

Theodore Roosevelt, Trail Blazer Among Hunter-Conservationists

By ASHLEY HALSEY, JR. Editor THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN

Now and forever after, President Theodore Roosevelt, who appears with his favorite rifle on the cover of this issue, must resemble a human puzzle or enigma to those Americans who arbitrarily raise a rigid mental barrier between hunting and conservation and between war and peace.

During his lifetime, 1858-1919, Theodore Roosevelt became typed as two hyphenated things:

Hunter-conservationist. Warrior-peacemaker.

Possibly those seemingly conflicting roles baffle some who fail to grasp the span of his intellect and interests, But what they regard as gross inconsistencies made perfect harmony in his mind as they do to this day in the minds of millions of Americans.

As a vigorous big-game hunter, TR could hardy hy wait to vacate the White House to go on safari in Africa. Hunting there and in both Americas, he took grizzlies, lions, elephants and much else with such zest that a political cartoonist once caricatured a variety of wildlife climbing into the tall timber in terror of him.

Yet in his youth he wrote tenderly of small blick in the Adirondacts and no Long Bland, N.Y., in the first two of his nearly 70 outdoors books. As our youngest President, succeeding the assantance of the president of the president succession beginning at Pelson Island, Fla., in 1902 and spreading through a third of the States and Territories by 1909. He expanded the National Park System and the first National Game Preserves, are succession to the president of the National Game Preserves.

Service to supervise forest reserves, began the rebuilding of the nearly extinct bison herds, created the National Conservation Commission and the Inland Waterways Commission, and set up the National Monuments system to protect the natural wonders of the Nation.

As a licutenant colonel of volunteer cavalry, the vaunted regiment of "Rough Riders", he led a mad scramble up San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War with a momentum that later carried him to two terms (1901-09) in the White House, and he told in explicit terms of killing a foeman with his revolver.

Yet be became the first and only President of the United States ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, for mediating the peace treaty that endedthe Rasso-Japanese War of 1904-05, and accideding to the Encyclopedia Britannica he "suggested the possibility of a League of Nations for the prevention of war" years before World War I broke end.

Important though the rifle on our cover was to the man, it symbolizes only part of his life and character. Theodore Roseveelt measured up not only as a legendary big-game hunter but as a towering pioneer figure in conservation at an early period when nobody except a few sportsman hunters lifted a finger to protect widiler. He expressed his philosophy clearly, and it is as applicable now

". The encouragement of a proper hunting spirit, a proper love of sport, instead of being incompatible with a love of nature and wild things, offers the best guaranty for the preservation of wild things. Even here on Long Island, New York, (location of the Roosevelt family home) which



has been settled for three centuries and is no wilder than the least wild districts of England, we can preserve deer, for example, only that the effort of sportsmen. If they were never shot at all they would increase to that the farmers would kill them completely out. They have to be kept down somehow, and it is best to have them kept down through legitimate hunting.

"In addition to being a true sportsman, and not a game butcher, in addition to being a humane man as well as keen-eyed, strong-limbed and stouthearted, the big-game hunter should be a field naturalist... if possible, adopt with the camera... (and) should carefully study and record the habits of the wild creatures...."

Emphasizing restraint, TR also comented:

"I have never sought to make large bags, for a hunter should not be a game butcher. It is always lawful to kill dangerous or noxious animals . . . but other game should only be shot when there is need for meat or for the sake of an unusually fine trophy."

Obviously, TR knew when to lower his rife as well as when to shoulder it, how to hold his fire as well as how to aim it. He demonstrated the essence of the true sportsman hunter for generations to come: A sense of responsibility.

Far from being our only hunting President, Theodore Roosevelt was simply one in a distinguished line going back to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. The line continues almost unbroken through U. S. Grant, 18th President of the United States and 8th President of The National Rifle Asso-

ciation, into very recent times.

