

THE PUBLIC SPEAKING OF WILL ROGERS

by

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## APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work is dedicated to Dad whom the "Sisters" called "Buddy," and whom Aunt Paula said "was the most like Uncle Will." I can picture him still wearing the "diamond" spurs and "shot-gun leggins."

A very special "thank you" to Mom for her support. And, Jean Shortridge for her inspiration.

My deep appreciation to Doctors George S. Sparks, Floyd Anderson, and Frank LaBan for their guidance and "toleration." And a special appreciation and "thank you" to Dr. Andrew A. King for his direction and understanding in the preparation of this work and "putting up with me."

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## ABSTRACT

The career and development of William Penn Adair Rogers, as a popular public speaker, begins on his father's Old Home Ranch or Dog Iron Ranch as it was also known. This ranch was located in the Cooweescoowee District of the Cherokee Nation of what is now the state of Oklahoma.

His career as a public speaker extends from the variety stage of New York to the so-called "legitimate stage" to radio to his literary achievements to the lecture platform and finally to his tragic death in a plane crash near Point Barrow, Alaska, in 1935.

He developed his early humor on the variety stage of New York and largely reflected the thoughts of a vaudeville comedian. When writing became the primary outlet for his humor, he transferred the same speaking mannerisms and characteristics to the printed page. The expression of his ideas seemed to be effortless and accidental.

His work and humor was grounded into the events of his time because the Depression showed him to be a shrewd and penetrating political commentator whose basic technique was to take the truth and extend it just beyond the bounds of reason producing homely jokes rich in flavor. Through his public speaking, he became a humorist possessing a

strong sense of comic feeling and goodwill for his listeners and hearers.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

The career of Will Rogers provides one of the most amazing chapters in the study of American public address. Born on his father's Old Home Ranch in the Indian Territory, he left a place in the hearts of Americans. Not since Mark Twain had any humorist been so beloved, and in the years following his death he became a legend.

By preparing his observations in the guise of a homely sage, his countryboy pronouncements reflected the pattern of American thought for two decades. Consequently, Will Rogers deserves consideration, not only as an historical figure, but in the make-up of his basic preparation and qualities of humorous discourse.

Even his inconsistencies confirm his position as a spokesman for the people, since many Americans shared his contradictory views. On most occasions he took the middle ground along with a majority of his hearers. In a few areas he could be classified as a liberal, but he could also be tagged a conservative in others. He was suspicious of intellectuals, but at the same time he counted such intellectuals as Will Durant, Walter Lippman, and H. L. Mencken

as friends. In the realm of new ideas and theories, he accepted only a few without reservation. On several occasions he took the unpopular side of controversial issues, the General Billy Mitchell court-martial for example.<sup>1</sup> He formulated his ideas and articulated clearly what millions of his hearers were thinking vaguely. Sometimes he was right, but he was always in the forefront of American thought and history.

Will's formal education was limited to a short session at various schools and a brief spell at Kemper Military Academy. Cowboy that he was, he could not be confined to a classroom, nor could he handle a military uniform more comfortably than "shot-gun leggins" and ropes. So, Will abandoned school, raised a herd of cattle, sold them at a profit and set out to see the world.

At twenty-one, he sailed for South America and attempted to "cowboy" on the Pampas. With a cowboy's urge, he shipped off on a cattleboat to Capetown, South Africa, where he got a job breaking horses. Joining a wild west circus, he worked his way from South Africa to New Zealand and Australia, finally reaching San Francisco.

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<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Paula M. Love, Curator, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma, correspondence, April 11, 1970. Mrs. Love pointed out that she believed that Rogers supported America's military might.



When he returned to the Indian Territory, he married one of seven sisters from Arkansas, Betty Blake. He met Betty on his father's ranch while she was visiting her sister.

In the course of his experiences he struggled with a troupe through the southwest, covered the World's Fair at St. Louis in 1904, and at twenty-six, he was a star roper in a wild west show in Madison Square Garden. He graduated from the tent to the theater, followed vaudeville and in 1917 was on Broadway in Florenz Ziegfeld's Follies and Night Frolics, with his rope and wise-cracking monologue.

From the so-called "Legitimate Stage,"<sup>2</sup> he entered the silent pictures. His first show was Laughing Bill Hyde.<sup>3</sup> While he starred in many others, it was in the sound pictures that he really came into his own. From his first talkie—They Had To See Paris<sup>4</sup>—he became the great

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<sup>2</sup>For an examination of Rogers and the "Legitimate Stage" see P. J. O'Brien's Will Rogers, Ambassador of Good Will, Prince of Wit and Wisdom (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1935).

<sup>3</sup>See Mrs. Paula M. Love, Rogers Collection (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma). These are available as a part of the Rogers Collection. For the exact dates, places and titles, please see the curator, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

American favorite in Lightnin',<sup>5</sup> followed by Connecticut Yankee,<sup>6</sup> State Fair,<sup>7</sup> David Harum,<sup>8</sup> Judge Priest,<sup>9</sup> and Steamboat Round The Bend.<sup>10</sup>

With the great strides in radio, he became one of its most popular artists. In 1930, he broadcast a series of fifteen minute talks for which he was paid \$350 a minute.<sup>11</sup>

His literary achievements were as well received. At the time of his death, his commentary was running in 350 daily and 200 Sunday newspapers. At \$3,000 a week, he was the highest paid syndicate writer at that time, with an audience of over forty million readers. He was, also, author of a number of books, the first Rogersisms,<sup>12</sup> appeared in 1919. His "Letters of a Self-Made Diplomat to

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>See National Broadcasting Company, "Biographies in Sound," Rogers Collection (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

<sup>12</sup>Rogers Collection (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

His President," published in the Saturday Evening Post in 1926, almost split the nation's side with laughter.<sup>13</sup>

He went around the world on lecture tours. He was on his last great adventure when the plane in which he and Wiley Post were flying across the top of the world to Russia crashed on August 15, 1935, near Point Barrow, Alaska.

#### Statement of the Problem

We wish to explore the specific training, and the practices of oral communication of Will Rogers; we wish, also, to explore the basic preparation, and the qualities, that characterized the discourse of this successful practitioner.

#### Justification for Study of the Problem

Will Rogers, the Oklahoma cowboy humorist and philosopher, is perhaps best remembered today for his clever observations in the guise of a homely sage whose common sense pronouncements made him a virtual American folk hero. Today, he is remembered for his most famous public utterance, "I never met a man I didn't like."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Correspondence April 11, 1970, Mr. and Mrs. H. T. McSpadden to M. R. McSpadden.

<sup>14</sup>National Broadcasting Company, op. cit.  
For the exact date see Mrs. Paula M. Love. See also the correspondence of Mr. and Mrs. H. T. McSpadden who tell of the "I never met a man I didn't like' Days" in the land of the Cooweescoowee. Correspondence April 11, 1970.

Will's influence was widespread and varied. He used his speech preparation in order to share his humorous dictums with the mass number of hearers in America. In 1930, John Moffitt, movie editor for the Kansas City Star, made the statement: "He is the only man in America who consistently is using every known means of reaching the public—stage, screen, radio, books, magazine, and newspapers."<sup>15</sup>

The moviemakers recognized his importance as a national critic and observer, and consequently adapted themselves to his goings and comings.<sup>16</sup> In viewing Rogers' training and preparation for discourse, one must remember that he was often classified as a crackerbox philosopher who developed his training with the westward movement into the Indian Territory, and especially the Cooweescoowee District of the Cherokee Nation. Rogers' audiences in the early years were frontiersmen who laughed at his foibles and follies. These individuals were generally unskilled in community organization, and complex governmental organization to them was very perplexing. The ability to laugh at his pronouncements helped the people

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<sup>15</sup>John C. Moffitt, "Will Rogers, the Only Stage, Movie, Radio and Literary Star, Tells How He Works At Fun," The Kansas City Star, July 27, 1930, section C, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

find some degree and measure of stability; thus, some of America's first symposiums met in country stores—somewhat like Oologah, Oklahoma—around the cracker barrels. From time to time, Rogers prepared his discourses and spoke clearly and cleverly from these informal settings. From 1835, with the emergence of Major Jack Downing, until the death of Will Rogers in 1936, America could point with pride to such philosophers as Sut Lovingood, Artemus Ward, Petroleum V. Nasby, Bill Arp, Mark Twain, Josh Billings, and Mr. Dooley, all of whom possessed great power and popularity.<sup>17</sup>

Rogers' crackerbox philosophy was unique; he shared a homespun philosophy with emphasis on prepared form which was distinctively local to America.

The purpose of this research and its justification is, first of all, to discover, examine, interpret, and record pertinent facts about Rogers as a successful practitioner of public speaking; secondly, to assimilate and interpret the area of specific training and art of communication preparation that will lead to a new understanding and deeper appreciation of his specific training; and finally, to examine thoroughly the qualities that characterized his

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<sup>17</sup> Donald Day (ed.), The Autobiography of Will Rogers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), pp. xiii-xiv.

discourse. It is hoped that this study will reveal the scope and importance of Will Rogers' preparation while laying the groundwork and foundation for future research into additional aspects of his art of humorous discourse.

### Method

An examination of Rogers' specific training in the art of communication reveals that certain elements of the speaking situation loom forward as the center of interest. As Lloyd F. Bitzer points out in his work "The Rhetorical Situation,"<sup>18</sup> the researcher needs to know and understand the nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse: How should they be described? What are their characteristics? Why and how do they result in the creation of rhetoric?

With these questions in mind, a specific point of interest is that of the subject matter which Rogers chose and the manner in which he handled the individual subject. The rhetorical situation presents itself in the critical periods of our nation's history—for the Will Rogers rhetorical situation—1900 to 1935. These periods of American history represent many changes and Rogers dealt with the rhetorical situation in optimistic fashion. His

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<sup>18</sup>Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," in Philosophy and Rhetoric, Vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1968), pp. 1-2.

response to the changing American scene was always arresting, and his use of humor and informal approach are particularly original. Ethos, logos, and pathos are essential elements of the rhetorical situation and his manner of preparation reveals his good sense and character, while his style reveals his good will.

In addition to these rhetorical situation factors, Bitzer points to exigence, audience, and constraints. The matter of Rogers' life and reputation is essential to the exigence and analysis of the qualities that characterized the discourse of this successful practitioner of oral communication. His life and reputation were the most essential elements in regard to his training, preparation, and qualities of the art of spoken discourse. With regard to audience, the American public was well acquainted with Will Rogers before he began his "gabbing" in the Ziegfeld Follies and Night Frolics—he had been a public figure for many years and his image was well established in the minds of rodeo enthusiasts and roping fans, as well as in the minds of the followers of the vaudeville circuit. Thus, an analysis of the man's life and character should be given prime consideration in order that the reader of situational rhetoric of today might become well acquainted with Will Rogers as was the audience of the twenties and thirties.

In viewing the constraints which influence the rhetor and can be brought to bear upon audiences, Rogers structured his preparation for public utterances around the economic, social, and political concerns of the twenties and thirties, for these concerns were the primary subjects of his spoken discourse. An analysis of the qualities that characterized his discourse and the manner in which he handled these subjects or constraints, where emphasis is placed upon his revelation of the depression situation between 1929 and 1932 and good sense, follows the rhetorical situation as pointed out by Lloyd F. Bitzer. With regard to the total rhetorical situation, consideration should be given to Rogers' effortless and seemingly accidental style of presentation, the manner in which he revealed his good will through his specific training, preparation, and qualities of discourse. Specific consideration should be given also to an analysis of his humor and informal approach.

Finally, the relationship between the speaker and hearers should be emphasized. Modern rhetorical critics have become basically concerned with this concept, for the audience is the element which determines whether or not the preparation has been effective and successful. Accordingly, emphasis should be placed upon the qualities characterizing the discourse itself.



