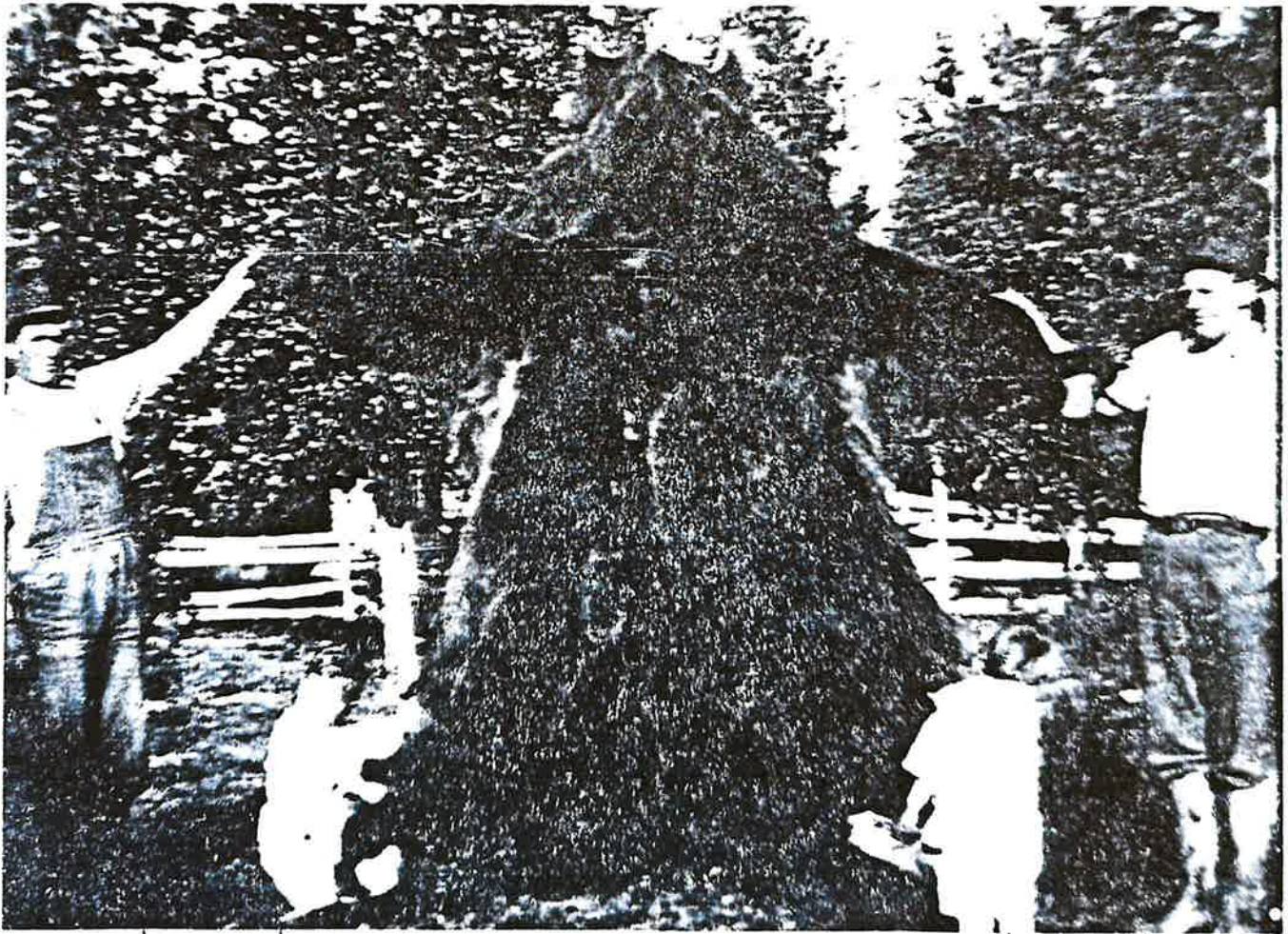


THE ANTIMONY BEAR STORY



This picture of the hide was taken just a day or two after the bear was killed. It shows Chess Riddle on the left and Clell Riddle on the right. The children are Sherrel Riddle, son of Chess, left, and Elliott N. Rowan, his cousin, right.