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a U.S. Senature, joined the NRA and
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dright "churchythuty" at his Texas
ranch to this day. Among current Presidential candidates, Son. Hubbert H, Numdential candidates, Son. Hubbert H, Numdential candidates, Son. Hubbert H, Num-

Special acknowledgment is due to three Boone & Crockett Club members, NRA First Vice President C. R. Guternuth, NRA Director John Rhea, and Robert M. Ferguson, treasurer of the Boone & Crockett Club, for making the Theedore Roosevelt rifle available to the NRA Firearms Museum. although he has reservations regarding

handguns.* Despite history's stereotype of TR as a buck-toothed cavalryman charging up smoky San Juan Hill, his most enduring public achievement now stands forth in the less glamorous but far more substantial field of conservation, recently rechristened ecology. No occupant of the White House before or since TR can approach his accomplishments in this respect. Among other long strides in it. Mr. Roosevelt founded the Boone & Crockett Club, a pace-setting group limited to 100 outstanding big-game hunters, which has pioneered in establishing the standards and goals of hunterconservation programs now widespread

over the United States. In keeping big-game records, the B. & C., as it is known, has focused sportsman hunting on quality rather than quantity, on passing up far more shots than are taken, on conservation rather

The Boone & Crockett Club sprang from a dinner that TR gave for several friends, amone them the famous outdoors artist Albert Bierstadt, Roosevelt set forth the five main objects of the club in his own words. Number Three

"To work for the preservation of the large game of this country, and, so far *The American Riffeman plans to publish the gan control views of the major Presidential can-didates probably in its October issue. It refrained from deeing so during the primaries not only because of the large number of candidates but because the views of scene were vigue or un-

While President, Theodore Roosevelt gave strong support to passage of the 1903 bill that founded the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice, parent arency of the Director of Civilian Marksmanship program. He also pushed and signed a 1905 bill authorizing sales of surplus military rifles and ammunition through the DCM to marksmanship clubs affiliated with The National Rifle Association. In his

1906 annual message to Congress, he urged more support for civilian marksmanship, and in 1908 he reiterated this recommendation. Between messages, in 1907, Mr. Roosevelt practiced what he preached in connection with marksmanship and the NRA. There came to the NRA a letter on White House stationery, expressing his wish to become a Life Member and enclosing

his personal check for the amount, as possible, to further legislation for that purpose, and to assist in enforcing

then \$25.

the existing laws," The membership was limited to conservation-minded big-game hunters who made their mark in "fair chase", a term defined as not taking advantage of game in unfair circumstances.

While President in 1901-09, Mr. Roosevelt founded five major National Parks, in Colorado, Oklahoma, Oregon and both Dakotas. He also established four large game reserves in Arizona. Montana, Oklahoma and Washington

Always a scrapper, "Teddy" Roosevelt did not hesitate to tangle with those who opposed his conservation efforts. This was evident from his very first message to Congress as President, when he emphasized the importance of setting aside forest reserves at a time when lumbering was denuding many areas. In 1905, near the start of his second term, he signed the bill creating what is now the U.S. Forest Service, an agency intended to safeguard the growing forest reserves. Next Mr. Roosevelt began adding multi-millions of acres to the vast forest reserves so fast and furiously that he ran head-on into opposition. By 1907, U.S. Sen. Fulton of Oregon persuaded the Senate to amend the annual Agricultural Appropriations Bill to deny the President authority to establish additional forest reserves in the Northwest timbering country. The House of Representatives agreed. Mr. Roosevelt was faced with a choice of having to yield or to

sign or veto the measure, he proclaimed 21 new forest reserves encompassing 16 million acres in the area where the hill forbade the establishment of further reserves. Then, probably with a typical toothy grin, he signed the bill into law, As the end of his second term approached, Mr. Roosevelt summoned the Governors of all the States to a White House conference on conservation with Federal officials. He appealed movingly to all of them to foster and continue the program of Federal and State con-

Competition, Fired by hopes of tak-

ing a specimen which will "make the

veto the entire bill, a move that would

have angered the important farm vote.

