Arphie Condray interview, March 1988, Milford Booster Club.
24. A. Thornton Edwards interview, 18 September 1998; Wood, *Life*, 210; Note typed by John Richard Brinkley III, JRB Papers, Misc., KSHS.
25. Wood, *Life*, 212–13.
26. Taylor, “Persuasive Technique,” 50–67; *Brinkley v Hassig*, U.S. District Court, copy in KSHS.
27. Reprinted in Taylor, “Persuasive Techniques,” 88.
28. *Junction City Union*, 24 November 1927, 29 November 1928, 13 March 1930.
29. *Ibid.*, 20 June, 5 September 1929.
30. Walter Davenport, “Gland Time in Kansas,” *Colliers* (16 January 1932): 49.
31. Wood, *Life*, 214–17; Woodbury quote in *Salina Journal*, 17 April 1977.
32. Wood, *Life*, 217–18; *Kansas City Journal Post*, 21 May 1930.
33. Wood, *Life*, 216–20.
34. John W. Ripley, “Dr. Brinkley’s Secret Prescriptions,” *Bulletin of Shawnee County Historical Society*, Bulletin no. 57 (November 1980): 156.
35. List of prescriptions and instructions in Kelsey Petro Manuscripts, KSHS.
36. *Ibid.* These additional instructions were dated 4 March 1930.
37. *Brinkley v Hassig*, copy in KSHS; for chionanthus see <http://endangered.fws.gov/i/q/saq3y.html>.
38. Quoted in Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 82.
39. Quoted in Titus, “Promised Gland,” 10.
40. Quoted in Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 82.
41. Titus, “Gland Times,” p. 10, and Price, “Sunshine Stations,” p. 22, \$750,000; Carson, *Roguish World*, p. 103, \$728,000; Backe and Payer, “Apotheosis,” p. 109, \$400,000. The diamonds are described in “John Richard

Brinkley: Broadcaster of Kansas,” *Real America* (July 1933), p. 45, and the AMA reprint of *Brinkley v Fishbein*, p. 16.

42. *Junction City Union*, 9 May 1929, 20 February 1930; JRB to John R. Brinkley III, 2 December 1928, JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box. 107.1, KSHS.

43. *Kansas City Star*, 25 May 1930. Brinkley had refused the writer a raise and the *Star* got a disgruntled McNabb’s story by deception.

44. Professor Young appended this story to his evaluation of this manuscript.

45. Taylor, “Persuasive Techniques,” 75–82.

46. *Kansas City Star*, 15 June 1930.

47. The *Junction City Union*, 6 August 1931, happily reprinted the *St. Louis Star’s* 1923 series on the diploma mill scandal, with a picture of Sachs, warning prospective investors of his background.

48. David A. Dary, “Alexander Black MacDonald Reporter” (M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1971), 130–31.

49. Brinkley’s Patient Registration Book, 1929–1930, WMM, Del Rio, Texas, confirms this figure of weekly goat gland operations. Although he was rounding out, he was not exaggerating the numbers of patients processed. *Kansas City Star*, 14 April 1930.

50. *Kansas City Star*, 15 April 1930.

51. *JAMA* 94 (May 3, 1930): 1426–27.

52. *Kansas City Star*, 23 April 1930.

53. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 87.

54. Carson, *Roguish World*, 138–39; *Kansas City Star*, 28 April, 20 May 1930.

55. *The Debunker*, September 1930, “The Goat Gland Doctor,” and April 1931 “The *Kansas City Star* and Brinkley,” copies in Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library, Pittsburg (Kansas) State University.

56. Chase, *Sound and Fury*, 70; *JAMA* 112 (June 1938): 2138.

4. Beset by Enemies

1. *JAMA* 90 (January 14, 1928): 134–37.

2. Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Learning to Heal* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 179, 235–37; Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 118–21 (the medical school numbers are at 118 and 120).

3. James Harvey Young, *The Medical Messiahs* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), 129–33.

4. James M. Burrough, *AMA, Voice of American Medicine* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), 169, 373–74; *Kansas City Kansan*, 17 November 1942.

5. *Kansas City Star*, 7 May 1930; Oliver Garceau, *The Political Life of the American Medical Association* (Hamden, Ct.: Archon Books, 1961), 171.

6. *JAMA* 90, 134–37.

