

WILL ROGERS

Childhood adventures with an Oklahoma legend

BY CAROLYN ESTES

CHAPTER 2: *End of a long day*

Frank and Anna rode in to the home place just before dusk. Ma rushed out to meet them, her apron blowing in the warm summer breeze.

"Supper is almost on the table," said Ma. "Feed and bed down the ponies before you come in."

"Make sure you give 'em some grain," she added. "I'm sure you rode 'em hard today."

"Yes, Ma," the kids said.

"Now scoot," Ma said as she rushed back inside.

Frank unsaddled Anna's pony while she fetched grain from the bin. Just as she lifted the lid, Frank heard a hair-raising shriek.

"MOUSE!" screamed Anna.

"Oh don't be a sissy! It won't hurt you, it's just having its supper," said Frank. "Now get some grain so we can have our supper, too."

Pa was at the water pump washing up when Anna and Frank started for the house. They joined him so he could pump the water while they scrubbed their hands.

Ma put the food on the table as everyone sat down. Pa said grace, then Ma passed the fried chicken.

"Mr. Rogers was stewing today 'bout those railroad folk comin' around," Pa said. "If they lay them rails where they marked, he said it'll cut his ranch plum in half."

He added. "Don't look like he made much headway protesting to Chief Bushyhead a few years ago. If the chief of the Cherokees couldn't stop it, I guess no one can!"

After supper, Anna gave Ma a hand clearing the table and washing the dishes.

Pa and Frank shut the gate on the chicken pen and made sure the horses were in the barn for the night.

"Pa, I heard that pack of coyotes last night," Frank said. "Sounded like they were getting close."

"I think they have a chicken supper on their mind," said Pa. "We'll have to keep our ears open 'til they leave the area. If you hear them tonight, wake me up."

"Now let's get to bed. We have a big day ahead of us."

Frank was sound asleep. All of sudden, he heard a coyote cry out and another one answer. He quickly bound out of bed and woke Pa.

Pa grabbed his shotgun and tiptoed out the door with Frank right behind.

"Don't spook them," Pa said as they worked their way across the yard.

Sure enough they could see those chicken thieves in the bright moonlight. Pa raised his gun high into the air and pulled both triggers.

BOOM BOOM! The shots rang out in the night. The coyotes bolted at a fast run.

"That should take care of it for now," Pa said. "Let's get some shut eye."



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Photo courtesy of the Will Rogers Memorial Commission

CHAPTER 2 - 6.4375x10.5

NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY

1. Do you think bringing the railroad into Indian Territory was a good or bad idea? Why?
2. What changes do you think took place when the railroad was built?
3. Search your newspaper for a topic in your community that might be controversial.
4. How will this subject affect the community?

NEXT WEEK: CHAPTER THREE

A day on the range

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