But in the 10 days allowed by law to

BOONE & CROCKETT CLUB been the Boone & Crockett Club's Game FOSTERS CONSERVATION DESPITE growing urbanization and

chase.

man's depredations against nature in the name of progress, big game is becoming more common in North America. The larger carnivores, or meat-eaters-brown, grizzly, black and polar bear and puma-are now recognized as game subject to seasonal hunting limitations in most States, and the practice of paying bounties for their extermination at any time has decreased. The U.S. deer population has grown from a mere half million in 1900 to an estimated 10 to 15

million animals These and other conservation improvements stem from efforts, now widespread, that were pioneered by the Boone & Crockett Club, a hunterconservationist organization founded in the 1880's by America's noted sportsman President, Theodore RooseDaniel Boone and Davy Crockett, the club limits its membership to 100 persons who have made outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation and who have bagged at least three species of North American big game in fair

An early achievement of the con-American bison from near-extinction. Beside the carnivores and deer mentioned the Boone & Crockett Club and other conservation groups have preserved for controlled hunting such once-threatened species as the pronehorn, mountain goat, wapiti (American elk), moose, caribou and the Rocky Mountain, Desert, Dall and Stone varieties of sheep, A considerable factor in the overall

big game conservation picture has

book" (the Club's Record Book), "more and more hunters everywhere are conserving the vounger animals and seeking the old specimens with trophy heads," according to former club president and NRA Director John E. Rhea.

Growing competition to "make the book" has caused the club to push up its requirements for trooby listings. From under 500 in 1951, entries in the North American Big Game Competition soared to better than 2800 in 1968. "If the 1951 minimums had been maintained, we calculate that by 1970 there would probably be almost 15,000 listed trophies," Mr. Rhea said. The club's chief consideration in setting entry standards for "the book" is always "to encourage the taking of trophies only, thereby preserving the best of the breeding stock," Mr. Rhea explained.

servation that he had launched.

"Roosevelt's most significant and farsighted accomplishments as President were undeniably in the field of conservation," Author R. L. Wilson wrote in his recent book. Theodore Roosevelt Outdoorsman (Winchester Press, 1971, 278 pages, \$12.95.) "Given his tremendous love of wildlife and the outdoors, this is not surprising. He argued that the greatest asset of the United States. outside of its people, was its natural resources. . . . Had Roosevelt done nothing else as President, his greatness would still have been ensured by what he did

in conservation." Naturally, such an outdoorsman appreciated good firearms as implements and also loved fine guns for the artistry they represented. Fortunately, being born to wealth, Mr. Roosevelt was able to satisfy his tastes in guns. Mainly he was a Winchester-Colt devotee who liked custom-built arms and fine engraving by such masters as L. D. Nimschke and John Ulrich. While President, he kept his personal secretary. William Loeb, Jr., father of the New Hampshire newspaper publisher and NRA Executive Committeeman, in constant correspondence with Winchester and others to order out and obtain just the guns that Mr. Roosevelt wanted for his expeditions into the wilds. His gun interest went far back in his life.

As small boys. Theodore and his brother Elliott played with toy ours Their father, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., preferred horseback riding to gunning but owned several fine guns and did some duck hunting on Oyster Bay, Long Island, N.Y., near the family mansion, Young Teddy's first gun, aside from air guns, was a side-by-side 12-ga. French pinfire shotgun given him by his Uncle Robert when he was 13. That was the summer that he studied wildlife and taxidermy with John G. Bell, one-time companion of the great naturalist J. J. Audubon. By the fall of 1876, when he entered Harvard University, young Roosevelt was a dedicated outdoorsman despite his bothersome spectacles, slight build and bushy sideburns in the city dude (now "mod") style, which he soon shaved off

Troubled by poor eyesight nearly all his life, he compensated for it by obtaining methodically fitted rifle stocks and seeking out the best possible sights that suited him. "Poor evesight required Theodore to take extra care in his aim," R. L. Wilson says in his book. "By ensuring that stock fit and size were just right, he could shoot faster and more accurately."

Although the young Roosevelt went



TR's Model 1903 Springfield Sporter. #0009, was put to good use during a Presidential bear hunt in 1905.

hunting in Maine in 1879 with a special Sharps Borchardt "Old Reliable" Mid-Range .40-25% single-shot, and was later to use both heavy double rifles and boltactions, he developed a steadfast preference for lever-action Winchesters. His special factory orders for them reveal his precise likes

The kind of lever-action rifle that he preferred and bought in several models and calibers had the following basic characteristics: 28" barrel, half round and half octagon, with a half-length magazine, deluxe stock with pistol grip and checkered forearm, and casehardened receiver or frame.