### Materials Available

A number of studies of Will Rogers have been completed. A noteworthy unpublished dissertation by Mr. E. P. Alworth, "The Humor of Will Rogers," in 1957, points out Rogers embodied the philosophy of many of the cracker-box philosophers.<sup>19</sup> However, in more specific terms, those in the field of speech are rather general in total perspective. In 1952, William Ralph Green completed a master's thesis at the State University of Iowa entitled, "An Analysis of the Use of Humor in Three Representative Speeches of Will Rogers."<sup>20</sup> Another thesis in the field of humorous analysis was completed by Helen Siegelin at Miami University in 1965. The title of her work was "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Use of Humor by Will Rogers, Senior, in Selected Public Performances."<sup>21</sup> These two theses deal with a general analysis of humor employed in specific speeches. A doctoral dissertation entitled "The Rhetorical Techniques of Will Rogers," by William Brown of the University of Oklahoma, analyzes the concept of Rogers as the epitome of the American dream.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>See Mrs. Paula M. Love, Thesis and Dissertation File (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

The specific training in the art of oral communication, preparation, and qualities characterizing the discourses of Will Rogers have virtually been ignored by researchers. Will Rogers' preparation is essential for a full understanding of his success as a speaker. His presentations have never been analyzed in depth as far as preparation, specific training, and qualities of discourse are concerned. The original radio transcripts of the speeches broadcast in the years of 1933 through 1935 sponsored by the Gulf Oil Company were given to the Will Rogers Memorial Commission in Claremore, Oklahoma, in 1966.<sup>23</sup> The banquet speeches and lecture tour addresses are available on loan from the Will Rogers Memorial through the Curator, Paula McSpadden Love. The speeches of Rogers' later years have been available for research purposes for some time; however, no specific study of these speeches has been conducted. These speeches are especially interesting because because of the preparation Rogers utilized during the critical periods of American life in his later years. In some of the specific speeches, Rogers appeared to be building up and "shoring up" the image of the President of the United States and attempting to restore confidence in the American system of government through the turbulent years of the depression.

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<sup>23</sup>Will Rogers Radio Broadcasts (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

His banquet speaking and broadcast talks have been selected and in addition to these sources, the researcher was able to obtain several of the original manuscripts which Rogers used in preparing his discourses. These are on the loan file of the Will Rogers Memorial for graduate study to all major colleges and universities. They were consulted in order to note the differences between the actual presentation and what was originally prepared for the particular occasion.

A speaker who needed and enjoyed audience contact, Rogers preferred not to speak on the radio, for his immediate studio audience was small, and he was restrained by exact timing. However, Rogers acknowledged that radio was a popular instrument for reaching a great many Americans. Of the 29,904,663 homes reported in the United States census for the year 1930, approximately 21,455,799 were equipped with radios in January of 1935.<sup>24</sup> This number accounts for approximately seventy per cent of the households in the United States.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of mass potential appeal alone, one must conclude that the radio speeches of Will Rogers represent important documents for studying

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<sup>24</sup>See Malachi Topping, Department of Radio-Television, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, correspondence April 11, 1970.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

speech preparation, specific training, and qualities of discourse. These aspects are intricately connected and involved with the personality of Rogers himself.

In addition to the sources previously mentioned, many folders of original reference material from the Rogers Collection of the Will Rogers Memorial have been placed on the loan file for graduate research through the Will Rogers Memorial Commission and Curator, Mrs. Paula McSpadden Love.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>For a detailed examination of the Graduate Research Files of the Rogers Collection one must visit the Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma. One must see the beautiful statue of Will Rogers by Jo Davidson standing in the foyer of the Will Rogers Memorial and feel the reverence and the stillness as if one is standing within a church or chapel. One must also visit with Mrs. Love and see the files that graduate students have the opportunity to observe.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER OF WILL ROGERS AS A SPEAKER

#### Birth and Beginning

Born on Clement Vann Rogers' Old Home Ranch in the Cooweescoowee District of the Cherokee Nation, November 4, 1879, William Penn Adair Rogers grew up in what is now the state of Oklahoma.

Many years ago the Indian territory was absorbed into the state of Oklahoma, but when Will was a little boy, it was an unsettled and extraordinary country and the home of the Five Civilized Tribes—the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, the Creek, and the Seminole Indians.<sup>27</sup>

The Old Home Ranch was located near the Verdigris River near a small settlement community of Cherokee Indian ancestry—Oologah. With the coming of the railroads, the entire Cherokee Nation began a new era of growth and development. Fences were built and the open ranges began to disappear.

Accordingly, Clement Vann Rogers fenced off thousands of his rich grasslands along the Verdigris River, and was one of the first to introduce barbed wire into the

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<sup>27</sup>Betty Rogers, Will Rogers: His Story as Told by His Wife (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1943), p. 30.

territory. He shipped purebred bulls to breed to his long-horn cows in order to improve his herds. As a result of these new developments, Clem's cattle business gradually changed from grazing longhorns on the bluestem ranges to feeding shorthorns in fenced pastures.<sup>28</sup>

Will was the son of pioneering parents each of whom was part Cherokee. His father was a rancher and took a very leading role in the affairs of the Indian Territory, and the Cherokee Nation in particular. His mother, Mary Schrimser Rogers, wanted her son to become a Methodist Minister. While his mother impressed upon her son the traditions of the Methodist Church, his father played the dominant role and retorted that "there is Damn little money in it."<sup>29</sup> In his early years, Mary Rogers was in very poor health and much of his care was left to a Negro woman, Aunt Babe Walker. She was a very kind individual who read the Bible when she had nothing else to do, or sang religious hymns.

"Come here, Willie" she would call. "The good Lord say, 'suffer little children to come unto me.'" Years later Will admitted that this frightened him because he did not want to suffer.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ellsworth Collings, The Old Home Ranch (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Redlands Press, 1964), p. vii.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Day, Will Rogers: A Biography (New York: David McKay Co., 1962), p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

As he grew older, Aunt Babe's husband took charge of the boy.

It was Uncle Dan Walker that interested Will Rogers in an activity that would later lead him to vaudeville, the Ziegfeld Follies and Night Frolics, and into pictures as a talking success--roping. Uncle Dan Walker made young Will practice religiously, and make every throw perfect. Every loop should be made and thrown with precision, from the "horse-catch" to the "Blocker" loop to the steer and calf roping loops. Uncle Dan Walker watched and corrected the youngster at every throw. "Naw, naw Willie," he would grumble, "that ain't the way to do it. Hold yo' rope this-away."<sup>31</sup> It was also at this early age that roping got him into a great deal of trouble:

Tolerant of most things, Willie's constant roping of everything in sight, particularly inside the house, annoyed his mother. One day when a neighboring woman was visiting her, Willie kept roping various objects in the room. "If you don't quit that, Willie" she threatened, "I'll spank you." Willie kept right on roping. Mary got to her feet and started toward him. Instantly his loop flashed out and as it settled over her head, he drew it tight, pinning her arms to her sides. As she still moved toward him, he backed away as he had seen good roping horses do. Finally, she stopped, shook her head, and burst out laughing. "If you'll promise not to spank me," Willie offered, shaking a warning finger at her, "I'll turn you loose."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

In addition to his instruction in roping from Uncle Dan, he got accustomed to horses. He studied the way men got on their horses, turning the horse's head with the rein so it would not start off before they were in the saddle, and how they swung up in one quick, graceful movement, then handled the reins lightly so as not to injure the horse's mouth with their movements. His first experience with horses came one morning after Will had pleaded with his father to get him a horse. At the age of five, his father agreed to get him a horse. His father presented him with his first horse on a Wednesday morning following the family breakfast.

The boy raced outside, followed by his father and the rest of the family. There stood Uncle Dan Walker holding the reins of a small sorrel mare with an arched head. She had on a saddle. Uncle Dan handed the reins to Willie. He took them, held them tight, placed a foot in the stirrup and tried to swing up. As he did so, he slackened the reins and the pony started forward.

"Watch out, Clem, he'll get hurt," Mary called out.

"Try again, Willie," said Uncle Clem, motioning Mary to be quiet.

This time Willie pushed the reins too tight and the pony circled on him.

"Please Clem."

"Try again, Willie."

This time he made it. With a touch of the rein he turned the pony, rode out the open gate and



down a lane toward the river, waving to them as he passed out of sight.<sup>33</sup>

Never losing touch with the Old Home Ranch environment, Rogers kept his identification with rural America, the horse he received and his work with Uncle Dan Walker became part of his public image, his reverence for the faith of plain people. The character and temperament of a region, as well as its common sense, are reflected in its laughter. The Old Home Ranch gave Rogers the pose and outlook that marked him throughout his life. The early years gave him, whether he was conscious of it or not, the system behind his humor. It can be described in one word—truth. It is one of the most ancient remedies and formulas for comic spirit. And, truth was the chief source of the purpose and motive in his public utterances within the depression situation. That, in the last analysis, was what the Old Home Ranch gave Will Rogers.

#### Education

Much of Will Rogers' wit was developed from topics suggested by his early educational experiences. He went to live with his sister, Sallie and her husband, Tom McSpadden. The life was pleasant but the Drumgoole School with its very uncomfortable split-log, backless benches did not appeal to him.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid, p. 16.

When he returned from school each day, he practiced roping on the ranch land of the McSpaddens. After one year of school he was promptly sent to Harrell Institute, a girls' school, in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Undoubtedly, Clem Rogers felt that this school would provide a more conducive atmosphere for study. He roomed with the principal's son, and on this particular occasion, Clem would not let his son have his horse with him.

After this particular academic arrangement, Clem Rogers next sent his son to a Presbyterian Mission School in Tahlequah, Oklahoma--the capitol of the Cherokee Nation. Unfortunately, Will did not last until Christmas. He became extremely untidy in his dress, let off Indian war whoops in the halls, and refused to obey orders.<sup>34</sup>

With the coming of another academic year, Clem next sent Will to the Willie Halsell College, which would be classed as a junior high school today. This time Will remained four years in what were possibly his happiest school days. He was very good in the dramatic productions and elocutionary activities of his classes. This was due partly to many of the neighboring boys and girls being there.<sup>35</sup> After a four year stint at Scarrett Collegiate Institute in Neosho, Missouri, Clem decided that the boy

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

needed discipline that only a military school could offer.

On January 13, 1897, Will enrolled in Kemper School, Booneville, Missouri.

Eighteen years old at the time, on arrival he created a sensation with his ten gallon cowboy hat, flaming red flannel shirt, fancy vest, and a red bandanna handkerchief knotted at his throat. His trousers were stuffed into high-heeled red top boots with jingling spurs. A number of ropes of various sizes were coiled around his suitcase.<sup>36</sup>

At Kemper, the parading in full dress uniform, brass buttons and high ornamented collar, appealed to him and for a few weeks he kept his rifle immaculate, the brass on his uniform shined, his bunk neat and orderly. But then he lapsed into his old careless ways. As Colonel A. M. Hitch, the superintendent of Kemper School, pointed out:

In his studies he excelled in the "talking subjects" where he could "bull" his way through or where his phenomenal memory served him well. "He glanced through a list of the books of the Old Testament once," a classmate recalled, "and rattled them off like an alarm clock." He excelled also in "elocution," where the teacher who usually emphasized the correctness of gesture and pronunciation, realized that Willie was an exception to the rule. He soon became known as the school wit . . . . "Just think of it," a classmate said later, "there's Will Rogers getting big money for saying the same things over the radio he got demerits for saying in the mess hall at Kemper."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Colonel A. M. Hitch, "Cadet Days," Kemper Publications, 1935, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-11.

The military school gave Will Rogers the "talking subjects" that he immensely enjoyed. And in evaluation of his educational success with public speaking, he developed the casual manner of expressing his humor that became part of his pose. Here, at Kemper, most of his humor appeared to be spontaneous; yet, it was not his ambition—at this point—to be a public speaker, although he really won the fame and reputation from his military cadet schoolmates. In his elocutionary classes he took considerable pains, worrying and attempting to get his material truthful and funny. It was this same style that he would use in answering a serious question in the classroom in such a way that his classmates were in an uproar before the answer was over. This style followed him through his long career. It was the style of a rather shy cowboy who made his observations in a rather timid manner, yet, beneath that pose of ignorance and studied carelessness, a great deal of preparation had gone into what he was going to say. This role was synonymous with him in everything that he did and said.<sup>38</sup>

#### Travel

It was in 1898 that Will arrived in Higgins, Texas, at the ranch home of his Kemper classmate and a friend of

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<sup>38</sup> Paula M. Love, curator, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma, correspondence April 12, 1971.

