

The Kick-Off Speech

A Bully Buffalo Hunt

with Pastor Eric Ludy

FORGING TEDDY ROOSEVELT

In the pursuit of one single buffalo

I just want one.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT
1883

The trick was to find that elusive lone buffalo. He needed a man who could find the creature, and Joe Ferris was such a man.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE
Forging a President

THE BUFFALO HUNTER

Joe Ferris

(Joe) Ferris was short, Canadian, and built like a bulldog, with a drooping cowboy mustache that hid a tight-lipped mouth. He was the same age as Roosevelt, but he didn't take to the man with glasses and the strange nasally accent.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE
Forging a President

The man imploring him to find a buffalo seemed like . . . just another rich man come to claim and bring home his part of the Western myth in the form of a buffalo head. But the dude had money, if nothing else, and Ferris agreed to help him find his buffalo. Ferris and Vine decided a good base camp for the hunt in the Badlands would be the cabin of the Scotsman, Gregor Lang, on the Cannonball Creek fifty miles up the river.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE
Forging a President

THE BADLANDS

The place no one should find beautiful. Temperatures ranging from -40 to 116 degrees.

It's hell with the fires out.

THE LEGENDARY DESCRIPTION

Worthless country.

GENERAL GEORGE CUSTER

A place for stratagem and murder.

FREDERICK REMINGTON

It's a bully place for adventure.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

“BULLY!”

Amazing! Incredible! Extraordinary! Great! Wow! I'm soooo excited!

READYING FOR THE HARSH ADVENTURE

*Roosevelt had beaten back his asthma and graduated Harvard a rich man's son,
but he was sickly in the era of muscular Christian men. His skinny frame,
glasses, chronic asthma, and undiagnosed heart condition made him an unlikely
cowboy.*

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

*TR's antidote would be simple: he would handle this the way he did his chronic
illness as a young man—when through unrelenting, strenuous activity beginning
with weight training, boxing, rowing, and hiking, he put himself to the test
against every physical challenge he could find.*

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

*There were all kinds of things I was afraid of at first, ranging from grizzly bears
to “mean” horses and gun-fighters; but by acting as if I was not afraid I gradually
ceased to be afraid.*

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

*We cannot avoid meeting great issues. All that we can determine for ourselves
is whether we shall meet them well or ill.*

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

THE STRENUOUS LIFE

Pressing forward in the moment you least want to press forward

*Each time (Teddy Roosevelt) encountered an obstacle, he responded with more
vigor, more energy, more raw determination.*

CANDACE MILLARD

The River of Doubt

Roosevelt: *Do you think we will see Indians?"*

Ferris : *Might. Better hang on to your scalp.*

Roosevelt: *Bully!*

A DIFFERENT SORT OF MAN

One that refuses to give up

*The truth was there just weren't that many buffalo left after the Sioux had
slaughtered most of them on the plains; and the open cars of the Northern
Pacific had proven such a wonderful platform from which people could shoot
buffalo, leaving them to rot in the sun. But here was this thick-spectacled New
York dude who wanted a buffalo. Fine. They would find a buffalo or give up
when the "dude" had had enough. Joe (Ferris) had found after a few days in the
Badlands people started not to care so much about finding their buffalo. They
wanted to get out of the sun or the rain or the wind or the biting cold and back
to their nice, cozy lives. And this dude would be no different, (Joe) was sure.*

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

By Jove this is beautiful! Egad, it's good to be out here. Bully! Just bully!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

*While staring across the rocky desolate moonscape of the Badlands while it
broiled under the hundred-degree midday sun*

THE FIRST MORNING

*Driving rain pounded upon their little cabin. Joe Ferris advised that the hunt not begin in slippery, muddied
conditions like this*

Nonsense. We are going hunting for buffalo!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

With the same grit and determination Roosevelt used when fighting to breathe and conquering his fears, he would face the Badlands. At six a.m. they mounted up and headed into the streaming rain to finally find a buffalo . . .

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

Hunting for buffalo was strenuous and could be deadly. The land and weather were constant hazards that could turn against a hunter.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

Joe Ferris couldn't believe it when TR put mud on his face like a Lakota Sioux preparing for battle.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

DAYS 2-5

Non-stop rain

Joe Ferris hoped the man from New York would just roll over in his blankets and pull out one of his books. The hammering on the roof foretold of misery outside the door, and Joe kept looking for something to slow the dauntless spirit of the (Teddy).

