

Actors Talk About Will Rogers

Those Who Knew Him Well Pay Tribute

Los Angeles, Cal., Aug. 28 (By Jacob Anderson for ANP)—The sudden death in an airplane accident in Alaska of Will Rogers, famed humorist and screen celebrity and of Wiley Post, the daring aviator, brought sorrow to many here. Expressions of sadness were universal among those of solace who actually knew the men.

For Wiley Post, the feeling of regret was that which humanity always feels when a glamorous vivacious figure is snuffed out. For Rogers it was different. It is amazing to witness the universality of compassionate grief from folk in all walks of life. Followers of his column among people of color must have been legion. In all probability he interpreted and expressed those feelings which we hold when we think of ourselves as Americans, just as he represented the thinking of the average white man or woman.

Probably the closest contact which Negroes had with Will Rogers was in the movie field. Several of the colored stars had worked with him in every instance their memory of him brought forth appreciative testimony.

Clarence Muse was enthusiastic as he spoke. Muse said:

Will Rogers, an interpreter of life in all its phases—misunderstood by some Americans, beloved by all. Because of his death the world is sadder and I believe my group is hurt more than the rest. They misunderstood him. That is why he is still a living spirit of Christ to me. Muse who had just returned from a memorial service for the cowboy actor which had been broadcast from coast to coast over a nation wide Columbia hook-up and on which he had sung "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" told several intimate stories about Rogers.

First he recalled the friendship of the dead actor for Dr. R. R. Moton and for Tuskegee institute. Several years ago while substituting for his friend Fred Stone of "Three Cheers" who had been hurt, Will Rogers visited Tuskegee. In the afternoon he attended the annual Tuskegee—Montgomery State football game and the following day he devoted his daily column to a tribute to the ability and sportsmanship of colored college football players at the Tuskegee Institute. When he performed in Tuskegee chapel that night he began a friendship with Dr. Moton which lasted through the years and made a substantial donation to the school.

A few weeks ago Muse said that he served as master of ceremonies at the Second Baptist church in Los Angeles. Will Rogers had accepted an invitation to be the principal speaker of the occasion. The affair was to raise money for the church. White Baptists were interested and 300 whites attended from a church in Glendale. Only 40 or 50 members of the colored Second Baptist were on hand, whether from lack of interest or resentment he did not know.

Rogers who had brought his wife with him seemed delighted to be present. There still lingered on his mind, however, the unhappy radio incident which had incensed colored people the world over. Rogers voluntarily brought the subject up expressing his deep regret and explaining what had happened.

He was discussing music and deploring the habit of writers who distorted spirituals concerning them into jazz. Particularly he spoke of "The Last Roundup" which he said he had heard long before it was published as an old "nigger spiritual". He meant no harm and was sorry. Muse recounted another story about Rogers who he said never tired of admitting that a Negro cowboy had taught him all the tricks he knew in roping and lassoing, the arts which started him on the road to fame. This colored man worked for Rogers who is said

to have supported him and his wife on Rogers' Oklahoma ranch until they died.

Louise Beavers

Louise Beavers had played in pictures with Rogers. The last one she said was "Too Busy to Work" in 1932.

"He was a most interesting man to work with", said Miss Beavers. "He was pliable and congenial. My contact with him was not particularly personal being confined to the casual conversation which always develops on the lots, but I grew to admire his personality and his great ability. At its close he told me he had enjoyed working with me. The world has lost a great character and a great man."

Etta Moten

"I only had a glimpse of Will Rogers", said Etta Moten.

"When Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson gave his famous party to some hundreds of guests out on the Fox lot last spring, one of the principle speakers was Will Rogers. As he paid a tribute to Mr. Robinson he praised the success which Bill had won in Hollywood and remarked with delightful humor that although Bill and Step-in Fetchit had stolen the show from him whenever he appeared with them, he had no hard feelings and wished them continued triumphs. He lauded Bert Williams as one of the greatest actors he had ever known. Mentioning his love for Negro spirituals prompted me to sing 'That City Called Heaven' that night and in describing it before I sang I dedicated it to Mr. Rogers who expressed his appreciation."

Step-in Fetchit

Probably the closest actor of color to Will Rogers was Step-in Fetchit.

