

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

It is great to be here in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, to help celebrate the 100th 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)*.