



*Olive A. Ringsrud*

## *Dakota Images*

Olive A. Ringsrud was born in Union County on 7 February 1892. She attended Elk Point High School, Southern Normal, and the University of South Dakota. She taught in rural schools for twenty-five years in the Huron, Platte, Corsica, and Beresford areas.

Olive Ringsrud came from a politically motivated family. Her uncle Amund O. Ringsrud had been the first secretary of state for South Dakota. It was no surprise, then, when Olive ran for the office in 1938 and won. She was a real campaigner in the old sense of the word, and farmers still remember being out in the field putting up hay when Olive would come striding across the field to ask them for their vote. She was a tireless worker both in and out of Pierre from 1938 to 1942.

After serving two terms as secretary of state, Ringsrud decided to run for the United States Senate in 1942, becoming one of the first women in South Dakota to run for national office. During the primary campaign, on 4 May 1942, *Time* magazine labeled her a "Willkie-ish liberal" and described her as a big woman: "5 ft. 10 in stocking feet, weighs a solid 193 lb., . . . and seems, they say, 'even larger than she is.' With a peaches-&-cream complexion, a talent for mordant remarks, and a zest for riding the biggest horses available, Olive takes both conservatism and a thirst for reform from her Norse Lutheran heritage" (p. 13). Ringsrud had personality and energy to match her size. She stormed the state, riding her horse in parades and pageants and vigorously attacking her opponent's record. Nevertheless, she lost her primary bid for the Senate to Harlan Bushfield, the former governor and her boss while she served as secretary of state.

Ringsrud moved to Washington, D.C., after her unsuccessful campaign and worked as a private tutor and as a Norwegian translator during World War II. In 1945, she moved to California, where she taught and tutored privately until her death in 1971.

by DOROTHY POLLEY RINGSRUD

Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

All illustrations in this issue are the property of the South Dakota State Historical Society except those on the following pages: pp. 8–9, from the National Archives, Washington, D.C.; p. 27, from Minnie Long, Timber Lake; and p. 77, from Gerald W. Wolff, Vermillion.