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

Returning at night, after another day fruitless, all save misery, (Teddy's) grin was still there, being apparently built in and ineradicable. Every day Roosevelt insisted they go out and every night (he) returned with the toothy grin.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

He nearly killed poor Joe!

LINCOLN LANG

Remembrances from his childhood

DAYS 6

The rain finally stops

- The gumbo mud turns to dust
- One hundred five degrees
- They spot a buffalo
- They follow
- After they close the gap, they army crawl through the sage brush to get within 300 yards
- Teddy's hands were covered in thorns
- Teddy takes a shot—hits the side of the buffalo
- The buffalo sprints off
- Ferris and Roosevelt jump back on their horses and gallop after it
- They find the wounded buffalo as the sun is setting
- Get within 30 ft
- Because of uneven terrain can't get off a good shot
- Takes a shot and misses
- The wounded buffalo charges Ferris and Roosevelt

My pony, frightened into momentary activity, spun around and tossed up his head. I was holding the rifle in both hands, and the pony's head, striking it, knocked it violently against my forehead, cutting quite a gash . . . heated as I was, the blood poured into my eyes.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

- After a few near-death escapes from the charging buffalo, they scare the buffalo away with another missed shot
- The sun is now down and they don't know where they are
- They need to make camp in the middle of nowhere (exposed to the wild animals, horse thieves, and Indians)
- They hadn't had water for nine hours in the hot sun
- They had one hard-horn biscuit apiece for dinner
- And Roosevelt was grinning ear to ear

Bully! Bully! Bully! What a ride! What a show!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

With his head covered in blood, bedding down under the open night sky with his saddle as his pillow

- Their horses ran off in the middle of the night pulling their saddle pillows out from under their heads
- They spent the rest of the night running down their spooked horses
- When they finally got back to their camp and laid back down to sleep, it began to pour rain
- In the morning they were soaked to the bone

By Godfrey, but this is fun!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Waking up soaked, thirsty, and lacquered in blood

DAY SEVEN

Sighting the buffalo yet again, army-crawling, shooting and missing. Then, to add insult to injury, it rained all day long.

Bad luck followed us like a yellow dog follows a drunkard.

JOE FERRIS

Joe's horse nearly stepped on a rattlesnake, and Nell (Teddy's horse) stepped into a hole and sent Roosevelt into a cartwheel. He had just remounted when Nell found a trap of quicksand and the earth left beneath her. They pulled the horse out with a lariat and continued on. Joe had figured any minute (Teddy) would throw in the towel and catch the next train east in Little Missouri. But he was wrong.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

He could stand an awful lot of hard knocks and he was always cheerful. You just couldn't knock him out of sorts.

JOE FERRIS

See you bright and early in the morning!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Upon the long-awaited arrival back at the Lang cabin

DAY EIGHT

Sighting the buffalo

. . . there below me, not fifty yards off, was a great bison bull. He was walking along, grazing as he walked. His glossy fall coat was in fine trim, and shone in the rays of the sun; while his pride of bearing showed him to be in the lusty vigor of his prime. As I rose above the crest of the hill, he held up his head and cocked his tail in the air . . . I put the bullet in behind his shoulder.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

And then Teddy Roosevelt did a war dance. He whooped and shrieked around the dead buffalo with his rifle held high like an Indian celebrating his kill.

WILLIAM HAZELGROVE

Forging a President

I never saw anyone so enthused in all my life.

JOE FERRIS

THE IMPACT OF THE BULLY ATTITUDE

He is the most extraordinary man I have ever met. I shall be surprised if the world does not hear from him one of these days."

GREGOR LANG

Said to his son, Lincoln, as Roosevelt galloped away from his cabin after the eight-day buffalo hunt



You have faced endless rains, burning heat, gumbo mud, gashes on your forehead, sleepless nights, and a thousand other challenges beside. All these challenges represent convincing reasons why throwing in the towel right now would seem the logical choice. But, like Teddy, you were built to overcome. You were built to change the world. So, like Teddy shout, "Bully! Bully! Bully! What a ride! What a show!" This is the hour you were built for. Rise up and let all the onlooking Gregor Langs of this world take notice that you are not like all the rest of the buffalo hunters out there. You are not one to melt like chocolate when the heat turns up. No. You somehow grow stronger when you arrive in the Badlands. For you are a real Christian!

ERIC. LUDY

I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes, not to the man who desires mere easy peace, but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

MORE RESOURCES AT ELLERSLIE.COM

© Ellerslie Mission Society 2025. All rights reserved.