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Reaction to the column on New Bern, written by Will Rogers a third of a century ago, convinces us that his brand of humor would be as popular today as it was way back when.

Shirley Temple, now 40 and running for Congress, was just a tiny tot when she co-starred in a movie with Will, but the two got along gloriously together.

It was Shirley, conspicuously small among the adult dignitaries, who unveiled the plaque of him in Hollywood's Rogers Memorial Hall. Facing the crowd as she drew the cord, she said, "I loved him, too."

Will made a fortune from his shy smile, drawling manner of speech, and witty observations, but he was no miser. Without fanfare, he donated huge sums to countless charities.

He thought nothing of flying thousands of miles to raise funds for disaster victims. And it will hardly surprise you to learn that he was a soft touch for every cowboy and ranch-hand who came to Hollywood in search of fame, and sought him out.

Rogers was first and last a cowboy himself, an honest to goodness one, and he never tried to act above his raising. The last Christmas of his life his wife gave him a tractor for the ranch he loved so well.

His foreman later told of seeing the tractor pushed to one side, and seventy-five cowhands plowing and grading a plot of ground. Asked why he wasn't making use of the tractor for the job, Will said, "But tractors don't have to eat."

Will didn't start out as a wisecracking entertainer. His stock in trade was a ropetwirling act that earned him his hoecakes in circuses and on the vaudeville stage.

Only fellow performers, out of public view, were treated to samples of his rare wit in those early days. None of them, it seems reasonable to assume, dreamed he would become a world figure.

It has been said that Rogers fed his first wisecrack to an audience at Tony Pastor's, a New York night spot of considerable fame. Nearing the end of his act, he wiped his forehead after completing a difficult twirl and confided, "Spinnin' a rope is fun, if your neck ain't in it."

Will was the gent who came up with the oft quoted remark that "The United States has never lost a war or won a conference." It was inspired by President Woodrow Wilson's generosity at the post-World War peace parley, but the words still ring true in troubled times like these.

On one of countless trips abroad, he wrote, "I must tell you about Venice. Say, what a fine swamp that Venice, Italy, turned out to be. I stepped out of the wrong side of a Venice taxicab and they were three minutes fishing me out.

"I got seasick crossing an alley. If you love to have someone row you in a boat you will love Venice. But don't try to walk or they will be searching for you with grappling hooks."

Everyone was fair game for

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QUITE A PAIR — Will Rogers (see Looking Glass) seems to have been talked into a trance by a very young Mickey Rooney, but you can bet your life Will wasn't missing a word. Both were established movie stars when the photo was snapped. At the time, Rogers hadn't written the hilarious column about New Bern that appeared in last week's issue of The Mirror. Rooney probably still doesn't know it, but like the

famed humorist he too was linked in a limited sense to the State's historic First Capital. Mickey's father, Joe Yule, played the role of Jiggs when "Maggie and Jiggs" graced the stage of New Bern's Athens Theatre many moons ago. Yule was a natural for the celebrated cartoon character created by George McManus to delight those who reveled in the Sunday funnies. It really is a little world, isn't it?