

Michigan man's new book includes details of Kodiak

Island bear attack

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A Michigan man's new book documents a near-death experience he had with a bear on Kodiak Island in 2003. Kent Kaiser's book "Hard Way Back" was released in September. The autobiography chronicles Kaiser's outdoor adventures, struggles with the U.S. and New Zealand governments, and the bear attack.

Kaiser grew up in Fairbanks and started coming to Kodiak to hunt for Sitka blacktail deer. In November 2003, he went on a deer hunt in Larsen Bay with a friend. The two were dressing the deer they shot when a bear emerged from a nearby thicket.

"There's no doubt I felt like I probably should have died that day," Kaiser said. "No human being is a match for a bear. I'm lucky things played out the way they did." The bear first went for Kaiser, but then veered off for his friend. The two men managed to kill the bear, only to find a sow and two cubs heading their direction. Kaiser said the bears surprised them because they hadn't seen any tracks all day while they were hunting. "I hadn't seen bear scat or tracks," Kaiser said. "Next thing I know, they're parachuting in." Kaiser said he remembers the experience vividly to this day.

Despite almost getting mauled, Kaiser hasn't been discouraged from spending time in Kodiak. He spent a week in Kodiak in 2011, and plans to return to Kodiak next spring for a bear hunt. "It has changed me, but it's not enough to scare me away from living and doing what I love," Kaiser said. "Alaska is a huge love. I'm so ambitious and adventurous. It's not going to detour me from what I love, chasing dreams and living dreams." Instead, Kaiser is more cautious. He carries a 12-gauge shotgun on him at all times while in Alaska, and always takes another person with him when he goes on hunts. "I'm so much more prepared now," Kaiser said. Kaiser has been in the outdoor tourism business for over 15 years, running guiding businesses in both New Zealand and Alaska. He has also lived on and off in Michigan, where he is currently based.

Kaiser's book also details his struggles with U.S. Fish and Wildlife. He faced federal charges from obtaining the wrong hunting licenses and tags in Alaska in 2001, 2003 and 2004. The charges followed him to New Zealand where they interfered with his attempts to gain residency. "I'm always facing adversity," Kaiser said.

Kaiser's book will soon be available in Walmart stores across Alaska, and the Kodiak store is expected to receive copies. It is also available for purchase online at <http://hardwayback.com/>. Kaiser signs any copies purchased from his website.