The first of this distinguished line of lever-action Winchesters in the Roosevelt battery fulfilled all the specifications that he regarded as ideal. It was a Model 1876 in cal. 45-75, serial No. 38647. He ordered it and a Model 1873 in cal. .32-20 in 1883. Both arrived during a period of personal despair and grief in

At the time, Mr. Roosevelt had lost both his wife and mother by sudden death, so unexpectedly that his brother Elliott was quoted as saving, "There is a curse on this house." He had struggled through an unsatisfying political experience at the 1884 Republican National Convention in Chicago. So, haunt-

ed and saddened, he plunged into the relative solitude of his Badlands ranch in South Dakota to seek consolation and escape through hunting.

The husky Model 1876 and its companion piece were shipped to him without sights, as he specified. Both were then fitted with his favorite folding-leaf open sights. The one on the Model 1876 is marked Freund, F. W. and George Freund, the great Western gunsmiths, were personal friends who did much work for TR. On the subject of sights, he had emphatic ideas. While in the White House later, he wrote a friend that he was prejudiced against peep sights-they either did not suit his eyes or his fancy, he was not sure whichand "have always used open sights." With a charming frankness for a great

hunter, he admitted: "At long range, I am sorry to say, I never was really good for anything. I enclose you the type of front sight I like most. The rear sight I like very open, but with a little U that takes the bead of the front sight,"

In addition to his attention to sights and stocks, TR became something of a handloader as time passed. At first he used Winchester factory loads developed for the Model 1876. These consisted, as nearly as records indicate, of a 350-gr, flat-nosed bullet in front of 75 grs. of powder. As substitutes for blackpowder came on the market, however. TR worked up his own potent handloads: A 330-gr. hollow point slug backed by 85 grs. of Orange Lightning smokeless. Winchester did not imitate this load

The Model 1876 served as Theodore Roosevelt's mainstay from 1887 through 1894 in taking well over 100 head of the largest game on the North American continent. Ever meticulous about keeping his guns in perfect working order, he sent it back to the factory at New Haven four times for adjustments or

overhaul. Some indication of how much TR relied upon his .45-75 is given in his own account of his preparations for a lengthy hunting trip in the Big Horn Mountains in 1884. He lists his battery and ammunition: Colt Single-Action revolver with 150 cartridges; 10-ga, chokebore shoteun with 300 shells: 40-90 Sharps Borchardt No. 17130 with 150 rounds; a cal. .50-115 double-barrelled Webley express rifle with 100 rounds. but for his Model 1876 Winchester Re-

peater in 45-75 he took 1,000 cartridges. "For once I have made a very successful hunting trip," he wrote later to a relative. "It took 16 days travelling (by wagon) before I reached the foot of the snow-capped Big Horn range. We then left our wagon and went into the mountains with pack ponies. As soon as I shot all the kinds of game the mountains afforded, I came out after two weeks, during which time I killed three grizzly bear, six elk (three of them have magnificent heads and will look well in the 'house on the hill') and as many deer, grouse and trout as we needed for the table. . . . I was more anxious for the quality than the quantity of my bag.

. . . I really shot well this time.' TR and his guide almost walked up to the first grizzly that he shot. It was in a dense pine forest cluttered with fallen trees that limited both visibility and movement. The big bear had fallen asleep after feeding on an elk carcass. but quickly roused up. The guide saw it just in time. "Cocking my rifle and stepping forward," TR said later, "I found myself face to face with the great bear, who was less than 25 ft. off-not eight steps, . . . At that distance and in such a place it was very necessary to kill or disable him at the first fire. Doubtless my face was pretty white, but the blue barrel was as steady as a rock as I glanced along it until I could see the top of the bead fairly between his two sinister-looking eyes. . . .

TR admitted that he "iumped aside" immediately after firing, in case the bear charged, but his bullet caught it exactly between the eyes and it went down forever. It weighed over half a ton and measured nearly nine ft long TR enthused with typical fervor over

his Model 1876 Winchester. It was, he wrote in Hunting Trips of a Ranchman, the first of his hunting books, "by long odds the best weapon I ever had, and I now use it almost exclusively, having killed every kind of game with it from

TR Used Many Different Guns

Teddy Roosevelt fired almost every kind of cartridge firearm available during his lifetime, 1858-1919. As Author R. L. Wilson says in his book Theodore Roosevelt Out-

Although TR was not a "gen expert" from a technical standpoint and had no scientific interest in ballistics or in the miscellaneous technicalities of small arms, it may safely be said that as a hunter and shooter his practical knowledge of firearms was excellent. He shot with a great variety of rifles, shotroms, and handgons, and owned a battery of nearly 50 weapons of many types

and makes.

