

Dear Friends,

Greetings again from **Sturgis, South Dakota**.

What a time we are having! There is so much to see and do in this area, that it's hard to know where to start. The motorcycle riding in the Black Hills is absolutely fantastic. Beautiful mountains, valleys, streams and lakes that take your breath away. As you come down out of the Black Hills, you encounter beautiful green rolling hills and more wonderful riding. The temperatures have been fabulous, generally running between 75 and 85 during the day and cooler in the evening. Well, all but today. At the moment, it's close to noon with a light rain and 66 degrees. It doesn't look like we will be riding much today, but it's a perfect opportunity to write to our friends. We are right in the middle of **Sturgis Bike Week** and what a gas that has been. You can travel 100 miles in any direction and everywhere you look there are motorcycles, thousands of them. "Welcome Bikers" banners are everywhere. Special parking has been reserved for motorcycles everywhere. It sounds impossible, but this area successfully accommodates a half million bikers relatively easily. They have been holding this event for 69 years and they really have their act together.

Travel Plans

Present to August 8 - **Shade Valley Campground**, 12 miles east of Sturgis on Highway 34.

August 9 to August 15 - **Hart Ranch**, about 15 miles south of Rapid City.
www.hartranchresort.com

Touring

Our wonderful friends, **Keith and Vicki** from Missouri, showed up as promised and we wasted no time checking out some of the attractions of the Black Hills. Our first stop was the old historic town of **Deadwood**.



Main Street, Deadwood, South Dakota.

In 1876, the gold camp of Deadwood in Dakota Territory was a rough and tumble gambling town where Wild West legends were made. Today, the entire Black Hills town is a National Historic Landmark and is still known for its wild ways. Almost every square inch of Main Street is occupied by drinking and gambling establishments. Wild Bill Hickok was killed here and Calamity Jane is buried in the local cemetery.

Our next adventure was to visit the **Presidents Park Sculpture Garden**. What an amazing and yet little known property. The park is located just a few miles SW of Deadwood off of US 85 just past Deer Mountain Road. A Texas artist and sculptor has created this beautiful park with a 20 foot sculpture of every U.S. president. It was incredibly educational since there was a beautifully succinct description of each man and how he came to be president. We were all a little taken aback by how much of our grammar school education had been lost. Don't laugh. Do you remember that William H. Harrison died 32 days after taking office? Because the sculptures were arranged in chronological order, you really came away with a new time perspective of our country. Yep, Barrack Obama is already there. If you choose to visit this park, give yourself at least a couple of hours. There are 44 sculptures to look at and presidential summaries to read.



Vicki in the Presidents Park.



20 foot bust of Abraham Lincoln.

The Black Hills is full of caves that you can see with a guided tour. All are hyped pretty hard and some are spectacular and some rather mediocre. We visited **Wonderland Cave**, which is not far from Sturgis. Frankly, it wasn't worth the money.



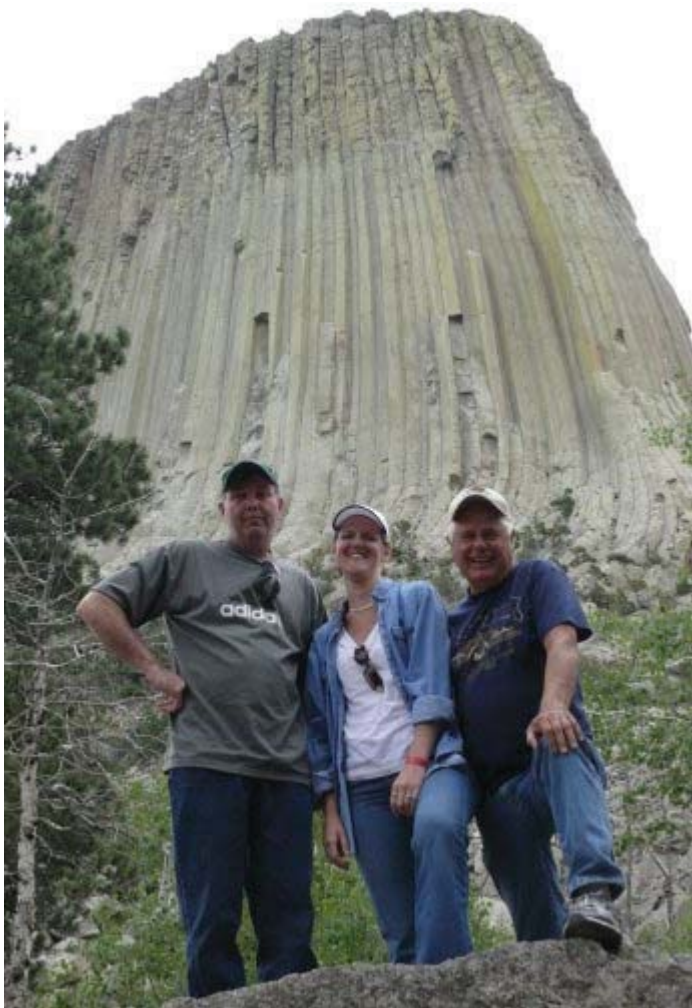
Wonderland Cave.

While we were not impressed with Wonderland Cave, we were very pleased with the day that we spent driving to **Devils Tower National Monument**. Devils Tower is in Wyoming and is about an 80 mile drive from Sturgis. By the time you get there, hike around the Tower, visit the interpretive center and get back to Sturgis, you've had a very full day. Is it worth it? Absolutely! It's a fascinating place and was the first National Monument in our nation's history. It's kind of interesting that Wyoming also has the first National Park in our history. Yes, Yellowstone National Park was the first National Park. Parts of Wyoming are absolutely spectacular and other parts are a disaster of sand, rock, wind, and snow.



Devils Tower.

You can see this monolith of solid rock from many, many miles away. At first, it's not impressive and you may wonder why you took the long drive. But as you get closer, it's grandeur starts to capture you. By the time you get to the parking lot, you're in awe. There is a fairly easy 1.3 mile walk around the tower and it's definitely worth the hike. Without a doubt, this is a wondrous place.



Keith, Vicki, and Chuck in front of Devils Tower.

For centuries, this chunk of rock has been sacred to over 20 Native America tribes. Even today the Arapaho, Crow, Lakota, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Shoshone celebrate ceremonial activities at this location. Virtually all of the Indian folklore involves a bear. Some legends say that the rock grew to save seven little girls from a bear and others involve a giant bear climbing the rock and hence, the dramatic vertical grooves. Most Indian cultures have "bear" in their name for the rock, i.e., Bear Lodge, Bear's Tipi, Bear's House, Bear Peak, etc. If you visit this site, be sure to attend a ranger's lecture on the formation, the legends, and the politics. The gentleman we heard was a fabulous speaker and we really enjoyed the presentation. How was this most unusual monolith formed? We know, but we won't tell. We want you to visit and experience the first National Monument for yourself or at least learn more from the website. <http://www.nps.gov/deto/index.htm>



Legendary bear climbing Devils Tower.

Does this chunk of spectacular rock look familiar to you? Did you see Steven Spielberg's 1977 film, "Close Encounters of the Third Kind?" Chuck saw the movie and remembered Devils Tower. It was a long shot, but we went to the Sturgis video store and sure enough, they had a rental DVD of the movie. Son of a gun, it was a darn exciting movie when it came out and it still is today. Watching the movie was really the frosting on the cake.

Well, we haven't told you much about the Sturgis motorcycle rally, but we promise to do so in our next Great Escape.

Until next time, home is where we park it.

Chuck & Donna
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