

[From Spring 1999]

## CNHA to Market "TR Bear"

The Chincoteague Natural History Association will soon be marketing "TR Bear," a unique collectible manufactured exclusively for the CNHA. The TR Teddy Bear is made in the likeness of President Theodore Roosevelt, who created the first National Wildlife Refuge in 1903 at Pelican Island Florida.

The association of President Roosevelt with "Teddy" bears came about in a unique manner. As many of you may know, the President was an avid hunter. In 1902 he was on a hunting trip in Mississippi. As reported in the Washington Post, the presidential hunting party treed and lassoed a lean, black bear, then tied it to a tree. The President was summoned, but when he arrived on the scene, he refused to shoot the tired and exhausted bear, considering it unsportsmanlike.

The following day, November 16, Clifford Berryman, Washington Post editorial cartoonist, immortalized the incident as part of a front-page cartoon montage. Berryman pictured Roosevelt, his gun before him with the butt resting on the ground and his back to the bear, gesturing his refusal to take the trophy shot. Written across the lower part of the cartoon were the words "Drawing the Line in Mississippi," which coupled the hunting incident to a political dispute.

The cartoon drew immediate attention. In Brooklyn, NY, shopkeeper Morris Michtom displayed two toy bears in the window of his Stationary and Novelty store. The bear had been made by his wife, Rose, from plush stuffed excelsior and finished with black shoe button eyes Michtom recognized the immediate popularity of the new toy, requested and received permission from Roosevelt to call them "Teddy's Bears." The little stuffed bears were a success. As demand for them increased, Michtom moved his business to a loft, under the name of Ideal Novelty and Toy Corporation.

At the same time as it was born in the United States, the Teddy Bear was born in Germany. The Steiff Company of Giengen produced its first jointed stuffed bears during the same 1902-03 period. The company had made toys for a number of years and had produced small wool-felt pincushion type animals of many varieties. The animals were the creation of Margaret Steiff. Steiff bears were introduced at the 1903 Leipzig Fair, where an American buyer saw them and ordered several thousand for shipment to the United States.



While other stories have been told regarding the birth of this wonderful toy, the simultaneous births in Brooklyn and Giengen are the best substantiated.\*

You can own a great toy and/or collectible and a part of history when you purchase one of these truly unique, cuddly bears for the very reasonable CNHA member discount price of \$29.95 (which includes shipping). To order your bear contact the Chincoteague Natural History Association at (757)336-3696, or P.O. Box 917, Chincoteague, VA 23336.

*Bob Wilson Deputy  
Refuge Manager*

\*Information on the history of the Teddy Bear was found on the Teddy Bear Home Page:  
<http://members.tripod.com/~bigbee/history>