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Review - Will Rogers Magazine Articles II

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REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...

It is obvious in Chapter 6, "The Mexican Experience Since World War II," that the second World War was as significant an event in the lives of Mexicans in Oklahoma as the Mexican revolution, World War I, and the depression had been. During the postwar period, due to large Mexican-American military participation, the use of the G.I. Bill accounted for the unprecedented numbers receiving an education that ultimately led to white-collar professions. By the third generation many families had undergone almost total assimilation. However, Smith points out that the great influx of Mexicans coming from other states beginning in the 1970s and 80s is changing the situation dramatically. "The cultural pride of the state's older Mexican families, the constant influx of Mexican-American immigrants, and the enhanced consciousness of the Chicano movement have all served to maintain a strong ethnic tradition with Oklahoma's Mexican community."

The study concludes with the "Bibliographical Essay," which is provided to aid those who wish to learn more about the history, culture, and impact of the Mexicans. The book also contains ten photographs and seven maps.

There seems to be little documented evidence of the Mexicans in Oklahoma, and Smith has resorted to personal interviews of those who lived the Mexican experience to compensate for the lack of written accounts. He acknowledges that the present study is an introductory survey and concludes that "In sum, nearly everything needs to be done." His purpose in the book is to indicate the need for further research and encourage others to seek new materials that will provide a better understanding of the Mexican's role in Oklahoma. Nevertheless, the book is recommended reading for all Oklahomans who, every increasingly so, need to understand and be more aware of the estimated 100,000 - 200,000 Hispanics now

living in the state. Though largely ignored by scholars, the Mexicans have left a marked impact on the state's history, and by virtue of their numbers alone, the former "invisible minority" will be an important factor in Oklahoma's future. Unlike the other ethnic minorities, the Mexicans continue to enter the state and their history is still being written. The 78-page book may be ordered in paperback for \$3.95 from the O.U. Press.

WILL ROGERS MAGAZINE ARTICLES II

— Reviewed by Dr. Jerry Nye

Rogers, Will. Will Rogers' Weekly Articles: The Coolidge Years: 1925 - 1927 (II), ed. James M. Smallwood. Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1980.

Will Rogers is undoubtedly the most famous native son that Oklahoma has produced. Nearly fifty years after his death, Will Rogers is still internationally famous. Remembered best as a humorist and lecturer, Rogers was also a popular star of vaudeville, motion pictures, and radio as well as an author of books, magazine articles, and newspaper columns. His weekly syndicated newspaper column was carried by approximately 600 newspapers.

Will Rogers' Weekly Articles: The Coolidge Years is a collection of the columns which he wrote from 1925 to 1927. Rogers himself explained the runaway success of the column: "When I first started out to write and misspelled a few words, people said I was plain ignorant. But when I got all the words wrong, they declared I was a humorist."

The columns collected in this volume illustrate the qualities which so endeared Rogers to his readers. Beginning many of his columns with "All I know is what I read in the papers," Rogers used his homespun humor and down-to-earth philosophy to poke good-na-

tured fun at the President, politics, business, and government. As a humorist and social critic, Rogers used an easygoing, kidding style to comment on anything that caught his attention.

Presidents and politicians provided Rogers with much of his material. Rogers' comments about what President Coolidge did not do made good copy and helped to make a colorless President memorable. When members of Congress voted to raise their own pay, Rogers recommended that the voters support them and perhaps the flattery would make them do a better job. But he did find it strange that they could vote themselves a raise without asking the voters who paid the bill. Rogers found political slogans particularly amusing and frequently made up his own. Some of his better ones were "Be a politician — no training necessary"; "Come to Washington and vote to raise your own pay," and "Join the Senate and investigate something."

Tax issues were frequently targets for Rogers' wit in his columns. His Weekly Article 161 is as modern as today's newspapers. Pointing out that America owed more money than any other nation but was still lowering taxes, Rogers wrote, "Where would common business sense get? No Sir, you let a politician return home from Washington and announce, 'Boys we lowered your taxes. We had to borrow the money to do it, but we did it.' Say, they would elect him for life."

International affairs provided the subject matter for some of Rogers' best columns. In a column entitled "Meddling in Mexico. A Summer Sport," he poked fun at "protecting our interests" all over the world and suggested that we "protect 'em here at home." He

wrote, "Why don't you let every nation do and act as they please? What business is it of ours how Mexico acts or lives?"

In commenting on the war in China, Rogers explained it by saying, "An Irish History in some round-about way must have fallen into the hands of the Chinese, and as they read it they started loading their guns; and as they finished it, they started shooting." The Irish motto, according to Rogers, is "When in doubt, shoot."

