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The Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Mycological Society

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MONTHLY MEETING:

WHEN? September 23, 2002

WHAT TIME? 7:00 PM; the meeting will come to order at 7:30

WHERE? Pikes Peak National Bank,
2401 W. Colorado Ave. (across from Bancroft Park). Enter at the door on Colorado Ave. just west of the bank door. There you will find stairs and an elevator. You may use either.

PROGRAM: The Program will be our annual potluck. The club will provide the drinks and chicken for everyone. We each are to bring a dish to share to go along with the main dish. Please bring serving utensils for the dish you bring, and your own plate and eating utensils.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES: by Dennis Craig

Seems like not a whole lot to write about as we wind down this rather dismal year for finding and foraging for mushrooms, we can only hope for better times ahead. At our last PPMS meeting in August, a motion was made to have this upcoming meeting to be our "Pot Luck" and to make this our last meeting of this year. A discussion followed and a vote was taken by those present to do this. I polled the board by phone and all agreed to the change. It was also suggested and agreed that the Society provide the main meat dish for our meeting. I will get chicken to bring for the main meat dish and the rest of us will bring the other "goodies" to go along with our "Pot Luck". On Monday, September 9, I went to the CMS meeting in Denver to renew old acquaintances and take in my friend's program titled "Changing Views of True and False Morels" by Nancy Smith Weber. Nancy gave us an insight as to what she and her study group are finding out about these mushrooms. There probably are many more and different false morels than we realize, and some of our true morels that we think are different are probably the same. The false morels found in the Mississippi Valley area are different from the ones found out west. They have eaten them with no ill affect, as I can attest to. Studies have been taken in Iowa to determine the distribution of these.

A temporary change in habitat such as fire, slides and construction scrapings seem to be a trigger for morels to cause spontaneous fruiting. Also the time of the year when the fire happens appears to affect the amount of fruiting. The amount of moisture in the soil when the fires occur is also a factor. This fall with the fires we've had maybe a good time to look for burn morels! Nancy is very much interested in hearing from anyone who finds morels. She does not want to know the specific locations, but wants to know the environmental data of when and, in general, what the area was like where finds occurred. Anyone for FALL morels?

See you at our September 23 meeting.

BEARS LIKE MUSHROOMS, TOO:

by Glenn Lorang

There are two of God's creatures that will instantly transport me to an ancestral escape mode and put me up a tree. A Mama Moose with calf and a Mama Bear with cubs. I learned those forty-some years ago when we were hunting elk "up the Lochsa." We already had the one elk we allowed ourselves. Now my older companions were more interested in something they called Black Jack or Red Dog or Four, Five Six, and I was hunting mushrooms.

My pulse was already pounding at a sight I often dream about! Brand new Shaggy Manes poking up through the forest floor! Fresh and snowy-white. Savory and delicate! I was almost certain they had not been here yesterday when we had backpacked in the four-point bull elk I shot. Now, I was hunting mushrooms, scanning the trail for fresh signs of wildlife and keeping an eye out for Blue Grouse. My older companions were already deep into their poker chips.

I could already see those *Coprinus comatus* simmering in the cast iron skillet on our camp stove, sautéed in onion-salted butter with a splash of white wine. I even got a whiff of their aroma! My mouth began to water. I could already taste them along with the bacon and onions and fresh elk liver. And there they were! Sparkling white and almost covering an old prospect dig. But something had been there before me. I suspected that

because I had come across a cauliflower mushroom, which had been ravaged by some animal, and from the looks of the ground about, it was a friendly bruin. I took special care to scan the area around me, but saw nothing else alarming.

Suddenly, my ears went on full alert at the sound of a suspicious "WOOF!" I was not alone! Apparently, I had invaded the dining room of Mama Bruin and she might not be alone. Except for the tracks around the *Sparassis radicata*, I had seen no sign. Now, I let my eyes search carefully for cubs. I told myself: "Now keep cool! Show no fear! This is a friendly bear! She is just curious! She does not see all that well, so she just wants a closer look! This is her home."

Nevertheless I carefully felt for the S&W .38 Special on my right hip. A shot from that might frighten her away. She was still a good 50' away. Right now she appeared to be only interested in communicating. Not having my self-teaching Berlitz Bear Book along, and being innocent of bear conversation beyond your basic "WOOOF!" I was not too comfortable with Mama Bear's head moving from side to side and a frequent WOOOF! I had carefully looked around when I first sighted the Shaggy Manes and saw no sign of a cub. But feeling that more effective communication had become necessary, since she had now raised to her hind feet and the frequent "Woofs!" had become GRRRRWHOOFS! and the head swaying was now accompanied by a gnashing of teeth, as she started toward me.

"Stay calm," I told myself. She is just curious. But she kept coming, swinging her head from side to side with loud sniffs, at times on all fours, and at times rising to her hind legs. When she invaded my comfort zone, I decided to end the conversation. This new acquaintance did not appear to be in a conversational mood. She obviously had something more than friendly hugging in mind. In my youthful naiveté I was not at all certain that romance was what she intended. Dancing with 300 pounds of Mama Bruin was not my style. Besides, I suspected BB and BO; (Bad Breath, and Body Odor).

They were always a turnoff to me, albeit how friendly the source might be. Had she not been so close, I would have quietly backed away, keeping a wary eye open for cubs. I would even have tendered a peace offering: the half-gallon of Chanterelles I had collected.

