

"THE LADY FROM OKLAHOMA"

Close-up of our Congresswoman

By Ned Baldwin

"She's some girl." The speakers were not street corner loiterers commenting on a passing 1921 display of hostility but members of the National Press club of Washington, D. C., about as hard-headed and hard-boiled a bunch as there is in America.

The comment was made after Miss Alice Robertson, the new congresswoman from Oklahoma had finished a 15-minute heart to heart talk with the boys of the press on "baby congressman night." Once each year the newly elected senators and representatives are invited to visit the super-reporters of America and tell "why they are on earth." "The lady from Oklahoma" completely won the hearts of the newspaper boys by her sound common sense and the pathos and human interest in her wonderful life story.

Just a moment please ladies! We'll pool our knowledge of what she wore and what she looks like right off.

In dress as well as in every motion and word this sterling daughter of America gives the impression of 24 carat honesty. There isn't an ounce of pretense about her. Right in the middle of her speech she admitted that she was six and sixty years old.

Dress and Appearance.

Medium or less in height, rather stocky in build, she gives the impression of strength rather than grace. Her dress was black, almost devoid of trimming. Some might have criticized it but to me it seemed the acme of taste and in perfect harmony with her personality.

Her hair is gray, silvery gray, almost white. She scorns the false even in hair and wears no switch. Age has taken its usual toll and the residue left by the thinning process of time is gathered up in an honest little old lady's knot on the top of her head. That she despises some of the shams of the day was shown by a little burlesque which she staged at the beginning of her talk.

After she had mounted the platform arranged in the Press club for the "baby congressmen" she sat down in a chair and to the amusement and delight of the press boys pulled a puff and mirror out of a bag and began to powder her face. When the laughter died down she remarked, "I have never did this before but I can't let these clerks and secretaries here in Washington get ahead of me." Then she told a happy story about the man who took beer by the teaspoonful on a doctor's prescription, and the audience was hers. She has a rare sense of humor, the durable kind that has survived a life full of struggle.

A Paradox.

She is a militant anti-suffragist—if such can be. "I am a paradox," she said, "vice-president of the anti-suffrage league of my state by accident. We were so busy during the

war looking after liberty bonds, Red Cross work and helping the soldier boys that the misguided men who did not go to war voted suffrage in." "Miss Alice" as she is spoken of generally about the capitol and the house office building, has a skill in springing surprises that is worthy of a seasoned stump speaker. Here was her next one.

"They ask me if I was born in Georgia. I tell 'em no, because my grandfather went over the plains into Arkansas just as soon as he got out of the penitentiary in Georgia."

Her grandfather was a missionary to the Indians in the early half of the past century. Some sort of charge was trumped up against him that he was fostering sedition among the Indians and he was convicted by the Georgia state courts and put in prison. The case went to the supreme court of the United States and was there decided in his favor—but Georgia would not release him for two years.

Representative Robertson is very, very proud of the missionary work of her grandfather, her father and her mother, and her own efforts among the Indians. "I am prouder," said she, "of being a member of the family which has more years of service to the Indians to its credit than any family in the United States than I am of the accident of being a member of congress."

She spoke interestingly about the hasty marriage of her father and mother in Indian Territory.

Her father had been sent as a missionary to the Indians by some so-

ciety. Her mother taught school near the scene of his labors. The missionary society felt that it was not good for a missionary man to live alone and so decided to send out a spinster of somewhat advanced years to be his wife. They even went so far as to outfit her with a trousseau.

Word that she was on the way came to the missionary and the school teacher and they moved forward the date of their marriage. "The old maid was quite wrathful when she arrived," said the speaker, "but she couldn't do anything to my father for breach of promise because he hadn't promised her anything."

A War Refugee at Five.

Her voice lapsed into a pathetic strain that held her hearers spell-bound as she recounted some of the experiences of her remarkable life. Among her first recollections are those of being a refugee when a child of five, during the Civil war. She told of the long flight from the Confederates to the federal camp and said she would never forget how good to her childish eyes Old Glory looked when they saw it in the distance. Her youth was rich in hardships. The struggle for existence by the missionary family was a hard one—often they just kept above the line of sufficient sustenance. Often her childish hands bled from the necessary work of hulling corn.

She skipped hastily over many years in her narrative—these years which we hear of from the lips of others wherein her kind and neighborly acts made her the best known and

best loved woman in her part of the state. Plunging into the story of how she came to run for congress, she said:

Running for Congress.

"I was 66 years of age when they came to me and told me I was the only person, man or woman, who could win against the man running on the other ticket. I told them it would look funny for me, an anti-suffragist, to run for congress but I didn't want to be a slacker. I told

them to wait and I would think it over. I talked with three persons about it that day, and none of them were women, mind you, and decided it was my duty to run."

She told how they abused her as a candidate. They asked her why she didn't go and raise a family and she replied that she had helped to raise and support more girls than one person in a hundred—and told with a sad note in her voice how she had bought trousseaus for 13 girls. Her

campaign slogan was "I'm a Christian, I'm an American, I'm a Republican." "And then after I had won they tried to count me out," she said, "but they didn't. If all the fighting blood of all my fighting ancestors hadn't come to my rescue, however, they would have. I'm going to keep fighting too until every white person—I won't say anything about the others—in my state of Oklahoma who want a

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