7. Clugston quote in *Kansas City Journal Post*, 27 April 1930; *Brinkley v Hassig*, U.S. District Court, copy in KSHS. Hereafter cited as Hassig case.
8. Brian J. Moline, "Bill Smith: The Jurist as Politician," *Journal of the Kansas Bar Association* 57(November-December 1988): 32.
9. Hassig case.
10. Don B. Slechta, "Dr. John R. Brinkley: A Kansas Phenomenon" (M.A. thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1952), 69.
11. *Ibid.*; *Kansas City Star*, 28 April 1930.
12. Hassig case.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 8 May 1930.
17. Hassig case.
18. Thomas Neville Bonner, *The Kansas Doctor* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1959), 210-11; *JAMA* 94 (April 26, 1930): 1339.
19. C.N. W(elsch) report, 6 September 1932, JRB Papers, Box 107.1, KSHS.
20. David Hamilton, *The Monkey Gland Affair* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1986), 30; *Brinkley v Hassig*, 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, #1344, copy in JRB Papers, B771b, KSHS.
21. JRB letter to druggists, 3 April 1930, Petro Papers, KSHS; Helen B. Branyan, "Modern Charlatansim: The Goat Gland Wizard of Milford, Kansas," *Journal of Popular Culture* 25 (summer 1991): 33.
22. *Kansas Reports* 130: 874, quote at 876.
23. *Kansas City Times*, 10 May, 13 May 1930.
24. Ansel Harlan Resler, *The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Radio Broadcasting in the United States* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1958), 90.
25. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 21 May 1930.
26. Francis Chase, Jr., *Sound and Fury* (New York: Harper, 1942), 72.
27. Chase, *Sound and Fury*, 70; Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 91.
28. *Kansas City Star*, 21 May 1930.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 21 May 1930.
31. *Ibid.*, 23 May 1930.
32. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 93-95.
33. *Ibid.*, 95-97; for Curtis telling Brinkley about Hoover, see *JAMA* 112 (June 1938): 1962.
34. Clement Wood, *The Life of a Man* (Kansas City: Goshorn, 1937), 240-41; Chase, *Sound and Fury*, 75-76; *The Junction City Union*, 5 February 1931, reported the sale price of \$95,000.
35. James T. Patterson, *The Dread Disease* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), 106-8.
36. John D. Price, "Sunshine Stations Between the Nations," *Superpowers and Borderblasters*, Part II, 1979, 16, copy in KSHS.

37. Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), chap. 2 discusses Baker's career.
38. JAMA 94, 1147.
39. *Ibid.*, 1242.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, pp. 88–89, 98.
42. *Junction City Union*, 29 May 1930; *Kansas City Star*, 29 April 1930.
43. Wood, *Life*, 250; *Kansas City Journal Post*, 15 July 1930.
44. Bonner, *Kansas Doctor*, p. 213; *Salina Journal*, 8 March 1909.
45. *Kansas City Star*, 2 May 1930.
46. *Brinkley v Hassig*, circuit court transcript, KSHS.
47. Ernest A. Dewey, "The *Kansas City Star* and Brinkley," *The De-bunker*, April 1931, Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library, Pittsburg (Kansas) State University.
48. Wood, *Life*, 253.
49. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 18 July 1930; Hamilton, *Monkey Gland Affair*, 131–32.
50. Hassig case.
51. *Ibid.*; *Kansas City Journal Post*, 16 May 1930, noted Fishbein's article was reprinted in the magazine of Capper Publications.
52. Hassig case.
53. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 17 June 1930.
54. W.G. Clugston, *Rascals in Democracy* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1941), 152.
55. Wood, *Life*, 148–49.
56. *Ibid.*, 250–51; Hamilton, *Monkey Gland Affair*, 132; Bonner, *Kansas Doctor*, 215.
57. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 25 July 1930.
58. *Kansas City Star*, 15 September, 25 September 1930.
59. Branyan, "Medical Charlatanism," 34–35.
60. *Topeka Daily Capital*, 16 September 1930; *Star*, 16 September 1930.
61. Wood, *Life*, 256; Chase, *Sound and Fury*, 74 does not identify the complimentary doctor nor does W.G. Clugston in *Kansas City Journal Post*, 16 September 1930. The comment on the Brinkley hospital is in Dewey, "The *Star* and Brinkley."
62. *Brinkley v Hassig*, circuit court case, Box 771b, KSHS.
63. Wood, *Life*, 256–57.
64. Branyan, "Medical Charlatanism," 36.
65. Moline, "Smith the Jurist," 32; *Junction City Union*, 22 February 1934; Wood, *Life*, 258.
66. John R. Herman, "Rejuvenation: Brown-Sequard to Brinkley," *New York State Journal of Medicine* 82 (November 1982): 1738; *Star*, 8 May 1930.
67. Wood, *Life*, 263.
68. Clugston, *Rascals*, 153–54. There is some correspondence in AMAA, Box 0097, Folder 11, between Dr. Cramp and the AMA lawyers who were investigating the background of L.L. Marshall.
69. Wood, *Life*, 260–61.

