

Corps of Discovery travel out West

Day 7 - July 3, 2002 (Continued)

After the water park, we stocked up on ice and supplies at Wal-Mart, then took the kids to a Golden Corral in Rapid City. The waiter, a really big, rough looking guy, singled out Justin and Derrick to pick on. The two of them couldn't do or say anything without getting verbally slammed. I, along with several others, laughed so hard I could hardly eat. Great entertainment, but Justin and Derrick probably didn't enjoy it much.

After eating, we finally got on the road into the Black Hills. On our way to where we spent the night, we drove past Mount Rushmore. The security was extremely tight; with a State Police checkpoint and National Guard personnel all along the route leading to the monument. We drove right past the monument and stopped in the National Forest about two miles further down the road.

The place we stopped is probably one of the best natural campsites Jenny and I have ever found. Boulders bigger than houses, level ground with plenty of room to park and set up our tents. We would have the whole area to ourselves for three nights before we moved on to Wyoming.

Day 8 - July 4, 2002

Had left over donuts, milk and

juice for breakfast this morning up on the boulders overlooking our campsite. The view is magnificent. We left the pup tents standing and headed into the town of Keystone. As we passed Mt. Rushmore, the police are gone, but the National Guard is still there.

In Keystone, we let the kids roam for a short time after we purchase tickets for the 1800's train. Since some of the ridecars sold out we need to drive to Hill City where we catch the train for a round trip from Hill City to Keystone and return. We took the back road to Hill City. Over thirty rail road crossings, stopping at each one since we're in a school bus. I forget that part when I chose the route. Pretty scenery though. I don't think the group was that excited about the train ride. So they did what boys from Rockcastle County do best. They flirted with the girls working on the train.

Finally, after the train ride, we head for Mount Rushmore. Since it's later in the day, security is back in force. We pass through police checkpoints, get a complete check out by a search team, to include a dog going through the bus and pass through metal detectors before we're in the monument. We all discuss the security measures later and come to the consensus that while it's a shame that

'terrorists have brought this to our country, the monument is still open for us to enjoy.

Mount Rushmore is simply a special place. People are either awed by the monument, or they're disappointed, there doesn't seem to be much middle ground in peoples reaction. Jenny has always loved to just soak up the monument, while it evokes such strong patriotic feelings in me that I sometimes become emotional. This year, because of 9-11 those feelings are really close to the surface. After letting the groups wander the monument for awhile, I am extremely surprised and pleased to hear several in the group talking about some of the facts they have learned about the monument and their country in the short time they've been here. It just reaffirms my belief that travel is educational.

Jenny does it again. She never stops trying to enhance the trip. Now she manages to top everything we've done in the program, at least as far as I'm concerned. She got permission for the group to formally retire the National Colors at the end of tonight's program. After talking to the Ranger in charge of the days program, we find that the flag that we'll be retiring is the same one that flew over the monument on 9-11. Even though the flag is tattered, the Rang-

ers decided that it would not be taken down until the 4th of July.

Like a lot of people, they were sending their own message to those who attacked our country last September.

After gathering the group and practicing several times in the main hallway of the museum, we all sat down to enjoy the final minutes of the program, which included patriotic music by the Air Force Band and a film about the monument and the people who built it. The entire crowd of approximately 10,000 people sang the Star Spangled Banner during which time hidden lights lit up the faces on the mountain and our nation's flag. The Cadets were introduced by the Ranger in charge, followed by the retiring of the Colors. It went picture perfect, there wasn't a sound to be heard, not even a child crying. When we got home and reviewed the video I shot, we couldn't believe the number of camera flashes. Afterwards the kids were floating, they were so pumped up about what

they did. What a tremendous honor.