Clem Rogers, W. P. Ewing—who promptly wrote Clem Rogers and informed him that his son was there and asked what to do with him. Clem told Mr. Ewing to try and get Will to work, and if young Will did not earn his board he would pay the difference.

After four months of "cowboying" in the Texas country, Will returned to the Old Home Ranch. Clem told his son:

You're the only child I have at home now, since May married, and if you're bound to punch cows, there's no need for you to leave. I'm going to give you this Dog Iron Ranch, lock, stock, and barrel. It's yours and you can run it the way you want to. There is a farmer and his wife there now and you can keep them if you want to.<sup>39</sup>

This was a very lonely time for Will. His sisters were married and had families of their own, while his father was concerned with his financial and business interests in Claremore, Oklahoma. In 1900, and the years following, Will witnessed the death of his mother and a great change in the Old Home Ranch. At this time in life, he grew restless and wanted to see the great cattle country of South America. He proposed selling the Old Home Ranch and the cattle along with it. His idea was to sell the ranch at a profit and set out for Argentina.

Unable to talk him out of the notion, Clem bought the cattle but would not permit him

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<sup>39</sup>Day, Will Rogers: A Biography, p. 47.

to dispose of the land. The absurdity of Will's dream soon revealed itself. The extent of the knowledge about the country manifested itself when nobody in the Indian Territory could tell him how to get to Argentina!<sup>40</sup>

However, in 1902, Will sold the cattle to his father and, with \$3,000 in his pocket, headed for New Orleans for the Argentine. He quickly became disillusioned with South America. And, instead of making big money in the cattle business there, his biggest worry was wondering where his next meal was going to come from. From South America, he sailed for Africa. The thirty-two day trip to South Africa was catastrophic for Will. The sailing vessel he was on was a cattleboat.

The ship was a modern Noah's ark with horses and mules below, cows on the deck, sheep were where the crow's nest should have been. Most of the crew was German except an Irishman who was the veterinarian.<sup>41</sup>

It seemed that the veterinarian spent most of his time curing Will Rogers' seasickness.

In 1902, Will made his way to a wild west show in Johannesburg, South Africa. He demonstrated his prowess with the ropes and was hired as the star roper in Texas Jack's Wild West Circus:

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

He was billed as "The Cherokee Kid," and from the beginning was the star attraction of the show. From Africa, he worked his way with the show to New Zealand and Australia, where he joined the Wirth Show, owned by Mae Wirth's father.<sup>42</sup>

While touring with these shows, Rogers developed a whole bag of roping tricks—the "Blocker," the "ocean-wave," the "butter-fly," and the "Texas skip." By the time Will reached New Zealand and Australia, he had enough money to book third class passage home. When he reached San Francisco he had been away for almost three years and had traveled over 50,000 miles—most of it seasick. "When Willie got back home," Uncle Clem told a friend, "He was so broke he was wearing overalls for drawers."<sup>43</sup>

Will headed for St. Louis where Colonel Zach Mulhall was putting together a show at his ranch that would eventually appear at the World's Fair in St. Louis. Rogers was offered a spot in the show and would appear with the same routine that he had developed with Texas Jack and the Wirth shows. During these shows Rogers would explain his rope tricks, and underneath his mask of "Ignorance" was a well-mannered and cultured man with a

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<sup>42</sup>p. J. O'Brien, Will Rogers: Ambassador of Good Will, Prince of Wit and Wisdom (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1935), p. 32.

<sup>43</sup>Day, Will Rogers: A Biography, p. 48.

shrewd, trained mind. During the Mulhall show, the Colonel was unable to furnish the stock and a great many arguments developed. Will wrote his father, Clem Rogers, that:

Mulhall and the boss stable man got into a scrape and after the show last night, they met out front when all the people were coming out and got to shooting. A boy that was standing near was shot in the stomach and it is doubtful if he will get well. A cowboy trying to stop the scrape was shot through the side. Mulhall did most of the shooting and if he had hit the fellow he was shooting at, it would have been all right.<sup>44</sup>

After this unfortunate incident, Will joined a smaller show and finished his routine and jaunt in St. Louis. However, he was laying the groundwork for his jump to vaudeville. Through his work with horses and roping, Charley Tompkins, the show manager, pointed out:

We had our sleeping quarters over the horse stables. Every morning, as soon as daylight would come, Will Rogers would be up and down in the arena practising with his ropes, trying out new tricks. He did this while the other cowboys lay in bed until breakfast was called. I have at times sat and listened to some fellow pop off as to how he taught Will Rogers all that Will knew about roping. Mark it down from me: No one taught Will Rogers anything. He got it the hard way by hard work.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Will Rogers to his father, Clement Vann Rogers, original letter dated June 20, 1904, Rogers Correspondence, (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

<sup>45</sup>Charles H. Tompkins, "Old Trail Drivers Association," Will Rogers Memorial Edition (San Antonio, Texas: Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, 1953), p. 10.



Filled with enthusiasm for his act, Will joined the Colonel Mulhall troupe again to put together a show that was headed for Madison Square Garden for the following summer. It was also at this time Will put together another type of show, only this one lasted his lifetime. Will met Betty Blake in Oologah, in 1899, while she was visiting her sister Cora Marshall, whose husband, Will Marshall, was the railroad station agent. While he had many girl friends, Betty Blake was the one to whom he always returned.<sup>46</sup> Rogers was well established in vaudeville when he married her in 1908. From Will's early career as a star roper in the wild west shows, this indifferent education supplied him with the material for some of his best quips. It was his favorite pose to joke about these shows and, undoubtedly, he could always find some utterance that would cause a laugh but which contained a great deal of wisdom.

#### Rogers' Career as a Stage Personality

The first chance to appear on the stage came in April of 1905. Will shipped "Commanche" and "Teddy" his roping horses to New York. In Madison Square Garden a steer jumped a chute gate and ran among the spectators, as the New York Herald reported:

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<sup>46</sup> Paula M. Love, correspondence, April 10, 1971.

The Indian, Will Rogers, ran up the twenty-seventh street side and headed the steer off. As it passed the corridor again into view of the spectators he roped the steer's horns. Alone and afoot, he was no match for the brute's strength, but he swerved it down the steps on the twenty-seventh street ring. Immediately, the ropes of a dozen cowpunchers fell over it quickly from all sides, and it was brought down with a quick turn and led from the track.<sup>47</sup>

Will used this write-up in the newspapers as publicity for himself. He was booked into Keith's Old Union Square Theater, and after a week at this spot, moved to Hammerstein's, one of the greatest vaudeville theaters of that time. As the New York Herald reported:

Will P. Rogers, the sensational lariat thrower is making his first appearance at the Paradise Roof and has proved a sensation in every way. The novelty of his act lies in the dexterity and oddity of what he does, and the whole act makes a charming specialty well out of the ordinary.<sup>48</sup>

Rogers remained on the Hammerstein stage for the remainder of the summer and made personal appearances elsewhere. There was a great deal of novelty to the act that Rogers put together. As his biography pointed out:

Buck McKee astride "Teddy" would come galloping out of the wings across the stage and in the twinkling of an eye Will's lariat would dart

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<sup>47</sup>"Will Rogers," review of Rogers' act Madison Square Garden, New York Herald, May 28, 1905; Scrapbook 1-A (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

out, roping both the rider and the horse. He would follow this up with an amazing variety of trick roping, and close by doing the big crinoline astride "Teddy" who would back up as the loop widened.<sup>49</sup>

One specific performance gave Will the push he needed that sent him into the coveted Ziegfeld Follies. At this performance, Will walked down front and motioned the orchestra to stop playing:

I want to call your sho nuff attention to this little stunt I am going to pull on you, as I am going to throw two of these ropes at once, catching the horse with one and the rider with the other. I don't have any idea I'll get it, but here goes.<sup>50</sup>

After this brief moment of spoken discourse, the audience started laughing, and as he finished his act he stormed off the stage determined never to "open his trap again." It took Betty Rogers a great many hours of persuasion to convince Will that he was funny and that it was his individuality that was the core of his humor. She convinced him to use himself instead of horse and rider—and consequently, Will trusted her judgment above all others. Whenever a new contract was to be signed, he never put a pen to the paper until he first consulted "Blake." In the later years, he would read his work to her before

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<sup>49</sup>Original Notes, Vaudeville File, Rogers Collection (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

sending it out for publication. If she failed to understand some reference to politics, he would change it because he reasoned that others might, also, miss the point. If his work on the stage failed to amuse her, he would throw it aside, and try something new and different.<sup>51</sup>

Of Rogers' success in making the transition from a horse and rider vaudeville routine to personal monologue, Richard Henry Little, a critic for the Chicago Tribune, observed:

The accomplished Mr. Rogers not only delights the audience with his amazing dexterity with the lasso, but even more with his running fire of small talk. The great beauty of Mr. Rogers' conversation is that he is never quite through. He makes a remark and apparently marks a period by doing some tricks with the lasso and the part of the audience that sympathized with his statement applauds madly. Then Mr. Rogers drops another remark that is diametrically opposed to his first statement and starts another section of the audience to great applause. But as this tumult drops down he makes still another comment along the line of the original thought that is a trifle more pertinent than either of the first two and differs widely from them.<sup>52</sup>

Rogers played in vaudeville from 1905 to 1914, though he appeared in several musical shows. It was in 1916 that he went into the Ziegfeld Mid-Night Frolics

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<sup>51</sup> O'Brien, p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Henry Little, review of "Will Rogers," vaudeville act, Chicago Tribune, July 1, 1914, Notes Folder (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

"On the Roof" and the following year into the Ziegfeld Follies.<sup>53</sup> Florenz Ziegfeld specialized in glorifying the American girl. His true genius and showmanship was within the confines of selected girls coupled with a unique taste for costumes and settings. There were many comedians involved with the Follies and Mid-Night Frolics—"Old Banjo Eyes" Eddie Cantor and the master comedian, W. C. Fields. It was at this point in his career that Will Rogers did some of his most unique and sincere work. Will tried to alter his material every single night. The reason for such alternation was simply the fact that individuals "On the Roof" constituted a relatively small group that came back night after night. Therefore, he had to change his routine almost nightly.

Accordingly, his act had to have jokes that moved with the occasional rope trick he was performing. He would amble out on stage chewing gum and possibly fire a remark that came out "Much Oblige." He would begin with something like the "butter-fly" rope trick, rolling the rope loop over from left to right in time with what he was talking about:

See where Henry Ford's peace ship has landed  
in Holland . . . " He punctuated this with a  
spin of the rope as all eyes turned to him. . . .  
"Got all them pacifists on board . . . " another  
spin, "Holland's welcome to em' they ain't

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<sup>53</sup>Paula M. Love, correspondence, April 10, 1971.

much good to us . . ." another spin of the rope "Ford's all wrong, instead of taking a lot of them high powered fellers on his ship . . ." another spin "He should've hired away all these Ziegfeld pippins . . ." another spin ". . . He'd not only got the boys out of the trenches by Christmas . . ." another spin "But he'd have Kaiser Bill and Lloyd George and Clemenceau shootin' craps to see which one'd head the line at the stage door."<sup>54</sup>

Rogers won his way into Ziegfeld's heart the first time he appeared in the Follies in 1914. From this time on, Rogers began speaking to all of the various groups around New York, and consequently, this is where so many of his early speeches were given. He naturally played all the benefits he could possibly work in and proved to the public he was a "spell binder" as a public speaker.<sup>55</sup>

After his appearances in the Follies and Mid-Night Frolics, Samuel Goldwyn, the producer, persuaded him to quit Broadway and try his luck in pictures in 1919. However, in 1921, he returned to New York and again joined Florenz Ziegfeld's cast. One must remember that at this time the motion picture industry went through some rather violent reshuffling and reorganization. Rogers asked Goldwyn for a raise and Goldwyn decided to let Will go. He tried going into production for himself, but the pictures

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<sup>54</sup>

Original Notes, Ziegfeld Follies File, Rogers Collection (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

<sup>55</sup>Paula M. Love, correspondence, April 10, 1971.

did not prove to be financially successful. One particular bit of roping makes one picture stand out as a masterpiece of artistic endeavor. He used a white rope and a black roping pony named "Dopey" for this picture entitled The Roping Fool. It shows Rogers using a "Blocker" loop with a "roll over" ocean wave in his "catches."

