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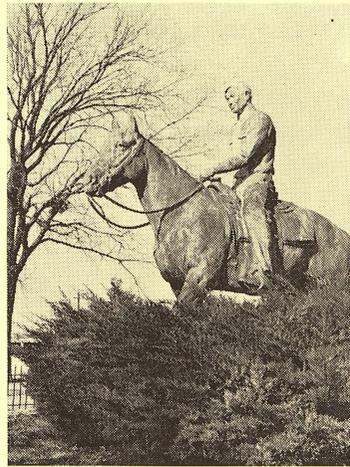
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THE COVER

This statue of the late Will Rogers stands outside his memorial in Claremore, Okla.

Oklahoma State University has contracted to chronicle all of Rogers' writings and speeches into a set of 10 volumes, a mammoth task which is expected to take about 10 years.

In charge of the project is Dr. Theodore Agnew, OSU history professor. Story begins on page six.

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The Life of Will Rogers

OSU to Perpetuate Memory of Renowned Entertainer and Philosopher



USUALLY when an individual in the United States rises from the ranks of the "common folk" to a position of international fame and prominence, particularly in the entertainment field, it often is a matter of little concern from whence he came. His home state is relegated to that corner of the mind, where distant memories lie untouched, and is rarely, if ever, mentioned.

Such was not the case with Will Rogers, Oklahoma's most revered citizen. The cowboy humorist, who came from Claremore to become one of the world's favorite people, never forgot Oklahoma. Wherever he went, he never failed to establish and emphasize his point of origin. He always believed in and remained close to his native state. And, since his untimely death, Oklahomans have not forgotten Will Rogers. Nor, in fact, has the rest of the nation. Moreover, the people of his home state are pursuing the particular goal of immortalizing the man and preserving his memories.

Throughout Oklahoma, his name has been bestowed on schools and institutions. Trans-continental air travelers frequently stop at the modern, functional Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City. In Claremore, the Will Rogers Memorial, an impressive tribute to the man who put Claremore on the map, is visited by over one million tourists annually; more than any other national memorial except George Washington's home at Mt. Vernon.

And now Oklahoma State University which, in its "A & M days" Rogers once called "the best agricultural school in the nation," is taking a major step to insure the perpetuity of Roger's sharp wit and perceptive insights for those who knew him, and to reincarnate Rogers the man, not Rogers the legend, for those too young to remember.

The OSU history department, in cooperation with the Will Rogers Memorial Commission, has agreed to tackle the monumental task of editing and compiling the massive chronicles of Will Rogers, including everything he wrote and said during his career. The result will be a complete set of volumes, perhaps as many as 10 in total, to be published, hopefully, at the rate of one per year.

The agreement, recently formalized in a contract signed by OSU President Robert Kamm and Morton Harrison, chairman of the memorial commission, is for the editing of Rogers memorabilia only. Although OSU probably will publish the volumes as well, that will be the subject of a later contract.

Mrs. Paula Love, curator of the state-operated, non-profit memorial and a niece of Will Rogers, exemplifies

the electric enthusiasm common to those involved in the project.

Stating that the signing of the final agreement between the memorial and OSU marks the most important day in the history of the memorial, she explains, "We've been gathering and collecting material toward this end ever since the founding of the memorial. This really will be a dream come true. We feel this is the greatest thing that has happened to perpetuate the memory of Will Rogers."

MRS. LOVE, along with her husband, Robert, who is manager of the memorial, will be in charge of supplying the editorial staff with photo copies of all the material in the memorial files.

The burden of responsibility in the editorial department has been placed on the receptive shoulders of Dr. Theodore L. Agnew, a senior member of the OSU history

department, who was chosen for the salaried position of project editor by Dr. Homer Knight, department head, and President Kamm, upon recommendation of the project advisory committee comprising Dr. Knight, chairman; John Hamilton, Roscoe Rouse, Bob Erwin, E. Moses Frye, Howard Jarrell, and John Egermeier.

The graying, soft-spoken Dr. Agnew, is a specialist on American social and intellectual history as well as a genuine fan of the famed philosopher whose words he will be editing. His reaction to the name Will Rogers is characterized by a sparkle in his eyes, a slightly raised, enthusiastic tone of voice, and a willingness to dwell on the topic for hours. One receives the impression that he is most anxious to begin delving into the mass of material.