5. Brinkleyism

1. W. G. Clugston, *Rascals in Democracy* (New York: Richard Smith, 1942), 142-43.
2. Francis W. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936*, (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1969), 1.
3. Ernest A. Dewey, "Cocktails in Kansas," *Commonweal* 11 (February 5, 1930): 385-86.
4. Clugston, *Rascals*, 146; Keith D. McFarland, *Harry A. Woodring* (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1975), 24.
5. McFarland, *Woodring*, 5-6, 12.
6. *Ibid.*, 30; Francis W. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1969), 24-27.
7. Schruben, *Turmoil*, 27.
8. Clugston, *Rascals*, 154.
9. 2 November 1930. This, obviously, is Clugston writing for the *Times*.
10. Thomas Fox Averrill, "Images of Twentieth Century Kansas," in *Kansas Revisited*, Paul K. Stuewe, ed. (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas, 1990), 196. For Townsend's plan see Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest* (New York: Vantage Books, 1983), 222-26.
11. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 23 September 1930; the Klan quote is from Carroll D. Clark and Noel P. Gist, "Dr. John R. Brinkley: A Case Study in Collective Behavior," *Kansas Journal of Sociology* 2 (spring 1966): 57.
12. *Topeka Daily Capital*, 26 October 1930; "Christian folks" quote from Clark and Gist, "Collective Behavior," 57. William H. Avery recalled the tremendous popular appeal of Brinkley's public meetings, interview 6 October 1998.
13. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 18 October 1930; Francis Chase, Jr., *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Harper, 1942), 76-77.
14. Rolla A. Clymer, "Doc Brinkley—Butler Phenomenon," *True Tales of the Kingdom of Butler*, 1981, copy in KSHS.
15. Francis W. Schruben, "The Wizard of Milford," *Kansas History* 14 (winter 1991-1992): 232.
16. See *Emporia Gazette*, 27 October 1930 for Smith's first ruling and *Wichita Eagle*, 21 October 1930 for the second one.
17. Schruben, "Wizard," 233; Ray Heard interview, 24 September 1998.
18. *Kansas City Star*, 27 October 1930; Clifford R. Hope, Sr., "Kansas in the 1930s," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 36 (spring 1970): 11. This and other Brinkley speeches are analyzed in Anita Grimm Taylor, "Persuasive Techniques in Selected Speeches and Writings of John R. Brinkley" (M.A. thesis, Kansas State University, 1952), 111-19.
19. *Topeka Daily Capital*, 3 November 1930.
20. *Ibid.*, 31 October 1930.
21. William H. Avery interview, 6 October 1998.
22. *Kansas City Star*, 26 October 1930.
23. *Kansas City Kansan*, 4 November 1930.

24. Schruben, "Wizard" and Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil* includes interviews with numerous people who were connected with the election of 1930 to determine the wholesale fraud at the polls.

25. *Topeka Daily Capital*, 4 November 1930.

26. Donald R. McCoy, *Landon of Kansas* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1966), 92 declares that Brinkley could not demand a recount because he was not on the ballot. Schruben, "Wizard," p. 236, says that a member of the University of Kansas Law Library told him that the doctor was entitled to one. No one proposed a legal decision at the time. Copies of the legal documents of Woodring filing to require the canvassers of Leavenworth County to include the questioned votes and Haucke intervening as a defendant are in Gerald Carson Files, KSHS.

27. *New York Times*, 15 March 1931. For fears of the medical people, see Thomas Neville Bonner, *The Kansas Doctor* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1958), 219.

28. *Emporia Gazette*, 7 November 1930.

29. The *Kansas City Journal Post* carried these stories on 11 November 1930.

30. Walter Davenport, "Gland Time in Kansas," *Colliers*, 16 January 1932, 50.

31. Don B. Slecta, "John R. Brinkley: A Kansas Phenomenon," M.A. thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1952, 124; Schruben, *Kansas In Turmoil*, 41-43; William H. Avery interview, 6 October 1998; Chase, *Sound and Fury*, 77.

32. *Emporia Gazette*, 8, 11, 12 November 1930.

33. Bert Comer, *Tale of a Fox* (Wichita: Bert Comer, 1936), 21; Schruben *Kansas in Turmoil*, 88.

34. William Avery recalled that Woodring was not a "bad" governor, but achieved nothing noteworthy. Interview 6 October 1998.

35. W.G. Clugston, "Thunder in the Wheatbelt," *Nation*, 5 August 1931, 123. See, for example, John L. Shover, *Cornbelt in Rebellion: The Farmers Holiday Association* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), for general farm conditions at the time.

36. Schruben *Kansas in Turmoil*, 81.

37. Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), 77-79.

38. *American Business World*, April 1951. For the support of Garner and Reverend Gerald B. Winrod, see Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 119-21, and Virgil W. Dean, "Another Wichita Seditonist? Elmer J. Garner and the Radical Right's Opposition to World War II," *Kansas History* 17 (spring 1994).

39. The *New York Times*, 7 February 1932 reported this straw vote.

40. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 1 June, 5 June 1932; *Time*, 16 November 1932, 40; Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 83-84.

