

**LETTER  
FROM  
OKLAHOMA**

*the return of  
Prince Rupert*

**Otis Durant Duncan**

WHEN PRINCE RUPERT, Oklahoma's \$25,000 sterile bull, came home in disgrace from Iowa, he was the maddest bull ever seen in this country. He pawed the ground, bellowed, and roared for weeks. It wasn't his fault that he couldn't induce Iowa heifers to calve. They were frigid from those terrible winters up in that tundra. Nothing can breed in Iowa but Swedes.

Prince Rupert went to Iowa determined to inject some real live Oklahoma bovinity into that fetid atmosphere. He had been promised an air-conditioned, disinfected barn,

with a harem of exciting females. Instead, denied air-conditioning, he was almost overcome by the stench from the hogpens which chiefly characterize Iowa; and the cows furnished him by money-hungry owners were flabby-teated, overbred, old canners and cutters. For a sensitive bull with esthetic tastes, all this was enough to shatter his nervous system.

Oklahoma's Governor Roy Turner, who had sold Prince Rupert into Iowa, is a man of honor, with sympathy for both men and bulls. When he heard that the Prince was accused of being sterile, he telephoned

the Iowa purchasers to crate him up and send him home, and he'd refund the \$25,000 along with all freight charges. That amount of Truman money is chicken feed to an Oklahoman, and to Governor Turner it's not even a respectable tip for a bellhop.

By the time Prince Rupert got home, Governor Turner had a singular experience to celebrate. His term had expired, and he had become perhaps the first man in Oklahoma history to survive a four-year term as governor without some effort being made to impeach him. Therefore, Turner decided to signify his return to private life by inviting all his friends to a barbecue — with Prince Rupert as the *piece de resistance*.

For the honor of barbecuing Prince Rupert, Governor Turner chose a barbecuing legend in Oklahoma named Clay Potts. No other living man can feed as many people in as short a time as Potts. He once barbecued enough steers to feed five thousand hungry Oklahomans, and he had them all eating just twenty-seven minutes after he began serving. When a man can handle a crowd like that, transform it from a mob into a group of contented, munching, purring human beings at the rate of more than a hundred a minute, he's a valuable man to have around.

Clay Potts, at first, balked at barbecuing Prince Rupert. "I got principles," he told Turner. "I'll barbe-

cue a steer quicker'n you can bat an eye, but a bull ought not to be barbecued." Turner persisted, however, and Potts finally converted the Prince into barbecue, but he says he's sorry he did it because "that bull had the pitiablest expression on his face a man ever seen." Nobody knows whether the Prince was so sad because he had to die or because he was an outcast from Iowa society.

After Potts had spitted the Prince, he was summoned to Washington by Oklahoma's senior senator, Bob Kerr. Kerr wanted to show Washington what an Oklahoma-style barbecue is like. So he called Potts and said, "Brother Potts" — Kerr is a Baptist and so is Potts — "Brother Potts, I want you to come to the nation's capital and demonstrate how real folks live. We're going to have a gollywhopping barbecue, and we're going to invite all the Democrats and show 'em a good time. Them that ain't Democrats and them that ain't Baptists, we'll let 'em stand on the sidelines and watch us."

That is the only way it could have been because a Baptist will not eat with anybody else, and a Democrat will divide only with another Democrat.

EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT Oklahoma produces the best of everything, and it will not be long before Oklahoma will have more lakes than Minnesota. Oklahomans are industrious, and they build dams

across their gullies and make their lakes. The Minnesotans are lazy when it comes to making lakes. They sat right there for thousands of years and did not dig a single lake, waiting for the glaciers to melt so the lakes would be formed naturally. If Oklahoma waited for things to be done that way, it would be as backward as Minnesota. Oklahoma people are naturally energetic. If they do not have what they want, they make it, or they go where they can get it.

Oklahomans are the "educated-est" people in the world, too. It is a fact. The United States Census has not enumerated a single illiterate person in Oklahoma since 1930, or if it has, there have been too few to make a fuss over. Education is improving in Oklahoma at the rate of a whole grade a year. It is impossible to hold people back when they are that thirsty for education, although they may have some difficulties once in a while.

Back in the 1870's, the Bureau of Ethnology sent an army general out from Washington to see if there were any Indians living in Oklahoma, and, if so, he was told to find out how long they had been in the territory. That was a sufficiently important mission to justify the use of a whole general, and it kept him out of the President's hair for about three years. When he got back to Washington, this general reported that there were a few Indians living in Oklahoma, but all of them had

moved in recently. He then declared, the way old generals do, that "There are not now, and the evidences are that there never have been any pre-Columbian Indians domiciled in the Territory of Oklahoma." That was printed in a book, thousands of copies of which were sent out by congressmen for campaign thunder. It stood up for sixty years as an officially authenticated, thoroughly verified, and indisputable fact before anyone found out anything to the contrary.