THE ANTIMONY BEAR STORY

This story was compiled in 1985
by Melba Larsen

from

A Newspaper Report by J. W. Humphrey, Forest Ranger and Supervisor of the old Sevier Forest, at that time called the Dixie Forest

A Report by Ambrose Shurtz, Ranger on the Powell National Forest, on which Wendell Larsen collaborated

An Unsigned Newspaper article headed Coyoto, Utah, and dated March 18

And a report by Kenneth Larsen

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I have tried to leave the original stories as they were written as much as possible and still eliminate a lot of duplication.

At the time of this story the town was called Coyoto. It was changed to Antimony about 1920.

The old grizzly bear was killed March 16, 1916, but stories of his size and prowess began circulating around Southern Utah several years earlier. From the Newspaper article we read: "This particular bear began his raids 10 years ago. He was larger than most bears in his youth, and grew still larger and became a menace and a fear, greater and greater, as the seasons passed. His fame spread and many an attempt has been made to bring him in, all unsuccessful until this last; and there are those even yet, who aver that it was a handicap of old age that proved his downfall--that the old grizzly was not able to "come back."

The old bear's favorite meat was choice young cow. His method of attack was to jump on his victim's back, bear her down, tear her open and eat the lungs and choicest portion of the carcass. One prominent ranchman here, C. E. Rowan, declares the bear knew his brand. Mr. Rowan has been the heaviest loser, but all have suffered. During the past 10 or 12 seasons this same bear has killed hundreds of head of choice cattle and the losses he has inflicted have run way into the thousands."

Mr. Shurtz told this story of an early encounter with Mr. Bear: "Over a period of time there was a very large silver-tipped grizzly bear that roamed the mountains of Southern Utah, particularly in Garfield County, but his trail covered, also, the mountains which lie between the East Fork and the West Fork of the Sevier River and onto Fish Lake Mountain. He did not confine his range to the mountain tops. Frequently his tracks were seen down on lower elevations. I once saw his tracks on what we called the Barney Top. This was where Major Powell set up his observation post. From this mountain which was twelve thousand feet high he could, with high powered glasses, scan the country from Nevada on the West to New Mexico on the East.

Mr. Grizzly was the cowman's worst enemy because wherever he happened to

lie, he never lacked for something to fill his belly. He not only killed a critter when he needed food, but he seemed to kill them just for the fun of it. Examination of dead cattle showed that he would slap a cow on the head and break her neck. One such cow had every bone on one side of her head broken.

In 1904 the Powell National Forest was created. This took in all of the mountain from the Boulder Top on the east to the rim of the mountain on the west, a distance of approximately sixty miles. On May 4, 1904, I was appointed ranger. With me were other men. One of these men was Joseph J. Porter. Our districts joined.

In my district, high up under the crest of the mountain at the head of Twitchell Creek, on a branch of North Creek, there was a small reservoir known as Round Wellow Bottom. Before I moved down onto Twitchell Creek, I visited this reservoir and saw that it was leaking badly at the one edge. Immediately below was a very steep mountain side, and I knew that if this dam should give way that the little flat on Twitchell Creek where I often camped would be buried under hundreds of tons of mud, rock, willows, and trees. Regardless of this I moved down and set up my tent, hanging the guy ropes on the pegs I had used before. Had I been camped there in 1907 when the reservoir broke, I would have been buried under tons of mud, rocks, willows, and trees.

Ranger Porter and I had agreed to meet on this small flat on July 2, 1906. About noon he rode up to camp. As I went about getting some dinner I told Porter of the leak in the reservoir, and I suggested that we pull up the tent and move out onto higher ground. Well, we didn't. Instead we grabbed a hook and line and set out to catch a mess of fish. We returned to camp about dark. When the fish were cleaned and our night chores were done, we made ready to roll in. Ranger Porter, now in his underwear, stood out in front of the tent. He called to me and said, "Brose, I just wish old Club-foot would come along."

"Well, if he were to come, what would you do?" I asked.

"Brose, I'd just leap upon his back and take a ride."

