

THEODORE Roosevelt's **ECCENTRIC** Medical History (& Curiosities)

ASTHMA

STRESS & FATIGUE

VULNUS SCLOPETARIUM

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

OBESITY

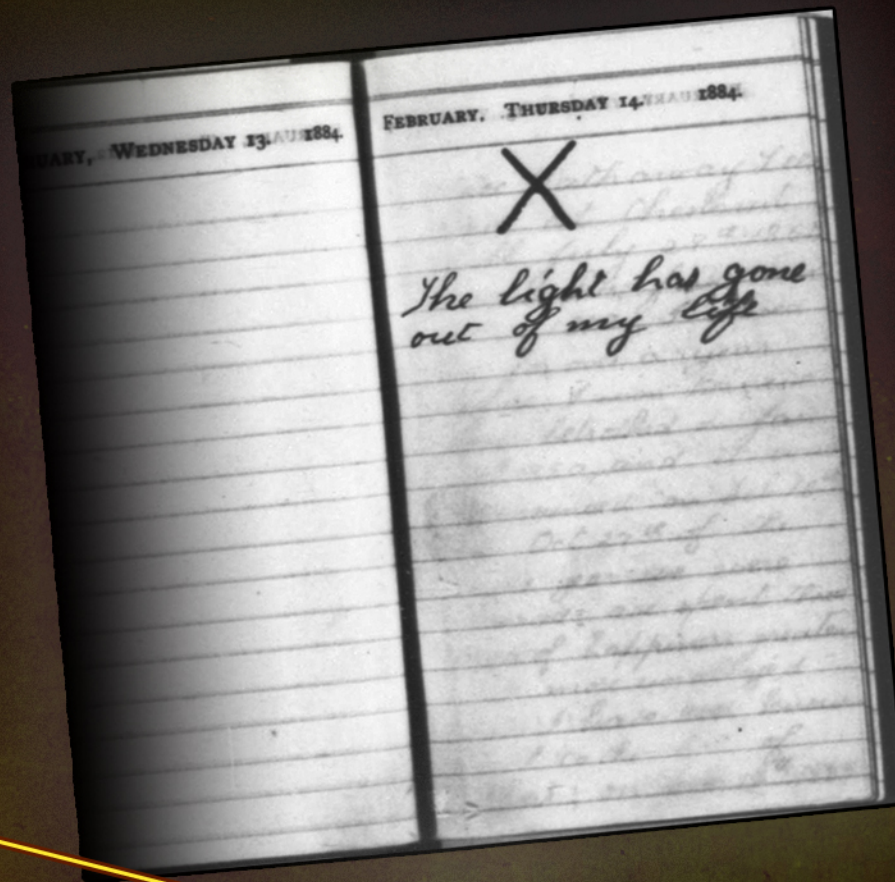
MYOPIA & AMBLYOPIA

UNILATERAL HEARING LOSS

PULMONARY EMBOLISM

FATIGUE

MYOPIA & AMBLYOPIA



STRESS

UNILATERAL HEARING LOSS

ASTHMA

VULNUS SCLOPETARIUM



PULMONARY EMBOLISM

OBESITY

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

"I have always made it a practice on such trips, to take a bottle of morphine with me. Because one never knows what is going to happen, and I did not mean to be caught by some accident where I should have to die a lingering death. I always meant that, if at any time death became inevitable, I would have it over with at once, with out going through a long-drawn-out agony from which death was the only relief" (Davis 2021)



VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

Douglas McCue

HIST110

03 May. 2021

IEP 3 – Theodore Roosevelt's Eccentric Medical History & Curiosities

Theodore Roosevelt had a compelling appetite for life and all that it could offer a gentleman of his time. He is known to most as an audacious 26th president who was also a colonel during the Spanish-American War. As expected, his personality and hobbies delve to a much more profound level than those titles can describe. He has a lengthy collection of published writings on many topics (Chronological 2021), he was the first and only President to attain mastery of Jiu-Jitsu and Judo (How the President 2015), he held impromptu wrestling matches at the White House (Teddy Roosevelt 2015), and he gave a speech after getting shot in the chest by a lone gunman (Missoulia 1912).

