

WILL ROCKIE'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY FIELD CAMP
(1970-1979)

My first acquaintance with the name W.A. Rockie came in 1961. I was an undergraduate student at Eastern Illinois University, and being interested in the north, did a research paper for Professor Dalias A. Price, entitled "The Agricultural Potential of Alaska." One of the major references was Will Rockie's 1946 paper, "The Physical Land Conditions in the Matanuska Valley, Alaska" (Publication No. 48).

Later in 1969, after I decided to come to Portland State for my first job, I was excited to see the name W.A. Rockie listed as an adjunct professor in the Geography Department. It did not take long to get to know Will, and when I decided to offer the summer field camp in 1970, Will agreed to come along and help. Subsequently, he visited the field camp every year it was taught, except for 1978, when he was recuperating from a broken leg.

Our first week was along the Deschutes River, three miles upstream from Maupin. Will drove over and joined us after we had been there for three or four days. He would typically arrive one afternoon and the next day we would go on a field trip of the surrounding area including Shaniko and the John Day fossil beds. The following day he would return to Portland. The three days with us gave ample time for Will to make personal contact with each of the students and to learn their names. His visit was a highlight for all concerned. His insight, experience, and historical perspective into the region made us all see the country with different eyes. I remember vividly many of the incidents which he faithfully recounted each year.

Every student was impacted by Will's ambience and verve, and his sincere interest in each person. During the final week on campus when final papers and presentations were given, Will would always come and listen and react to the student papers. Afterward he would attend our final beer blast, slide show and party. Not one student who took the field camp will ever forget Will Rockie, nor will I. He helped make the course a success.

One last story tells of the kind of person Will Rockie was. In the mid-1970's the department decided to take a three-day midwinter trip to the Palouse. Professors Clarke Brooke, Dale Courtney, Tom Poulsen and I were along in addition to 10 or 15 students. The idea was for Will to take us to

some of his old haunts and to discuss how the land had changed in the interim. Upon arriving in Pullman, Washington, the first evening all of the accompanying faculty sought refuge in local motels, while Will and I joined the students in a grass field on the local agricultural experiment station. We sat around a campfire and slept on the ground in sleeping bags although the temperature dropped below freezing. It was no big deal; there was never any question but that Will and I would stay with the students. At over 80 years of age this says it all about the character of Will Rockie.

Larry W. Price