That material, when all is available, will include an estimated total of more than 2,000,000 words to be sifted, categorized and compiled. In a complete breakdown this involves these 11 categories, followed by the number of publications: Syndicated weekly articles, 667; syndicated

daily telegrams, 2,861; magazine articles, 58; transcriptions of radio broadcasts, 105 plus; "The Worst Story I've Ever Heard Today," a syndicated column, 511; seven books, three of which were serialized in the Saturday Evening Post; syndicated convention articles, 48; miscellaneous newspaper articles, 25; Bull Durham advertisements, 266 plus, and the introduction to seven books by other authors.

THE MEMORIAL also is in possession of nine silent and five sound movies made by Will Rogers as well as 100 tape recordings of speeches, broadcasts, and interviews. Approximately 100 more tapes have yet to be classified.

According to Mrs. Love, the memorial files contain a considerable amount of material "that is relatively unknown to the public." Dr. Knight also indicates that there is much in the files about which little or nothing is known and won't be known until it falls into the hands of the editorial staff.

From the commencement of the spring semester, when work on the project officially began, until the day when the final volume goes to press, Dr. Agnew will remain on a part-time teaching basis, spending a major part of his day in the project's library office.

Estimated cost of the undertaking is between \$300,000 and \$500,000. Financing will be entirely through contributions and no state funds will be used. Contributions for this important project are being accepted through the OSU Development Foundation.

Specific methods of operation, including the order and categories in which the material will be compiled, have not been completely determined, Dr. Agnew explains. The problem of how to organize such a large and diverse amount of material into a cohesive, scholarly set of volumes is one that, he believes, will work itself out as he and the staff progress in their work. Right now all he has is a wealth of ideas and countless suggestions.

Mrs. Love believes that the project will result in not one, but three separate sets of volumes to be utilized as historical and reference works for university, high school, and elementary school libraries.

Agnew explains that the high cost of one set of volumes, which has not been determined, may be prohibitive for many individual buyers.

It is suggested, however, by Will Rogers, Jr., that a paperback "Best of Will Rogers" might have some commercial potential. The son of the cowboy philosopher made the suggestion during a recent visit to the OSU campus to discuss the project. Presently, he is working in Washington, D.C., with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the creation of an Indian education program.

During his short stay in Stillwater, Rogers spoke at a luncheon held by Dr. Kamm and attended by members of the Will Rogers Memorial Commission and OSU faculty. In his talk, he created a new image for his father, and expanded the old.

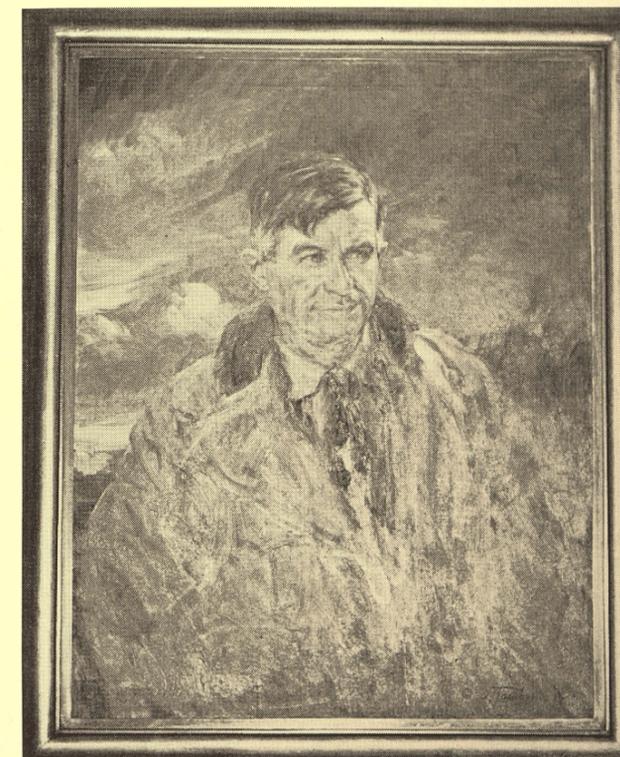
"I've always thought Will Rogers was much more than a humorist," he said. "Perhaps his lasting effect will be



