

Man Snaps Picture of Will Rogers and Wiley Day Before Their Death

Max Sherrod, Now Living in Alaska, Proud Possessor of Snapshot Taken When Famous Pair Visited at Palmer.



Photograph of Rogers Is Exceptionally Clear New Hospital Being Built at Colony, Former Nurse Reports.

Sherrod wrote: "It was too bad about Will Rogers and Wiley Post. They were here (at Palmer) the day before they were killed. Will Rogers stated that he was awfully disappointed about it up here because he found this such a nice place and didn't see a mosquito. He was right, as the mosquitos are all gone. They only last for about six weeks in May and June.

Mr. Sherrod, who was for a time employed in a warehouse, is again a nurse. His written account of the hospital and its work throws considerable light on the situation at the colony. His letter is dated May 15.

"We are temporary hospital patients," he wrote. "Temporary hospital patients served up here."

One of the last pictures ever taken of Will Rogers, America's own humorist and home-spun philosopher, and Wiley Post, "round the world flier," who were killed near Point Barrow, Alaska, August 16, was snapped by a Battle Creek man, 1935.

The photograph was taken by Max Sherrod, who with his wife and daughter, Janet, went "on their own" to Alaska but settled near the federal rehabilitation colony in Palmer, in the Matanuska valley near Anchorage. It was taken the day before Rogers' death, during a brief visit to the Alaskan colony.

The picture of Will Rogers is exceptionally good and although Wiley's back is turned to the camera there could be no mistaking the identity because of the path over his eye. When the picture was taken the two famous characters apparently had just alighted from an automobile.

In a letter to friends at Nichols hospital, where both the men and Sherrod were formerly patients, Mr. Sherrod wrote: "I am glad to see you were formerly patients, Mr. Nichols."

MEAT AND LEAVE FOR PALMER

EXPECTED TO RETURN HERE THIS EVENING FOR SHORT STOP

Will Rogers and Wiley Post made a brief stop in Anchorage shortly after 2 o'clock this afternoon, taking off immediately after luncheon for Palmer where the gum-chewing comedian carried out his plans to "see what the Democrats have done to the Republicans." The two are expected here again tonight.

His first query on arriving here pertained to the colony.

"Have they run out of committees?" he asked.

The intrepid flyers came in a PAA Lockheed plane of silver finish. Because of the color of the plane and because it had wheels instead of pontoons, there was some doubt at first whether the ship carried the notables.

Immediately upon landing in Anchorage the two went to the Anchorage Grill for luncheon. Post declined to talk, but Rogers talked freely. Many spectators gathered to get a glimpse of the two.

Accompanying them were Joe Barrows and Joe Crosson, star pilots of the FAA. Arrangements were made for an immediate departure to Palmer.

Word of the arrival was passed along rapidly throughout the city and residents came from all parts to see the two. Some picnickers at Lake Spenard, upon seeing the strange plane, hurried to the city to join the crowd.

The screen star said that he would accompany Post as far as Nome. He did not disclose his plans thereafter. Post said he did not know what the future plans would be, declaring that he did not know how long they would stop at Palmer or where they would go from there.

Post, who has blazed two trails around the globe in record-smashing flights, is scheduled to cross the Bering Sea and fly over Siberia to Moscow. Rogers probably will return to the states.

At the airport it was indicated to airmen that the party would return here this evening for a short stop. It was not believed, however, that they plan to remain here over night.

"Have they run out of committees?" said Will Rogers as he climbed into a seat at the counter of the Anchorage Grill, and ordered a roast leg of lamb.

"Committees for what?" said The Times reporter.

"Committees to investigate Matanuska" (Continued on Page 5)

Rogers Talks

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Matanuska," he replied. "We heard they were coming so fast the supply was about exhausted and I met a revenue cutter man at Juneau. A woman was on the way and was the last of the tribe they could find to send."

Will looked himself, just like he does in a farm scene on the screen. With his hair scrambled atop his grizzled brow he laughed and joked with Wiley Post, Joe Crosson and Joe Barrows.

All four, Will, Wiley and the two Joes sat in a row on their perches at the Grill and joked and chatted as they ate.

Post said, "We are just bumming around here to Dawson, Whitehorse, Aklayik and Fairbanks, and don't know where all we will go—but will visit Nome."

"Yes," said Will, as he took a deep breath and opened his gray flannel shirt, sans collar or tie, "this is a great country, spread all over creation, and I'm glad I came. Never saw anything to equal Mt. McKinley in her majestic robes today—perfect day and perfect view, and we circled around the big dome and looked down on every quarter."

"Oh boy, is that a lofty peak. I'll say it's as high as Mt. Lowe or Telegraph Hill in Frisco. What's more, this big peak of yours has plenty of goats on it. Did we see 'em—yes, and a plenty, climbing all over the bluff, and near Fairbanks we saw a big black bear. Joe Crosson was piloting at the time, and swooped down, and old man Bear stood up on his hind feet and shook a fist at us. He didn't seem to like us. Can you blame him."