When Rogers returned to New York he appeared in Shubert's Winter Garden. He supplemented his income with after-dinner speaking engagements to the various groups around New York City. Will enjoyed these speaking engagements and gave the New Yorkers a picture of the stock character of the "yokel" which seemed to be a source of humor. It was, also, true to a great extent that the New York audiences lacked the first-hand experiences of a cowboy in Texas or Oklahoma. In writing about one of his experiences, Will said:

I have played to audiences all over the country, cities, towns, and right on the bald prairies, and lots of swell people concerned with charity affairs in New York, and if you know about international or political affairs a fashionable New York audience is the dumbest one you can assemble anywhere in the country. Small town people will make a sucker out of em' for reading and keeping up with the news.<sup>56</sup>

Will's pictures in "sound" were some of the most uproarious bits of comedy ever produced. So This Is

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<sup>56</sup>Day, The Autobiography of Will Rogers, pp. 73-74.

London, Lightnin', The Connecticut Yankee, Young As You Feel, State Fair, David Harum, Judge Priest, and Steamboat Round The Bend, proved that Rogers was an actor of rare talent. It used to be one of the favorite and humorous jokes of the stage that the low comedian always aspired to the role of the Melancholy Dane. Rogers proved that it took a great comedian and humorist to play an emotional part. During the filming of Judge Priest he played the leading part; and in Ah, Wilderness, on the stage and when the show opened in San Francisco, he was accorded one of the greatest ovations ever given a star in that city. His performance of the sympathetic role, created by that other great comedian, George M. Cohan, was acclaimed by dramatic critics as one of the outstanding triumphs of the stage at that time.

In analyzing his pictures, one must conclude that the character was distinctly that of Rogers—who rated as the player who had drawn the largest number of patrons to the movie houses of the country. In his pictures he displayed his rare ability of timing his scenes perfectly, of modulating his voice in the exact tone, and of emphasizing the humor with a spontaneity that made it appear as if acting were fun, instead of the hardest kind of work. Rogers had a quality that left him to play scenes that demanded simple and human emotions. When viewing these



performances, audiences forgot he was a wise-cracker and seemed to think of him as an individual with great emotion.

### Will Rogers on the Radio

The newest means of entertainment, the radio, was not long in claiming Will Rogers for one of its top performers and for his broadcasts over the air. In his radio talks he found that Presidents made shining targets for his barbed shafts of humor. Of all the Presidents he gave generous helpings of satiric jabs, President Herbert Hoover received the most generous sampling of the Rogers wit:

The first job he got was in Australia. Well, he thought Australia was too wild a country to get married and take a wife to, that is, a new wife, so he decided to wait until he got to a more civilized place to go before he married. Then he figured too, that after he got back from Australia, why, he wouldn't have to go in debt for the license. . . . Through all these years of travel, Mrs. Hoover stuck right with him and she helped him out in his work. He would think up new places to go, and she would look up the time table and see how to get there. If they stayed two weeks in any one place, why Mr. Hoover joined the Old Settlers Club.<sup>57</sup>

Will would have fun with commercials, presidents, and international affairs, all in a single broadcast. One particular broadcast points this out rather uniquely:

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<sup>57</sup>Will Rogers, Wit and Philosophy from the Radio Talks of America's Humorist, Will Rogers, broadcasts during April, May, and June, 1930, National Broadcasting Co., E. R. Squibb & Sons, 1930, p. 8.

Now don't get scared and start turnin' off your radios, I ain't advertising or tryin' to sell you anything. If the mouthwash you're usin' ain't the right kind and sorta' tastes like sheepdip, well you'll have to go right on usin' it. I can't prescribe any other kind a'tall.<sup>58</sup>

Consequently, Rogers found that presidents, governmental heads, and dictatorial heads of state made shining targets for his spoken broadcast discourses. In March, 1930, Will signed a contract for fourteen radio talks of fifteen minute duration and was paid \$72,000. It should be pointed out that some protested that the sum of about \$350 a minute was far too much and that he could not possibly be worth that much. The editors of World's Work printed a defense of Will's receiving this vast salary, and pointed out that his stories were all spontaneous and without prologue.<sup>59</sup>

In his broadcast humor Rogers generally prepared his best gags. As a conscious artist he could give the illusion of spontaneity and freshness. In what appeared to be an alarm clock, he would give the impression to his hearers that he was nearing the end of his broadcast. It was supposed to be a signal that he was to stop talking and let the rest of the show go on. There was no alarm clock, but an electric bell that Will rang himself and then he would mutter something about the untimely

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>59</sup> O'Brien, p. 92.

"interruption" and would close the broadcast with "Good-bye and Good Luck to you."<sup>60</sup>

The important underlying premise in his broadcasts was the perfect working relationship Rogers had with network officials. On an anniversary of broadcasting, Rogers told his radio audience:

Tonight's anniversary is not such a testimonial to the work of the radio as it is an example of the perseverance and good will of the American people. They tell you it has been a great cementer of good will among countries. I don't suppose there was ever a time in our history when as many nations were just ready to start a shooting war as there are now. Nothing that makes people acquainted makes friends. If somebody invented something nobody knew anything about, that would really be a step in world peace.

Honest, no other nation in the world would stand for advice as that. But we do, and we like it. So the only thing that can make us give up our radio is poverty. The old radio is the last thing moved out of the house when the sheriff comes in.

Its an invention that has knocked nobody out of work and that gives work to many people. That is something you can't say for many inventions. So, as bad as it is, it is the best invention that has ever been.<sup>61</sup>

Rogers used the radio for many worthy causes. When developing his skills and finding new ways of putting his ideas

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<sup>60</sup> Paula M. Love, correspondence, April 10, 1971.

<sup>61</sup> Original Notes, Radio Anniversary and Opening of Radio City Music Hall, New York, November 11, 1933, Rogers Files, Claremore, Oklahoma.

across, he turned to the radio broadcast. In November of 1931, he appeared on a memorial radio program to collect funds for a memorial to Knute Rockne, the famous football coach of the "Fighting Irish" of Notre Dame. It would have been almost impossible to keep him from turning to the broadcast media, for Rockne was one of his friends. And tragically, Knute Rockne, like Will Rogers, died in an airplane crash. This reinforces the idea in a very unique way. His chief interest was not the affairs of foreign dignitaries, but in the manners and customs of the great American public. It seemed to be his mission with spoken humor to tell the American people the truth about politics, local government, and American social habits. These were the truths that many did not like to hear, but took with a grin and thought that the individual uttering such truths was "Will Rogers." In this regard, Rogers gave the American people the truth of the matter that showed the way for the soul--and he seemed to have a worldly supply of it.

In making an assessment of Rogers' spoken broadcast humor, one must realize that it was central to his pose. Most of his broadcast humor appeared to be spontaneous; yet, as in any artistic endeavor, hard work went into it. He took considerable pains with his Sunday broadcasts, attempting to get it the way he wanted it. He wanted to make his ideas appear effortless and accidental.

Much of his success in this area can be given to his boundless industry and native Oklahoma wit. As a radio speaker, his listeners gave little thought to the distinction between the humorist and Will the man. Everyone accepted him as a representative American who had been born with better than average intelligence who had become unusually adept in figuring out simple solutions to the complex problems of life. It was these qualities that made Rogers a broadcast speaker and he did not drop these qualities when passing from the microphone to pictures—or possibly to the stage. He became unique as a radio personality because his mental equipment was far beyond that of the average cowboy.

#### Rogers' Literary Achievements

Despite the pose of ignorance and studied carelessness, the personalities of Will the humorist and Will the man carried over to his written humor. His writings represented the shrewd observations that rushed through his mind and were read by hundreds of thousands of readers. When he became a columnist, and writing became the principal outlet for his humor, he carried with him the same devices, mannerisms, and pretenses. Although he could not transfer the grin and drawl to the printed page, he employed the same homely colorful mode of expression

and characteristic qualities of simplicity and directness with the same pretense of ignorance and illiteracy.

Will's technique, in writing, was to take the truth and extend it just beyond the realm of possibility, usually not far enough to produce burlesque, but to such an extent that his readers could recognize the absurdity. His remarks on the London Naval Conference of 1930 demonstrates this. As a result of the treaty, he said:

England is to sink three battleships that competed against the Spanish Armada. Japan is raising two that the Russians sunk and will resink them for the treaty. We are building two to sink.<sup>62</sup>

The terms of the treaty announced are true, but the methods of carrying it out are exaggerated beyond the bounds of reason. Had the humorist said that England and Japan were sinking ships of World War I vintage, the statement might be true, but not funny. The written humor lies in the incongruity between the truth and Will Rogers' interpretation of it which is so illogical and inappropriate that it obviously cannot be taken seriously. The incongruity is further heightened by the fact that the humorist pictures England and Japan reaching into the past to comply with the agreement, which contrasts with the United

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<sup>62</sup> Will Rogers, McNaught Syndicate, "Weekly Articles," New York Times, July 24, 1930 (Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma).

States, which will reach into the future. The idea that the United States will build two ships to sink is just enough of a distortion of the truth to throw the reader off balance and give him the momentary conviction that America will be bested in diplomacy again, which is probably exactly what Rogers wanted his readers to think. Although the exaggeration of the American role is unpleasant, it is not painful because it is not true; thus, it becomes a joke, and the humorist's reputation as a humorist-philosopher seeing through diplomatic maneuvers is further heightened.

In considering Rogers' written humor and literary achievements, one must realize that there are a good many illiterate people who looked and wrote as Rogers did, but he became unique as a writer because his mental equipment was far superior to that of the competition. When Rogers remarked that all he knew was what he read in the newspapers, Edwin Blanchard of the New York Sun said, "He is uttering the shibboleth of the homespun, hundred per cent, no nonsense about me, American humorist."<sup>63</sup> Rogers created sharp terse phrases which could be easily remembered, and which contained a great deal of common sense. Summing up the European situation in 1934, he

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<sup>63</sup>Edwin Blanchard, "Review of Will Rogers," New York Sun, May 28, 1927.

wrote: "Chile is selling nitrates, Europe is fertilizing again."<sup>64</sup> Or speaking of the peace conferences: "I have a scheme for stopping war. It's this, no nation is allowed to enter a war till they have paid for the last one."<sup>65</sup> It was written humor like this that his followers chuckled at, agreed with, and repeated to their friends.

Will's first book Rogersisms,<sup>66</sup> was published in 1919, and the same year also appeared the Cowboy Philosopher On The Peace Conference<sup>67</sup> and the Cowboy Philosopher On Prohibition.<sup>68</sup> One work that was not published but was prepared for publication was the work entitled Rogerisms-What We Laugh At to supplement his newspaper work.<sup>69</sup> At one time he was writing the material for a motion picture weekly feature called "The Illiterate Digest." The widely read news weekly, The Literary Digest, at that time was showing on a screen a short film called

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<sup>64</sup>Will Rogers, "Daily Telegrams," New York Times, March 5, 1934.

<sup>65</sup>Will Rogers, "Daily Telegrams," New York Times, April 30, 1928.

<sup>66</sup>For a detailed examination of Rogers' complete works, see the Rogers Collection, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.



the "Topics of the Day," after the department in its columns. These topics consisted of pithy sayings and epigrams from the editorial columns of the newspapers all over the world. A lawyer connected with the Digest thought Rogers' feature was an encroachment upon their film and wrote the humorist a letter concerning it. Rogers' reply pointed out: "Your letter in regard to my competition with the Literary Digest received and I never felt as swelled in my life."<sup>70</sup> He went on to explain that he had stopped the short feature because "The gentlemen who put it out were behind in their payments and my humor kinder waned in, as a matter of fact, after a few weeks of no payments I couldn't think of a single joke."<sup>71</sup> Four years later, in 1924, his book called the Illiterate Digest, was published and it contained many of the humorous dictums he had written for the movie feature. Two years later he wrote his famous "Letters of a Self-Made Diplomat to His President" and this followed up with "There's Not a Bathing Suit in Russia or Other Bare Facts," in 1927.<sup>72</sup> This was a shrewd and humorous account of his first visit to Soviet Russia. Despite his fund and wit, his observations made many friends among the powerful Russian leaders.

