

**“Just Call Me Cowboy.”  
by Mary Engquist**

**An adventure during the times of the famous Will Rogers**

**Setting: Living room scene from the 20’s**

**Characters: Narrator---Will--CLEMENS, Betty-- Mary---  
Carlos**

**Narrator--- reads the following**

**Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me; I want people to know 'why' I look this way. I've traveled a long way, and some of the roads weren't paved and when you know you are getting old when everything either dries up or leaks out.**

**I have no idea how I got over the hill without getting to the top, but one of the of the many things no one tells you about aging is that it's such a nice change from being young.**

**One must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been, and being young is beautiful, but being old is comfortable.**

**Wow! Looking back over my life I would not change a thing. They called them the roaring 20’s. Jazz was hot, and women just won the right to vote. What was this world coming to?**

**I was born into a prominent Cherokee Nation in Indian territory before it became Oklahoma. What can I say, my dad was a rich rancher, and a Cherokee Judge and a confederate veteran and delegate to the Oklahoma convention. He also was their Senator who helped write the Oklahoma Constitution.**

**I have learned that there are three kinds of men: The ones that learn by reading. The few who learn by observation. The**

rest of us have to pee on the electric fence and find out for ourselves.

I know that good judgment comes from experience and a lot of that comes from bad judgment, and if you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there. I am back home now and spending some time with my Dad.

Scene is set in cabin, set in the '20s

**CLEMENS**

You need to be more responsible, Son, you know, grow up. You take nothing serious. I want to see change.

**WILL**

I think I understand, Dad. I might even have a job at the “Dig Iron Ranch.”

**CLEMENS**

Really now. Hey that's my boy going to go to work for a living.

**WILL**

I know, Dad, and boy is it going to be fun using my roping skills to lasso the cattle. Why after this job I will pay my way to New York, Paris, Berlin and maybe even London.

**CLEMENS**

Not so fast, Son. Throwing a rope around in a circle. Why you will never make a living doing that.

**WILL**

Then I should take a wife?

**CLEMENS**

No, not what I meant or was going to say.

**WILL**

Oh, you will love her.

**CLEMENS**

You mean to tell me you have a wife picked out and you're without a job?

**WILL**

I kid you not, she is the most beautiful gal I ever met, why she has lips sweet as honey, and toes pure as gold.

**CLEMENS**

Really now! What is her name?

**WILL**

She is my childhood sweetheart, of course. You know her -- Betty Blake

**CLEMENS**

Oh, yes I remember she is one fine looking woman. Will, you only went to the 10th grade. Now what kind of future can you give Betty?

**WILL**

Well, it's like this, Dad, I am real good with the lariat and I am tired of reading the fourth reader in class now for 10

years. It's time that I moved on.

(Lights dim)

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**Narrator**

**I gave up on the idea of Betty Blake and me for now. I needed to sow my oats, and so near the end of 1901, myself and a friend left home with aspirations to work as gauchos in Argentina. We arrived in Argentina in May 1902, and I spent five months trying to make it as a ranch owner in the pampas.**

**My partner and I lost all our money, and I was ashamed to send home for more, so I separated from my friend and I sailed to South Africa. Some people claimed I took a job breaking in horses for the British Army, but the Boer War had ended three months earlier. I tried the circus and was a trick rider. I could use three lassos at once. I would aim for the head, neck and legs. Boy, would the crowd scream then.**

**My mom died when I was 10 years old and things became worse with my dad and I. There was a huge personality clash. I started drifting from one venture to another with little success. Only after I won acclaim in vaudeville did the rift begin to heal, but my father's untimely death in 1911 precluded a full reconciliation. I was torn but on my way to a successful future.**

**I learned to never squat with my spurs on and always drink upstream from the herd.**

## Scene 2 (Back in the cabin)

**WILL**

A few more things, Dad, that I have learned from my ranching experience.

**CLEMENS**

What's that, Son?

**WILL**

If you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there. We rode so many, many miles on the trail and lost our herd.

It's hard for me to tell you all this. I guess I'm lettin' the cat outta the bag and it's a whole lot easier 'n puttin' it back.

**CLEMENS**

I sure hope now, Will, that you are ready to settle down. I want you to be somebody. Not just an old cowboy doing tricks with a rope. You need to be responsible. Get some education.

**WILL**

Well, it's like this, Dad, after eating an entire bull, a mountain lion feels good so he starts roaring. He keeps it up until a hunter comes along and shoots him.

**CLEMENS**

Yes, and the moral of that story is: When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut.

**WILL**

Yea, you're sure right on that one. I have some dreams, Dad.

**CLEMENS**

What is that, Son?

**WILL**

I am not getting any younger so I will ask Betty Blake to marry me, after all we go back 10 years. You know that we met at the Oologah, Indian Territory at the train station.

**CLEMENS**

Well, do you think that she will have you?

**WILL**

Well, the time is now, and if she refuses me, why, I will find another the likes of her.

**CLEMENS**

It's not that easy, Son, when you have true love well, it may only come once in a lifetime.

**WILL**

Yea, I know that and time is not standing still for me.