"Now listen, Joe, the sight of Old Bruno would scare you until your knees would crack and your whole physical being would just about collapse. I'd have to bathe your head in cold water to keep you from having heart failure."

"You know that I'm not a coward," he continued. "Why, I'd leap on his back, clinch my fingers into the hair on his back, and away we'd go."

Our saddles, with guns, were laid down one on top of the other at the foot of the bed. The beds were behind the center post. Porter was in the front bed. We left a small wash pan of water just inside the tent door. Hanging on the front post were my two quarters of mutton. We rolled in and were soon in slumberland--but not for long. I was awakened by the tent's lapping down into my face. I nudged Joe and told him what had happened. But he just gave me an off-hand answer, saying, "Brose, let me alone and let's get a little sleep."

When our visitor, Mr. Bear, had come from behind the tent, he had pulled the two guy ropes off the peg. That was why the tent sagged onto my face. As yet I had not heard any real audible sounds, but I was nervous and couldn't feel easy.

After our night visitor had eaten our fish, he came and stood with his head right inside the tent door. I looked up and saw him lapping the water from the pan. I nudged Porter and said, "Joe, there's a bear!" He raised up and saw the old grizzly's face about four feet from him. I didn't have to tell that "brave" man to cover up. He quickly covered his head with quilts so tightly that he nearly suffocated. The old bear paid no attention to either of us. He kept looking at that mutton.

I said, "Joe, he's going to take my meat."

In a smothered, trembling voice he answered, "Let him have it."

Well, the good-natured old fellow didn't take the meat. As he stood there he opened his mouth, which looked mighty big to us, and with that long red tongue of his just licked his face off.

When the old fellow decided to leave us, he quietly walked down the trail about forty yards and there stopped on the bank of the creek. He seemed in no hurry. Both of us men were so excited that we simply couldn't get our guns out of the scabbards. We yanked and pulled at them, and when we finally did get them out, each of us stood in the tent door and took a shot at him. We missed him, but hit "Aunt Vesta's Ranch House."

Next morning I reminded Joe that he had wished Old Bruno would come along. I said, "Joe, do you remember what you wished for last night? When your wish came true as suddenly as yours did last night, what ailed you? You told me that you were no coward. Our good natured old cowkiller came along, and all you needed to do was to hop upon his back and take a ride."

Looking at me very seriously, Mr. Porter pleaded, "Brose, please don't tell the men down town about how my courage failed me. I really thought I was no coward, but I tell you I was so darned scared that I wondered when I would get my breath back, and my hair is still standing straight up."

The long night of fright was ended for Joe and Brose.

The final and last day of life for Clubfoot, the monster grizzly bear, came to an end on March 16, 1916. Ten long years of freedom for this cowkiller had gone down the stream of time since that night he visited Ranger Porter and me. During all this time he had ranged at will and wherever he went he left a few dead cattle. On one of his tours across the country, he killed sixty cattle. Charley Rowan who lived in Coyoto told me that he killed thirty-six head for him in one little valley. Now, whether these thirty-six were a part of the sixty or not, I do not know. He said that he found one cow with her head buried under the mud out in the center of a shallow lake and that it looked like that bear just chased her out into the lake and then held her head under the water until she was dead. I never heard of his bothering a sheep herd.

Obviously, there seems to come an end to most things whether they be good or bad. This was especially so when on March 16, 1916, the tables were turned on the old cowkiller. He had gone down off the high mountain ranges to hibernate for the winter. He had located himself out seven or eight miles west

of Coyoto in a rough section of country that was covered mostly with pinion pine and scrub cedar, and after killing a few head of cattle he was not in evidence again until last Wednesday.

At a later date the men who killed the bear found a large hole dug under a tree. They thought the bear had dug this hole in which to hibernate for the winter. He had lined it with cedar bark. They theorized that he had come out of hiding only a few days before he was killed."

There was still snow on the north slopes of the mountains, but the ranchers had begun putting their cattle out onto spring range in the higher country. There were no fences, so there was someone riding, checking range and cattle every day.

Old Bruin's first act after leaving his den was to knock down a cow belonging to Chess Riddle. The cow was not dead when the men found her, but had all the meat on the top of her shoulders, and part of her back torn off and devoured. That was the first indication they found that Mr. Bear was out. The cow was killed by the men. They then went back to town for a bear trap.