In those days we had not been taught to intimidate curious bears by yelling and making ourselves appear larger than we were. I don't believe this bear had read from that book! She kept coming. And I felt the pressing need to make a stronger statement. Mama Bruin's GRRRRWOOOFS!!! were becoming louder. Saliva started dripping from her gnashing teeth. She did not sound friendly at all.

I reached to my right hip for the .38 Special and carefully raised it to the desired position as I quietly eased back on the hammer, carefully held my breath, hoping she might suddenly wheel and depart. She took another step closer and reared back on her hind legs. Now her paws were swiping back and forth. I took another shallow breath; at this range, I couldn't miss! Mama B. showed no inclination to depart, and with a really loud GRRRRRWOOF!! shook her head violently, flinging saliva one side and the other, and squinted her piggy eyes directly at me. I gently squeezed the trigger!

I caught a brief glimpse of daylight through the neat round hole that appeared in Mama Bear's left ear and the surprised look of amazement on her face at the muzzle blast. After all, there was a Magnum load of Bulls-eye powder behind those hand-loaded semi-wad cutter slugs, and it made quite a blast. And she was only 16' away. I did not pace that off until later.

"I was only trying to get better acquainted!" she seemed to say in that puzzled fraction of a moment before she exploded in a black ball of fur up the mountain. And I was alone and a little shaky. But then I realized: bears like mushrooms, too! Until this rendezvous, I didn't really know that! I had seen deer and squirrels, porcupines and coyotes feasting on the succulent fungi. And Bruin and I had gathered huckleberries together several times; but never Chanterelles! Shaggy Manes! *Sparassis radicata*! Or was it *S. crispa*? No matter.

I do things differently now, than I did 40 or 50 years ago. I am no longer the brash teen-ager loaded with impulse and seething hormones. Bears are no longer the worrisome pest that ripped open young calves and stripped back the hides, or raised all sorts of havoc in the chicken coop. Or ripped open beehives and brutalized apple trees. I am a mature, senior citizen. Kill a bear, when I was a teen-ager, and you were a nine-day hero.

I will never forget my father telling me when I was a seven year old on my first deer hunt. We had climbed a

saddle above Spirit Lake near Mt. St. Helens and spotted a huge bear across the draw ripping a log apart. "Grizzly!" Dad whispered. I got a quick bead behind his ear with Dad's old Model '94 .30-30 Winchester. He put his hand on my shoulder. "NO!" he whispered. "We will go back this way." When we had dropped back down the ridge, he explained about Grizzly Bears and bears in general. "Remember, my boy! Grizzly Bears and Mama Bears don't bluff!"

Now, I am extra cautious. I kick tires! I go over the check-off list twice! I don't drive at night. One drink is my limit. I stay off the streets and highways and out of the parks and camping sites on weekends and holidays! I vote conservative, as long as it is environmental and humanitarian. And when I go picking huckleberries or mushrooms, I carefully scan the surroundings for Mama Moose and her calf, and Mama Bear and her cubs. At least twice, or more. I will still share the huckleberry patch with Mama Bear when it is large enough and the escape route is clear. I enjoy watching her rake the ripe berries off the bushes and cram them in her mouth. Even mushrooms, I will share! No one who eats mushrooms can be all bad! I am a gentler and kinder, mature adult now, with great gratitude for the gifts of mother nature and the obligation to share with our furry and feathered and scaly kind, even with Mama Bear and her tribe. I never did wish to shoot one, even for food. I never did like bear meat when I was growing up and shooting one made you a local hero.

If you should ever visit our elk hunting and mushroom heaven, Little Bull Basin, just above Dutch Creek, 60 miles up the Lochsa River from Lowell, Idaho, where it joins the Selway, and you see a Mama Bear with a round hole in her left ear, treat her kindly. She would be pretty ancient now. Tell her Hi! for me. Tell her I am sorry. But keep your distance. Remember: "Mama Bears don't bluff!" And remember to share. Bears like mushrooms, too!

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Mystery Mushroom

Pat Gustavson correctly identified the mystery mushroom *Gomphidius glutinosus* and her name was the first one out of the hat and therefore she was the winner of the \$5.00 prize. Pat doesn't just take care of those books, she also reads them! There were a total of 6 entries, all of which were correct. In addition to the winner, correct entries came from Dennis Craig, Frieda Davis, Glenn Lorang, Ken Pals, and Esther Price. Pat Gustavson agreed to provide the next puzzler, which you will find on page 4.

MYSTERY MUSHROOM by Pat Gustavson

I was unexpectedly discovered in Mid-September on Ptarmigan Trail near Cottonwood Pass. I grow on wood (commonly conifers). I have pores that produce spores of an olive-brown hue. My cap is large, 5-16 cms, convex, broad, densely woolly to hairy, dark brown to red. My flesh is firm, lemon yellow and very distinctive. Sometimes when bruised it turns reddish. I have a stalk that is substantial, 12-22 cms long, thick, club shaped to bulbous and widest near the base. My stalk is often decorated with large reticulations. I am a scrumptious mushroom for culinary dishes.

WHO AM I?

The Pikes Peak Mycological Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of mycology, publishes *Spore-Addict Times* monthly from April through September. Membership is open to anyone wanting to study mycology. Annual dues are \$15 for individual and family memberships. Submissions of ideas, articles, reviews, letters, artwork and recipes are welcome.

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