THE MONTALVO MYSTERY BEAST

Once upon a time there was a mama bear that had two baby bears. One was the right size and the other one was very much smaller than he should have been. As the bears got older, one got bigger but the little-bitty one didn't grow at all. The small one was only one inch long when he was born and stayed one inch. One inch is big for an ant, but much too small for a bear.

At home with his family, Bitty Bear soon learned that he had to sleep out in the cold and not with the others because two other bears would roll over in their sleep and they could crush Bitty flat as a dime.

When the other bears would go hunting berries, Bitty's legs were so short that by the the time he got to the berries, everyone else was ready to go home. That wasn't the worst of it, either. He had to jump and jump to get one or two berries, or eat those on the ground that the other bears dropped and stepped on.

When Bitty was two years old it was about time to leave his mother and be on his own. He was old enough, but he sure didn't feel big enough. But, when the day came for the other young bears to leave, he did, too. The other young bears started off across the mountains and through the forests. Bitty started off across the rocks and through the weeds. There was an advantage when night came. The other bears had to hunt and hunt for a cave to sleep in. Bitty could fit nicely in a beer can.

After a long time and long travels, Bitty came to live in Montalvo Forest. It was a good place to do a good bear thing; scare people. It was good because there were lots of paths

and lots of tourists walking along the paths but it was impossible for Bitty to scare anything. He would hide behind a tree until people came down the path and jump out and growl as loud as he could. The darn people would politely walk right past because they thought somebody burped without saying,"Excuse me."

He would run at the people waving his claws in the air but he would trip over pine needles or large leaves and only scare himself.

One day he got so mad he decided to bite someone. He hid right beside the path so he could charge out and bite somebody's toe. He was very excited and scared, but he did it anyway. This turned out to be a bad one. He ran out and bit the first foot that came by. He bit with all his strength but all that happened was that he made some marks in a man's shoe, fell off after two steps and almost got stepped on besides.

Bitty was sad, very sad and miserable so he went off to cry. He climbed under a small cement bridge and cried until his fur belly was all wet. While he was crying he got the hiccups. The hiccups made him madder and sadder because it wasn't a very bear thing to do..BUT!!Guess what? His hiccups were ten times as loud under the bridge as they were anyplace else. He tried a growl and it was ten times as big. You see, out in the forest, Bitty's growl was about the same as the sound of a large bumble bee. But when he growled under the bridge it sounded BIG, so big he scared the dickens out of himself and jumped out of the way.

Oh, boy, it made him feel so good to do something real bear size. He growled and growled big rumbling growls. While he was practicing, some people came along. He waited until they were in the very middle of the little bridge and really let out a

ferocious growl. It worked! It worked!

The people who were walking very quietly through the forest so they couldn't be noticed by any bears, jumped up, screamed and squealed and ran away, scared out of their wits. The people were happy because they liked to be scared and Bitty was very happy because they thought he was a huge mean bear.

Bitty only took one minute to decide to live under the bridge and move into one of the bear caves so he could growl when anyone came quietly over the bridge. Pretty soon everybody was talking about the Montalvo Mystery Beast but nobody could ever find him. Hunters came to the forest; people from the zoo came to catch the huge mystery bear and they looked everywhere.

When Bitty heard people whispering down the path about the Montalvo Mystery Beast, he laughed and laughed until he was sore all over. What a gas it was to be the mystery beast and to have every person in the forest looking for him, but also afraid they would see him. As it turned out, the tourists never did see him. The zoo people never did catch him and the hunters never did shoot him because none of them every looked in the beer can under the bridge.