

Theodore Roosevelt Reenactor has been "Deelightening" Colorado Audiences for 16 Years

What began as a publicity stint for the opening of a renovated historic Colorado hotel sixteen years ago, evolved into a perpetual passion for Theodore Roosevelt reenactor and Colorado Spring resident, Don Moon. "Theodore was a performer, just as I am", comments Moon.

But, the similarities between the charismatic 26th president and the equally energetic Moon don't stop there. Both lost their father's at a young age and both regard presidents as their heroes and inspiration for their lives. "The man that Roosevelt looked up to first and foremost was his father. He feared him. But he feared disappointing him." Moon relates that Roosevelt also idolized Abraham Lincoln, whose funeral procession he watched from his grandfather's apartment window in 1865. "It affected him deeply" he says. Along with Lincoln, Moon's champions are Eisenhower, whom he had the opportunity to see speak at a Boy Scouts Jamboree as a child and John Kennedy. But, he relents that Roosevelt is his passion.

Moon was first approached to play Roosevelt while an actor with a Colorado Springs based murder mystery entertainment company called Red Herring Productions. A participant commented that he looked like the famous "Rough Rider", and the seed was planted. With the opening of the Cliff House hotel in Manitou Springs, Colorado in 1999, Moon was asked to portray Roosevelt for the event. The historic resort hotel was a destination spot for Roosevelt while on his many outings in Colorado. To prepare for his portrayal of Roosevelt, Moon began gathering books on the famous president and reading as much as he could. What began as a ten minute speech for the Cliff House turned into half hour programs for other events and finally developed into an hour and half one man show for venues such as political rallies, the Colorado Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Colorado Springs Downtown Rotary Club as well as many schools and other organizations. "If you don't stop me, I could go on for hours or more!" remarks Moon. Ironically, it is thought that the lengthy speech folded in Roosevelt's inner jacket pocket slowed the bullet of an assassin while in Milwaukee in 1912 that allowed him to orate for an hour and a half after being shot. Fortunately for Moon, disgruntled saloon-keepers are not one of the similarities he claims with his mentor.

Moon's development of the Theodore Roosevelt character was a gradual process which took over two years to perfect and is ever evolving as he gains more information. "At events where speak I listen to people's stories about Roosevelt, and everyone has a story. The more programs I do, the more those opportunities show up." Moon relates a specific story told to him by an elderly woman who as a child had the great experience of sitting on Roosevelt's lap. What she remembered most was his teeth and bad breath. At a later event, family members of the woman asked Moon if he remembered the young girl that sat on his lap. Moon was able to enthusiastically recall the event, in character, to the delight of the audience.

Moon explains that occasionally it is uncanny at how he knows information about Roosevelt. "I don't believe in the paranormal, but there are times when I feel that Theodore sits on my shoulder and tells me what to say."

Moon describes another experience while as a guest in character for a national radio talk show. A caller phoned in and asked "Roosevelt" if he knew of a specific Hispanic man who was mustered into the "Rough Riders". Through a strange coincidence, a week earlier Moon was given a document which contained the names of all the participants of the 1st United States Cavalry. The Hispanic Cavalryman's name stood out and he pocketed it in the back of his mind. However, he was able to provide that name for the caller on cue. Moon says the talk show hosts jaw dropped and he asked him, "How did you know that?" Moon replied, "I don't know!"

"Roosevelt" will be on the campaign trail again in 2014 as Moon has a trip scheduled which will take him from Colorado Springs, Colorado to Devil's Tower, Wyoming with stops in Fort Collins, Colorado and Cheyenne, Wyoming. Moon is providing non gratis talks along the way in return for free lodging. He hopes to reach as many people as possible with the words and inspiration of the famous president. "Teddy had a message for the youth, the conservationists, the politicians. He had a message for everyone. In a nut shell that message was that all of us are responsible for our own lives, and it's up to us what we make of it."

To schedule an event or for more information Don Moon can be reached at donmoon@comcast.net or (719) 650-6350 or BullyMoosePulpit.com (available late February 2014)

Red Herring Productions, which Don Moon co-owns is a murder mystery entertainment company which has been providing ice breaking events for corporations and organizations since 1985. The website is www.redherringproductions.com.