41. Evengeline Adams to Dr. Brinkley, 30 March 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1. KSHS.

42. *New York Times*, 7 February 1932; McCoy, *Landon of Kansas*, 95-102.

43. Brian J. Moline, "Bill Smith: The Jurist as Politician," *Journal of the Kansas Bar Association* 57 (November-December 1985): 32, 34.
44. William H. Avery interview, 6 October 1998; Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 88.
45. C.N. Welsch report, 31 August 1932, JRB Papers, Box 107.1, KSHS.
46. *Ibid.*, 6 September 1932.
47. James E. Smith to JRB, 25 October 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
48. JAMA 112, 2144; George Allen Root Collection, Material on JRB, KSHS.
49. *Pink Rag*, 7 October 1932. The AMAA, Box 0100, Folder 05, contains the issues of the *Pink Rag* that printed stories about Brinkley.
50. C.N. Welsch report, 23 October 1932, JRB Papers, Box 107.1, KSHS.
51. *Ibid.*, 24 October 1932. A wedding invitation is in the Brinkley Papers. Naomi married James Edward Palmer of Fort Worth at "Brinkley House" on May 25 but it does not give the year.
52. Evangeline Adams to Dr. Brinkley, 1 June 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
53. Gerald Carson, *The Roguish World of Doctor Brinkley* (New York: Rinehart, 1960), 169-70.
54. William H. Avery interview, 6 October 1998; quote from *New York Times*, 31 August 1932.
55. Quoted in Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 132.
56. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 89; *Nation*, 21 September 1932, 154-55; Ribuffo, *Old Christian Right*, 119-21.
57. *Emporia Gazette*, 8 October 1932; *New York Times*, 31 August 1932; Clugson, *Rascals*, 286; Comer, *Fox*, 95.
58. Donald R. McCoy, "The Politics of Kansas in 1932," in *Kansas Revisited*, Paul K. Stuewe, ed. (Lawrence, Univ. of Kansas, 1990), 253; McFarland, *Woodring*, 74; KFBI station manager to JRB, 4 October 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
59. Ernest A. Dewey to JRB, 14 May 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, Dewey Folder, KSHS.
60. *New York Times*, 31 August 1932.
61. *Emporia Gazette*, 27 September 1932.
62. James C. Carey and Verlin R. Easterling, "Light on the Brinkley Issue: Letters of William A. White to Dan D. Casement," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 20 (February 1953).
63. *Emporia Gazette*, 9 October 1932; *New York Times*, 24 October 1932.
64. Harold Mehling, *The Scandalous Scamps* (New York: Holt, 1959), 63.
65. *Emporia Gazette*, 27 September 1932.
66. *Kansas City Journal Post*, 19 September 1932.
67. *Ibid.*, 21 October 1932.
68. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 132.
69. *New York Times*, 23 October 1932; Schruben, *Turmoil in Kansas*, 93.
70. Walter Davenport, "Gland Time in Kansas," *Colliers*, 16 January 1932, 50.

71. *The American Freeman*, 9 May 1931, copy in Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library, Pittsburg (Kansas) State University.
72. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 97; McCoy, "Politics of Kansas in 1932," 257-58. *Emporia Gazette*, 29 October 1932 advertisement.
73. Schruben, *Turmoil in Kansas*, 100.
74. John Thomas, "Diamond-Studded John Richard Brinkley," *Real America*, July 1933, 85.
75. Bert Comer to JRB, 17 December 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
76. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 139.
77. *New York Times*, 15 October 1933; McCoy, *Landon*, 158, 183; Comer, *Fox*, pp. 99-101.

6. Hands Across the Border

1. Jan Orton, "New Life at Rosalia," *Kanhistique*, July 1985, 4.
2. F.M. Crume to JRB, 12 June 1933, JRB Papers, Box 107.3, KSHS.
3. Orton, "New Life at Rosalia," 12.
4. *Ibid.*, 12-13. See also Rolla A. Clymer, "Doc Brinkley—Butler Phenomenon," in *True Tales of the Kingdom of Butler* (1981), 151, copy in KSHS. AMAA has a file on Owensby and Dragoo. The association was not really concerned over these two rascals as they believed they were not nearly as clever as Brinkley and thus would be unable to make large amounts of money as the latter could do.
5. Bert Comer to JRB, 17 December 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
6. John D. Price, "Superpowers and Borderblasters," *Broadcast Programming and Production* (1979), 22, copy in KSHS.
7. Ansel Harlan Resler, *The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Broadcasting in the United States* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1958), 114-16.
8. Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), 24; *Junction City Union*, 5 February 1931.
9. Weldon salary from H.L. Munal to JRB, 25 April 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
10. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 24-25; Isaiah Gallo to JRB, 27 December 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1926-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
11. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 116-17; Price, "Superpowers," 23 on the 735 kilocycles. XER listed 735 kilocycles on its stationery as its number.
12. Weldon description in Price, "Superpowers," 23; \$36,000 story in J.C. Furnas, "Country Doctor Goes to Town," *Saturday Evening Post*, 20 April 1940, 13.
13. Letter from Wilson to Bushbaum and Rauh, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
14. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 114-18, 121-23; *New York Times*, 28 December 1931.