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<sup>70</sup>O'Brien, p. 115.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>For a detailed examination of Rogers' complete works see the Rogers Collection, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

It was to be expected that in writing for 350 daily and 200 Sunday newspapers from coast to coast some of his estimated 40,000,000 readers would find fault with some of his solutions and opinions to complex problems of the day.<sup>73</sup> However, there was no bluff about Rogers in either his writings or his public utterances. Success with his typewriter never turned a single hair on his head, anymore than his achievements on the stage, screen, or lecture platform. His style was simple and undoubtedly the way he fashioned his countless witticisms that came from his mouth or typewriter. His "slant" on things was the factor that those who tried to copy his style could never find. His weekly articles, which appeared in the Sunday newspapers throughout the country, often started, "Well, all I know is just what I read in the Newspapers." He would then proceed to show that in reading the newspapers he learned far more information than the average reader suspected they contained.

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<sup>73</sup>To understand Rogers' feelings and particular views one must visit with the "Sisters," Mrs. Paula M. Love, Mrs. Walker M. Milam, Mrs. Helen M. Eaton, and Mrs. Maize Poole. These individuals are the nieces on the McSpadden side of the family to Will and Betty Rogers. These individuals are those whom Dad and my mother lovingly called the "Sisters."

The Mature Will Rogers

In viewing Will Rogers as an influence in the years of 1920 through 1935, one comes to the conclusion that his work was based on the concept of the importance of timeliness and essentialism. Most humorists recognize that there are no new jokes, only old ones recast into new surroundings; consequently, Rogers seemed to have learned that old humorous material and subject matter could be made effective by relating it to current topics of public interest. He said over and over that his material always related to the "now." This does not mean that his comedy depended on timeliness and essential on the spot delivery for its effect, since the form and content of his material was often funny itself; yet, because most of his work was related to topical events which, at the time, was of great public interest, the impact of his spoken discourse was reinforced. Will Rogers had such a high regard for timeliness that Max Eastman said of him, "He had such a keen sense of kinship between humor and the present moment, more so, than any other humorist I know."<sup>74</sup>

The Old Home Ranch provided Will Rogers with an identification with rural America and it gave him a reverence for the faith of plain people. His academic training

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<sup>74</sup>Max Eastman, The Enjoyment of Laughter (New York: MacMillan Co., 1948), p. 21.

left him with the "talking subjects" that gave him his style of expressing himself in a manner that appeared to be spontaneous. His travels through many foreign countries supplied him with the material for some of his memorable quips and remarks. His work on the vaudeville stage contributed to his rare ability of timing that was so necessary for his spoken word--especially the modulating of his voice in the exact tone, and of emphasizing the humor with a spontaneity that made it appear as if what he was doing was fun rather than hard work. His broadcast humor reinforced the idea that his work was spontaneous and fresh. It, also, contributed to his developing new skills and of exploring new ways of putting across unique ideas. His literary achievements represented the shrewd observations that rushed through his mind. These literary achievements represented the same characteristics of simplicity and directness that followed him through his life. Finally, his casual manner of expressing his humor was part of his pose. Most of his humor appeared to be spontaneous, yet he worked very hard attempting to get it exactly right. He expressed ideas in several ways before he got something that suited him. He put considerable effort into making his humorous ideas appear to be effortless and accidental, and his success in this pose testifies to his boundless industry and

native wit. It was these qualities that made Will Rogers a humorist and a popular public speaker, and he could not drop them in passing through the portals of time. Eight words testify to his public speaking most adequately. He once told a gathering that "I've Never Met A Man, I Didn't Like."

## CHAPTER III

### PREPARATION OF SPEECHES

In this chapter we will discuss Rogers' method of gathering materials for his discourses, the evolution of his style, and the use of his skills that were developed in vaudeville and the wild west shows. We will also examine Rogers' relationship to his hearers and attempt to assess his highly successful adaptation to a national radio audience.

#### Gathering Material

In his search for new material Will turned to the daily newspapers to find items on which to comment. The new approach was immediately successful with the paying customers, many of whom were either reading or making news. According to Will Rogers, Jr.'s comments in the program Biographies in Sound, Rogers' remarks were excellent and when things were rather dull, his comments were also dull—as one can see, his material depended in large part on timeliness and essentialism. Will was at his best when things were happening in the world. Three or four

thousand jokes would pass through his hopper in one season.<sup>75</sup>

A small worn note pad was found at the Will Rogers Memorial which Will used and carried in his pocket—a skeleton script for his basic preparation for speaking engagements. Handwritten and carefully indexed, the contents are categorized by subject and the pages are filled with outlines for "jokes," and "gags." From this note pad, as far as basic preparation of material is concerned, one can readily see that he gave careful thought to spontaneous humor. It also provides proof that he put his witticisms into spoken and written expression. Listed were such topics as "KAISER-Germany," "SUBMARINE-WAR," "German boat," "Century Theatre," "Song Titles," "Oldest Jokes," "DAMES IN PARK," "VILLA," "BRYAN," "Taft," "War-Political," "Luistania," "Ford," "Preparadness," "Wilson," "Old Ads In Papers," and "MISSELLANEOUS STORIES."<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, under the "Used Gags," which he listed first, are comments based on the audience or show. Later entries refer to more timely topics as he began to use the newspapers for ideas. A few of the sketches from

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<sup>75</sup>Day, The Autobiography of Will Rogers, p. 86.

<sup>76</sup>Underlining and punctuation, as well as spelling in the "Gag" book are Rogers'. Property of the Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

the "Gag" book easily illustrate the preparation utilized on the subjects of his spoken discourse. However, these sketches are more than mere comments, they are really slogans or "aphorisms," and one must remember that one of the ancient exercises in the Roman school was the expansion of an aphorism. Rogers revealed himself as the practitioner of this ancient method while condensing into brevity a pithy saying or slogan of common sense—or an aphorism—which he illustrated, expanded, and played upon at great length at various times in the future. These are the "islands" of his discourse. He depended upon his general experience, the circumstances of his time, and the inspiration of the moment to develop these cues.

Slogan: "Be a politician; no training necessary."

History is all we got to go by and history don't record that economy ever won a war.

You can get your name on a button easier than you can get it on the letter box in front of the White house.

The people in Tennessee are trying to prove that they didnt descend from monkeys, but their actions prove otherwise.<sup>77</sup>

#### Rogers' Development of Style

Rogers never seemed to set goals or make long-range plans or commitments as he climbed toward success;

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<sup>77</sup>Underlining and punctuation are Rogers'.  
Property of the Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.



he always seemed to be alert for what "caught on" with an audience. Betty Rogers, his wife, who was totally familiar with Will's working habits, observed:

It was impossible, in spite of the ever increasing demands upon his time, to convince Will that he should plan ahead. His was a casual day-to-day existence. He hated to be tied down to prearranged plans and would not make an engagement two weeks ahead if he could possibly help it. He didn't know where he would be in two weeks' time and preferred not to think about it. If he wanted to do something, he wanted to do it immediately.<sup>78</sup>

Because of his focus on day-to-day existence, Rogers' casual manner of expression and explanation with humorous discourse became part of his pose. Most of his work appeared to be spontaneous; as was mentioned before, a great deal of work went into it. Rogers wrote hurriedly, however he took considerable pains with his prepared material, attempting to get it right. A staff writer from the New Republic, on visiting the humorist's dressing-room at the Follies made this observation:

In the typewriter on this occasion, was a sheet of paper on which were written seven or eight versions of the same quip, each an improvement on the one before. In the performance he did his monologue with the lariat. In the middle of it, he stopped, chuckled as though a thought had suddenly struck him at that moment, and repeated the final version of the joke verbatim.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Betty Rogers, p. 173

<sup>79</sup>"The Cowboy Philosopher," New Republic, August 15, 1935.

As noted earlier, Rogers put considerable effort into making his prepared dictums and ideas appear to be effortless, spontaneous, and accidental, and his success in this pose testifies to his boundless industry and native wit. As he himself pointed out in the Mid-Night Frolics:

In the four years I was with Mr. Ziegfeld and MidNight Frolic, where we played to a great many repeaters, I never did the same act any two nights. I always changed parts of it and in the Follies a great many times I did an entirely new act. Another thing, I think I did the shortest act of any monologue man and that recommended it. On the Amsterdam Roof I never did over six minutes and in the Follies nine or ten, generally eight.<sup>80</sup>

It is significant that the early humor was developed during Will's career on the variety stage of New York and largely reflected the viewpoint of the vaudeville comedian. Among New Yorkers, the stock character of the "yokel" was always a source of humor; thus, the apparent illiteracy of the cowboy philosopher enhanced his stage personality. The common sense nature of his pronouncements made in this rural idiom provided an element of incongruity which his audiences found irresistible. Faced with the challenge of entertaining a sophisticated audience, many of them regular patrons of the midnight show. "On

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<sup>80</sup>George S. Martin, "The Wit of Will Rogers," American Magazine, November, 1919, p. 34. (Exact words of Will Rogers).

the Roof," plus nightly performances with the Follies which he added to his schedule in 1916—a total of two regular shows a day, plus two matinees a week—Rogers was forced to sharpen his prepared material and consequently, search for new material. Rogers, himself, pointed out:

I would start on a subject and if it was no good then I would switch quick and lots of times I would have an entirely different act from what I intended when I went on. Sometimes an audience is not so good and my stuff that night might not have been very good, so it is then you would see the old ropes commence to do something. It got their mind off the bum stuff I was telling and as I often said to the folks in the show, "I reach away back in my hip pocket and dig up a sure-fire gag," as I always try to save one of my best gags—just like a prohibition State man will his last drink.<sup>81</sup>

Accordingly, the stock character of the "yokel" gave Rogers a method of showmanship that was enhanced in large part by his performances with the wild west and rodeo shows. It was at Hammerstein's Winter Garden that Rogers first began to talk. Part of his earliest performances consisted of the difficult task of throwing two ropes at once in "horse-catch" fashion, thereby catching both horse and rider on stage. With brief explanations of complicated roping tricks consisting of "Blocker" loops, "butterflies," "ocean-waves," and "Texas-Skips," he began to work for all the laughs he could get. His pose of ignorance

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<sup>81</sup>Day, The Autobiography of Will Rogers, p. 45.

and studied carelessness—that of the "yokel"—blended into the personalities of Will the humorist-showman, and Will the man and, as was previously mentioned, they were never too far apart. His audiences gave little thought to the distinction; they seem to have accepted him as a representative American who had not let an education distort his thinking, and who had become unusually adept in figuring out simple solutions to the complex problems of life. He had some definite ideas concerning his audiences:

I like all kinds of audiences excepting the convention kind, the lodge brand, the sort of crowd that wants itself praised. That kind gives me a pain. There's always some fellow sending you a note framing your gag for you, asking you to mention this and that and not forget a name. It's sure to be the name of the fellow that writes the note—some modest business guy that wants to get his name incorporated in the libretto of the follies. It is usually a great pleasure to pan him—if only you can remember his unknown name, which mostly you can't.<sup>82</sup>

#### Rogers' Relationship to His Hearers

The concerns of both the audience and role of Rogers the speaker must be examined simultaneously, for "The ideas that find a place in our consciousness are limited to the horizons of our time and locale."<sup>83</sup> The

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<sup>82</sup>Martin, p. 34.

<sup>83</sup>L. H. Mouat, "An Approach to Rhetorical Criticism," The Rhetorical Idiom, ed. Donald C. Bryant (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1958), p. 167.

speaker also reveals in his speech the manner that he conceives his listeners to be. His concept of the audience is clearly revealed by the information he presents, the issues he chooses, the questions he asks, the faith he engenders, the doubts he raises, and the process of choice which he encourages.<sup>84</sup> This image of the audience and its concerns as presented by the speaker further serves to strengthen or weaken his audience appeal.