Uncle Bill Baker, a man who by his own admission and insistence never had any schooling beyond the third grade, is the man who finally proved that Oklahoma once fed many prehistoric, and hence pre-Columbian, Indians of highly advanced cultures. Uncle Bill Baker is a tall, angular, nut-brown, weather-beaten, behandle-barred, white-hatted, high-booted old westerner who looks as if he might have staked out the country when they decided to civilize it. He is a man who loves nature, who has an insatiable hunger for knowledge, a hard-headed sense of honor and duty, a boundless amount of energy, an eye like an eagle, and just plain old common sense, one of the rarest qualities of human kind in this world of crack-brained do-gooders.

During the dust bowl years, 1934-1937, Uncle Bill spent his Sundays, holidays, and any spare time he had out on the plains. As the scraping

winds rapidly blew away the plowed soil, there were easily found piles, or deposits, of primitive arrowheads, spear points, mortars, pestles, bone and stone knives, axes, and various other artifacts. Uncle Bill staked these deposits, called in geologists, archeologists, botanists, and anthropologists, and took them to the spots where the remains were. Thus, he identified, classified, verified, and systematized everything he found. He located salt beds that had been worked clean, buffalo wallows with bones in which were still lodged arrowheads that had been shot in prehistoric ages. He found petrified corn pollen, parched grains and ears of corn, and other forms of organic matter preserved by the processes of nature, often mysterious to men. These things proved that pre-Columbian Indians had lived in Oklahoma at varying times between 1500 and 25,000 years ago, to the embarrassment of the United States government and to the astonishment of scientists.

At first, Uncle Bill had difficulty in getting scientists to hear him, but once he began to dent their pithecanthropean skulls they came to him in droves. The University of Pennsylvania invited him to bring samples of his specimens, of which he has over ten thousand, and to give a series of lectures on its campus. He went, and everything was fine until one day he got wind that the University was trying to trap him. He

had been voted the honor of the degree of Doctor of Science. The date for making the award was set, and he was being banqueted gloriously. Someone made a mistake and left his nest unguarded, and when he was to have been called to the platform and given "the surprise of his life," he showed up over in New York taking in the wonders of Manhattan.

I asked, "Uncle Bill, why did you not let them make you into a Doctor of Science?"

"Humpf!" he replied. "I'm no Doctor of Science or of anything else, and they know it. I just found those Indian relics, and anyone could have done that." Then, after a moment of deliberate reflection, he continued, "I don't mind telling you this, for I know you'll understand. The University of Pennsylvania did not care whether or not I ever got a doctor's degree. They thought they would obligate me to them, and maybe I'd will 'em my collection. No sir! I'm not letting them or anyone else get that collection. That is my son's when I'm gone."

That is the way Oklahoma people are. Those who have only a third grade education are world authorities on whatever they claim to know, and they are getting smarter and smarter all the time. Not many of us are as bright as Uncle Bill Baker, and nowhere can one find his exact equal as a man. He is a corporeal demonstration of what steady hard work can do.

WHEN PEOPLE THINK of Oklahoma as a wild, uncultured, half-civilized place, they are wrong. A good many years ago, a Bohemian peasant boy, Bohumil Makovsky, followed a carnival into Oklahoma with a clarinet in his hand. He liked the place, stopped, and began teaching music. He developed bands in about every village high school, in all the colleges in Oklahoma, and in many other places throughout the whole country, that is, through his students and his work. He brought band directors in from far and wide, conducted clinics, had them try out before the big name band leaders who came from every direction on the compass. When he died in 1950, it was said by people supposed to know that there was more appreciation of music per city block in Oklahoma than per square mile in any other state.

If Oklahoma had never done anything else worth mentioning, having produced Will Rogers (the Great Will Rogers) was enough to justify its place in the sun. Men of his calibre do not grow up in barren environments. If he had not been great before leaving Oklahoma, California would never have taken him in. Of course, every time Oklahoma has an election, enough men named "Will Rogers" spring up out of the ground

to form an army, all of them trying to capitalize upon the famous name in vote getting. Two of them have been elected.

Oklahoma's love for literature, art, and education is as great as that for the music of Makovsky and the humor of Will Rogers, although it may not be associated often with as distinguished personalities as they were. All the fine arts, as well as literature, have their patrons and their producers in Oklahoma. And what other state has invented a workable alphabet for a language? An Oklahoma Indian named Sequoyah did that for the Cherokees. What other state has produced a George Milburn? What state produced a William Henry "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, colonizer of the Bolivian jungles, farmer, Congressman, sage, governor, author, lawyer, historian, enemy of bureaucracy, and writer of a political constitution?

Two thousand years from now, when the present age becomes known as The Age of Classic Art, Oklahoma productions will be among the most valuable.

There is greatness and pride in Oklahoma. We are the youngest state, culturally, in the Union, but in the crises of our times, Oklahomans can be counted on to work and pray and keep our powder dry.

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