Winchester was by far his favorite brand. He nurchused over a dozen lever action rifles, from the Model 1873 to the Model 1895. He also owned and fired rifles by Sharps, Freund, Ballard, Bullard, the Springfield Armory, Webley, Holland & Holland, Marlin, Manulicher-Schoenhaner. Flobert, and Stevens: a combination rifle-shoteun by Fred Adolph: handgons by Colt, Smith & Wesson, Luger, and Greener; and shotguns by Lefaucheux, Parker, Thomas, Kennedy, Fox, and W & C Scott & Son.

He was familiar with practically every kind of basic mechanism; boltlever-, slide-action, and falling-block in rifles, hammer and hammerless double rifles and shotguns, a breakopen, single-shot market gun, doubleand single-action revolvery, automatic pistols, and even varieties of airguns. The types of ammunition he fired in small arms were numerous: handguns-32, 9 mm., 38, 41 rim-

fire, .44-40 and .44 S&W Special: carbines and rifles-.22, .256, .25-35, .32-20, .30-30, .303, .30-40, .38 Long. .40-254, .40-60, .40-70, .45-2.6, .45 2%, 45-70, 45-75, 45-90, 45-120, .405, .50, .50-115, .50-150, and .500/ ,450; shotguns-4, 10, 12, 16, and 20 gauges.

a grizzly to a big-horn. It is handy to carry, whether on foot or on horseback. and comes up to the shoulder as readily as a shotgun. It is absolutely sure, and there is no recoil to iar and disturb the aim, while it carries accurately quite as far as a man can aim with any degree of certainty; and the bullet, weighing % oz., is plenty large enough for any-

This rifle also elicited the unstinting praise of author R. L. Wilson, who said of it in his book on TR (p. 47): "The Model 1876 No. 38647 is a spectacular gun, one of the finest Model 1876 Winchesters known-and certainly the most historic. This was the rifle held by

thing on this continent "

Roosevelt in posing for the frontispiece to his first big game book Hunting Trips of a Ranchman, and it also appears in several original photographs, drawings and prints from the mid 1880's." Beneath the lever, as Wilson points

out, is the stamp of John Ulrich, one of the classic artists of American firearms engraving, who adorned the TR special with exquisite engravings of buffalo, antelope and other wildlife. The Model 1876 and the Model 1873 ordered at the same time, probably through a New York City dealer, are the earliest known specimens of rifles built specially for TR

Both TR's Model 1876 and its ac-







done up to his specific order, as were half a dozen other lever-action Winchesters. He liked shotgun butts, cheek-pieces and fancy wood; halfmagazines and half-octagon barrels: Ulrich engraving, and big calibers, Note Ulrich signature under lever, and the 1%" x 2%" gold inlay displaying a bear. Freund sights as shown helped his weak eyes aim better, he felt,



companying Model 1873 here one distinctive ornamentation which set them to the control of the control of the total of the hunt of the control of the hunt of a gold oval inlay. As an indication that the 4.8-75 was for big game and the 32-20 Model 1873 for small game, the oval of the former was engraved with a magnificent bear and that of the latter with a rabble—inst personal expressions,

as it were, of a rich gun owner's fancy. TR also ordered elaborate engraving for several of his Colts. Perhaps his most highly decorated handgun, now in a Harvard Library collection, was a Colt Single-Action in cal. .44-40 with 71/2" barrel, serial No. 92248. This he ordered "in the white" from the factory in 1883, at approximately the same time that he ordered his two custom Winchesters. Upon receipt, TR had it fully engraved by L. D. Nimschke, one of the old masters at the art. It was then gold-plated in part and silver-plated in part, and fitted with ivory grips showing a buffalo head in high relief on the left side and

head in high relief on the left side and the monogram initials TR on the right side. Another Single-Action, serial No. 92267, also a .44-40 with 7½" barrel, was similarly engraved and fitted with mother-of-pearl grips.

