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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**  
**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR  
and the New Deal**

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**File No. 1178**

**1938 November 4**

**Radio Message to Dedication  
of the Will Rogers Memorial**

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT  
EXERCISES OF DEDICATION OF THE WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL  
CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA  
NOVEMBER 4, 1938

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This afternoon we pay grateful homage to the memory of a man who helped the nation to smile. And after all, I doubt if there is among us a more useful citizen than the one who holds the secret of banishing gloom, of making tears give way to laughter, of supplanting desolation and despair with hope and courage. For hope and courage always go with a light heart.

There was something infectious about his humor. His appeal went straight to the heart of the nation. Above all things, in a time grown too solemn and somber he brought his countrymen back to a sense of proportion.

With it all his humor and his comments were always kind. His was no biting sarcasm that hurt the highest or the lowest of his fellow citizens. When he wanted people to laugh out loud he used the methods of pure fun. And when he wanted to make a point for the good of all mankind, he used

the kind of gentle irony that left no scars behind it. That was an accomplishment well worthy of consideration by all of us.

From him we can learn anew the homely lesson that the way to make progress is to build on what we have, to believe that today is better than yesterday and that tomorrow will be better than either.

Will Rogers deserves the gratitude of the nation and so it is fitting that the dedication of this Memorial should be a national event made so by the magic of radio. The American nation, to whose heart he brought gladness, will hold him in everlasting remembrance.

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

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*Orig. reading copy.*

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
FROM HYDE PARK, NEW YORK, IN  
CONNECTION WITH THE DEDICATION  
EXERCISES OF THE WILL ROGERS  
MEMORIAL, CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA,  
NOVEMBER 4, 1936.

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Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

SUGGESTED DRAFT OF REMARKS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S CONSIDERATION IN PREPARATION OF ADDRESS TO BE DELIVERED FROM HYDE PARK AT 2:00 P.M., E.S.T., NOVEMBER 4, OPENING THE EXERCISES OF DEDICATION OF THE WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL AT CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA. THE ADDRESS WILL BE BROADCAST THROUGH THE SAME FACILITIES WHICH WILL CARRY THE POLITICAL ADDRESS TO BE DELIVERED FROM HYDE PARK THE SAME EVENING.

~~Therefore~~ <sup>W. R. R.</sup> this afternoon ~~we~~ grateful homage to the memory of a man who <sup>helped</sup> ~~taught~~ the nation ~~how~~ to smile. And after all, I doubt if there is among us a more useful citizen than the one who holds the secret of banishing gloom, of making tears give way to laughter, of supplanting desolation and despair with hope and courage. For hope and courage always go with a light heart.

We remember Will Rogers with gratitude and affection because he knew how to revive the spirit of laughter in hearts that had known too much of the distractions and anxieties of a busy world. ~~His mission in life was to cheer, to comfort and to console.~~

There was something infectious about his humor. His appeal went straight to the heart of the nation. Above all things, in a time grown too solemn and scabier he brought his countrymen back to a sense of proportion.

**A** Will Rogers knew out of the fullness of a blithe heart that few things in life are to be taken seriously and that our troubles multiply if we take them tragically. And so he showed us all how to laugh. From him we can learn anew the homely lesson that the way to make progress is to build on what we have, to believe that today is better than yesterday and that tomorrow will be better than either.

Will Rogers deserves the gratitude of the nation and so it is fitting that the dedication of this Memorial should be a national event made so by the magic of radio. The American nation, to whose heart he brought gladness, will hold him in everlasting remembrance.

*ST. G. 7 Bill  
Will you give me  
about 200 words?*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 28, 1938

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT  
Secretary McIntyre  
Miss Le Hand  
Miss Tully

At 2:00 P. M., E.S.T., November fourth, the President will speak by radio for not more than two or three minutes, participating in the dedication of the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore, Oklahoma.

(NOTE: This is the same day the President speaks by radio -- at 7:30 P. M., E.S.T. -- on the political situation.)

The President will open the exercises, speaking by radio. Following his remarks, the dedicatory address will be delivered at Claremore by Jesse Jones. Other speakers of national prominence will speak following the conclusion of Mr. Jones' remarks.

Mr. Jones advises that more than 50,000 people throughout Texas, Oklahoma and the country will attend the dedication of the memorial in Claremore.

In speaking from Hyde Park, the President will use the same facilities that will carry his political address of the evening throughout the country. The broadcasting companies have been advised and will have their installations for the evening address ready and working in time for the afternoon event.

STEPHEN EARLY