

# MEMBER ADVENTURES

## THE ACORN SERIES - COLONEL W.D. PICKETT, BEAR HUNTER



Theodore J. Holsten  
EMERITUS MEMBER  
Boone and Crockett Club

The first book in the Acorn Series was published by the Boone and Crockett Club in 1893. It featured a collection of unique hunting adventures by members of the Club. One of these, "Nights with the Grizzlies,"

was written by Colonel W.D. Pickett, a Confederate war hero. Pickett, who owned a ranch in Wyoming, was a dedicated bear hunter. His favorite bear rifle was a Sharps single shot that he used to dispatch many grizzlies. Here is an excerpt from what he wrote:

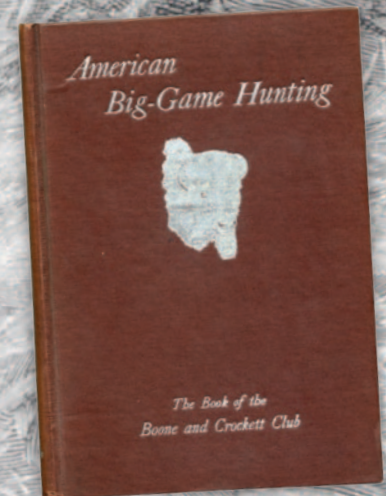
"About the middle of July 1885, word reached me that there was a considerable sign of bear rooting on some high mountain plateaus not many day's [sic] travel by pack train from my ranch. Taking a pack outfit, including my fur-lined sleeping bag, a good mountain man, and a lad of fifteen to take care of camp and the horses, and enough grub for a few days, we reached the locality after a hard climb, about noon on the 18th of July. We made camp at about 8,500 feet elevation on the head of one of the forks of Four Bear Creek, having to pack wood up from below for making coffee.

We struck out after lunch up the gulch, and after going a few miles discovered a grizzly rooting among the rocks well up to its head, near the summit of the range, which is here between 10,000 and 11,000 feet elevation. A reconnaissance indicated that the only chance to approach him to windward was by crossing the mountain to the right into the valley of another fork of Four Bear Creek. Accordingly, we climbed over the mountain divide and were making along the opposite slope, when just in our front about a mile off, near the head of the gulch on the right, was discovered another grizzly rooting.

It was agreed that I was to have the shot, and it became necessary to leave my horse and dogs back with the men. I took it afoot. A little study of the ground showed that in order to approach him successfully, it was necessary to descend to the bottom of the gorge on the right, and to ascend along its bed. This I proceeded to do. Just before reaching the bed of the gorge I was exposed to view, and was walking fast or running to get the advantage of friendly cover. When within about fifty yards of the bottom, and with my attention directed to the bear about half a mile away, a large grizzly forced himself on my attention by rising from his bed in the bottom of the gulch. Walking slowly away, he commenced ascending diagonally the opposite and steep side of the gorge. The old rascal during the heat of the day had dug a resting place in the cool bed of the branch, was taking his siesta, and evidently resented being disturbed. From the sullen way in which he made off, occasionally looking back, I felt he was going to be ugly. Quicker than it takes to write it, I had two cartridges in my right hand, which, with the one in the rifle, were thought sufficient, for at that time the size of the beast was not realized. The cartridge in the rifle was a 110-270-grain express, and those in the hand 110-270-grain and 110-340-grain respectively, all express balls.

While [I was] making these preparations, the bear, going diagonally up the side of the gulch, had disappeared behind a huge conglomerate boulder that overhung the stream. Seeing he must soon emerge, I dropped on my right knee and stood ready to fire at the first favorable opportunity. In a moment he emerged from behind the boulder, walked up a short distance, stopped and looked back, exposing his left side to rather more than a quartering shot. Aim was quickly taken for his heart. A report followed, and the little express ball did its work well.

It broke two ribs, three or four large fragments entered the heart, and the balance of the splinters scattered through the lungs. Making but little noise when hit—an ugly sigh—he, as this species of bear almost always does under the circumstances, tucked his head between his hind legs, and rolled down into the gulch, using his forelegs for guides. He came up with a bounce, was on his feet in a moment and making a rush straight for me. I had loaded in a jiffy with the other 110-270-grain cartridge, but waited a moment until he commenced ascending my side of the gulch, hoping with a good shot to roll him back. Crossing rapidly the bed of the gulch, he was in a moment ascending toward me, and when within about thirty yards (he was originally about seventy yards at the first fire) I fired at his front, hitting at the point of the right shoulder, shattering the socket-joint and that bone half-way to the elbow. He did not roll back, but was demoralized and sickened, and had not the strength to come further, but changing his direction to the left about forty-five degrees, passed within twenty yards of my right front. I was loaded and ready for another shot as he passed. He appeared so near done for, however, that I hesitated to fire, wishing to have some practice on him for my two young dogs, Bob and Snip, which had never seen a live bear. He, however, seemed, after passing, to mend his licks so fast that I feared he would give trouble in dispatching him, so I ran rapidly after him; he in meantime having partially disappeared under the bank, and when within fifteen or twenty yards he turned at bay, facing me. Before he could charge, if such was his aim, the 110-340-grain cartridge was delivered into the side of the neck within the collar-bone, making a fearful wound, and rolling him down into the gulch, where he soon died. It was only after my man had come up and the bear had been rolled over that his dimensions and the danger I had escaped by the little ball doing such execution at the socket joint were realized. Had it struck an inch and a



The Member Adventures series will continue to feature highlight and excerpts from Boone and Crockett publications written by our adventurous members.

half to the left, he would have been on me in a few more jumps; and though another shot would have been given, I think, unless it had been a paralyzing shot in the brain or spinal column, he would have so torn and lacerated me as to make death preferable.

I have been in half a dozen scrapes of more or less danger with these bears, but have never lost my presence of mind until they were dead and the danger passed through realized. I have always determined never to run, but to face them and fire away believing that the least sign of fear gives any animal additional courage." ■

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This illustration by A.B. Frost was from Scribner's Magazine, titled Prospecting for Grub.

Colonel W. D. Pickett's story, Nights with Grizzlies can be found in the book *American Big-Game Hunting*.

**B&C**

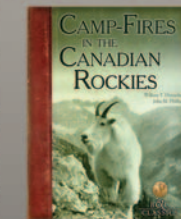
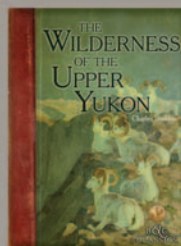
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