

WILL ROGERS

Will once said "A man with a message is a lot harder to listen to than any other species of speakers".

Even without that sound admonition, it would not occur to me to bring to you, his neighbors and friends, a message about Will Rogers. He was born 12 miles north of Claremore, in the county named for his father. You knew him, and respected and loved him, long before the stage and the motion pictures and the newspapers made Will Rogers the friend of every member of the household, in every rich and humble home in the land.

It is easy to imagine Will looking down from the height of this splendid bronze. I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't looking down from even a greater height, glad to be back in Claremore today, glad to meet again with the people of his home town and of his choice.

I spent an evening, many years ago, in Will's home, in California. I was there for the reason that Amon Carter invited me to go along. It was a pleasant and enjoyable evening, with only Will, Amon, Fred Stone and myself for dinner.

After dinner Will said "Would you like for me to read the finest thing I have ever written?", and with that he read through his introduction to "Trails Plowed Under". The introduction was written directly to Charley Russell, who by then had gone to the place where all good cow hands go. He spoke of his affection for Charley, and how much he missed him. He then asked Charley if he would go by a little white house up there and call on two people, both from Claremore, Rogers Country, Oklahoma. They were the mother and the father of Will Rogers.

Will believed that it was not too far from the earth to heaven, and it might be possible for those up there to look down on us here. I hope that it is, and that Will is aware today of the strong and lasting affection we have for him, and that it is our purpose today to express that, in the dedication of this fine bronze figure of a great American.

It is, I am sure, especially fitting that Amon Carter has been willing, and has been permitted, to share in the creation of this memorial to Will. Amon, like Will, is a man of the small town. He is a man with many of the characteristics of Will Rogers, otherwise he would not have been his close friend and associate, the man from Shady Oak Farm so often described by Will in his column.

Amon, like Will, represents the strong, courageous character which has permitted the development of the West, who has made this land into the vigorous, friendly, happy section which has found and held the affections of all who have known it.

You, Mr. Governor, represent the people of a great state. I take pleasure in conveying to you, for the benefit of Oklahoma and of all other states, this strong, appealing figure of our friend, Will Rogers.