

YOSEMITE

By Janine Bouyssounouse

"We're here! We're here!" Jane said as she bounced up and down in her seat when she saw the entrance sign.

"We need to make a stop at the ranger's station before we get going on the trail." Dad cautioned.

The car pulled up in front of the ranger station and we all got out stretching out legs and getting a look at Yosemite. Dad went inside to have his talk with the ranger.

"There are so many trees and they are so big. It's beautiful here. Why didn't we come visit here before?" Jane said to no one in particular as she stared wide eyed at everything around her.

"Let's go." Dad said as he waived his arm in the air to motion us to come back to the car.

"Why can't we stay here for a while and look around?" Complained Mark.

"Yeah." Agreed Jane.

"We have to get going if we are going to get to the first camp before nightfall." Dad explained.

We drove back out of the valley the way we came and turned into a small parking lot near the exit and we pulled our packs out of the old blue station wagon.

"Do we have all the food with us?" Dad asked in a hurried voice, as he made sure all the doors to the car were locked.

"We're only going for a few days. Why does it matter?" Jane asked as she felt how heavy her backpack was.

"There have been reports of bears breaking into cars." Dad said calmly.

"Bears!" Mom said anxiously.

"Are the bears going to get us?" Mark asked with wide-open eyes.

"They would only be after our food, not us." explained Dad.

"I don't understand. Wouldn't the food be safer in the car, than in our packs?" Jane asked.

"The ranger explained what to do with the food so the bears won't get it when we are out on the trail. There have been several cars and ice chests that the bears have broken into to get food. I think the food is safer with us out on the trail." Dad stated.

We began our trek into the Yosemite wilderness.

"Why are all the trees on the hill cut in half at the same height?" Jane wanted to know.

"There was an avalanche here last winter and that was how high the snow was as it came down the mountain." Dad answered.

"I don't think I like Yosemite. They have bears and avalanches." Jane complained.

"The hill looks ugly with all of those dead trees." Mark joined in.

"Just keep going and watch your step." Mom said in her warning voice.

We finally arrived at camp and began setting up the tent, rolling out the sleeping bags and getting dinner ready. After dinner, we cleaned up extra well with the bears in mind.

"Dad, what are we going to do with the food?" Mark wanted to know.

"We are going to put all of the food into these two trash bags. Hurry up, it's getting dark. Don't forget to bring the garbage. The bears can smell garbage better than the unopened food." Dad said impatiently.

"Now what?" asked Jane

"Get the rope out of your pack, Mark." Dad directed.

We all watched as dad tied a rock to one end of the rope and walked around looking at different trees. He finally found one he liked and threw the rock into the air. He missed and it came crashing to the ground.

We all stood silently, afraid to say anything to disturb him. He tried again and this time he hit his mark. He got the rope over a branch. He jiggled the rope until the rock came down low enough for him to reach it. He untied the rock and tied one of the bags of food to it. Then he pulled the rope until the knot touched the branch.

He opened the second bag and put most of the rope inside of it. Then with the rope that was outside of the bag, he tied the other bag in a tight knot. Then he started looking around on the ground.

"This will work." Dad said to himself as he picked up a long, thick stick.

He lifted the bag of food that was on the ground and the other bag started to drop down a bit. He pushed the lower bag up using the stick until the two bags were at the same height, high above our heads and hopefully the bears' heads, too. Then we went to bed.

We woke up when we heard noises outside of the tent.

"What is that?" Asked Mark, annoyed that something woke him up.

"I'll look." Mom said bravely as she unzipped the tent door.

"John look!" Mom shook dad awake.

Mark and Jane looked outside and saw a momma bear and her two medium sized cubs. The cubs looked about the same size as Jane and Mark. The momma bear looked like she was bigger than dad.

"Mom, one of them is sniffing my backpack!" Jane exclaimed.

"The other two are trying to reach the bags of food!" Mark cried out.

"Be quiet. They should figure out that they can't get the food and go away." Dad said angrily.

We all sat in the tent and watched the bears to see what would happen. The bear sniffing Jane's backpack decided to go over to the other bears. The momma bear started leaning on the tree. She pushed harder and harder on the tree and we watched it sway back and forth. One of the bags started to lower a bit.

"The bags aren't the same weight. They are going to come down!" Mom gasped.

Dad motioned for us to be quiet.

The bags stopped shifting, but now they were swinging back and forth with the tree. Two of the bears were pushing on the tree now and the third was circling below the bags.

"What was that noise?" Mark asked.

"I think it was the branch." Answered Jane.

The bags didn't slide down, but the branch they were hanging on broke and both bags crashed to the ground. The bears ripped open the bags and ate all of the food. Once they were done, they wandered off into the woods.

"Well, now you have seen bears up close and personal." Dad stated.

"Let's get some sleep. We will have a long way to hike in the morning and the sooner we get out, the sooner we get to eat." Mom said to end the conversation.

YOSEMITE Follow Up Questions

1. How many people were on the backpacking trip in Yosemite National Park?
2. What information do you think the dad received from the ranger?
3. Was this the first trip to Yosemite for the family? How do you know?
4. How many days was the backpacking trip supposed to be? How many days did it end up being?
5. Why was it important to take all of the food on the backpacking trip?
6. What was interesting about the trees the family saw on the trail? Why were they that way?
7. What was done with the food and the garbage after dinner?
8. Why was it so important to take care of the garbage in a special way?
9. Why did the dad need a rock?
10. Why did the dad need a stick?
11. What woke up the family while they were sleeping?
12. Who looked out the tent first?
13. What was outside the tent when the family looked? How many of them were there?
14. What happened to the food?
15. Why did the family wait until morning to hike back to the car?

YOSEMITE

Follow Up Questions And Answers

1. How many people were on the backpacking trip in Yosemite National Park? *There were four people, the dad, the mom, Jane and Mark.*
2. What information do you think the dad received from the ranger? *He received information about bears and how to keep the food safe while backpacking where there are no bear boxes.*
3. Was this the first trip to Yosemite for the family? How do you know? *Yes, this was the first trip to Yosemite for the family. Jane asked why they had never been there before this trip.*
4. How many days was the backpacking trip supposed to be? How many days did it end up being? *The trip was supposed to be a few days and it ended up being one day in and one day out.*
5. Why was it important to take all of the food on the backpacking trip? *There were reports of bears breaking into cars to get food.*
6. What was interesting about the trees the family saw on the trail? Why were they that way? *The trees were broken in half and dead because there was an avalanche during the previous winter.*
7. What was done with the food and the garbage after dinner? *The food and garbage were put in bags and hung from a tree limb.*
8. Why was it so important to take care of the garbage in a special way? *The bears can smell the garbage more than the unopened food.*
9. Why did the dad need a rock? *He tied the rock to a rope to be able to throw the rope over the branch so high in the air.*
10. Why did the dad need a stick? *The dad used the stick to push the lower bag up to be even with the first bag.*
11. What woke up the family while they were sleeping? *A family of bears rummaging around close to the tent.*
12. Who looked out the tent first? *The mother was the first one to look out the tent.*
13. What was outside the tent when the family looked? How many of them were there? *There were bears outside the tent. There were three of them, an adult and two cubs.*

14. What happened to the food? *It was eaten by the family of bears.*

15. Why did the family wait until morning to hike back to the car? *It is dangerous to backpack in the dark. The family needed the light to hike safely.*