

Miss Stone Describes Will Rogers, the Actor

(This is the third installment of an interview with Dorothy Stone, stage and screen star, on "Will Rogers as I Knew Him." In the last article she described Rogers' all night vigil New Year's Eve during the Los Angeles flood two years ago. Several road embankments had been washed away, and she speaks of his fear and anxiety for his son who had not returned home.)

(Copyright, 1935, by I. N. S.)

NEW YORK, Aug. 21.—"At 4 o'clock in the morning," Miss Stone continued, "young Bill came driving home. He saw the figure of a man on horseback waving a red lantern. The rain was falling so hard he could not recognize the man until he heard a familiar voice shout:

"'H'ya there! Stop yo' car!"

"As young Bill said afterward, there is one voice and one accent that he'd recognize anywhere in the world. He shouted:

"'Dad!"

"He jerked the car to a stop and leaped out. Then, he saw the yawning hole where the road had been washed away, and he saw the dripping figure of his father—saw the water streaming from his horse. Will put out his hand and grinned:

"'Bill, I'm sho' glad you made it.'"

"Bill Jr. told me the story later as we were sitting in my hotel suite. I can still see how his eyes shone, and how he seemed to thrill at the narration of it. If ever a son worshiped and adored his father, that son was Bill Rogers."

Miss Stone paused for a moment, then began:

"Well, I could go on for ages talking about Will, but I must tell something about the fun we had together in 'Three Cheers.' You know, Daddy broke his leg in an airplane crash, and Will took his place in the show. He did it partly as a favor to Dad, partly to help Mr. Dillingham, the producer, and mainly, I think, because there were over a hundred people in the show who would lose their jobs if he didn't substitute.

Always Overly Generous.

"I know he had a lot of other contracts at the time, but he managed to break all of them up until June 1. He was just so decent about the whole thing, but he was always that way—always overly generous.

"The opening night when the show began again after Daddy's accident I was sitting in my dressing room terribly nervous. I felt all jumpy and was wishing Daddy were there so I could tell him just how miserable I was feeling.

"Suddenly there was a knock and in came Bill with tears streaming down his face.

"'Oh, honey,' he said, 'I wish yo' daddy were here.'"

"He took me in his arms, and I could just see how upset he was. Somehow, it took away all my own fear, and I just patted him and comforted him and began to feel very brave.

"The show that night seemed to go over big. Will was a sensation, and we were never quite as nervous again.

"I've been in show business for quite a while, but he's about the only actor I know who could have almost as large an audience in the wings as he would out front.

Actors His Audience.

"The whole company used to stand and watch him in every performance because he was always changing his jokes. In the middle of a scene, he would say:

"'Now I'll tell you about Hoover—'

"And he would introduce some brand new joke.

"There was one scene where the entire chorus would come out singing 'We are the peasants, etc.,' and, after they had danced around, the mayor would strut pompously out on the stage and announce:

"'I am the mayor!'"

"The routine at this point would usually be interrupted because Will

would whirl his lariat and rope him from the wings, then jerk him off the stage. The audience never could figure this out, although it always got a laugh, and they did not realize it wasn't supposed to be a part of the show.

"Sometimes Will would get excited and be having so much fun with this stunt that he would steal out behind the chorus girls with his rope and just chase the mayor around the stage. The audience would see a man in shirtsleeves stealthily creeping behind the last row of chorus girls, and most of them thought he was a stagehand.

"I still laugh when I think of the mayor trying to go through his speech—constantly being in mortal fear of Will's rope descending on him.

Kept Show Off Cue.

"Will's antics kept the show off cue, and everybody caught his boyish spirit. No one took his part in tense seriousness, and we all had a lot of fun.

"I'd be in an act with Will, and he'd introduce some new joke that wasn't in the script, and I'd have to follow him. His humor was so exuberant, so boyish, and so natural that this was never hard, and half the time I'd be hearing the joke for the first time along with the audience.

"Occasionally, I used to introduce something new myself, and Will always got a huge kick out of that. It's actually true we used to have so much fun together we'd forget about the audience until bits of applause would suddenly remind us.

"When celebrities came to the show Will would insist upon introducing them while I was on the stage. He knew what a kick I got out of it, and it delighted him to amuse me. Sometimes he would ask me to make the introductions.

"'You do it, honey, you're getting paid,' he would say. Then he would sit on the stage while I made the introductions, and grin and remark to the audience:

"'Isn't she wonderful! I'm teaching her to work.'"

In the fourth installment of this interview, Miss Stone tells of the night Will's son, little Jimmy, got lost in the theater, and describes the dramatic closing of "Three Cheers."

46 Planes to Fly in Honor of Post

NEW YORK, Aug. 21 (AP).—An aviation memorial for Wiley Post will begin at 2 p. m. Thursday at Floyd Bennett Field, it was announced Wednesday.

Forty-six planes will cruise over the metropolitan area, taking off at the hour funeral services begin at Oklahoma City for the flier who died with Will Rogers in an Alaskan crash.

All ships will fly mourning streamers of black crepe from both wings.

Three navy planes flying in a formation headed by Capt. G. R. Allison, commander of naval operations at Floyd Bennett Field, will head the procession.

They will be followed by six army planes from Mitchel Field, one plane each from the Coast Guard and the police department and 35 civilian planes.

ARIZONA WILL PAY TRIBUTE TO ROGERS

PHOENIX, Ariz., Aug. 21 (AP).—The State of Arizona will pay tribute to Will Rogers Thursday afternoon by closing statehouse offices.

Governor B. B. Moeur said his office would close for the duration of the funeral.