They appeared in numerous pictures together and the sincere bond of friendship, which some gave Rogers credit for helping Step-in Fetchit back in pictures. "I'd like to give you my version of what Will Rogers would have written in his daily column if he had been describing his own death" said Step-in Fetchit when asked for an expression on his friend's death. Step-in, a humorist reported as follows:

"Will Rogers, everybody's buddy and Wiley Post are dead. The world's greatest aviator, Wiley Post and the pride of Claremont, Okla., Will Rogers, chose the ice-lands of Alaska as the coolest way of announcing to a hot world its saddest news in centuries.

"Ethiopia and Italy you can disband your armies and the great now call back your troops. Disworld war story which is being prepared for early production can be put on the back shelf, because without Will Rogers' treatment on the dialogue, the war would surely have been a flop. Signed Will Rogers."

"But it was good Mr. Rogers, to have been your man, 'Friday', Step-in Fetchit.

And then Clarence Muse closed the interviews: "We as a people should learn to be more tolerant and to get the facts. Will Rogers in that memorable incident was defending us. We should be less quick to use the hatchet on 'those who have been our friends', said Muse."

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WILD PARTY



Inauguration of Tuskegee President Set For October 28

New York City, Aug. 28, (ANP)—Announcement was made here this week by Col. William Jay Schieffelin, chairman of the Board of Trustees of Tuskegee Institute, that the inauguration of Dr. Frederick Douglas Patterson, as president of that institution would be held at Tuskegee, October 28.

Speakers of national repute, including the heads of various civic, business, and welfare organizations, presidents of some of the larger colleges and universities and the Board of Education, have been invited to be on the program at this momentous occasion, which means the beginning of the third administration at Tuskegee Institute.

Imes May Take C. C. C. Job

Washington, August 31—(By ANP) Dr. G. Lake Imes may become an official of the Civilian Conservation Corps it was learned here this week, reports having it that he had been offered a post as chief chaplain and contact man for the colored enrollees. It is understood that a number of colored chaplains may be selected and that in addition to supervising their activities, Dr. Imes will serve as a liaison between enrollees and citizens in various towns near which camps are located. Dr. Imes retired recently as secretary of Tuskegee Institute.

Editor Named Member of Bond Committee

St. Louis, Aug. 31 (By ANP)—J. T. Mitchell, editor of the St. Louis Argus and an active figure in the life of the city here, has been named a member of the committee formed recently to aid in putting over a ten million dollar bond issue. The federal government has promised to extend a grant of thirty million dollars for the construction of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial providing St. Louis provides ten million dollars.

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Noted Historian Reviews "Black Reconstruction"

By Rayford W. Logan, A. B., A. M. Professor of History, Atlanta Uni.

Black Reconstruction in America. By W. E. Burghardt DuBois. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 746 pp. \$4.50.

Those who have known Dr. DuBois only as the bitterly sarcastic or the coldly furious critic of white oppressors of the darker races must naturally wonder whether he could write a history of the most controversial period of his race's struggle in America. One should remember, however, that the former militant editor of the Crisis was also a student under some of America's most famous historians at Harvard, that his book The Suppression of the African Slave Trade is number one in the famous Harvard Historical Series. A grant from the Trustees of the Rosenwald Fund permitted him during two years to use this training and his ripe scholarship in personal and supervised investigation of material for this study.

Black Reconstruction reveals Dr. DuBois as both the merciless critic and the constructive historian. In the last chapter, "The Propaganda of History", he has penned some of the most stinging castigations of American historians since the controversy over the war guilt of Germany. Thus he says, "Burgess was a slaveholder, Dunning a Copperhead and Rhodes an exploiter of labor." A reading of this chapter first will give a clue to the task that the historian has set for himself.

That task is to rehabilitate the Negro at the bar of history. Now, there are two kinds of rehabilitation. The one disregards the record denies all adverse criticism, and accepts all favorable comments. The other method seeks merely to give as much emphasis to the contributions as to the mistakes. Dr. DuBois, then, admits most of the short shortcomings attributed to the Negroes in the Reconstruction, conventions and legislatures, but he also reminds his readers that these same Negroes helped to give the South its first system of public schools for both black and white children.

But other authors have done this, although not so eloquently and not always so brilliantly as in Black Reconstruction. The real value of this epoch-making book lies elsewhere. This, I believe, is the first time one understands that America lost during Reconstruction her golden opportunity to found a political and industrial democracy. Instead, as Dr. DuBois sees it: "There began to rise in America in 1876 a new capitalism and a new enslavement of labor. Home labor in cultured lands, appeased and misled by a ballot whose power the dictatorship of vast capital strictly curbed, was bribed by high wage and political office to unite in an exploitation of white, yellow: brown and black labor, in lesser lands and 'breeds without the law.' Sons of ditch-diggers aspired to be spawn of bastard kings and

thieving aristocrats rather than of rough-handed children of dirt and toil." In 1913, he continues, "The fantastic structure fell, leaving grotesque Profits and Poverty, Plenty and Starvation, Empire and Democracy, staring at each other across World Depression. And the rebuilding, whether it comes now or a century later, will and must go back to the basic principles of Reconstruction in the United States during 1867-1876—Land, Light and Leading for slaves, black, brown, yellow and white, under a dictatorship of the proletariat."

