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One of the outstanding experiences of the days when I was spending my summers in survey camps, living in tents in the back country and moving every few days is the time we ran into a big black bear. It was on a pleasant fall day about the middle of September 1913 and we were moving camp up the road along the west side of Wood River about twenty miles south of Meeteetse, Wyoming. Traveling in two horse drawn wagons piled high with tents, bed-rolls, groceries, and other camping equipment we were headed for a new job in the mountains near the small mining town of Kirwin. Karl Suhr, the teamster, a man from Cody was driving the lead wagon, and I was driving a team of mules pulling the second wagon, my wife Inez in the seat beside me. The other four members of the party consisting of John Keefe of Billings, Ralph Fowler of Cheyenne, Bill Lumis of Powell, and Jim Bascom of Cody were riding on top of the loads wherever they could find a place to sit.

As we slowly wended our way along the dirt road through the canyon I was getting my first look at a new country. I was especially interested at the moment in the mountain scenery as it unfolded before us. A black object on the hillside across the river about a half mile ahead attracted my attention as it moved about. Glancing that way occasionally as we drew closer I decided it was a black cow grazing among the scattered trees. As we approached within a quarter mile or so of the animal I noticed that it did not move like a cow, but would hump over and make quick moves from side to side. Suddenly, I tumbled to the idea that it might be a bear. Calling to Karl ahead, he quickly verified my opinion, and excitement ran high. It was the first real live wild bear I had ever seen and we were loaded for just such an occasion. Karl had

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a 30 - 40 Krag Winchester and I had a 30 - 30 Carbine. By this time we were about 250 yards from the animal and it did not seem to be aware of our presence, or at least paid no attention to us. It kept right on mouthing the ripe huckle berries from the low bushes.

Grabbing our rifles we squatted beside the road just in front of the lead team. We both leveled down on the target taking rest on our knees. In my excitement my rifle sight kept wobbling all over the hillside, it seemed, but we both managed to fire at the same time. The bear tumbled down the slope into a clump of small spruce out of sight. We men folk went scrambling down the hill, across the swift, waist deep Wood River, and went panting up the rocky slope toward the clump of spruce. Cautiously approaching the scene we could hear nothing of the wounded bear. But visions of a wounded bear concealed in the bushes caused us to take precautionary measures. Karl's dog, a brown sheppard, was at our heels, but was showing no concern. The dog, Vee, had a trick of fetching a stick back to you if you threw it. I played a dirty trick on the unsuspecting Vee by throwing a stick deep into the clump of spruce. The ever faithful Vee went bounding happily into the thick brush! Wow! He let a yip out of him and came charging back just as fast, looking back with his bristles up and his tail between his legs! Since no bear followed him we felt reassured. Poking our rifle barrels ahead opening the way we eased into the brush inch by inch. Ready to flee at the first crack of a twig. But bruin was found dead. One shot had entered the neck and killed him instantly.

While congratulating ourselves Inez came puffing up. She had waded the swift river all by herself. (But when we went back I had to carry her across piggy-back.) We now found ourselves with a dead bear on our hands, faced with the problem of how best to get to the wagon. This was solved by putting a pack-saddle on one of the mules and bringing it over.

One smell and the wary mule refused to go near the bear. Even after being blindfolded it still remembered where the bear was, so we had to try another scheme. The mule was snubbed close to a tree down the hill a ways and hemmed in with a pole so it could not swing around much. The bear was then pulled down to the mule and an attached rope thrown over the mules back. Then at a signal with two men pulling on the rope and two men boosting the carcass was hoisted aboard. The mule ceased to object once the bear was loaded. With the bear loaded on the wagon we continued on for several miles to where we camped for the night. It was late and everyone was tired so no tents were pitched. The cook stove was set up alongside a big three foot log lying on the ground which was utilized as a cooktable. Inez fried up a big mess of bear liver with bacon for supper and everyone pronounced it fine. After supper we just rolled our beds out on the ground and slept under the stars. The next day was Sunday, or at least I called it Sunday, and we spent the day skinning out the bear and cleaning up the head and hide in preparation for shipping to Denver for mounting into a rug.

In dressing out the carcass it was found to be very fat, with lots of white leaf lard. Rendered out the lard was nice and white and made excellent biscuits. We filled all of our empty buckets for use in the future. Naturally, the question arose as to which one of us fired the fatal shot. The spent bullet was found and Karl very generously gave me the credit, based on the size and shape of the bullet. We had used different sized ammunition. A Denver taxidermist made the hide into a full sized rug with head and open mouth, and claws. A nice trophy now gracing the room of my grandsons.