

Dear Friends,

Greetings once again from **Hart Ranch, Rapid City, South Dakota.**

The **Black Hills** of South Dakota is an absolutely fascinating area. The history is fascinating with old mining towns like Deadwood still intact and thriving, and the current events are equally interesting. There is always something going on in this area. In fact, we still haven't caught up in reporting the fun things we did here this summer. It's not unusual to have a current event that is related to an historical event. When this happens, it's double the fun.

About 10 miles from our park and just a little way off Highway 16, is a beautiful, natural, geological bowl. The bowl is called **Stratosphere Bowl**. But why? Ah, that is the story.

Yesterday morning, a half dozen colorful hot air balloons were flying close enough to be easily seen from our RV park.



Some of the balloons flying over Rapid City on September 26, 2010.

Yesterday's flight was to commemorate a record breaking balloon flight 75 years ago. Yes, 75 years ago, a helium balloon called, **Explorer II**, took off from the Stratosphere Bowl and climbed to an astounding 72,395 feet. This flight showed that humans could survive in a pressurized capsule. A photograph that the pilots took from the capsule documented the curvature of the earth for the first time. Who would have guessed that the Black Hills has played a part in the exploration of space?



Hot air balloons taking off from Stratosphere Bowl.



Explorer II in 1935 from the same Bowl.

The full story of the Explorer II is a fascinating one. For that matter, Explorer I is also an exciting read. If you would like to know more, here is a link:

http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-5844704/The-first-space-race-The.html

So much fun, so little time. Yesterday was the balloon flight and today is the annual buffalo roundup in Custer State Park. The roundup started at dawn this morning and turned a whole lot of grazing buffalo into a thundering stampede. We just can't keep up with the fun as we have too many work related projects underway. Very soon we will be telling you about our new financial website and our free financial and tax email tips. But that's another story.

Until next time, home is where we park it.

Chuck & Donna Cole
(530) 524-5020