

GRIZZLY ATTACKS

Oct. 1960. A game warden was attacked and injured by a grizzly sow with cubs in the Bob Marshall wilderness area. Details of this attack were presented in the Daily Missoulian.

Oct. 8-9, 1960

Tom and Charlene Milligan were making an overnight fishing trip into the Beckler area when they were attacked by a grizzly. They were going quietly along a trail when a grizzly suddenly appeared. Charlene was pregnant and expecting in Jan. Tom yelled to her to take off her ~~pack~~ pack and climb a tree. He dodged through the trees trying to draw off the bear. The grizzly rose up on his hind legs right in front of Charlene and she poked him in the face with her fishing rod and told him to "Get away you son-of-a-bitch" or at least so the story goes. Tom then came up and hit the bear in the ribs with a stick and the bear turned and started chasing him. Charlene ran, tripped over a log and fell down. From this position she continued to yell at the bear until Tom told her to shut up and remain quiet. The bear caught up with Tom dodging through the trees and knocked him over with a raking blow to the shoulder. He then bit him in the leg but his heavy clothing protected him to some extent. Only two teeth broke the skin. Both Tom and Charlene remained motionless and eventually the bear wandered off. They continued on with their fishing trip but returned earlier than planned as the shoulder wounds did not seem to be healing. Tom took a tetanus shot. This is a brief account as told to me by several people but not Tom. Plan to try to get a first hand account.

Talked to Tom —



YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF OAKLAND

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December 31, 1959

Mr. and Mrs. John Craighead
Route #3
Missoula, Montana

Dear Margaret and John:

It certainly was a pleasant surprise to receive your nice Christmas card.

By the way, I just had an opportunity to talk to Bob McKinnon, who is going to school up your way. It seems like his boat trip across the country was an exciting adventure. He is a fine boy.

Your study on grizzly bears excites me. From 1936 to 1939 I served as a seasonal ranger in Yellowstone National Park. One of my pleasant duties was to accompany the garbage truck with a rifle to the old bear feeding grounds in the Canyon Area. The bulk of the animals coming to this spot were grizzlies. I don't know what good the rifle would have done should I have had to use it.

I had a lot of opportunities to go back into this region alone and watch the life of the grizzlies. The coyotes seemed to have a fond trick of coming in pairs. One would remain on the hillside while the other would come up behind a grizzly - nip him on the flank as the grizzly roared in anger - at the same time dropping the morsel in his mouth. Then the coyote would pick it up and be off to the hillside to his mate with a dinner in hand.

You asked in particular about our bear incident in Glacier National Park. In the first week of September of 1956 there were 26 teen-age boys and 6 adults from the Oakland YMCA enroute from Many Glacier to Waterton Lakes. We camped at Stoney Indian Pass in Glacier Park near the Canadian border.

Early one morning 16 of us departed for a climb. As it grew light I noticed a large grizzly proceeding through a meadow, going in the general direction of our camp. He reared up and sniffed the air. I took great pride in pointing out that this was a grizzly and it was a rare sight. Because of their usual avoidance of men I did not give our camp a second thought.

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When we returned in late afternoon we found that one of the boys, Tobey Johnson, was sleeping under a makeshift tent when he felt something nudge him. Thinking it was his partner, he pushed back. It turned out to be a grizzly. The animal tore down the shelter and sunk his teeth through the sleeping bag into the calf of Tobey's leg. The bear then retreated, but remained near camp most of the day.

That evening three huge grizzlies showed up. We cached all our food in the one large tree and built a big fire. We kept a watch by the fire all night. This didn't phase the animals at all. They roamed among the sleeping boys, opened every rucksack to see if any food might remain. Fortunately no one was hurt. Possibly it was due to the large number of persons.

I shall never forget that long night. As the grizzlies would approach within a few feet of the fire, rear up and look at us, it reminded me of some of those grizzly paintings made by Charley Russell.

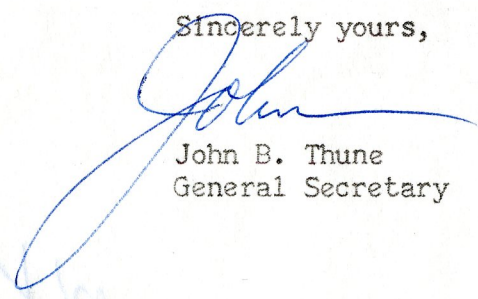
The grizzlies had left by morning, but when one of the boys went down to the creek to get some water one of the animals broke out of the brush and rushed him for a short distance. Needless to say the boy was back in camp in a few seconds. By the way, the boy that I spoke of was Bob McKinnon.

After consultation with the ranger, following this incident, I am convinced that this boldness on the part of the animals was due to the very poor berry crop that season. Hibernation time also was drawing near.

I remember reading in the newspapers that Fall of one or two other grizzly bear incidents in Montana. If my memory is correct, one or two men were killed in the episode.

May the New Year bring loads of happiness to both of you and your splendid family. I hope that our paths may cross again in the not too distant future.

Sincerely yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John B. Thune', is written over the typed name and title.

John B. Thune
General Secretary

JBT/m