

The following is a transcription of a document by William Roy Bandy. The original, a typewritten draft (carbon-copy on onion skin), was found in the materials sent to Glenn Borkenhagen by Bandy's grandson Dirk Reith during August 2019. This document was scanned, but the scan was illegible. The pagination has been maintained.

Two Grizzly Bears

An encounter with two large grizzly bears furnished unexpected excitement for my survey party while surveying the Revised East Boundary of Yellowstone National Park in 1931. Starting out as a prank the episode threatened to turn into a disaster when the grizzlies were routed from their den.

We were camped just outside the park at the head of Eagle Creek about twenty miles south of the East Entrance on the east slope of Eagle Peak. In this remote area far from roads the bears and other animals are wild and not used to seeing humans.

On this particular occasion we were opening up a new pack trail preparatory to establishing a camp on the east slope of Mount Schurz, a 10,500 foot peak east of Yellowstone Lake. About mid-morning two grizzly bears were spotted feeding along the steep rocky slope high above us. They did not see us working below.

Keeping watch we saw them disappear among some large rocks on the mountain side. It became necessary for two boys, Frank Montibeller and Jack Morris to make a trip to the top of the ridge to reconnoiter the divide. So they thought it would be a good joke to go around above the bears and roll some rocks down the mountain side and rout them out.

They took off, keeping out of sight of the bears and made their way to the top of the ridge above the bear den, accompanied by our sheppard pup. Arriving at a point directly above

the bear den they started down. Not being certain just how far down it was they rolled some small rocks down ahead as they climbed down to test out the country. This was all above timber line and they could see if they scared any thing out. We knew where the bears were but we could not tell them.

They kept slipping down the rocky slope but were not sure the bears were still there at all. However we knew, and could see they were getting mighty close and something was going to happen, and soon.

They told us afterwards how at this time the dog bristled up and growled. They knew by this signal they were close to their quarry. They cautiously rolled another stone over a ledge into a wide crevice. That started something! A big ferocious grizzly came bounding up onto the ledge directly in front of them. Seeing the men the startled beast growled savagely then immediately whirled and took off down the mountain side making the rocks and dust fly. Frank said the bear's head looked to be two feet wide and his mouth like a cave! Needless to say it was a great relief to them when the bear turned and ran. From our distant vantage point our joy was unconfined. We hollered and laughed to see the bear kicking up a dust on that rocky slope. Here we were free to yell as much and as loud as we like without fear of disturbing any neighbors! We all had a grand time.

But the worst was yet to come!

Glancing back up the hill we were just in time to see both boys running in different directions with a bear chasing one of them. They later related what had happened. The immediate flight of the first bear gave them increased courage to pry into the affairs of the second bear.

Easing another rock into the crevice they flushed the old mamma bear out. As she clamoured to the ledge instead of running away she let out a blood curdling roar and made for them! Although the going was rough the boys made good headway. The pup followed Jack, and the bear chased the pup. Jack tried to drive the pup back away from him, but without success. He dodged behind a big rock in time to look back and see the bear had given up the chase. Mamma bear seeing she had the enemy on the run suddenly gave up the chase and took off down the mountain side toward us!

Of course all this happened in less time than it takes to tell it. When we saw the boys were safe we again set up our shouting and yelling, enjoying the fun to the utmost.

But whoa is me! About this time I realized mamma bear was heading directly for us! That threw an entirely different light on our situation. Hurriedly explaining the danger to the other boys I looked for a tree to climb. There were no trees over ten feet high. I never was a good runner, so the best solution at hand was to hide back of the nearest bush and hope for the best. We flattened out on the ground like baby quail in the face of danger.

Speaking for myself, all of the enjoyment had suddenly vanished and my mouth was getting dry. She was rapidly drawing nearer and I could see she was panting with her mouth open and tongue hanging out. She was loping toward us not suspecting anyone was near. As she looked back over her shoulders as she ran she would stumble and then gather herself and gallop on.

We flattened closer to the ground and held our breath! As she was passing a few feet away I felt as though I could almost reach out and touch her. Then she suddenly got our scent and stopped short. Turning to face us she stuck up her nose in the air and sniffed. Our fate was hanging by a thread. I was afraid she would hear my heart beating! But after a few seconds that seemed like an eternity she whirled and fled faster than ever. Happy day!

We quickly regained our nerve and jumping up started to shout again. The story was to have a happy ending after all.