"Then we came over a lake before we got to McKinley, and there was a moose browsing and enjoying himself. I had no lasso and left him there. After that we saw a lot of moose and then other kinds of animals, largely sheep and goats about Mt. McKinley. I am telling them Outside all about it in my daily short message to a syndicate of 650 newspapers which get my service. I filed one message here in Anchorage immediately after arrival—and will send more. I send to the same papers a weekly article and I will have a plenty to say about Alaska."

Will paused to talk with Oscar Wingshell, "Flying Cowboy" of the Star Air Service, about taking a trip to Matanuska.

"Yep," said the comedian, as he reached for a Matanuska radish, "I want to get up there this afternoon, and see the whole works. I didn't come on a committee to investigate but just want to give them the once over—and then write a few words to tell the world."

and will certainly give the world the straight of it.

"Rightly fine people lives Alaska. Never saw anything to beat their hospitality. We enjoyed meeting the sourdoughs in Dawson, Aklayik, Fairbanks and other places—and as to the climate, I'll say this day in Anchorage is perfect—sunshine every foot of the way from Fairbanks here. Of course I know you never had such a day here before in history. It must be put on for our special benefit. Seems funny, the flowers would come out and the hills be decked in trees and valley full of lush, with ripening crops and all that just because we came along."

Mr. Rogers reached for a piece of pie.

"How is the tourist business—lots of people coming this way?"

"All ships coming up the coast are crowded to capacity and hundreds weekly going over the Alaskan Railroad and through to the Interior."

was the reply.

"Yes, and there will be more every year," continued Rogers. "They will get their money's worth. Alaska's scenic charms and climate are a permanent lure and asset. Hope it works for all its worth. It will bring fortunes to the country. Alaska has something the others haven't."

Mr. Rogers became interested in the air and naval bases for Alaska.

"What's the news on that point?" he asked.

"Well, the latest is that the President has ordered no commercial flights to fly over the naval reserve at Dutch Harbor."

"Hey, boys," said the humorist, as he turned to Post, Crosson and Barrows, "we haven't got enough gas or we would fly right over there wouldn't we?"

"Sure Bill," chorused the three workhorses.

"Will you go fishing around Anchorage for some of our famous rainbow trout or try to get a bear," Rogers was asked.

"Nope—don't fish—don't hunt—wouldn't know what to use for bait or how to shoot or what to do with the victims." Just don't have the urge, Rogers answered.

Mr. Rogers had in a lot of interrogations on how many are in the colony, how many quit, how many men were working up there and how things were, showing he has a weather eye for the serious side as well as the humorous.

Everybody thimed in to tell the screen star what they knew, and he rambled on with his good-natured chatter.

"About those mosquitoes," said Rogers, "why, I haven't seen any mosquitoes. That seems to be a big piece of bunk about the country being eaten by the mosquitoes. I notice the people up here are not bothered very much about them—and the cows are giving milk like nobody's business. I will try to locate a mosquito at Matanuska."

BELIEVE HE TO GO PLANNED ON TO SIBERIA

Will Rogers and Wiley Post went to their deaths at 5 o'clock last night near Point Barrow as Rogers was on the way to see an old friend at Point Barrow, press dispatches disclosed today.

They crashed on a river 15 miles south of Point Barrow after they had landed for direction to the city from natives. A fog hung over the section.

After receiving the directions, Post's plane skimmed over the river to take off, raised 50 feet and fell when the engine faltered. A native who had given the directions ran to Point Barrow and gave the report to Sergt. Stanley R. Morgan of the U. S. Signal Corps there. Sergeant Morgan rushed to the scene with a Mr. Doherty.

They reported that both men were dead when they pulled them from the wrecked plane. The bodies were taken to Point Barrow and placed in the care of Dr. Henry W. Greist, medical missionary at the Presbyterian Hospital.

Reports had it that the two flyers set their plane down on Harding Bay, 30 miles from Point Barrow, to await the lifting of a dense fog.

The old friend whom Rogers wished to visit was Charles Brower, known as "King of the Arctic," who operates a whaling station and trading post.

Meanwhile, from Washington, Secretary of Commerce Roper said that his inspectors have been dispatched to the scene of the accident but they lack jurisdiction because the crash did not occur on a scheduled airline flight but in a privately-owned plane.

"We want to be helpful but words cannot express my sorrow at the loss of these splendid developers of aviation," Secretary Roper said. He also stated that Murray Hall of Anchorage was en route to the scene of the accident.

At Los Angeles it was said that the real aims of the flight to Alaska and Rogers' actual part in it is still not known definitely as the venture was veiled in secrecy. There is a prevailing belief that Post was en route to Siberia and Moscow to raise a new capital for the Soviet Union.

"Yes, I'm set for a good time and Mrs. Rogers is thousands of miles away, headed for New England on a visit—and am I enjoying myself! Never had such a time in my life. Don't know just where I'm going, probably as far as Bering Straits with Post, and then back. Just possible I will be in Anchorage again. Can't say. But I do want to see Matanuska and find out if it is true they have run out of committees."

"Have they heard about Matanuska outside? Well, the papers have been full of it—and I will add my daily shot when I get there. So adios, until we meet again. Glad I came. Here's hopin' to come again and linger longer."

The great figure—one of the greatest and most beloved America is known—great because he is himself, plain, kindly and understanding.