

April 8, 1966.

Mr. John Marshall
Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce
Fort Worth Club Building
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Mr. Marshall:

In response to your inquiry concerning the history of the Will Rogers equestrian in front of the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum and Auditorium, I will give you the facts and you can put them in newspaper form, or however you want to use them.

First, may I say that the late Will Rogers and his family, the late Amon Carter and his family, were close friends dating back to Mr. Rogers' appearance in Ziegfeld Follies in New York.

Will Rogers, Jr., started his newspaper career in the Advertising Department of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Mr. Rogers insisted that his son be treated as any other employee, and he even lived at the Y.M.C.A.

Mr. Carter was in Washington, D. C., when Mr. Rogers was killed in an airplane crash in Alaska. He returned here, flew to California and from there he flew to Alaska and returned to California in the same plane with Mr. Rogers' body.

Out of love and affection for Will Rogers, and because Mr. Rogers stated many, many times that Fort Worth was his second home, the bronze equestrian was commissioned to Electra Waggoner (now Mrs. John Biggs of Vernon, Texas). Mrs. Biggs is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E. Paul Waggoner of Vernon, and is the granddaughter of the late W. T. Waggoner, multimillionaire cattleman, who resided in Fort Worth.

The pony which Mr. Rogers rides is "Soap Suds" - his personal horse.

Will Rogers, Jr., who resembled his dad in many respects, sat for Mrs. Biggs in the process of creating the sculpture. The bronze was completed and shipped to Fort Worth in 1941, but because of the war and the many complications, the formal unveiling was not held until November 4, 1947, on what would have been Mr. Rogers' 68th birthday, had he lived.

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General Dwight D. Eisenhower came to officially unveil the equestrian and Miss Margaret Truman, daughter of President Harry Truman was here for the occasion - as were many other notables.

The original bronze is here. Mr. Carter had two copies made - one for the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore, Oklahoma, and one for Texas Technological College in Lubbock.

Enclosed are four glossy prints, all of which must be returned as they are my file copies; however, since these were made immediately after the unveiling, and since there have been so many improvements in photographing techniques in the past nineteen years, I am sure you could obtain a much better photograph than those enclosed.

Also enclosed is my file copy of a clipping from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram on Wednesday, November 5, 1947, which I shall appreciate your returning. If the Thermofax copies are not clear enough for your purpose, please let me know and the originals will be loaned to you. The "Picture of the Week" gives a human interest factor and was carried in Life Magazine.

If there is any other information you may wish, please let me know; however, I am in the office only in the mornings.

Yours very truly,

S e c r e t a r y

KD:mm