One or the other of the two big .44-40's usually swung from TR's hip on his western adventures. Unlike Gen. George S. Patten, who were an iverygripped revolver in much battle action,

George S. Patton, who wore an ivorygripped revolver in much battle action. TR as an officer of volunteer cavalry carried a regular service revolver in combat in Cuba, His was a Colt New Army, serial No. 16334, in cal. 38 with standard 6" barrel, blue finish, and rubber grips. This revolver had a romantic history, Shipped to the Government in 1895, it is said to have been issued to the U.S.S. Maine and to have gone down with the ship when an explosion sank the Maine in Havana harbor. It was salvaged and obtained by William S. Cowles, TR's brother-in-law, who presented it to him. As if to avenge the Maine, TR wrote later, "I killed a Spaniard with the pistol Will gave me which was raked up from the Maine."

Those warlike sentiments may have seemed strange, even bloodthirsty, by any peaceful standards, but any who carp at them may be reminded that Theodore Roosevelt received the Nobel Peace Prize. This international bonor was accorded him in 1906 in recognial was accorded him in 1906 in recognition was accorded him in 1906 in recognition to the Roosevelt recognition of the was accorded by the recognition of the was accorded by the recognition of the was accorded by the recognition of the second that the recognition of the recognition of the Serving as mediator in that distant

conflict, in which the rising sea and land

forces of a modernized Japan crushed

the courageous but fumbling Czarist

A. S.

TR used a Holland & Holland big-bore double to stop this rhino which "galloped full on us" at just 13 paces. Behind the rhino is Capt. Arthur Slatter, a local rancher with TR on this occasion.

fleets and armies, Mr. Roosevelt restored an uneasy peace to Asia that lasted except for minor clashes until Japanese aggression began its march a quarter of a century later. The Russo-Japanese peace treaty was signed, of all places, at Portsmouth, N.H.

As a soureeir, the victorious Japanese Admiral Togo, conqueror of two Russian flects, presented Mr. Roosevelt years later with a Belgian-made Nagant revolver taken from a captured Russian warship after a climactic battle in the Sea of Japan. It remains in one of the Roosevelt arms collections to this day. For a widely fine was the control of the Roosevelt arms collections to this day.

For a public figure who held all the awsomer responsibilities of the Presidency, Mr. Roosevelt always recognishing of the tradificual fatherly responsibility of Several accounts of his conscientions real in this respect have survived. Son Kermit tells of it. His cousin Nicholas Roosevell tell's detailed report of target practice under NRA Life Member Histories under NRA Life Member Histories (Long Island estate:

"As we grew older we were permitted first to watch target practice and then

us youngters how to shoot. We began with a 22, and, if I remember the pight, progressed to a 30-30. He gave to de-tailed instructions about the care and tailed instructions about the care and ting, and, above all, the manners of the rife range. He warned to against ever pointing a gam, whether loaded or not, at anyone, anywhere, any time. Among a tanyone, anywhere, any time. Among ing sharpness toward any of us youngsters was if someone was careless with a weepon."

In writing the foreword of the R. L.

In writing the foreword of the R. L.

to take part in it. He had a small rifle

range in a safe hollow and not only

kept up his own skill as a marksman.

which was considerable, but also taught

In writing the foreword of the R. L. Wilson book on TR, Archibald Roosevelt, the last survivor of four lighting TR sons, three of whom died while serving in the World Wars, began with these

in ing in the world wars, began with these is words:

"I am one of those fortunate ones who had a father who took the time is and made the effort to instill in his sons a love of the great outdoors. He taught us to accept the discomforts and hardships that attend sport in the open fields

and wilderness, and to accept them as a challenge to our manhood.

"Although he did not know or care about the science of ballistics as applied to the sporting rifle, he could teach his sons how to shoot straight and to handle themselves in the open spaces. Perhap that is more important than any theory

"There were a lot of guns and rifles around the house, and in the summer months at Oyster Bay, we would often go to our rather amateur target range—its extreme length about 200 yds.—and practice several mornings or afternoons every week. We knew that when we got into our teens, we would be sent off, or my father would take us off, on a trip



TR worshipped regularly at this church, then Grace Reformed Church, very near NRA's Washington headquarters.