But it is when he wrote about home, family, and friends that we see the warm, generous, compassionate Will Rogers who captured the hearts of his readers. Weekly Article 128 was written while he was in Chelsea, Oklahoma, for the funeral of his sister. This column reflects Rogers' values. He wrote, "After all, there is nothing in the world like home. You can roam all over the world, but after all, it's what the people at home think of you that really counts. I have just today witnessed a Funeral that for real sorrow and real affection I don't think will ever be surpassed anywhere." A later passage sums up his feelings about his sister's life, "Some uninformed newspapers printed: 'Mrs. C. L. Lane sister of the famous Comedian, Will Rogers.' They were greatly misinformed. It's the other way around. I am the brother of Mrs. C. L. Lane, 'The friend of Humanity,' and all the honors that I could ever in my wildest dreams hope to reach, would never equal the honor paid on a little western Prairie hilltop, among her people, to Maud Lane. If they will love me like that at the finish, my life will not be in vain."

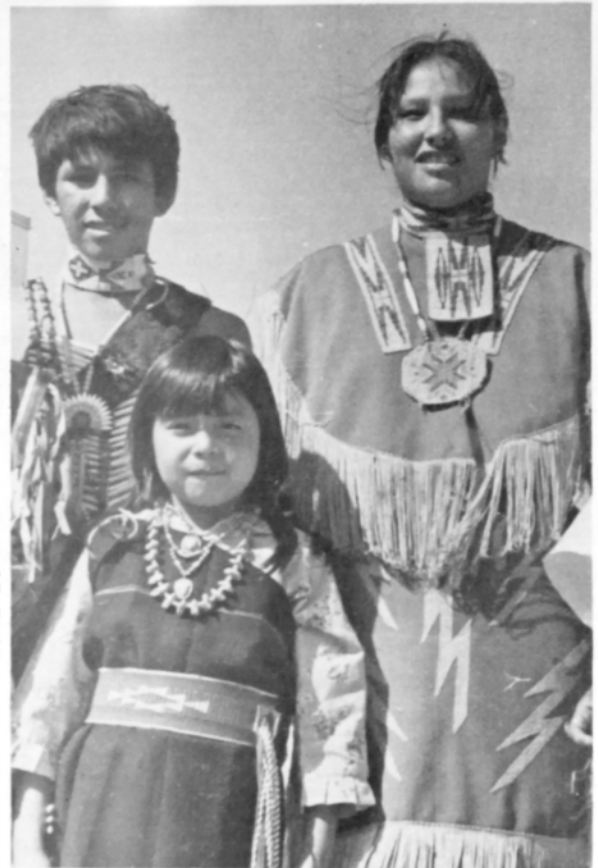
Another example of the warmth and human affection which characterized Will Rogers is found in Article 206, a

tribute to three of his famous friends who died at about the same time. The three were Harry Houdini, whom Rogers called "the greatest showman of our time;" Charles M. Russell, who was, in Rogers view, "the greatest artist the West has ever produced"; and Annie Oakley, "the best known woman in the world at one time", according to Rogers. The last paragraph in the article says as much about Will Rogers as it does about his three friends.

"One was a faker on the stage. One was a Cowpuncher. One was the greatest single attraction the outdoor show World has ever produced, yet they all lived so that their personal lives as well as their professional ones will remain an everlasting credit to their various professions. So it's what you are and not what you are in that makes you."

Surely it was what Will Rogers was that has kept his fame alive today. The articles in this volume capture the simple charm of a person who has become legendary and preserve the personality of a man who could honestly say, "I never met a man I didn't like." Few readers will read this volume without liking Will Rogers the better for their effort. ■

PHOTO BY KATHERINE DICKEY



WESTVIEW

Westview's next edition will feature the cultures, folklore, history, costumes, songs, and recipes of the tribes of Western Oklahoma Indians. Our Managing Editor, or Leroy Thomas, is now receiving manuscripts for review and possible publication for "featured" articles in our January edition. Any submissions should be typed, double spaced manuscripts. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Our staff reserves the right to edit these manuscripts if necessary, or return to author for changes. Mail manuscripts to the address on the bottom of the Contents page no later than November 20, 1981. Interesting photos and artwork will also be reviewed for inclusion by Pat Lazelle, Art Director, c/o Art Department, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096 no later than November 20, 1981. Please enclose proper mailing and return postage if return of photo or artwork is desired. ■

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