15. Ralph Titus, "John R. Brinkley, The Radio, and The Promised Gland," *Prairie Scout* 5 (1985): 14.
16. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 121-22. The author cites *El Nacional* to the effect that Mexican officials had prohibited his entry, 266.
17. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 29.
18. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 266-267.
19. Price, "Superpowers," 24.
20. *Ibid.*, 23; Karl Romstedt, "Doc Brinkley's Radio XER Sold It All," *Reminisce* (May-June 1999): 12.
21. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 39; Furnas, "Country Doctor," 50.
22. William Holifield to JRB, 9 May 9 1933, JRB Papers, Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
23. *New York Times*, 28 December 1931.
24. Cited in Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 131.
25. JRB to Minnie, 24 December 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
26. Jim Weldon to JRB, 22 November 1932, *Ibid.*
27. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 266-69.
28. Jim Weldon to JRB, 22 November 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
29. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 157.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Price, "Superpowers," 24; Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 157; Josephus Daniels, *Shirt Sleeve Diplomat* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1947), 373-75.
32. *New York Times*, 20 August 1933; Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 273.
33. *Topeka Daily Capital*, 7 December 1933; JRB to Baird, Kuntz and Dobson, 14 September 1936, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
34. Loesh, Scofield, Loesch & Burke to Arthur J. Cramp, 26 December 1933, AMAA, Box 0097, Folder 11; JRB Correspondence, 1933, *Ibid.*
35. *Junction City Union*, 12 October 1933; *New York Times*, 15 October 1933.
36. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 31.
37. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 138-39.
38. T.J. Crowe to AMA, 22 April 1932, AMAA, Box 0097, Folder 10; 29 January 1934, *Ibid.*, Box 0098, Folder 01.
39. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 140-41.
40. *New York Times*, 14 February 1934; *Newsweek*, 24 February 1934, 9.
41. *New York Times*, 25 February 1934; *Tribune* quote from Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 142.
42. AMAA, Box 0098, Folder 01.
43. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 142-43.
44. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 32.
45. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 149.

46. "Statement" by JRB, JRB Correspondence, Box 107.1; JRB to Abe Johnson, 6 January 1936, Business File, Box 107.2, KSHS.
47. Ibid.
48. JRB to Dr. H.D. Osborn, 5 May 1936, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
49. Walter Wilson to JRB, 17 August 1936, Ibid.
50. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 34.
51. Copy of *Roads Courageous* in JRB Papers, KSHS; quote from Ralph Titus, "Doctor Brinkley, The Radio, and The Promised Gland," *Prairie Scout* 5 (1985): 16.
52. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 34.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 40.
55. Price, "Superstations," p. 24.
56. J.E. Pate to H.L. Munal, 3 October 1932, Bert Munal to JRB, 5 October 1932, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1; JRB to Abe Johnson, Business File, Box 107.2, KSHS.
57. H.L. Munal to J.W. Adamson, 7 October 1932; Bert to JRB, 10 October 1932, in Ibid.
58. Price, "Superstation," 25; Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 33.
59. Quoted in Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 152.
60. Ibid., 157-58.
61. Ibid., 225.
62. Ibid., 159-61.
63. Furnas, "Country Doctor, 50; Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 165.
64. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 176-78.
65. Ibid.; J.C. Furnas, "The Border Radio Mess," *Saturday Evening Post*, 25 September 1948, 168; Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 166-67.
66. Price, "Superstations," Part III, "When Radio Went to War," 15-16.
67. Ibid., 22.
68. Telegram in Dr. Brinkley Papers, WMM, Del Rio.
69. JRB to Carl V. Rice, in a retrospective letter, 17 February 1942, JRB Papers, Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
70. Ibid.

7. The Old Cocklebur

1. Brinkley Film, #V030, KSHS.
2. JAMA 112, 1953-54.
3. Description of the operation in Clement Wood, *The Life of a Man* (Kansas City: Goshorn Publishing, 1937), 301; Brinkley Movie, #V030, KSHS.
4. Dr. Brinkley File, WMM, Del Rio; JRB Papers, Box 107.2, Abe Johnson File, KSHS; JAMA 112, 5; Schneider, "Troublesome Old Cocklebur," 34.
5. James C. Netts to Clarence H. Watson, 8 March 1934, JRB Papers, Box 15-03-05-03, KSHS.