Once the image is presented by the speaker, he may also attempt to identify with his audience. Such identification may build his audience appeal and heighten the confidence of the audience. Some explanation should be given to the concept of identification. Modern rhetoricians use this term frequently, but sometimes without necessary clarification.

The term identification includes the art of employing topics in such a way that one's proposals are identified with the beliefs and desires of the audience and counter-proposals with their aversions, but it is also more extensive and more intensive than this. . . . Identification is a process of becoming substantially one with an audience. It is an attempt to proclaim a unity among men at odds with one another . . . but content is paramount. The audience is given the material it wants and needs.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Thomas R. Nilsen, "The Interpretive Function of the Critic," Essays on Rhetorical Criticism, ed. Thomas R. Nilsen (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), p. 90.

<sup>85</sup>Mouat, p. 172.

Kenneth Burke, one of the first rhetoricians to employ this term with regard to public speaking, emphasized that identification may involve unconscious facts, also, that the audience may act upon itself in an attempt to identify with a particular group.<sup>86</sup> No effort is made to dispute this point, but today it is impossible to measure the unconscious factors which may have been at work upon the listening audience of the twenties and thirties. Concentration should, therefore, center upon the content of the speeches and the basic preparation which enabled the audience to identify with the speaker, Will Rogers.

In this regard, the manner in which Rogers dealt with the economic, political, and social concerns of his audience through his basic preparation for speeches in critical periods—such as the depression situation—of the history of the United States is of utmost concern. The image of the audience which Rogers revealed, and the manner in which he worked to identify himself with the concerns and image of his particular audience, is very noteworthy. In particular, his qualities and reflections

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<sup>86</sup>Kenneth Burke, "Rhetoric—Old and New," Journal of General Education, V (April, 1951), 203. Marie Hockmuth Nichols gives further clarification of this theory in her article entitled, "Kenneth Burke: Rhetorical and Critical Theory," Rhetoric and Criticism; also "Kenneth Burke and the 'New Rhetoric'," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 38:137 (April, 1952).

of background preparation were used most diligently in his work as a vaudeville comedian and banquet speaker. It was, also, this background training that allowed him to develop his comic traits and to become more personal with the audience. He shied away from the tendency to tell funny stories, preferring to relate incidents in his personal experience:

Will's sense of humor was always at its best when dealing with things of the present moment. He couldn't tell a funny story. "I never told a funny story in my life," he said. "What little humor I've got always pertains to now." And that might be an event of the day or one of the last minute; for Will was very quick to seize the opportunities that suddenly offered themselves.<sup>87</sup>

His humor came from reality, and it revealed the truth concerning the subject under discussion. As Rogers, himself, observed:

I use only one set method in my little gags, and that is to try and keep to the truth. Of course you can exaggerate it, but what you say must be based on truth. And I never have found it necessary to use the words, "Hell," or "Damn," to get a laugh either.

Personally, I don't like the jokes that get the biggest laughs, as they are generally as broad as a horse and require no thought at all. I like the ones where, if you are with a friend, and hear it, it makes you think and you nudge your friend, and say, "He's right about that." I would rather have you do that than to have you laugh—and then forget the next minute what it was you laughed at.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Betty Rogers, p. 129.

<sup>88</sup>Martin, p. 34.

In the area of preparation and expression of ideas, the form and content of Rogers' "gags" contributed to his humor and it is difficult to say which of these elements is most important. He hurried his work and liked to think that exaggeration was the foundation of his humorous discourse. But it seems that exaggeration is too loose a term to apply and extend to all of his comedy preparation, for various degrees of exaggeration produce different reactions. For humorous purposes, it is usually the "too much" rather than the "much" that is funny. Hence, exaggeration used effectively is based upon the incongruity between what the hearer or listener expects as the norm or possible average as against the Rogers' interpretation that makes for laughter.

In his hurried day-to-day existence, Rogers' technique for preparation was to take the truth and extend it just beyond the realm of possibility. As was mentioned previously, the Naval Disarmament Treaty of 1930 showed his use of the truth as a result of diplomacy. In the context of that particular technique for preparation, Rogers took the humorous applications and exaggerated them beyond the literal truth. Rogers' humor was found in the incongruity between the truth and Will's interpretation of it which was so illogical and inappropriate that it obviously could not be taken seriously. Although



the exaggeration of the American role was unpleasant, it was not true; thus, it was a joke rich in flavor. Therefore, the humorist's reputation as a sly observer who saw through diplomatic maneuvers was further enhanced.

Another example of Rogers' technique of taking the truth and extending it just beyond the realm of possibility is that of the radio broadcast on President Hoover. Rogers observed:

He was chairman of the American Relief Association, and he helped feed Belgians, and a little later it was found out we was worse off than the Belgians, so they brought him home to feed us. He is always feeding somebody. Now he is feeding the Republicans. No Armenian that ever lived can eat more than one of them can.<sup>89</sup>

The story of the American Relief Association was true, but the suggestion of Mr. Hoover feeding the American people, and later the role of the Republicans, was exaggerated to heighten the implicit irony. Had the humorist pointed out that the American Relief Association was feeding the Belgian people, the statement might be true, but not funny. The humor lies in the incongruity between the truth and Rogers' interpretation of it which brings us to an aesthetic or poetic truth. This incongruity, again, is heightened by the fact that the humorist sees Mr. Hoover feeding first the American people, and then feeding the Republicans. The idea that the American people are

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<sup>89</sup>Squibb, National Broadcasting Co., p. 8.

hungrier than the Belgians—and the Republicans are hungrier than the American people—is enough of a distortion of the truth to throw the hearer off balance, yet bring home to him the conviction that the American government has, again, made another mistake.

In review, Rogers' method of showmanship was firmly developed in his early years on the variety stage of New York. In searching for new material, Rogers found the daily newspapers to be a source of new material. He found that by applying his ironic vision to immediate events, his comments gained timeliness and essentialism. He kept a skeleton script in the form of a note pad for his speaking engagements. Handwritten and carefully indexed, this note pad categorized his subject matter and outlined jokes and gags. This note pad shows that he gave careful thought to spontaneous humor, and provided proof that he put his witticisms into spoken and written expression beforehand. His jokes were aphorisms, encapsulated arguments, that might be expanded as circumstances and personal inclination dictated.

From his day-to-day existence, the spontaneous humor and casual manner of expression and explanation became part of his pose. This pose had its beginnings with the stock character of the "yokel." It was in this pose of ignorance and studied carelessness that Will blended the

personalities of a humorist-showman and himself together. His audiences considered him an average American who had not let an education distort his thinking, and who had become unusually adept in figuring out simple solutions to the complex problems of life with his spontaneous humor. It was, again, this humor that allowed him to identify with his audience, and his audience with him. This identification came about through the economic, political, and social concerns of his audience.

In preparation and expression of ideas, form and content of his humor rested upon exaggeration. His technique for preparation was to take the truth and extend it just beyond the realm of possibility. He extended it just far enough for his listeners to recognize the absurdity. And finally, it was this exaggeration that built a joke rich in flavor. The humorist's reputation was greatly enhanced by this preparation and expression of humorous ideas.

## CHAPTER IV

### ORIGIN AND PREPARATION OF SELECTED SPEECHES

To assess Rogers' discourse, one must understand the age in which he lived. We must seek to understand his rhetoric in terms of the persuasive purposes of the discourse. Rogers wished to fashion a fitting response to his environment and, therefore, developed a message that could be evaluated in terms of its effect on the environment. In this assessment, we must first describe the situation of the depression; secondly, we must describe Rogers' means of effecting the goals he hoped to achieve; thirdly, we must examine how these means were implemented in terms of specific messages during the troubled years of American life in the twenties and thirties; and finally, render an assessment of his total discourse, with regard to Rogers' persuasive unerring understanding of the attitudes of a generation of Americans on the scene at the time that allowed him to become a shrewd, penetrating political commentator.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>For a complete detailed study of the method of criticism, see Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation" in Philosophy and Rhetoric. Bitzer outlines his method of criticism by pointing out that: (1) rhetorical discourse is situational; the situation which the rhetorician

The Situation: The Era of Normalcy, The Crash and  
The Great Depression

Through the years of 1921 through 1929, the United States piled up a huge annual surplus above the costs of immediate maintenance. However, personal extravagance on the part of the United States citizenry wasted much of this while the cost of the First World War had to be met from this annual surplus. This surplus financed Europe in and after the conflict, and Europe could not repay this financial assistance afterwards. Also, much of this surplus was sunk in very unwise financial investments and when European nations stopped buying, income dropped off, and consequently, the revenues out of which both maintenance and the surplus that should have been cared for, immediately fell away.<sup>91</sup>

At the same time, the nation ignored danger from the constant replacement of man by machinery. Every new

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perceives amounts to an invitation to create and present discourse. (2) It must invite a fitting response that fits the situation. (3) If it invites a "fitting" response, then situation must somehow prescribe the response which fits. (4) The exigence and the complex of persons, objects, and events, and relationships which generate rhetorical discourse are located in reality, are objective, and publicly observable historic facts in the world.

<sup>91</sup>For a complete detailed examination of the Depression years, see Dixon Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression (New York: Bancroft, 1958).

labor saving device lessened the demand for labor. The cutting off of most of the immigration from Europe by the Immigration and Naturalization Laws of 1921 and 1924 further reduced the number of workers, but even then there were still more workers than jobs. The children growing up in this period needed to find work or face becoming a menace to themselves and society.

But through the prosperous years of Calvin Coolidge's administration, which was expected to continue without check through the Herbert Hoover administration, little regard was paid to the threats against the future. There was a minor panic in 1921, causing Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, to become concerned about the future.<sup>92</sup> Few realized that the United States was heading into another of the troughs between two booms.<sup>93</sup> The financial reserves were being drawn upon more heavily than they could bear, yet business remained optimistic.

A panic broke out in October of 1929. Automobile sales had declined, but advertising was relied upon to bring the buyers back. Within a few days after the stock market had reached the highest level known, there was a complete slump. Throughout the decade, American economy

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-16.

expanded in every direction almost without interruption. Up to 1927, the advance was normal since business was expanding and profits were increasing, but soon an unnatural trend developed. Although business activity leveled off and commodity prices tended to decline, the prices of common stocks continued to soar.<sup>94</sup> The continued prosperity enjoyed under the Harding-Coolidge administrations had blinded the American people to the facts of common economic law. The twenties was a period of unbounded and unparalleled optimism and strong faith in all things "American."<sup>95</sup>

The effect of the collapse of the boom spread rapidly to every level of society. The promotion of new business ceased. People with debts to pay could not raise the necessary amounts by selling their securities. Fear followed hope; and because of the fear, those who still had cash refrained from spending it. Buying stopped and dealers could not move their goods, retain their help, or pay their bills. Factories, unable to collect the debts or make new sales, laid off more hands. The unemployed lived as best they could on their savings, borrowed on their insurance, and sought in vain for jobs and felt

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-16. Despite the strong faith in "American" products, Hoover warned business that "if the future is like the past, such periods will recur."

the fear of charity. And finally, upon the farmer who was the ultimate producer and who had not prospered when the rest of the country was prosperous, fell even under more burdens.<sup>96</sup>

Every administration which happens to be in office during such a period of financial calamity is held accountable for the suffering, and President Herbert Hoover was blamed for this misfortune. Burdened with the need to bring about recovery, President Hoover had to face defections among his political friends and active hostility from his political enemies. He was not a professional politician, and was never much liked by those who were. As a successful engineer he knew how to chart a course upon its merits, but as every politician knows, government cannot do even right and obvious things unless the voters sustain it.