On March 15th, Sil Riddle and his two sons, Chess and Clell Riddle made a tour of the range, checking their cattle. They set a bear trap by the dead cow and hunted bear. He was not to be found that day, although about half a mile from the cow they came upon a horse that had wintered out and died. It was a two year old filly that had belonged to Clell. The bear, still hungry, had eaten all the meat off the hind quarters of the dead animal, estimated to be at least 200 pounds.

The next morning the Riddles decided they should probably move their cattle somewhere else, away from the old bear. So Chess, armed with a 30.30 rifle and Clell, with a 25.35, rode over to the ranch of Jess Jolley, who was called Rube by everyone in Antimony. He armed himself with a 30.30 rifle and the three set out.

As they rode along Pole Road, they spied the old fellow on a ridge about 300 yards away. At first they thought it was a burnt stump. In a few minutes, however, he was off, with the men in hot pursuit.

The country there was very rough. There are three little creeks coming from the west. These small canyons or gutters were about a half mile deep and very steep to climb. The grizzly headed south across North Fork of Forest Creek and the men followed him. As he climbed toward the top of the sidehill Chess Riddle made the first direct hit, hitting him right behind the ears on the back of his head. This knocked him down and he rolled and tumbled down the hillside about two hundred feet.

"That's it," they said. "We got him." But the old fellow was only stunned and in a little time he got up and took off up the hill heading south across Forest Creek, the men following.

The men chased him as fast as they could and continued firing at him as best they could. One bullet hit him in the flank and it ranged upward into

his vital parts. This really started his downfall. He began to show signs of weakening but he still had plenty of go. Every time he was hit, and that was practically every shot, it only served to make him angry and he would chase after the hunter from which the shot came. He chased the hunters back down the hill, then climbed again toward the ridge. He didn't seem to like to chase them up hill.

Between the forks of Forest Creek the country is steep and rocky and fairly well covered with pinions and cedars. All three men were climbing out when a little brown burro, about the same color as the bear, jumped out from behind a tree and snorted, right in front of Clell. It was one the Gleave family had given Kenneth Larsen, and it had wintered out with Riddle horses. Clell thought for sure the bear had him. He said afterward that he would have shot it, then and there, except he didn't want to waste a bullet.

After the bear had crossed both forks of Forest Creek he climbed a ridge and went out of sight. Just over the top he stopped and waited. The men got close before they spotted him and he took after them. Both the Riddle men were riding good horses and they took off, but Rube Jolley was riding an old horse that could not run very fast. He could barely keep ahead of the bear. Later the men said it looked like he was clawing the horse's tail at every jump. They finally made an extra effort and got away from him and he took off up hill again.

By now they were almost out of cartridges. Clell had the fastest horse so they sent him back to town for more ammunition and to get more help.

The trail was now bloody and easy to follow. Chess and Rube followed him another four or five miles over rolling, ridgy country before they caught up with him again. In the meantime poor old Clubfoot lay down under a bushy cedar tree. He didn't have life enough left to get up so they carefully moved up closer to him. As he seemed to be dying, they overcame their fear. They had only two cartridges for a 30.30 gun, and they fired both of these at his head between his eyes. Neither bullet broke through his skull. Now, all fear gone, they got on their horses and pelted the old fellow in the head with big rocks until they were sure he was dead. He had stopped on a rocky hillside so they had no trouble finding rocks about football size, weighing possibly ten pounds each.

As soon as they were sure the old grizzly wouldn't get away they made a signal fire so the men coming from town could locate them.

Young Riddle led a group of other men (the reports varied from four or five to fifteen) out to the place where the old grizzly had lain and died. Chess and Rube had started skinning him by the time the other men got there, so there was no need for the extra ammunition, but they all pitched in and helped with the skinning job. In trying to estimate his weight they compared his body to that of a Durham bull that weighed 1800 pounds. His hide, when off, had thirteen bullet holes in it. There were two holes between the eyes and another two at the back of the head, between the ears, but there was not one hole in his skull. They also discovered that half of one front foot was gone, they surmised from being caught in a trap. It was the track made by this stub foot that had earned him the nickname of "Clubfoot."

