

# 31 Teddy Bear President

Cliff Klingenhagen had  
me in to dine  
With him one day; and  
after soup and meat,  
And all the other things  
there were to eat,  
Cliff took two glasses  
and filled one with wine  
And one with wormwood.  
Then, without a sign  
For me to choose at all,  
he took the draught  
Of bitterness himself,  
and lightly quaffed  
It off, and said the other  
one was mine.

And when I asked him  
what the deuce he meant  
By doing that, he only  
looked at me  
And smiled, and said it  
was a way of his.  
And though I know the  
fellow, I have spent  
Long time a-wondering  
when I shall be  
As happy as  
Cliff Klingenhagen is.

—EDWARD ARLINGTON ROBINSON,  
1897



**TR knocks down the trusts. But he wasn't as tough on big business as this cartoon makes out.**

Roosevelt made a great president. But you knew he would. He was "delighted" to be president, he said. It was a "bully" job, he added. No president has ever had such a good time at it—and worked so hard, too.

Andrew Jackson had made people feel welcome in the White House, but not the way TR did. Remember when Jackson escaped out a White House back door to get away from the admiring mob? Roosevelt couldn't

seem to get enough of "the people." On New Year's Day in 1907, anyone who wanted to could go to the White House and shake their president's hand (anyone who was clean and not drunk). Roosevelt set a record that day: he shook 8,150 hands.

The people loved him; the press did, too. He was always doing things that made good stories. Like the time he went hunting for bear but refused to kill a helpless little bear. When that story got out, a candy maker in Brooklyn, New York, made a toy bear and called it a "Teddy bear." He sent it to the president

**TR never stopped talking. He had a high voice that squeaked when he got excited.**



## AN AGE OF EXTREMES



Senator John Sherman, for whom the Antitrust Act was named (he had little to do with it, really).

One day in 1905 a struggling poet named Edward Arlington Robinson went to his mailbox and found a letter from the president. It offered him a job that would allow him time to keep writing poetry. Theodore Roosevelt invited the great black educator Booker T. Washington to the White House for dinner. Some prejudiced people objected; that didn't stop TR.

President Roosevelt was responsible for the building of the Panama Canal. That created a water passageway from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean at the midsection of the American continents. Just think about

that. It took most ships more than two months to make the trip from San Francisco to the East Coast by sailing through the Straits of Magellan at the tip of South America.

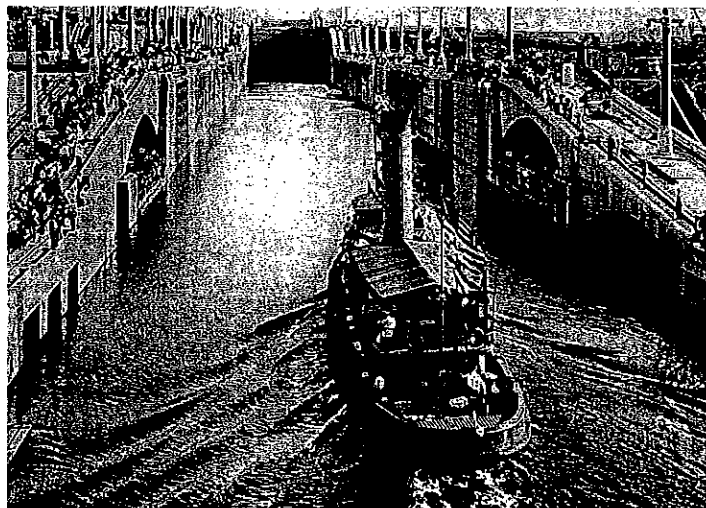
Cutting through Panama was like un-

locking a door between the oceans.

Look at the map on the next page. It should be a simple thing to take some steam shovels to Panama and dig out a canal, shouldn't it? Ha. Digging that canal was a nightmare. The map does not show thick jungle, but that was only one of the things the canal builders had to contend with. The worst problem may have been the tiny mosquitoes that carried malaria and yellow-fever germs. Nearly 6,000 men died, mostly from disease. There were also accidents and political hassles and enormous engineering problems. It is worth going to the library and finding a book about the building of the Panama Canal. It is some story. Without Theodore Roosevelt it would have been even more difficult.

He had a favorite saying: *Speak softly and carry a big stick*. It was an African proverb, and TR was always quoting it. He believed that if you show you are strong no one will pick on you. The big stick he wanted for the nation was a strong navy. He helped build one.

Roosevelt talked a lot about war and soldiering, but his presidency was a time of peace. He was a good diplomat and was able to deal well with other countries. After he helped settle a war be-



**Top:** A worker at the Gatun Locks construction site. The Gatun Locks are a series of three locks of the Panama Canal that raise the water level 85 feet, connecting to the man-made Gatun Lake. **Below:** A tugboat, the very first to pass through the completed Panama Canal.