

E. F. Trefethen Jr., 86, Executive Who Had Role in Hoover Dam

By **BARRY MEIER**

Eugene F. Trefethen Jr., an industrialist and philanthropist who played a role in the building of the Hoover Dam and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, died last Wednesday at his home in Napa, Calif. He was 86.

Mr. Trefethen's career as an executive with Kaiser Industries paralleled the company's growth from a minor construction concern into a worldwide mining and industrial enterprise. His principal role at Kaiser was to put the plans of Henry J. Kaiser, the company's founder, into practice by making financial arrangements, organizing construction of new plants and taking care of other behind-the-scenes work.

Eventually, the company established the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program, the largest private health care delivery system in the world.

Mr. Trefethen also helped to found the Walter A. Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley.

"Trefethen was the financial and managerial genius who turned Henry J. Kaiser's dreams into reality," said Cornell C. Maier, a retired chairman of the Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation.

He was born in Oakland, Calif. In 1926, while still a student at the University of California, he joined Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical, initially working as a sand-and-gravel laborer. Over four decades, he rose through various executive jobs, eventually becoming president of Kaiser Industries, the holding com-

pany for Kaiser's many industrial operations.

In 1931, he was the executive assistant to Mr. Kaiser, when work on the Hoover Dam began and traveled with him during the years the project was being built on the Colorado River in Nevada. In 1934, he was named vice president and director of the Industrial Equipment Company, a Kaiser operation formed to sell the heavy equipment that Kaiser had bought to build the foundation for the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

Mr. Trefethen retired in 1979. At that time, he was named an honorary lifetime director of Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical, the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and the Kaiser Foundation Hospitals.

After his retirement, he tended to a 600-acre Napa Valley estate. His son, John Vance Trefethen, and daughter-in-law, Janet Spooner Trefethen, established the Trefethen Winery in 1973.

Mr. Trefethen received many honors, including being named Business Statesman of the Year by the Harvard Business School in 1990. He was also the first recipient of the Alexis de Tocqueville Society Community Philanthropy Award of United Way in 1985. He was named Alumnus of the Year in 1979 by the University of California at Berkeley.

In addition to his son, he is survived by his wife, Catherine; a daughter, Carla Jean T. Saunders of San Francisco; two sisters, Carol Trefethen of Oakland, and Dorothy Dodds of Walnut Creek, Calif., and four grandchildren.