

*Remarks for the  
Great Delta Bear Affair  
October 19, 2002*

It is great to be here in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, to help celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of President Theodore Roosevelt's famous bear hunt. Mr. Roosevelt, we are proud to have you here with us for this event, and I want to personally thank you for your commitment to the conservation of our natural resources.

I also want to thank those who have helped make this event possible through their support – Cellular South, Entergy and Time Warner, as well as the volunteers and members of the Great Delta Bear Affair Steering Committee.

I appreciate the commitment you have shown, and continue to show, to raising the awareness of Mississippi's history and the beauty of our natural areas.

And, I want to recognize and thank the Mississippi Army National Guard for their commitment to preserving the delicate environmental balance here in our state – a balance that keeps a healthy ratio between ourselves and our natural resources – and commend them on their award given earlier here today.

It was 100 years ago next month – November 14, to be exact – that President Roosevelt arrived in Sharkey County, eager to take part in a bear hunt. The environment was well-suited for just such a hunt, and the president had a seasoned guide for the hunt in Holt Collier.

The result of that hunt became history. From the banks of Little Sunflower River, President Roosevelt chose not to shoot a restrained bear, and millions of children have benefited from his choice – a choice that resulted in the birth of the teddy bear.

The journey of the teddy bear from Sharkey County, Mississippi, to today is amazing. I entered “teddy bear” in the Google search engine and came up with 649,000 results. E-Bay has more than 7,000 teddy bears and teddy bear items on its auction site – everything from a Dale Earnhardt bear bidding for \$1.99 to a 1920’s German bear that was going for more than \$1,600.

Now, down here in the South, it seems like the Earnhardt bear would be the one going for \$1,600...

But, the impact of the teddy bear on our world – from the expensive bears being auctioned on the Internet to the inexpensive bears that we had as kids – can't be denied.

It's been said that a teddy bear doesn't depend on mechanics to give the semblance of life; he is loved, and therefore he lives. That's why we're here today, to celebrate the history of a president, a bear and a tale that will live for generations of children and adults alike.

As part of that celebration, I have officially proclaimed 2002 as the year of the "Great Delta Bear Affair." The proclamation reads as follows: *(read proclamation)*.