

Teddy Roosevelt Said It Best

An Opinion on Allegiance

By Del Albright, BlueRibbon Ambassador

“We have room for but one flag (in this country)...and we have room for but one sole loyalty, and that is a loyalty to the American people,” said President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907. Teddy was big on every American being just that – an American. He was strong on equality and fairness to everyone, regardless of creed, religion, birthplace or origin. But he also said, “...this is predicated upon the person’s becoming in every facet an American and nothing but an American....There can be no divided allegiance here.”

Since the days of being on my grand Dad’s knee and hearing stories of the old days, I have been a flag-waver and believer in our country. I learned long ago while fighting overseas for our country, that the foundation of freedom is our liberty and right to choose and express ourselves. That stems from having an allegiance to your beliefs. We can still learn from Teddy Roosevelt today.

I found the above quote in the spring 2006 issue of *Range*¹ magazine. I read my quarterly copy of *Range* from cover to cover because it is about freedom, liberty and the land we all love here in the USA. It is also about an allegiance to a lifestyle.

Allegiance is defined as the obligation of support and loyalty to one’s country and/or government. When people build a nation, design and fly a flag, and pledge allegiance to that nation, it is something to behold. It cannot be undone by mere words and threats. It endures through history.

We also have some semblance of allegiance in the recreation world. In motorized recreation, we are at war – perhaps a “cold” war; but nonetheless a battle to save what we believe in. Special interest groups, motivated more by greed and power than anything else, want to see our form of recreation shut down, or at best limited to arenas and OHV parks.

I am not going to stand by idly while someone attempts to curtail my freedom in favor of another. We are about equality and fairness, as well as freedom. My allegiance to my sport and my foundation of freedom spur me to fight!

These radical groups want to limit, curtail or even “take” our liberties and shelve them. *Range* magazine is one publication that constantly fights against this “taking.” It focuses on the western lifestyle, founded in ranching, farming, and living off the land – a way of life that is being threatened to extinction. However, ranchers and recreationists have much in common.

Like our ranching friends, if motorized recreationists have no land on which to recreate, we lose our way of life. There is no way I can accept a power-hungry special interest group “taking” my liberties. Unfortunately, they have more money and influence than we do in recreation; but we must not let down our efforts. We must continue our allegiance to what we believe in and do.

That means, in my opinion, that we must also build stronger and better organizations like the **BlueRibbon Coalition** (www.sharetrials.org) that fight for us and our rights. We must learn to develop stronger allegiances to those groups, clubs, organizations and politicians that are on our side and working for us. Yes,

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there are things that always need fixing and improvements in any outfit; but without our allegiance – our loyalty – our dues – what we do have won't have enough oomph to help us.

One politician that comes to mind that is helping us, and bringing some common sense back to politics, especially the Endangered Species Act, is Congressman Richard Pombo. There are others too, and our job is to support those folks that support us. Our job is to build allegiances to folks in politics who are our friends and believe the way we do. Find out in your area who you can trust, build an allegiance to, and help fight for what you believe in.

In my research I have come to the conclusion that the fight for public lands is not about the environment as much as it is about money and power. It's unfortunate that the average working person has to feel the impact of this directly on the thing that keeps us sane – our recreation.

Double sad is the fact that nearly everyone I know who recreates on public land is also a conservationist and environmentalist. We recreationists (and landowners like responsible ranchers) are the real environmentalists. Yet we are held in a dim light by those who speechify about protecting everything to some extreme degree.

Let's build our organizations and clubs stronger than ever before. Join everything you can afford to join. Support politicians who are fighting for us. Let's hang onto what Teddy told us. Build an allegiance to what you believe in, and pledge that allegiance!

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Del Albright, internationally published columnist and BlueRibbon Ambassador, has published volumes on land use and access for over 25 years. The BlueRibbon Coalition is a national recreation group that champions responsible use of public and private lands, and encourages individual environmental stewardship. It represents over 10,000 individual members and 1,100 organization and business members, for a combined total of over 600,000 recreationists nationwide. 1-800-258-3742. www.sharetrails.org For information about Range, please call 1-800-RANGE-4-U or visit www.rangemagazine.com