President Hoover was not overly popular with big business for he believed that it ought to be governed in the public interest, while it preferred to be left alone. He was not completely at ease in public and lacked the magnetic power to charm and persuade that a president needs as he explains to the people the measures he advocates.<sup>97</sup> Hoover could not escape the depression and its consequences;

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<sup>96</sup>Wecter, pp. 17-19.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-19.



and he was handicapped in that the American government had never relieved a panic, or knew how to relieve one; and finally, no one in 1929 could possibly visualize the depths that would be reached in 1932.

Rogers--The Speaker: An Intervention  
in the Situation

In these troubled years, Will Rogers affectionately referred to America as "Cuckooland."<sup>98</sup> He loved every foot of it, but he more than half suspected that the prosperity was not and could not be permanent. He pointed out that America was not prosperous:

There is no country in the history of the world, that ever lived in the high class manner we do. Radio, bath-tubs, almost unique and antique furniture, pianos, rugs--course other countries buy 'em on credit. This country is not prosperous. Its just got good credit. We live better and owe more than anybody in the world.<sup>99</sup>

Rogers was uneasy about the depression situation and the American attitude toward prosperity. He felt that people were making money and buying products without having to work. In the Indian Territory, and later Oklahoma of

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid. Also see the works of Mrs. Paula McSpadden Love, specifically in her many articles and books on Will Rogers. Also observe the colorful expressions and memories of Clem, Bob and Trent McSpadden, sons of H. T. McSpadden, nephew of the great Oklahoman.

<sup>99</sup>Donald Day (ed)., Sanity is Where You Find It (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1955), p. 99.

his boyhood, a man had to work for his money and he had to pay hard cash for goods received. To Will, the allure-ment of installment buying seemed to be basically wrong unless credit could be adequately established and basi-cally secured. He observed:

Our taste we acquired on credit and we wanted to keep on enjoying em' on credit. It wasent what we needed then that was hurting us; it was what we was paying for that we already used up.<sup>100</sup>

A great many questions were generated about by the depression experience; however, Rogers viewed the depres-sion situation as a challenge to the soul of the nation. He employed a strategy of reaffirmation and a strategy of the comic scapegoat as ways of restoring morale. These two strategies were embedded in his discourse and proceed from Rogers' faith in the triumph of optimism and character over large structures and adverse circum-stances. Rogers answered the question on everyone's mind at this particular time by pointing out:

We spent six years of wild buying and spend-ing on credit (everything under the sun whether we needed it or not) and now we are having to pay for em' under Mr. Hoover, and we are howling like a pet coon.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Will Rogers, "Weekly Articles," McNaught Syndi-cate, New York Times, July 24, 1930.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., June 28, 1930.

Emergency legislation was introduced in Congress, and the nation's financial leaders offered various remedies.

"Prosperity is just around the corner," became the theme as American began to adjust to a depression economy. The American public had spent six years of wild buying on credit; now there was no money to pay the balance. The unlimited credit idea, the "buy now---pay later" theme had in all aspects backfired. Rogers pointed to his first strategy of reaffirmation when he said: "First payments made us think we were prosperous and the other nineteen showed us we were broke."<sup>102</sup> He believed that if only audiences could understand the humorous incongruities of their situation, they might return to the basic common sense values that had built the nation. His goals were not realized in specific programs, but in the minds of the American people.

#### Rogers' Means of Implementation

Rogers' depression speeches reveal two basic strategies: the first a strategy of reaffirmation. A strategy of reaffirmation seeks to strengthen and intensify values, beliefs, and attitudes already held by the audience. A speaker does more than remind an audience of its common traditions; he seeks to use our image of the

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<sup>102</sup>Day, Sanity is Where You Find It, p. 99.

past to shape our actions in the future. A skillful persuader will reaffirm only those beliefs which are particularly relevant to solving the problem at hand. The values that Rogers felt were most crucial and those that would sustain the average American in an era when corporate institutions seemed to have betrayed him were faith in the individual, and a healthy suspicion of large institutions and quick political panaceas. Rogers's speeches bristled with remarks that affirmed the amateur over the professional. In this respect, Rogers had a knack for adjusting his discourses on public issues related to the depression situation to the human factors of amateur over professional and this directly related to his audiences. The amateur was not an issue that was to be discussed in abstract terms, for in a very real way the primacy of the amateur over professional affected the life and times of every citizen. One particular discourse—with a national radio audience—clarifies this knack rather uniquely:

We used to be told that depression was just a state of mind but starvation has changed that impression. Depression is a state of health. It's moved from the mind to the stomach. And it ain't really depression either; it's just a return to normalcy. We are just getting back to earth. We are back to two-bit meals and cotton underwear and off \$1.50 steaks and silk under rompers. The trouble is America is just muscle bound from

holding a steering wheel. The only place we are calloused from work is the bottom of our driving toe.<sup>103</sup>

This points out rather clearly the American plight and that these basic concerns were not issues of professionalism in abstract terms. Rogers discounts professionalism further when he observed:

This country has got just one problem: it's not the balancing of Mr. Mellon's budget--that's his problem; it's not the League of Nations; it's not the silver question; not a one of those problems mean a thing in the world to us as long as we have seven million of our own out of work. Our only problem is to arrange the affairs of this prosperous country--yeah, prosperous that's right--so that a man that wants to work can get work and give him a more equal division of the wealth the country produces. Now if our big men in the next year can't fix that, well they just ain't big men, that's all.<sup>104</sup>

Rogers' answer and simple direct solutions over the absurdly pompous actions of experts enhanced his reputation as a healing force in this desperate situation. Rogers related public concerns to simple direct solutions and alternatives for the common citizen. In this respect he was more than a news commentator, for he was much more personal with his audience. The news commentator may

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<sup>103</sup>Will Rogers, Speech on Unemployment, October 18, 1931, Columbia Broadcasting System, National Radio Hook-up, Los Angeles, Calif. Will Rogers Memorial, Sound and Tape Collection #28, plus original manuscript.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid. (The spelling is Rogers')

utter prophetic statements, but they are of a more abstract professional nature. Note for example, Rogers' simple, direct solution to the depression during a particular broadcast speech:

We are the first nation in the history of the world to go to the poor house in an automobile; our potters fields are surrounded with granaries full of grain. Now if there ain't something "cockeyed" in an arrangement like that, then this microphone in front of me is a mousetrap. Its simply a case of getting it fixed, all the feed is going into one manger, and the stock on the other side ain't getting any of it . . . .

Now a miracle cant happen----all these people get a job over night, its going to take time. So they must be fed and cared for perhaps all winter. . . .

The working classes didn't bring this on, it was the big boys themselves that thought this financial drunk we was going through was going to last forever. They overmerged, over-capitalized, and over everything else.<sup>105</sup>

Will attempted to debunk and unmask the complex and high-sounding programs of corporate business interests. However, this particular speech on unemployment gives evidence of Rogers' constructiveness. He never attempted to destroy either persons or institutions; rather, he worked to improve impressions and conditions. However, he lashed out at corporate business interests when he said:

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

Now don't wait for the government to feed these people. I have seen lots of audiences and heard lots of appeals, but I have yet to see where the people knew the need, and the cause was there, that they didnt come through. Even Europe who hates us and thinks we are arrogant, bad mannered, and everything else, will tell you that we are liberal. Doggone it, our folks are liberal. I don't know anything about America being "funda-mentally sound" and all that "after-dinner hooley," but I do know that America is funda-mentally generous.<sup>106</sup>

Although he joked about the defects of men and their affairs, his attacks were never malicious, and he attempted to temper his discourses with notes of hope and encouragement. Rogers' speeches and discourses attempted to unmask the jargon of big programs by translating them into common sense idioms, while laughing at the quick solutions of the politicians and economists. In order to fulfill this strategical dictum, Rogers attempted to effect change in the American attitude by shifting away the ill-feeling toward Mr. Hoover in the troubled years:

There is Orthodox Quakers and then there are the modern Quakers. The Orthodox stayed in Philadelphia and the modern ones got out. The further away from Philadelphia they got, the more modern they was. Mr. Hoover's about the most modern of them all. He got to Iowa. . . .

He graduated Mr. Hoover did, in 1895. The year he graduated there wasn't any filling

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

stations for a college man to work in, so he took up engineering. He wasn't a stationary engineer; he was a locomotion engineer. I guess that is what you would call it, for he was always moving. He couldn't seem to make a go of it in any one place. He just prowled all over the world . . . he got a job in the interior of China. It was quiet and nice and fine there. He got married and went there. China gave him a wonderful reception. They put on the Boxer Rebellion for him when he arrived. They were barricaded in the town of Zin Zin, or Tin Tin, something like that, or Sen Sen, I don't know the name of it, one of those names, they all sound alike besides Hong Kong. They were barricaded there for a long time, and the Chinamen shot at them for three months.<sup>107</sup>

The common sense nature of his pronouncements on President Hoover greatly reflected the reaffirmation strategy he hoped to achieve. With his informality and style, he would use a simple solution and generalization to show the "human side" of Mr. Hoover, the man.<sup>108</sup> Later in this same broadcast, Rogers turned on Congress and unmasked the jargon of its flood control programs and financial manipulations by translating them into the common sense idioms of the average citizen while laughing at the quick solutions of the politicians and economists:

One time I was down in the flooded area of the Mississippi Valley, I was shown around there during the flood, and I saw some of the splendid work Mr. Hoover did, he really saved people's

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<sup>107</sup>Will Rogers, Wit and Philosophy from the Radio Talks . . ., April 20, 1930.

<sup>108</sup>Martin, p. 35.



lives in that flood, he honestly did, he saved their lives. Out on a raft, he really pulled the people out of the water with his own hands, you know, and then after he got them out and wrung them out, they was Democrats. Well, that was wonderful you know. Suppose you swam in and laid yourself liable to some personal injury and dragged something out and find out it was only a Democrat, you have a tendency to shove him back in again you know . . . . He kept them out, you know, and that showed that he was really a humanitarian at heart, you know, because Congress ain't going to do nothing about the floods at all. Just before they closed the last session, they passed a resolution denouncing floods. They came out against them. So, if you have gat any friends in the Mississippi Valley, you had better advise them to get a row boat. I would put more dependence in a skiff during a flood than I would in the whole of the Senate or Government and all, you know.<sup>109</sup>

It was this method of unmasking the jargon of big programs of the Congress by putting them into common sense pronouncements in a rural idiom and ridiculing the quick solutions of the politicians and economists that allowed Rogers' hearers and radio listeners to be amused rather than irritated by Rogers' discourses:

Here it seems to be his mission, under the guise of raillery, to tell us hard, blunt truths, about ourselves--truths about our politics, our civic standards, and our social habits. They are the sort of truths that we do not like to hear, but we will take them with a contagious chuckle and a piece of chewing gum.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Will Rogers, Wit and Philosophy from the Radio Talks . . ., April 20, 1930.

<sup>110</sup>Martin, p. 35.

Rogers' humor, therefore, was very much a part of the reaffirmation strategy that sought to strengthen and intensify values, beliefs, and attitudes already held by the audience. Rogers sought to use the American image of the past to shape the actions for the future. He reaffirmed those beliefs which were particularly relevant to solving the depression situation.

The second strategy that Rogers employed was that of the comic scapegoat.<sup>111</sup> The notion of scapegoating suggests the selection and denigration of a common enemy as a device for uniting a constituency and deflecting attention away from its own failures and problems. The modern master of this device was Germany's "Der Führer," Adolph Hitler, who used both external and internal scapegoats as a means of concealing the divisions within his own people. The comic scapegoat, however, is less familiar and it is certainly a less devastating device because it finds the scapegoat within rather than without. The comic scapegoat locates the source of our troubles not in an external enemy to be loaded with abuse but within ourselves. Thus, the unity it achieves is through an ironic appreciation of the ordinary human feelings we hold in common. If a political figure is attached he is also

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<sup>111</sup>For a detailed examination on the Comic Scapegoat see Hugh Duncan, Communication and Social Order, Chap. 38, "The Comic Scapegoat" (New York: Bedminster Press, 1964). Methodological footnote.

humanized. His imperfections and foibles are declared to be widespread human foibles that the audience shares. They are not seen as diabolical and systematically planned crimes against the people.