6. *Del Rio Evening News*, 17 September 1937.
7. JRB to Abe Johnson, 29 December 1937 memo, JRB Papers, Box 107.2; JRB Papers, Box 107.4, Abe Johnson File, KSHS.
8. Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), 9, 28, 35.
9. Anita Grimm Taylor, "Persuasive Techniques in Selected Speeches and Writings of John R. Brinkley" (M.S. thesis, Kansas State University, 1952), 104-7.
10. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 40-41.
11. *Kansas City Star*, 25 March 1941.
12. Address of Dr. A.W. Bromwell to the Texas Surgical Society, 1 October 1979, Dr. Brinkley File, WMM, Del Rio; JRB Papers, Memo of 26 April 1937, Box 107.2, Abe Johnson File, KSHS.
13. JRB Papers, Box 107.3, Reuter File, KSHS.
14. *San Antonio Express News*, 13 October 1935.
15. John D. Price, "Superpowers and Borderblasters," Part III, *Broadcast Programming and Production* (1979), 14, KSHS.
16. A description of the mansion is on the Brinkley Lumber letter-head, Mrs. JRB to Clark Gower 18 February 1949, Legal file, Dr. Brinkley File, WMM, Del Rio. The "Sunday Texas Magazine," *Houston Chronicle*, 15 September 1968, also carried a feature story on the mansion with description.
17. *Del Rio Evening News*, 5 April 1984; *The Spirit of Val Verde* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1985). The *Galveston Daily News*, 19 March 1939, carried a picture of Father Flanagan as a guest on board the Brinkley yacht. The good Father responded to John's criticism of the movie "Boys Town" by admitting that "Mickey (Rooney) was too convincing." Reverend E.J. Flanagan to JRB, Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
18. Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 162.
19. *San Antonio Express News*, 13 December 1975; JRB "Certificates" Miscellaneous Materials, 1988-149.01-04-01-07-03; Gerald Carson Newspaper Clippings, KSHS.
20. JRB Papers, Box 107.3, Miscellaneous Folder, KSHS; *Washington Evening Star*, 26 August 1935. The *Halifax Record*, 5 July 1935, had a story with pictures of the salvage claim, copy in Gerald Carson newspaper clippings, KSHS.
21. JRB Papers Box 107.3, Miscellaneous File, KSHS.
22. National Anglers Club Records, JRB Papers, Box 107.3, Miscellaneous Folder; Brinkley Film, # V076, KSHS.
23. *Del Rio Press*, 23 April 1937.
24. Gerald Carson Newspaper Clippings; JRB Papers, Box 107.2, Radio Talks, KSHS.
25. JAMA 112, 1956.
26. David Smith, "The Best and the Brightest? The Story of John R. Brinkley," Baylor University history paper, copy in JRB Miscellaneous Materials, 1988-149.01-04-01-07-03, KSHS.
27. JRB to H.D. Osborn, 29 April 1938, JRB Papers, Box 107.1, Dewey

to White File; J.A. Farley to JRB, 28 January 1937, Box 107.1; JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.3, KSHS.

28. Morris Schonbach, *Native American Fascism During the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: Garland, 1985), 322–24; *House Report # 1, 77 Cong., 1 Sess., Serial Set 10552*; *Time*, 9 February 1940, 17; Gerald B. Bryan, *Psychic Leadership in America* (Los Angeles: Truth Research Publishing, 1940), chap. 3; Virgil W. Dean, “Another Wichita Seditonist?,” *Kansas History* 17 (spring 1994): 58; *Chicago Daily News*, 10 February 1940; Harold Mehling, *The Scandalous Scamps* (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), 67; Clifford Hope, Sr., “Strident Voices in Kansas Between the Wars,” *Kansas History* 2 (spring 1979): 59. Hope believed John Brinkley either owned or controlled *Publicity*, which published many Fascist stories.

29. JRB Papers Box 107.2, Business File, KSHS.

30. Interview with Bill Smith, 4 May 1998, Sylva, North Carolina; JRB Papers, Box 107.2, Business Folder, KSHS.

31. W.E. Baird to JRB, 4 August 1936, JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.

32. JRB to Baird, Kuntz & Dobson, 14 September 1936, JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.1, Abe Johnson File, KSHS.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. W.E. Baird to JRB, 12 September 1936, JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.1, Abe Johnson File, KSHS.

36. W.E. Baird to JRB, 26 September 1936, JRB Papers, Box 107.2, KSHS.

37. Ralph B. Wilson to JRB, 22 December 1937, JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.1, Abe Johnson File, KSHS.

38. JRB Memo, 17 October 1938, JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.1, Abe Johnson File, KSHS.

39. JRB to Abe Johnson, 9 September 1936, 8 November 1937, “season’s greetings” 1937, n.d., JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.1, Abe Johnson File, KSHS.

40. *Ibid.* See JAMA 112, 2051 for Morris Fishbein’s estimate of physician income.