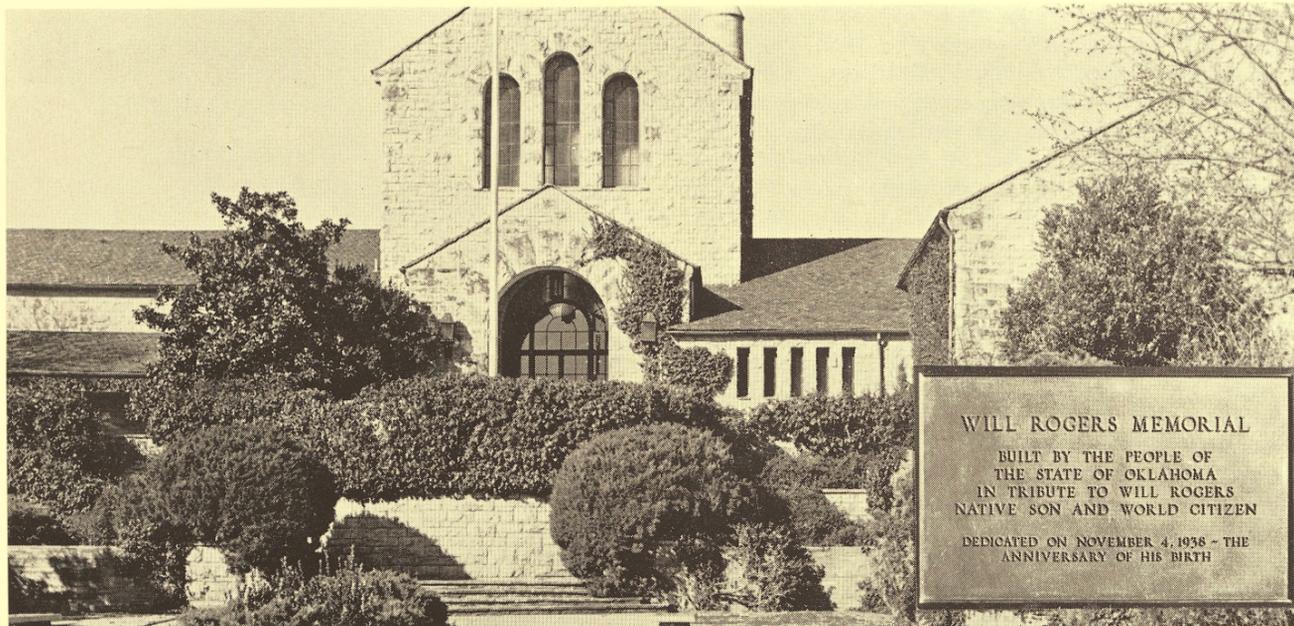
Will Rogers, Jr., visited OSU after he learned his father's works would be chronicled here. He is seen with Dr. Theodore Agnew, history professor and head of the project.



A section of a large mural at the Will Rogers Memorial depicting Rogers' skill as a trick rope artist.



Purchased by the Will Rogers Memorial Commission in 1953, the portrait of the Cowboy humorist has proven most popular. It hangs in his memorial in Claremore.



WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL
 BUILT BY THE PEOPLE OF
 THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA
 IN TRIBUTE TO WILL ROGERS
 NATIVE SON AND WORLD CITIZEN
 DEDICATED ON NOVEMBER 4, 1938 - THE
 ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

in history. He was a commentator, an analyzer, a capsulizer—he could take a thing and say it very pithy. He represented his time. In the '20's, he was of the '20's; in the '30's, he was of the '30's. He definitely and wholeheartedly was 100 percent American and 100 percent mid-west.

"There was nothing phony or shallow about him. I think that comes through in his writings, and that's why he was able to analyze as well as he did."

Rogers also noted of his father that "there was no meanness in his remarks."

"You'll find vigorous, even bitter criticism against a lot of the people," Rogers told Agnew. "He was very outspoken about President Hoover. Especially in 1928, 1929, and 1930, when the depression was beginning to come in. But as soon as the depression got worse and people were beginning to denounce the President, all criticism of President Hoover in my father's columns stopped. He took just the opposite tack, saying, 'Now this country's got to get together and we have to work ourselves out of this depression. Don't blame those Republicans. They are not smart enough to have thought of all this.'"

Rogers feels that his father had a sly way of needling men in power that will make his writings useful in the future, and that his father was not "taken in" by Russia. "He was not anti-Russia; he was not Red-baiting; he just looked at it cold."

The son also says that some of his father's best work was in his daily newspaper column, rarely longer than a page of telegraph paper. "The reason it was so popular," he explains, "is that not many columns went over the telegraph then and his column often referred to the news in the headlines that day. For example, I remember during the depression one day's headline read: 'Thirteen Bankers Indicted in Detroit,' and my father commented,

'You'd think Detroit would be a bigger town than that.'"

Rogers adds that his father's writings belong in the academic world, and in scholarly works laboriously foot-noted. "I know this project will bring credit to Oklahoma State University, the state of Oklahoma and, perhaps, a little bit of credit to my father."