It was close to midnight before we got back to camp. On the way, we had noticed a note under our windshield wiper. It was a note from someone from Mercer County just saying hi. No one was even close to being tired, so Jenny decided to cook a late supper of chili by lantern light. Just about the time supper was ready, a car turned off the main road and stopped in camp. When the driver got out I couldn't believe it. It was Kyle Fletcher and his wife, Audrey, from Brookhead. Kyle was one of the original members of the "Corps of Discovery '98," who came out here with us four years ago. He was camped in a nearby KOA, and saw our tents set up earlier in the day. Other than our daughter, Kyle was the first of the original group to make it back to South Dakota. Ticked Jenny and I both.

Day 9 - July 5, 2002

Still in Black Hills National Forest.

Woke up this morning to the sound of beautiful Native music that Jenny and Jay were playing over the external speaker on the bus. We then had a breakfast few of us will ever forget. Don't remember what all we had, but it included oatmeal with walnuts and raisins. I love my wife with all my heart, and I sincerely believe she's the best cook in the world. But she has never tried to cook oatmeal in a big pot over a Coleman stove for 14 people before. I ate mine right away, but it was starting to set up pretty good before I finished. Oatmeal is supposed to stick to your ribs, but this stuff stuck to anything it touched before it got to your ribs. The kids harassed her to no end. I didn't though. I learned long time ago in the Army, you never give the Mess Sergeant a hard time. You never know what you'll be eating the next meal. She took the harassment real good though.

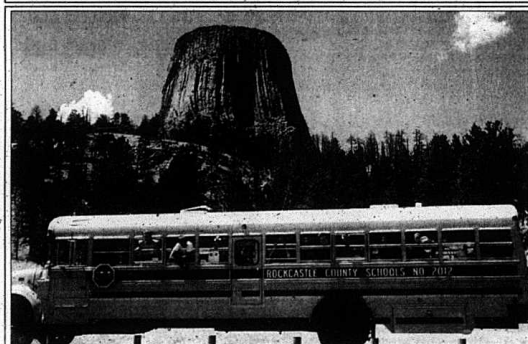
Board the bus for a short trip down the road where the group takes a short dip in Horse Thief Lake. Don't spend much time swimming though, we've got places to go and hills to climb. We pick up ice in Keystone and head up on Iron Mountain Road. Beautiful scenery. The road cuts through the mountains in narrow one-lane tunnels. I chicken out and bypass two of

them though. I don't think Mr. Perkins will be amused if I stick one of his buses in a tunnel in South Dakota. Several switchbacks and pig-tail loops where you can almost read your own license plate from the driver's seat.

We finally arrive at Harney Peak in Custer State Park. I don't think too



"B" Team making fried apple pies and bacon at Devil's Tower National Monument



Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming



JROTC's "Corps of Discovery" retiring our nation's colors on the 4th of July at Mt. Rushmore.



Tim, John, Jay, Jacob, Jessica and Andy hiking to Harney Peak

Grand Opening - August 1st

Magnolia Boutique

Latest styles - name brands

Slightly used clothes, shoes and unusual treasures

Located at the end of Main St. in the McKinney Tire Building - in Mt. Vernon.

COME IN AND WIN DOOR PRIZES

Brodhead Elementary

Pre-Registration for New Students

Dates: Monday, August 5th - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Wednesday, August 7th - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Please bring the following:

- Physical (must be on Kentucky form)
- Immunization certificate
- Eye examination (only for preschool and entry level students) - must be from an optometrist or an ophthalmologist
- Certified copy of child's birth certificate (applications are available at school)
- Social Security card

If you have any questions, please call the school at 758-8512

Faith Mountain

Vacation Bible School

at First Christian Church of Mt. Vernon

Come join the adventure!

AUGUST 5th-9th 6:00-8:00 pm

CLASSES FOR

Ages 3 - ADULT

Nursery provided for children with parents

TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED

For More Information Call 256-2876 or 256-3512

Attend* 4 of 5 nights with good behavior RECEIVE a free voucher for the Berea pool on Tuesday, August 13

Kick-Off /Registration

Monday, August 5th @ 5 p.m.

COOK-OUT • FREE HOT DOGS & DRINKS

* Must receive 8 of 10 stars to be eligible for free pool voucher, good Tuesday, Aug. 13, 7-9 p.m.