There was a layer of fat from 4 to 6 inches thick over his back and down his sides. One of the men, with a long bladed knife, cut a strip of fat off the back for each member of the party. They estimated there was about 60 pounds of fat taken by them. After being rendered, bear grease was highly prized for use in greasing harnesses and other leather items.

The hide was bundled up and Sil Riddle carried it home in front of him on his saddle that night.

The next morning Sil took a pack saddle and his two grandsons, Wendell Larsen, just turned thirteen, and Kenneth Larsen, eight, and went back up to salvage more fat. They had brought along two heavy, tightly woven, canvas type sacks, called bemis sacks. They came from the grist mill, and were used there because they would not let the flour sift through. Each had held about 125 pounds of flour. These sacks were filled with fat to a little more than the depth of the bags on the pack saddle so that when placed, one on each side, they reached just a little above the top of the horse's back. After they were tightly secured the head was placed on top, in the middle, and also secured, to ride triumphantly back to town.

It was estimated they collected between 100 and 150 pounds more fat. After it was rendered Mrs. Sil Riddle used most of it to make home made soap.

The seventeenth of March was the annual celebration of the founding of the Relief Society. The women of the town always had a Seventeenth of March Festival, this being a Mormon community. The men decided to join the party. They put the bear hide on the old, black, baldy horse that Rube Jolley had ridden during the hunt. In order to get the hide onto the horse's back, they had to put a twister on his nose before they could subdue him. When the hide was on the horse, they paraded up and down the street, stealing the show from the ladies. This was not surprising because the legs of the hide drug the ground on both sides. The hide when tanned covered a good sized floor.

The next day after that, the 18th, Chess took Kenneth and went up to get the bear trap and check cattle. From Kenneth's report: "Uncle Chess showed me where the bear was when they started shooting and where it had rolled down the hill in the snow. On the way up we had passed a good sized pile where the old bear had relieved himself. To me it looked huge. Chess turned to me and said, "See, that is where we shot the sh-- out of him."

I also saw the cow the bear had eaten on. They had set a large bear trap by her. Chess had me try to spring the trap with a long stick, but I was either too small or too big a coward. I couldn't do it. I also got down in a bear track in the snow that was so deep I could hardly get out of it, and lost sight of Chess. That was one time I really yelled. Even though I knew the bear was dead I was still afraid. I was sure glad to see Chess again.

The hide had been hung lengthwise on the corral fence, where it stayed for several days. While it was there we noticed that the horses would snort and shy away from it, but that all the cattle were curious. They would go right up and sniff at it. That is possibly one reason why the old bear was able to kill so many cattle. They were not afraid of him."

From Mr. Humphrey: "In the middle of March, 1916, I read in the Deseret

News a report of the killing of a huge grizzly bear near Antimony, then known as Coyoto. The item mentioned that the bear weighed a ton. The size of the bear was so unusual that I decided to drive over there to learn the facts. So, accompanied by my assistant Wallace Riddle (who was a half brother of Sil Riddle and well acquainted with the people of the community) I drove over to the little town, made up mostly of scattered ranches, a small store, a school, and a church.

We drove directly to the ranch of Sil Riddle. Here we saw the bear hide hanging lengthwise on his corral fence, the skin touching the ground on both sides of the fence. There were at least two other ranchers besides Sil Riddle present, and they soon let us know that they thought the newspaper report was no exaggeration as to the size of the bear. A large Belgian stallion in a nearby stable weighed 2000 pounds and they compared the size of the bear to him. They also said that they had placed the bear hide on another horse and it covered the horse completely from head to tail. We accepted their story, and they proceeded to tell us of the actual killing of the bear.

At our office in Panguitch we got out a small mimeographed paper which we called the "Sevier Ranger." It contained items of interest in Forest work from the different Ranger districts. Copies were sent to all the Forest personnel, a copy to the Regional Foresters office in Ogden, and to the Foresters Office in Washington, D. C.