41. F.C. Furnas, “Country Doctor Goes to Town,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 20 April 1940, 50.

42. *Del Rio News Herald*, 15 April 1984; Research Material on JRB, Box 15–03–05–03, KSHS.

43. Ansel Harlan Resler, *The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Broadcasting in the United States* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1958), 163.

44. Albert D. Schneider, “That Troublesome Old Cocklebur: John R. Brinkley and the Medical Profession of Arkansas, 1937–1942,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 35(spring 1976): 33.

45. *Ibid.*, 33–34; Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 162–63.

46. JRB to Doctor H.D. Osborn, 5 May 1938, JRB Correspondence, 1925–1976, Box 107.1; Brinkley Film, V030, KSHS.

47. Schneider, “Old Cocklebur,” 34; Furnas, “Country Doctor,” 50.

48. Furnas, “Country Doctor,” 50.

49. JRB to Dr. H.D. Osborn, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
50. Keith D. McFarland, *Harry Woodring* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1975), 1, 229.
51. For *Publicity* support of Brinkley's Sunday night speeches, see Dean, "Wichita Seditious," 55-59.
52. Memo of 23 October 1938, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
53. JAMA 108, 1196.
54. T.J. Crowe to Olin West, 14 May 1936, AMAA, Box 0098, Folder 02.
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56. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 164-66.

8. Decline and Fall

1. JRB Correspondence to Abe Johnson, Box 107.1, KSHS.
2. Clinton Giddings Brown, *You May Take the Witness* (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1955), 38.
3. *Ibid.*, 40-41.
4. JAMA 112 (May 1939): 1968, 2262-64.
5. *Ibid.*, 2152-53, 2280-82.
6. *Ibid.*, 2050-62, 2282-84.
7. *Ibid.*, 1952-58.
8. Brown, *Take the Witness*, 49-51.
9. JAMA 112, 2284-88.
10. *Topeka State Journal* clipping in JRB Papers, Box 15-03-05-03, KSHS.
11. *Kansas City Times*, 30 March 1939.
12. J.C. Furnas, "Country Doctor Goes to Town," *Saturday Evening Post*, 20 April 1940.
13. Albert J. Schneider, "That Troublesome Old Cocklebur: John R. Brinkley and the Medical Profession of Arkansas, 1937-1942," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 35 (spring 1976), 35-36; JAMA 115, 1655.
14. Chicago Better Business Bureau, Gerald Carson Files; Harry Miller to J.S. Chase, 8 December 1941, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
15. Schneider, "Old Cocklebur," 36-37.
16. Gerald Carson newspaper clippings; JRB to Minnie Brinkley, 21 July 1941, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
17. Howard J. Mueller to Mrs. JRB, 19 January 1941, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
18. H.W. Green to Carl V. Rice, 4 April 1941, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.
19. Gerald Carson newspaper clippings, KSHS; JAMA 115, 1653.
20. *Del Rio News Herald*, 15 October and 23 October 1940; Ansel

Harlan Resler, *The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Broadcasting in the United States* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1958), 167-68.

21. *New York Tribune*, 24 May 1941; newspaper clippings, JRB Papers, Box 15-03-05-03, KSHS; *Del Rio News Herald*, 14 May 1940.

22. Resler, *Impact on Broadcasting*, 168.

23. JRB to L.L. Marshall, 13 June 1941, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.

24. Carl V. Rice to H.V. Green, 1 December 1941, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.

25. Chief Inspector to Morris Fishbein, 26 June 1939, AMAA, Box 0098, Folder 07.

26. JAMA 117 (October 11, 1941): 1269, prints these charges against "dr." Brinkley, as he is labeled.

27. JRB to Wallace Davis, 10 January 1942; JRB to Minnie, 5 February 1942, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.

28. Mrs. JRB to Maury Hughes, 25 January 1942, *Ibid.*

29. Maury Hughes to Mrs. JRB, 26 January 1942, *Ibid.*

30. Schneider, "Old Cocklebur," 38-39.

31. Telephone interview with Clarence E. "Bud" Stewart, 5 December 1998, Manhattan, Kansas. Bud, who worked for Manhattan Mutual, recalled seeing his company's Brinkley file before it was destroyed and was certain that it contained no mention of Texas; R.P. Martin to Hubert W. Green, 5 December 1942, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.

32. Jamie Chase to Minnie, 16 April 1942, *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*

9. Postscript

1. Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), 172.

2. Hubert W. Green to Mrs. Minnie T. Brinkley, 3 November, 27 November 1942, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.

3. E.P. Stillwell to Hubert Green, 3 December 1942; Hubert W. Green to Minnie Brinkley, 15 March 1945, *Ibid.*

4. H.B. Stubblefield to Minnie Brinkley, 21 July 1950, *Ibid.*

5. Mrs. JRB to Clark Gower, 18 February 1940, legal file, WMM, Del Rio.

6. *San Antonio Express and News*, 4 November 1962; Folder, Sale of Estate, WMM, Del Rio; *Del Rio News Herald*, 31 December 1978.