He also warns Dr. Agnew, "You have yourself a real difficult job."

WILL ROGERS, SR., was born on his father's ranch near Oologah in 1879. He became ranch manager 19 years later when his father opened a bank in Claremore. It was then that he began his own cattle herd, and remained interested in cattle for the rest of his life.

In 1931, during an appearance on the OSU campus, Rogers surveyed the audience and mused, "this ain't a bad lookin' gang, but what I want to see is Blizzard's bulls."

The reference was to Dean W. L. Blizzard, then head of the animal husbandry department and a friend of Rogers. The name "animal husbandry" amused the Oklahoma cowboy, who once made the following statement on a lecture tour:

"Never was our farmers taught as much as they are today and never did they raise as little. Everybody is learning to farm and nobody is farming. They have a course in those schools called animal husbandry. I asked a boy what it was called and he told me. Here I had followed cows all my life and didn't know what it was."

DURING his reign as the head of the Rogers spread, Will continued to practice his roping, and frequently performed for friends. At the age of 13, he had become determined to

be the world's greatest trick rope artist when his father took him to the Chicago World's Fair. There he saw Vincente Oropeza, the Mexican king of ropemanship. Rogers was entranced, and decided that one day he would be better than Oropeza. This, combined with his spirited humor and urge to make people laugh, made him a practical joker with a rope through school and in his earlier years.

Later, it launched him on his way to stardom when he entered vaudeville with the Ziegfeld Follies as a wisecracking lasso artist. His act was new, and to insure its popularity he continually invented new stunts and gimmicks. Perhaps his most popular one was the trick in which he used two ropes, simultaneously lassoing both a horse and its rider.

Later, Rogers took his ropes and jokes to Europe, to tour with a wild west show. Then Hollywood beckoned and Rogers soon attained the status of a movie idol. He also began making radio appearances, charming the nation with his homespun wit, apple-pie philosophy, and genuine sincerity. Later, he applied the same qualities to his columns, articles, and books. His name and quips soon became a part of every language. Perhaps one of his better known remarks is, "I never met a man I didn't like."

Rogers also was a humanitarian, and frequently gave both money and time to help the unfortunate. His one official appearance at OSU was in 1931 during a "relief tour" of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas to raise funds for the poor.

Rogers told a fieldhouse crowd of 1,700 students "I'm here for (governor) Bill Murray. We're going to do away with these places. Bill favors curtailing education. I favor abolishing it. What we need is more professors with bad stomachs. They eat too much now and that costs the state more money."

His appearance netted \$2,400 for the relief fund, which was a considerable sum in those days.

After his show in Stillwater, Rogers wrote in his newspaper column, "From 5,000 feet in the air, Frank Hawks took a dive for the field to land at the best agricultural school in America, Oklahoma A & M. Their cattle win all the shows and their boys win all the judging contests. It's not a raccoon coat college."

According to Mrs. Love, Rogers interest in Oklahoma A & M sprang from the fact that his nephew, Maurice McSpadden, attended school there. Rogers also had other relatives at OSU at one time or another, including Clem McSpadden, a great-nephew, who is now President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma State Senate, and another great-nephew, Robert Rogers Lane.

In 1932, Oklahoma on the second ballot cast 22 votes for Rogers as a "favorite son" candidate in the national Democrat convention. Rogers quickly blocked any possibility of the move going any further with the statement, "I certainly know that a comedian can last only till he either takes himself seriously or his audience takes him seriously, and I don't want either of those to happen to me until I am dead—if then, so let's stop this foolishness right now." He also was a realist.

In 1935, the pioneering Oklahoma aviator, Wiley Post, invited Rogers, who took an adventurous interest in the new industry of aviation, on a trip to survey a possible air route between the United States and Russia by way of Alaska, the Bering Straits and Siberia.

That August the pair took off from Harding Lake, Alaska, for Point Barrow on the fourth leg of their ill-fated expedition.

Seven hours later, on August 16, an Eskimo came into Point Barrow with tragic news, and soon the world knew of the death of Will Rogers, whose plane had crashed in flight near the spot where a monument now pays silent tribute in the frozen wasteland to the man who hailed from Oklahoma.

In 1940, the OSU Redskin annual put out a special Will Rogers Memorial Edition.

Now Oklahoma State is taking another step in honoring Will Rogers. "It will be a privilege," says Dr. Agnew, "to see the living influence of a man about whom I think it truly can be said that no one more truly represented the best of our traditional American society in the early 20th century."

