

## **Theodore Roosevelt – A Man Of Many Hats**

By

Philip Brooks, PM

**Presented to A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research, #1949**

**On**

**August 31, 2013**

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I am dee-lighted to be here today with my Brethren to address a matter of great concern to myself, one that has caused me many hours of anguish.

It is true that I vowed not to seek re-election in 1908. Many of you have reminded me of this commitment to honor the legacy of Brother George Washington and to serve only two terms. Yet, I stand here before you today in 1912 again seeking that very same office.

What has changed you may ask? Why am I again seeking to be elected President? I ask you ... did I not campaign vigorously for the Republican nominee Brother Taft in the election of 1908? His margin of victory was wide and sweeping based largely on the premise that he would maintain the course that I had set in motion. I had positive assurances from this Brother that the progress that had been made in protecting our natural resources; the defense of the common man against the single minded purposes of the Trusts; that the interests of the nation would be kept front

and center. I departed in peace to Africa for safari with these assurances in hand only to return two years hence to learn that these promises had been broken, policies had been reversed, and the promises to the American public had been betrayed.

I have puzzled many long hours over the regression of policy under the current administration, the erosion of protections for and the outright willfulness to back big business at the expense of the common working man. Correcting these wrongs and ensuring that every hard working man receives a *SQUARE DEAL* are what have drawn me forward once again into the fray!

I have heeded the cries of the many that urged me forward to again seek out the Republican nomination for the 1912 campaign.

But, when it became obvious to me that the Republican Political Machine was set to dictate the nomination of that Party, selecting their delegates despite the will of the people they represented, what else could I do but split from the Party that I have so long supported – the party of my personal hero Abraham Lincoln — and accept the nomination of the newly formed Progressive Party – the Bull Moose Party – with the goal to once again take the White House. **BULLY!**

Allow me to pause a moment to reflect on how I came to this crossroads. I might remind you that I have worn many hats during my life.

I was serving Brother McKinley's administration in the capacity of Assistant Secretary of the Navy when the Spanish took the lives of 250 American sailors in the cowardly and hostile act of blowing

up the Maine as it was anchored in the Havana Harbor. It may seem odd to say, but this brazen act of treachery was just the opportunity that I had been seeking. It was to be the springboard to put the world on notice that the United States of America was indeed a global power and one to be reckoned with.

With the assistance of my dear friend Leonard Wood, I immediately set about recruiting the very best of the best to serve in the US VOLUNTEERS, 1st Calvary. One thousand of the very most able men were chosen to defend this nation's honor. These men came from all walks of life: cowboys from New Mexico, Arizona and the Dakota Badlands, athletes from Harvard and Yale, Indians, Policemen, the very best men to be found from all walks and stations of life.

We set about quickly forming this group into an elite mounted fighting force. We drilled day and night in the San Antonio heat to ready ourselves for the mission ahead.

We deployed for Cuba from Port Tampa, but there was not enough room on the transports to carry mounts for the men — only a few of the officers would have access to horses. We would be forced to press into battle as dis-mounted cavalry.

As we cut our way through the dense Cuban jungle marching towards Santiago, we came under fire from the Spaniards. Their locations were difficult to pinpoint as we were unfamiliar with the terrain and the Spaniards used smokeless gun powder for their rifles. We took cover as best we could as we advanced inland pressing the Spaniards back skirmish after skirmish. At one point I paused behind a palm tree for cover. As I peered around the tree — attempting to discern the enemy position — a bullet tore through the tree where my head would have been had I not been trying to gain a vantage point. This was but one of my several close encounters during my time in Cuba.

On the morning of July 1 we opened fire on two adjacent hills — Kettle Hill and San Juan Heights. We were entrenched at the foot of these two hills as we waited for what seemed an eternity for the order to press forward to arrive. Finally, orders were received to advance on Kettle Hill from General Wheeler in the form of a message to “kick them in the teeth!”. My “*CROWDED HOUR*” had begun! I gave the order to “Follow me boys, follow me.” We surged up Kettle Hill overrunning the Spaniards and claimed the hill for our own. From this position — we were on the flank of San Juan Heights — we could see the battle on the adjoining ridge. I again gave the order to advance and charged forward. To my surprise, only a hand full of the troops advanced, the rest did not heed the command — they could not hear me over the din! I returned to rally the men and together we charged up San Juan Hill. The capture of this position set off the chain of events that lead to the fall of Santiago and the Spaniards in Cuba. The war was won!

The Rough Riders and I returned to New York to a hero's welcome.

