

The BIG Ditch

Chapter Seven – by Kay Hively

The start of school was in the midst of the rainy season in Panama. Each day after school Doug hurried home and looked for standing water. Every night he spent two or three hours doing homework.

On Saturday Doug usually went with his father to the hospital. On Sunday afternoon, Mario came to visit. The two boys enjoyed boxing. Dr. Taylor worked with them, teaching them self-defense and discipline, and making sure they didn't hurt each other. Dr. Taylor said they should box like gentlemen, using the Queensbury rules, not box like back-alley thugs.

One night in early November, Dr. Taylor came home very excited. He proudly announced that the President of the United States was coming to Panama. He said an American President had never traveled outside the United States.

Maria became very excited. She said it would be a proud thing for her country to host the President. Doug and his parents laughed as Maria made plans for the visit of the President. She said Dr. Taylor must bring home American flags to hang on the porches. And she said they must paint the house and make the yard more beautiful. Mrs. Taylor put her arm around Maria and told her that the President was not coming to their house. But Maria stood firm, and when Maria stood firm, things always went her way!

The Taylor family soon learned that Maria was not the only one excited about the visit of the President. Almost every house in Panama got new paint. Men worked hard to make yards and gardens beautiful. Rough roads were smoothed, and even with constant rain the entire country looked beautiful.

All the schools were closed when the President came. It was hoped that many of the children would get to see the

important visitor as he moved around the country. Dr. Taylor hoped the President would visit the hospital, but no one knew the President's schedule for sure.

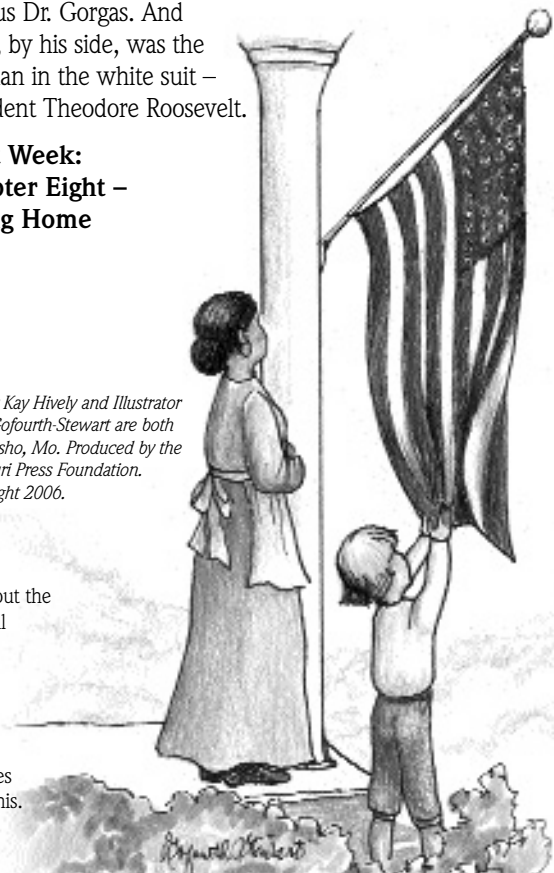
Finally, the big day came. Since Doug did not have to go to school, he went with his father to work in the hospital. Everyone there was talking about the President, but they stayed busy taking care of patients.

The patients were always happy to see Doug. He spent the morning taking fresh cool water to them and putting cool wet rags on their foreheads. Doug went from bed to bed, taking care of the patients. Finally, out of fresh water, he took his empty pail to get more. Just as he opened the door and rounded a corner, Doug ran headfirst into a big man in a white suit.

Doug stepped back and started to walk around the man. As he looked up to apologize, Doug was startled to see the famous Dr. Gorgas. And there, by his side, was the big man in the white suit – President Theodore Roosevelt.

**Next Week:
Chapter Eight –
Going Home**

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Things to Think About and Do

- Who is President of the United States now? Using a newspaper, search for stories about the President of the United States. Look at a newspaper every day for a week and save all the stories that talk about the President.
- What did you read in this chapter that makes you think the Taylor family loves Maria? What does Doug do in this chapter that proves he is a good person? What good things do you do for others?
- President Roosevelt's trip to Panama was the first trip outside of the United States by a President. Is it important for our President to visit other countries? Find examples of editorials in the newspaper and write your own editorial stating your opinion on this.