When the copy reached Washington, a Dr. Griffiths, reading the bear story, wrote and asked us to ship him the skull of the bear. This was done and he frankly admitted that the skull was the largest he had ever seen. He also mentioned that the bear could have been between 50 and 60 years old. I checked my encyclopedia and found that Grizzly bears had been known to have attained a weight of as much as 1400 pounds and a length of nine feet from the tip of the nose to the tail.

The hide of this bear was shipped to Denver to be tanned and mounted in a rug. The Denver people in turn sent it to Portland to do the mounting. Both Denver and Portland reported that it was the largest bear hide they had ever come across."

Note: The hide is now in the possession of Utahna Gottfredson, daughter of Chess Riddle, in Ely, Nevada.

Sil had already begun to clean up the head before the request came for the skull. He was curious about the age, and wanted to get it to someone knowledgeable about such things, who could tell him how old it appeared to be. He would alternately boil it in a big, black, cast iron kettle, about two feet across, which was set over a fire in the yard, then cool it and scrape and polish. He continued this until he was satisfied it was clean. He shipped it to the Smithsonian Institute, in Washington, D. C., and they paid him \$35.00 for it. As far as we know it is still there.

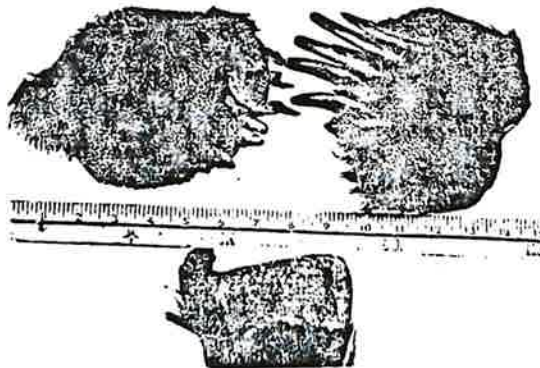
From Mr. Shurtz: "Because these men said they could not penetrate the skull with a 30.30 caliber gun, I was rather skeptical. They also said that his teeth were worn down almost to the jaws, and that the bear must have been anywhere from sixty years of age up. There were two Indians who said the

bear was known to be in the country when they were little boys, and they were at least forty years old. Because of these stories I decided to write to the U. S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Sports, Fisheries and Wildlife to ascertain if these stories were true. I am giving the letter that I received from Richard H. Manville concerning the story of Clubfoot." (See copy of the letter on page 9).

And so ends the story of the famous old "Clubfoot," long gone but not forgotten.



Bearskin as it looks today.



Bear paws as they look today.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife
Washington 25, D.C.

April 19, 1963

Mr. Ambrose Shurtz
175 North 7 East
Springville, Utah

Dear Mr. Shurtz:

Your recent letter to the Smithsonian Institution concerning the Utah bear specimen has been referred to this office. We are pleased to learn of your interest in this specimen and happy to hear something further of the circumstances of its capture.

The specimen in our collection is merely the skull. It was received on March 16, 1916, and catalogued as No. 223034. Our notes indicate that it was an old adult male, collected by J.M. Riddle on the Sevier National Forest, Utah. It is indeed a very large specimen and certainly came from a grizzly (or silver-tip) bear. The greatest length of the skull is 15 and one quarter inches. There is no evidence on this skull of bullet wounds. Certainly this is a fully adult bear, but judging from the amount of wear on the cheek teeth we do not feel that it is nearly as old as the 60 to 100 years which you suggest. We have no precise way of aging such specimens as this, but we would feel that an age of about 20 years might be reasonable. The cheek teeth are not greatly worn, certainly not to the jaw. The incisors and canines in the front of the mouth have been worn considerably more. Several of them are shattered near the tip and this appears to be an injury suffered from a severe blow, or possibly damage to the teeth after the skull was cleaned up. Bears frequently have accessory and abnormal teeth, usually representing rudimentary premolars. This specimen had two such small nubbins in the lower jaw and four in the upper, one of which was worn down to the jaw line, as though from fighting a trap.

The above is about the only information which we can deduce from the specimen and we hope that it will be helpful to you. We will be most interested in seeing a copy of the article you propose when it is published.

Yours sincerely,

Richard H. Manville
Director, Bird and Mammal
Laboratories
Branch of Wildlife Research