

BOLLY'S FOLLIES

By Fred Hobbs

Bolly Bear lived in a comfortable den with his mother, Molly, his father, Rolly and his sisters, Holly and Polly. He was an inquisitive little fellow, always poking his nose into places it clearly did not belong and where danger might lurk. This resulted in frequent bee stings when he tried to extract the honey from the combs and the residents of the hives took umbrage at his intrusions.

In Mrs. Bruin's second grade classroom at Ursa Minor Elementary School on the edge of the forest, he was known as the "unbearable class clown." He pulled Patty Porcine's pigtales. He exchanged funny text messages with his buddy, Freddie Fox, who replied with jokes his parents had taught him lampooning the government. Often, he teased his cousin, Ted. Actually he was jealous of Ted. Bolly didn't like the fact that Mother Polly called him "Teddy." To Bolly, Ted was too soft, too cuddly.

One day, Bolly was just fooling around in the woods, mostly looking for berry bushes or some other source of goodies, when he encountered a big, fellow bear he had heard of but never had met. That bear wore a hat like some of the humans Bolly had seen, called forest rangers. He was prowling and growling and sniffing the air. Bolly was clearly intimidated by the huge, gruff sounding creature. "What's your name and what are you looking for, kid?" the bigger bear bellowed. Bolly meekly replied, "please sir, I'm Bolly. I just want some food, some berries or a bit of honey."

The adult bear softened his voice, just a little. "Well," he said, "My name is Smokey and I'm here to prevent forest fires." You never light matches in the forest, do you?" Actually, being the inquisitive and somewhat mischievous bear he was, Bolly had struck a match or two outside the den when Mother Molly wasn't looking. But he was afraid to admit it, though Smokey had an incredulous look on his face indicating he knew Bolly was not telling the truth.

And then, Smokey suddenly rose to his full height, making a loud sniffing noise and a low growl as a puff of gray smoke rose above some nearby trees. Smokey grabbed Bolly's paw and headed him toward the smoke. They reached the scene. Apparently, it was a campfire left by some careless human. The blaze had spread to some adjacent undergrowth, but not yet to trees. Smokey grabbed his cell phone and called into the ranger station. He snapped at Bolly: "Help me kick some dirt on that fire. I'll use my special portable entrenching tool on my belt buckle and we'll get this out."

The fire was just smoldering when Ranger Rick came upon the scene. "Looks like you and the little guy here knocked it down pretty fast, Smokey," he said. "Good job." "Aw, shucks, it was nothing," replied Smokey. Then he turned to Bolly. "Bolly, this was a good lesson about fire dangers and other mischief little boy bears can get into. So long, and remember, only you can prevent forest fires."

Back in the den, Bolly excitedly recounted his experience in the forest, promising to all to never play with fire.

By golly, that was a real adventure for Bolly. Polly, Rolly, Holly and Molly agreed.