Whether one agrees or not with this interpretation and this prophecy, he will have to admit that Dr. DuBois has written a book that will necessitate further reply from the advocates of white supremacy and the maintenance of capitalism—if they have the courage to read Black Reconstruction. At all events, this magnum opus of the cost distinguished of Negro scholars again thrown open to discussion, and to fiery debate, what was considered a closed chapter.

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Jews In Germany Have Nothing On Negroes In Miss.

Jackson, Miss., Aug. 31—(By ANP)—In the heated and almost unbelievably ridiculous gubernatorial primary run-off campaign concluded in this state Tuesday, the public was informed of an amazing set of "crimes" of which the Negro in the state may be guilty, or his friends.

The two candidates were Hugh White, millionaire lumberman, and Paul B. Johnson, a former judge. They opposed each other in the Democratic run-off.

The two issues in the campaign were Huey Long, Senator from Louisiana, and the Negro. These two issues became merged into one: "Don't let the Negro get out of his 'place'."

Almost daily reports reach this country of new crimes, possible of commitment by Jews, which Nazi government in Germany has defined. The outside world, including the United States and Mississippi, is horrified.

There isn't an upright Negro in Mississippi who wouldn't swap places with a Berlin Jew and pay him a bonus. There isn't a Jew in German who, having agreed to come to Mississippi and live as a Negro, could be compelled to keep the bargain.

In the campaign just ended, Hugh White accused Huey Long and Paul Johnson of angling for the Negro vote. Paul Johnson charged that Hugh White was seeking the Negro vote. Both men impressed their audience that it was criminal for a white (Aryan) man in Mississippi to encourage a Negro (Jey) to exercise his franchise as an American citizen. Both men charged it was criminal for a Negro to think of voting in a "white" Democratic primary. Both men implied that it was criminal for a colored American citizen in Mississippi to have any interest whatever in the person elected as governor of the state.

Hugh White charged that a colored man had heckled him at Tupelo, and that it had been difficult to hold the mob off this colored man. White gave the following description of this "heckling":

"Saturday night I spoke to an audience over in Tupelo that numbered nearly 5,000 persons. While I was making my talk someone shouted from a car in a nearby street. He said, 'Yes, you are a millionaire.' Later he said, 'Hurrah for Mr. Johnson and for Huey Long.'

Some of our friends were standing nearby and went over to see who was heckling me. Who do you think it was? It was a big buck Negro. Trouble was averted, but the Negro was warned. He kept his mouth shut."

Thus, in Mississippi, a Negro runs the risk of mob violence if he calls a white man a millionaire or if he cheers either Huey Long or Paul Johnson. A Jew in Germany might call a German a millionaire or cheer for Hitler without danger of bodily harm.

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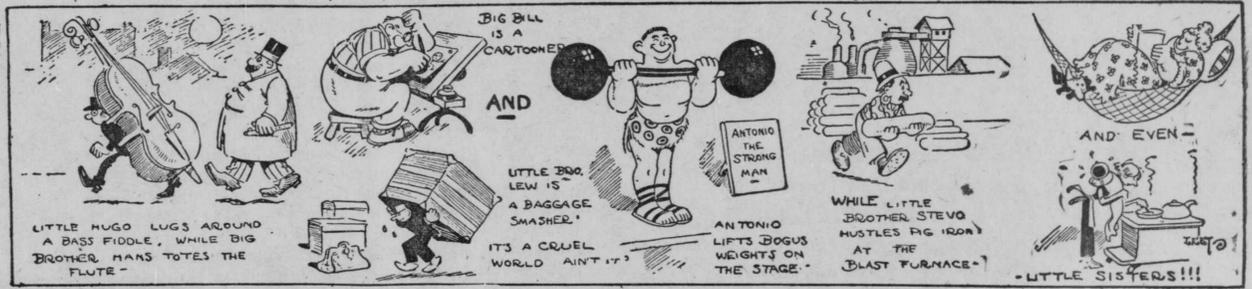
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