Shortly after my return home I was approached by delegates of the Republican Party and was asked to consider a run to serve as Governor of that state. Not only did I run for Governor, I won!

From the start there was an uneasy alliance between myself and Boss Tom Platt who ran the Republican Political Machine in New York. He sought to maintain the status quo — for example, patronage of public service positions, using them as currency — while I sought and brought about reform of the state government and business.

I was successful in cautiously pressing forward with reforms both within the legislature and in the government of business. Success can at times cause interesting circumstances to arise. Boss Platt dearly wanted to be rid of me. I was pressing for reform at all levels in the state legislature. The Political Bosses and the likes of John Rockefeller

and JP Morgan were growing increasingly wary of me and wanted me out to their way. What better way to remove a problem person than to promote him! I was approached to join President McKinley's re-election ticket as the candidate for Vice President. Surely this was job that I could not take. What better way to relegate a person to nothingness than to elect him as Vice President. Surely I could accomplish more by remaining Governor. At the Republican Convention that year there was but one dissenting vote to my nomination — my own. I accepted the nomination and campaigned tirelessly for Brother McKinley to be re-elected which he was in convincing fashion.

Six months into my new role as Vice President, Brother McKinley was slain by a bullet fired by a member of the *LUNATIC FRINGE*. Soon after, I was sworn in as the President of these United States. I guess the Political Bosses and the likes of Rockefeller and Morgan didn't see what the fates had in store for them!

There was much to be accomplished and I tackled my new role with vigor.

The antitrust case was pressed against the Northern Securities Company that they held a monopoly on rail traffic throughout the western portion of the country. We won that case and the race was on to ensure the Trusts would no longer unfairly control the means but that every man would receive a *SQUARE DEAL* for his labors.

My time spent in the Dakota Badlands as a rancher caused me to realize that there are precious few nature resources available to us. It is incumbent upon us to preserve these resources that our children's children will have the benefit of the same awe inspiring grandeur of nature that we enjoy today. Millions of acres of land were set aside as national forests. When Congress tried to stop further land savings, I declared them to be national monuments — like I did with the Grand Canyon.

As any great world power would need, we would need a great Navy to not only defend our shores but also to protect our interests abroad. The Navy was rebuilt and the *GREAT WHITE FLEET* was sent on a tour of the world to demonstrate that we possessed both the will and the capacity to compete with the world powers. In our own backyard in particular was this of the utmost importance — European nations were not to meddle in affairs of the Americas. The United States would be the policemen for our nations, we would be the ones to *SPEAK SOFTLY, BUT CARRY A BIG STICK*.

The need to be responsive to every bit of our security led to what I consider to be the crown jewel of my administration — one of the greatest engineering feats of mankind — the building of the Panama Canal.

The need for this canal was clear. Not only would it improve commerce — ships would be able to sail from coast to coast in half the time as before — but it also enhanced our security, permitting the Navy to more easily transfer ships between oceans.

The Columbians held the best path across the isthmus. But they were unwilling to come to terms that were equitable. It was brought to my attention that a group planned to revolt in the area. Certainly, I would never encourage such an action, but conversely, I did not discourage it either. The Panamanians rose up and in short order the revolt was over. The US Navy was on hand to ensure that bloodshed was held to a minimum. Three days later the US formally acknowledged the sovereign country of Panama and the lease that the Columbians had refused was put in place in quick fashion. I visited the construction site in person, becoming the first sitting US President to travel outside the country while in office.

So you see, through it all I have worn a goodly number of hats. But, some of my most cherished times were those where I wore no hat at all. This

includes the time I spent with my Brothers at Matinecock Lodge No. 806 Oyster Bay. I availed myself of the quiet period during my 6 month tenure as Vice President to join the Lodge. My raising was a grand event — truly so. It was attended by the entire Grand Line of New York and Grand Masters from surrounding jurisdictions as well. The Lodge room was so tightly packed that the Brothers had to hoist me overhead and pass me hand over hand into the Lodge room. I heartily enjoyed attending Lodge whenever I traveled and my home Lodge whenever I could. Sadly, this was not as often as I had hoped. Too many times others would seek me out while at Lodge to press me on matters of concern to them.

"One of the things that attracted me so greatly to Masonry . . . was that it really did live up to what we, as a government, are pledged to — of treating each man on his merits as a Man."

With that my Brothers I shall close the Lodge.  
Thank you for your attention.



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Theodore Roosevelt – A Man Of Many Hats, by Philip Brooks, PM, Presented August 31, 2013