**CLEMENS**

You're right, Son, no one ever said it did.

**WILL**

I will be headed to Arkansas to ask her mother for her hand in

marriage. And remember, Dad, that we live in such a way that I would not want you to be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip. So please keep this quiet until I return with my bride.

## **CLEMENS**

No problem. I must get to Washington tomorrow and work on Oklahoma's Independence.

**Narrator----**Well, the years went by and yes, Betty Blake said her I Do's to me. It was a wonderful event. I moved her back to California while she was pregnant with our first child. We ended up over the years having four kids.

**On a trip to New York City, I was at Madison Square Garden when a wild steer broke out of the arena and began to climb into the viewing stands. I quickly roped the steer to the delight of the crowd.**

**The feat got front page attention from the newspapers, giving me valuable publicity and an audience eager to see more. William Hammerstein came to see my vaudeville act, and quickly signed me to appear on the Victoria Roof—which was literally on a roof top with my pony. Life was good.**

**I got the most beautiful, loving kind wife you could asked for. She was my rock. It was something like this.**

## **SCENE 3**

**(Kitchen a table and four chairs and food.)**

## **BETTY**

Chows on now, put your spurs on and sit down.

## **WILL**

You heard her, kids, “undo lay” undo lay.

**CARLOS**

Oh, Pa, when did you learn Spanish?

**WILL**

Well, for your information when I was learning to be in the circus a freed slave taught me all I needed to know. He taught me that things are complicated in a modern world and I would have trouble adjusting. I wanted to show him better. He also showed me the tricks of the trade. Then I was ready for “Texas Jack’s Wild West Show. Yippee, do da, Yippee a, my, oh my, what a wonderful day.

**MARY**

Oh, Daddy, you’re too funny.

**WILL**

Young lady, be sure to pack your bags after dinner.

**MARY**

Where are we going, Daddy?

**CARLOS**

Yea, I want to know too.

**BETTY**

Dear, you never said that we were going on a trip.



**WILL**

Well, who said it was a trip?  
I have a very big surprise for all of you.

**BETTY**

Well, I cannot imagine what it could be and why must we  
pack our bags if we are not leaving?  
About all I can say for the United States Senate is that it  
opens with a prayer and closes with an investigation.

**BETTY**

Well, what does that have to do with a surprise?

**WILL**

Nothing really. Now, kids, help your ma do the dishes and  
pack up. Your future is awaiting.

**BETTY**

My dear, you sure are full of funnies.

**WILL**

We are headed to the backyard.

**BETTY**

Excuse me dear, did I hear you right?

**WILL**

Why yes Betty, it is time the kids learned how to rough it out.  
I want you all to line up and follow me outside. One, two,  
three, four, one two, three, four. About face.

**MARY**

But, Daddy, I can't.

**WILL**

No, never say that you can't do something. Now about face, you know, turn around.

**MARY**

Okay, but don't let him come between you and me.

**WILL**

Aha, listen I have never met a man that I didn't like.

**MARY**

It's not a man daddy, it's a snake that is standing in back of you.

**BETTY**

Gee, Will, I have had enough of your silly games.

**WILL**

Why did you not tell me, girl?

**MARY**

I just did.

**CARLOS**

Yea she did. I heard her.

**WILL**

Look he is leaving now.

**CARLOS**

Yea, Dad, he took one look at you and scared himself.

**BETTY**

Like father, like son, and oh, how that saying is true.

**WILL**

Ok, I cannot keep a secret any longer. Tomorrow morning we are taking the train to Kansas City.

**BETTY**

What is so interesting there?

**WILL**

All I know is just what I read in the newspapers. They say that the farmers are all hurting badly and that they had a massacre and shootout and murder of four law enforcement officers and a criminal fugitive at the Union Station railroad depot in Kansas City.

**BETTY**

Do you really think that we should subject the kids to this?

**WILL**

Okay, I want them just to see how lucky they are to live here in this quaint little town.

**BETTY**

It's time, kids, to go inside and get ready for bed.

**CARLOS**

But we are still waiting for our surprise from Dad.

**WILL**

You bet! Little man, follow me. You all shall see the surprise.  
(In the garage)

**CARLOS**

Oh no, what happen to this car? Why it has nothing on top of it.

**WILL**

No, Son, this is called a convertible. It's a model T. Soon enough though we will get a model A. It should be out in 1927.

**MARY**

Daddy--That is a long way off.

**WILL**

Well, yes, for you it is.

**CARLOS**

Yea, but not me. Hee hee.

**WILL**

Why I may just give up flying in an airplane.

**BETTY**

I sure would rest easy, dear, if you did.

## **WILL**

Oh hog wash, the plane is much safer than the cars.

**Narrator---** I always believed that there are two theories to arguing with a woman and neither works.

**August 15, 1935** I was getting ready and excited to go with my good friend Willy to Alaska for a much needed rest and vacation. We made it part way and something went terribly wrong.

We were near Point Barrow, Alaska. The plane was giving us trouble. I was only 55 years old when my plane went down. Guess I should have listened to my wife Betty.

I always wondered if there were dogs in heaven. Guess I will find out now.

*The End*