Rogers employed the strategy of the comic scapegoat to build morale, thus it was a healing device. Rogers' speech at the Editor's Banquet in Los Angeles in November of 1931 is an example of his healing discourse:

Another convention--no matter how deep depression gets or hardships or poverty we are in, you can always get a band of Americans to forsake their comfortable homes and beds, leave their companions and friends, and go across the country to attend a convention. I think about a hundred years from now when some of our ancestors--no, that's the ones that come before us--I mean the fellow that comes after us--the sheriff--no--your forbears--anyway the fellow that comes after you--Governor Rolfe says "descendents" is the word. That's the Missouri education cropping out. Well, anyway, a hundred years from now they will be attending conventions somewhere.<sup>112</sup>

From this observation one can see that Rogers located the source of the American troubles, especially with large organizations, within the American people. The unity he achieved was through an ironic appreciation of the ordinary human feelings and failings held in common:

I shouldn't be even attending a banquet in honor of a man from Kansas--and if they even thought

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<sup>112</sup>Will Rogers, Editor's Banquet Speech, Book 006, November 11, 1931, Graduate Research Loan File, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

I called him "Mister"—but I got a special dispensation from "Wild Bill" Murray [Governor of Oklahoma]. Bill says after all, he is a poor Republican. Its just like throwing stones at a dead elephant—the poor elephant in his old age and dotage can't tell his tail from his trunk and he has to feed himself.<sup>113</sup>

The interesting point in Rogers' speech was that if he attacked a political figure he was also humanized. For an example, note Rogers' "humanizing" remarks in regard to President Hoover:

He won the war for us. He really did. Did you ever figure that out? He was our food dictator. He won the war for us, but he ruined our stomachs. He gave us liberty with indigestion. You remember all the slogans we had during the war. Well, he is the inventor of all of them—"Butter it thin and you're bound to win;" and "Drink your coffee black and give the enemy a whack," all of them. Mr. Hoover thought of all those things, you know.<sup>114</sup>

Rogers presented his discourse in such a way that Mr. Hoover's imperfections and foibles were declared to be widespread human foibles that the audience shared—not as diabolical and systematically planned crimes against the people. Rogers excused the fault as widespread, and pointed out this idea to his audience:

The politicians, you know, they have all been against him. That is what elected him. The

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Will Rogers, Wit and Philosophy from the Radio Talks . . .

minute the people found out the politicians didn't want him, the whole nation said, he is the kind of fellow we want. Of course, we kid about his commissions and all that, but I tell you in this late Wall Street crisis, I really believe that the way he got all those big men together, really saved a very delicate situation there, and you know there is quite a psychology in getting a lot of big men together on commissions with you. You have just got that many more men working for you, you know. Any time you tell a fellow you will put him on some committee or something, he thinks, you know, it kind of makes him do a little better, you know, and I think that is one thing Mr. Hoover did about that.<sup>115</sup>

In this strategy, Rogers was a master at bringing about the unity that America needed so much through an ironic appreciation of the ordinary human failings held in common:

Prohibition—they think Mr. Hoover ought to fix prohibition. Well, my goodness, Mr. Hoover can't—I don't know, but if I remember right, the boys had a couple of nips under Calvin's administration, I think they did.<sup>116</sup>

Following this ironic appreciation of the ordinary human failings, Rogers continually declared that Mr. Hoover's imperfections and foibles were widespread human foibles that the audience shared. "Prosperity—millions of people never had it under nobody and never will have it under anybody, but they all want it under Mr. Hoover."<sup>117</sup> As

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<sup>115</sup>Editor's Banquet Speech.

<sup>116</sup>Will Rogers, Wit and Philosophy from the Radio Talks, . . .

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

his remarks on Mr. Hoover indicate, Rogers practiced the idea that the blame for the depression was widespread, and he used this as a healing device to build morale.

He practiced this idea as an element of recovery:

They are all wanting something from Mr. Hoover. If the weather is bad or wrong, we blame it on Mr. Hoover. So all in all, I believe he is doing a pretty good job. . . . Women have always been very strong for Mr. Hoover. When his picture appeared on the screen, all the time women have always applauded him. Even during the war, the women would drop their knitting to applaud for Mr. Hoover. Of course, they would be knitting on a sock that the soldier afterwards wore for a sweater, but you know, their patriotism was better than their knitting, but they meant well. I only claim one distinction, and that is that I am the only person that I know of that is not on one of his commissions.<sup>118</sup>

Rogers located the source of America's depression troubles—not in an external way or through an external enemy—as Hitler dealt with the Jews; he channeled our frustration into laughter with witticisms based on common sense observations:

But we do have two men we naturally look upon not running around to yokel conventions, galivanting clear across country and swinging at strange mosquitoes, and thats the President and Vice-President. We expect them to have more intellect and intelligence and thats giving you the best of it Charlie. . . . We wanted to get you out here before your sentenced to those four years but now that you are out on good behavior—you notice I call you "Charlie" but that's all right—I knew the gentleman when he was just a Senator—when he was darned lucky to be called

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

anything but a "liar" by another Senator. You ought to hear what Pat Harrison called him.<sup>119</sup>

Accordingly, Rogers' notion of scapegoating suggested the selection and denigration of the depression situation as a device for uniting the American audience and deflecting attention away from its own failures and problems. His remarks were brief and to the point. As he, himself, pointed out:

Being brief gives the impression of intelligence and folks do admire intelligence. Brevity and clarity show that you have done some thinking, and that you know what you are talking about.<sup>120</sup>

Thus, Rogers created sharp, terse and brief phrases which could be easily remembered and which contained a great deal of common sense and value. His implementation to restore basic American values caused his listeners and hearers to chuckle, agree, and repeat to others his countless witticisms and public utterances.

Finally. Rogers' discourse was presented and fashioned with a message that could be evaluated in terms of its effect on the environment. We have viewed the depression situation, we have seen Rogers' means in

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<sup>119</sup>Editor's Banquet Speech. On this particular occasion, at the Editor's Banquet, Rogers frequently referred to Vice President Curtis who was the guest of honor. The banquet was held at the Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, California.

<sup>120</sup>Martin, p. 108.

effecting the goals he hoped to achieve, and have examined how these means were implemented in terms of specific messages during the turbulent years of the depression. Rogers implemented his discourse during the depression experience through two basic strategies. First of all, his strategy of reaffirmation sought to strengthen and intensify values, beliefs, and attitudes that were held by the depression audiences. Will did more than remind his hearers of its American traditions, he sought to use the American image of the past to shape our actions for the future. As a skillful persuader, Rogers reaffirmed only those beliefs which were particularly relevant to solving the problem at hand. The values that Rogers felt were most crucial to sustaining the average American in an era when corporate institutions and empires seemed to have betrayed him were faith in the individual and a healthy suspicion of large institutions and quick political panaceas. His discourse sparkled with remarks that affirmed the amateur over the professional, the simple direct solution over the absurdly pompous actions of experts, and the debunking and unmasking of complex and high sounding programs. Throughout the discourse, Rogers built the ethos of the stock character of the "yokel," while unmasking the jargon of big programs



by translating them into common sense idioms, and laughing at the utopian solutions of the professional politicians.

Secondly, in employing the strategy of the comic scapegoat, Rogers sought out the selection and denigration of a common enemy as a device for uniting the American constituency and deflecting attention away from its own failures and problems. As the comic scapegoat, Rogers was locating the source of American trouble not in an external foe but from within ourselves. Thus, the unity he achieved was through an ironic appreciation of the ordinary human failings we hold in common. If a political figure was attacked, he was also "humanized." This was the case of President Herbert Hoover. Hoover's imperfections and foibles were declared to be widespread human foibles that the audiences shared, not as diabolical and systematically planned crimes against the people. Therefore, Rogers' discourse through thought and action excused the depression experience as widespread. This was a healing device to build American morale.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMATION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this work we have attempted to explore the specific training, and the art of communication of Will Rogers; also, we have attempted to explore the basic preparation and the qualities that characterized the discourse of this successful practitioner of oral communication.

In viewing our work, we have arrived at some basic conclusions:

1. The Old Home Ranch, in the Cooweescoowee District of the Cherokee Nation, provided Will Rogers with an identification with rural America while giving him reverence for the faith of the plain "everyday" common people. It was this ranch environment that gave depth to his academic life and travels. It reflected itself with his work on the vaudeville stage and complimented his style of expression. The Old Home Ranch gave his spoken word a spontaneity that made it appear as if what he was doing was fun rather than hard work. This rural identification added freshness to his literary achievements. These achievements represented the characteristics of

simplicity and directness that followed him through his life. This casual manner of expression was part of his pose.

2. Rogers' work was based on timeliness and essentialism. He recognized that there were no new jokes, but old ones cast into new surroundings. Through his basic preparation, he learned that old humorous material and subject matter could be made effective by relating it to current topics of public interest through simplicity and directness. Because his work was related to topical events which at the time of presentation was of great public interest, the impact of his spoken word was greatly reinforced and enhanced. He had a very high regard for humor and the present moment, and this was the foundation of his preparation and quality of discourse.

3. Rogers' method of showmanship and searching for humorous material gained momentum and development through his early career on the variety stage of New York. He searched for new material through the daily newspapers. He often pointed out that "All I know is what I read in the Papers." He found that by applying his ironic vision to immediate events, his comments became timely and essential. His note pad gives impetus to the notion that he gave careful thought to spontaneous humor, and it provides proof that he put his witticisms into spoken and written expression beforehand. Thus his discourse grew from

aphorisms, encapsulated arguments that were expanded as the circumstances and inclinations presented themselves.

4. The spontaneous humor and casual manner of expression and explanation became part of his pose. This pose had its beginnings with the identification with rural America and the development of the stock character of the "yokel." It was within this pose of ignorance and studied carelessness that Rogers blended the personalities of a humorist-showman and Rogers the man, together. Within this pose of the "yokel" his audiences considered him an average American who had become unusually adept in figuring out simple solutions to the complex problems of life with spontaneous humor. This "yokel" pose extended itself to include the areas of economics, politics, and social concerns of the United States, with the exaggeration of ideas in form and content.

5. Rogers' spoken word was presented and fashioned in terms of its effect on the environment. Through the depression experience, Rogers used a strategy of reaffirmation to strengthen and intensify values, beliefs, and attitudes that were held by depression audiences and hearers. He reaffirmed those beliefs that were relevant to solving the problems at hand. These were the crucial values that he felt were essential to sustain the average American in the depression experience when corporate institutions and financial empires seemed to have betrayed

him. These values included faith in the individual and a healthy suspicion of large institutions and empires, as well as quick political panaceas.

6. Rogers employed the strategy of the comic scapegoat to bring about the selection and denigration of a common enemy. This, to Rogers, was a device for uniting the American constituency and deflecting attention away from its own failures and problems. Through the comic scapegoat, Rogers located the source of American trouble within ourselves. He achieved unity through an ironic appreciation of the ordinary human failings held in common. His discourse expressed the notion that the blame for the depression experience was widespread. And consequently, this was a healing device to build American morale.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

In viewing possible future research, there seem to be two possible journalistic approaches that journalism students might explore:

1. According to my research, there have been only two columnists that have had a following of well over forty million readers—one was Phillip Peter Dunne, the other was Will Rogers. An avenue of approach would be a

comparison between the two, including style and subject matter.

2. One possible area of study and research would be a study of Will Rogers' relative influence over the readership in the rural West and South as opposed to the urban Northeast.

In terms of rhetorical scholarship and research, there seem to be four areas that need exploration:

1. One should attempt to explore the broadcast rhetoric of Will Rogers in terms of the radio advertising he attached himself to—such as his brilliant use of the cowboy "image" for Bull Durham cigarettes. Much might be learned about Rogers as a conscious creator of folk images in the area.

2. One should study Rogers' use of analogy and how he used such techniques in his art of persuasive action. The skilled use of analogy appears constantly in his work and it proved to be of great importance in his more sustained argumentative discourse.

3. There have been renewed emphasis on the "lost canon" of rhetoric—Memory—one should explore the area in relation to how he put his radio broadcasts together. These broadcasts are remarkable as to his quick recall of facts, figures, and witticisms. There has been no emphasis in this area at all.

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