7. Legal File, WMM, Del Rio; *Topeka State Journal*, 5 May 1962.

8. Wesley Peacock, Sr., to JRB, 6 May 1940, JRB Correspondence, 1925-1976, Box 107.1, KSHS.

9. JRB Papers, Miscellaneous File, KSHS.

10. *Ibid.*

11. John R. Brinkley, III? To Antonio Bornot, 3 March 1959, JRB Papers, Box 107.4, KSHS. This is a two page letter with the end and signa-

ture missing, but it had to be written by Johnny Boy. See Fort Worth news clipping, 13 November 1959, in *Ibid.* for a story of his Cuban exploits.

12. Abe Johnson to W.E. Baird, 14 December 1960, Legal File, WMM, Del Rio; *The Spirit of Val Verde* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1985).

13. *Del Rio News Herald*, 19 October 1975.

14. Newspaper clippings, WMM, Del Rio.

15. *Topeka Daily Capital*, 16 April 1976.

Conclusions

1. Story on organizing doctors in *Kansas City Star*, 11 April 1999.

2. *Ibid.*, 23 June, 24 June 1999.

3. *JAMA*, 20 May 1998, p. 1548.

4. James Harvey Young, "The Development of the Office of Alternative Medicine in the National Institutes of Health, 1991–1996," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 72 (1998): 279–98.

5. Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), 248.

6. *Ibid.*, 22.

7. Brown story in *Wichita Eagle*, Sunday during Milford dam dedication, 15 May 1976.

8. Luke quotes from *Kansas City Star*, 15 June 1940; Weldon quote from Fowler and Crawford, *Border Radio*, 27.

9. John R. Brinkley to Frank Trilby, 8 July 1959, JRB Papers Box 107.3, KSHS.

10. *Newsweek*, 2 May 1960, 91.

11. *Emporia Gazette*, 28 May 1942.

Sources

Clement Wood wrote *The Life of a Man*, the principal source for John R. Brinkley's early life. He published it in 1934, then reprinted it four times; the 1937 edition was used here. In the 1930s Brinkley hired Wood to write this potboiler for promotional purposes for a reputed \$5,000—a tidy sum during the Great Depression. While Wood did the writing, it is obviously autobiographical in terms of scope and content. He wrote what Brinkley told him to write, but in his own writing style. This authorized work is sentimental, blatantly self-serving, unreliable, contradictory, and even badly erroneous in many places. It contains not a few suggestions of schizophrenia.

In 1960, Gerald Carson wrote a flamboyant, but captivating, biography of Brinkley, based on extensive newspaper accounts, the files of the American Medical Association in Chicago on his medical career, and the many court cases in which he was involved. It has numerous errors of omission and commission. His treatment of the political phenomenon of Brinkleyism is weak, as is his coverage of the international developments in the control of radio broadcasting. He had the disadvantage of writing without two valuable sources, Francis Schruben and Ansel Harlan Resler, which became available after he published his work.

In 1969, Brinkley's political career was covered rather thoroughly by Francis W. Schruben's book *Kansas in Turmoil, 1930–1936*, although sources are now available, of course, to which Schruben did not have access. In 1958 Ansel Harlan Resler made extensive use of the AMA files on Brinkley and the Department of State records for his doctoral dissertation, "The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Broadcasting in the United States," in which he traced the development of international control of radio broadcasting.

I have made use of these excellent works, as well as two master's theses on different aspects of the doctor's career: Anita Grimm Taylor, "The Persuasive Technique in Selected Speeches and Writings of John R. Brinkley," Kansas State University, 1952; and Don B. Slechta, "Dr. John R. Brinkley: A Kansas Phenomenon," Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1952.

The most important Brinkley resource, though, are John R. Brinkley's papers, which Minnie Brinkley donated to the Kansas State Historical Society in 1976. While they are not as extensive as a biographer might wish, and indeed are somewhat sparse for the Milford years, (perhaps Brinkley was less careful in retaining records early in his career), they were quite helpful in fleshing out his life. Gerald Carson also deposited his notes and

numerous newspaper clippings with the society and these accelerated the research. Whitehead Memorial Museum in Del Rio, Texas, has some important Brinkley sources. These include a number of photographs, tapes of his broadcasts, Brinkley artifacts and papers, and, especially, correspondence of Minnie and Johnny Boy after Brinkley's death. The files of the American Medical Association in Chicago were helpful. In addition, I have used newspapers in Kansas, Missouri, and Texas.

The endnotes will indicate my indebtedness to various scholars and journalists, and also to my archival and other sources, such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

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