His medical history is lengthy and nearly as impressive as his achievements in life were. Young 'Teedie' had asthma which his doctors noted very early (McCullough 1982, p.96). Roosevelt was visited by stressful tragedy early on. His mother and his first wife died on the same day, Valentine's day, 1884; his response is depicted on the infographic with one sentence (Roosevelt 1884). He developed a workaholic attitude and lifestyle, which eventually began to affect his health. Davis (2021, p367) said, "that night he attempted to address a meeting in the Coliseum, ... there his voice broke, ... he got back to the hotel unable to do more than a whisper." Even an assassination attempt—being shot point-blank in the chest—would not seem to stop him any. Before it entered his body, the bullet was slowed by a 50-page folded manuscript and his eyeglass case. It was noted that just afterward, while his bodyguard was trying to kill the assassin, Roosevelt yelled, "don't hurt him ... bring him to me!" (Davis 2021,

p.376). That was only the beginning of his troubles from the vulnus sclopetarium. Klein (2019) said, “the shooting exacerbated his chronic rheumatoid arthritis for the rest of his life.” At some point, his literal appetite might have become a danger to his health, as a friend would recall later. "I have seen him eat a whole chicken and drink four large glasses of milk at one meal, and chicken and milk were by no means the only things served" (Davis 2021, p.429). Sources vary when it might have happened for sure, but they all agree that myopia and blindness were issues. One source said he gained blindness in one eye during his Harvard days in their boxing club (Teddy Roosevelt 201). Amblyopia was not his only deprivation; another source mentioned that Roosevelt had severe unilateral hearing loss (Manners 1969). Last on the list was what ultimately took his life—which I speculate was caused by his asthma and rough lifestyle. In the biography by Miller (1992, p.566), he described the scene as, "when they returned to the bedroom, the Colonel had stopped breathing altogether .. Dr. Faller was called and pronounced Roosevelt dead of an embolism."

I thought it interesting to his character to include some curiosities like voluntary euthanasia not to draw things out (Davis 2021). I thought the fight training was also necessary to note that self-defense training to Roosevelt meant to use said training on anyone who agreed to it. Some class themes I picked up on include hidden and unexpected relationships, war and medicine, and technology-medicine-health.

References

Primary Sources

- [Eyeglass case Roosevelt was carrying during the shooting]. (2021). [Photograph]. *History.com*. https://www.history.com/.image/w_1540/MTU3ODc4Njg1Mzg4MzE4NDMx/image-placeholder-title.webp
- How the President is taught Jiu Jitsu. (2015). *Martial Arts New York*. <https://martialartsnewyork.org/2014/10/29/how-the-president-is-taught-jiu-jitsu/>
- McCarthy, E. (1912). [The pages of the speech that saved Roosevelt's life were later bound into a book]. [Photograph]. *Reddit*. <https://external-preview.redd.it/FjxytgjD2o14pEHWmpNnjxaPM7eFoIgoIZX7jnWz9E.jpg?auto=webp&s=bd7e311efe1cbc5cb7ec5d861ede5da05f1561c0>
- Missoulia Pub. Co. (1912). Colonel Roosevelt shot in Milwaukee [volume]. [Photograph of Newspaper]. *Daily Missoulian*. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025316/1912-10-15/ed-1/seq-1/>
- Roosevelt, T. (1884). Image 11 of Theodore Roosevelt papers: Series 8: Personal diaries, 1878–1884 [Image of Manuscript]. *Library of Congress*. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss382990724/>
- Theodore Roosevelt Collection Photographs: War of 1898. (1898). As colonel of the rough riders, 1898 [Photograph]. *Harvard Library*. https://hollis.harvard.edu/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=HVD_VIAolvgroup12088&context=L&vid=HVD2&search_scope=everything&tab=everything&lang=en_US

Secondary Sources

Chronological listing books (2021). *Theodore Roosevelt Association*.

https://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=991271&module_id=338469

Davis, O. K. (2021). Released for publication: Some inside political history of Theodore Roosevelt and his times, 1898–1918, (1st Edition). *Houghton Mifflin Company*.

<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=HxVdashLAyYC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP6>

Klein, C. (2019). When Teddy Roosevelt was shot in 1912, a speech may have saved his life. *History.com*. <https://www.history.com/news/shot-in-the-chest-100-years-ago-teddy-roosevelt-kept-on-talking>

McCullough, D. (1982). Mornings on horseback: The story of an extraordinary family, a vanished way of life and the unique child who became Theodore Roosevelt (1st ed.). *Simon & Schuster*. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=mrL-tl1HQ0UC&oi=fnd&pg=PA9&dq=McCullough,+David.+Mornings+on+Horseback&ots=zJYYzZOUjB&sig=yTjiNnKjev4aZ88zi6e8QmXOwY0#v=snippet&q=asthma&f=false>

Manners, W. (1969). TR and Will; a friendship that split the Republican party (1st ed.). *Harcourt, Brace & World*.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=pGhCAAAAIAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=ear>

Miller, N. (1992). Theodore Roosevelt: A life (Reissue ed.). *Quill/William Morrow*. <https://archive.org/details/theodoreroosevel00mill>

Teddy Roosevelt held secret judo matches in the white house basement. (2015).

Fightstate. <https://fightstate.com/teddy-roosevelt-was-first-american-ever-to-receive-a-brown-belt-in-judo-and-held-secret-matches-in-white-house-basement/>