



Turning south from Rapid City, South Dakota, we set our sights on Mount Rushmore. If you have never been there before, you need to put it on your bucket list for it is as American as apple pie, baseball or whatever else you associate America with.

Mount Rushmore is host to just over three million visitors a year. They come from across the country and from around the world. They come to marvel at the majestic beauty of the Black Hills of South Dakota. No wonder that the native American people saw the Black Hills as a magical place. It truly is and now what makes it so much more spectacular is the Mount Rushmore tribute to four unique and diverse presidents.

Going to Mount Rushmore makes you feel so proud of your nation’s history. It makes you really feel how much was sacrificed for those who made our country the great country that it is today. I know that recently people who live in this country are disappointed with the way that things have been handled in our government but that does not belittle the fact that there were those who lived and died to make



it a country to be proud of. A country where we still have the freedom that our forefathers wanted for us. So much has been given in the past so that we may continue to be the greatest country on earth and Mount Rushmore reflects that.

For one thing, Mount Rushmore is a monumental feat of carving. It features the faces of four US presidents which are carved into the mountain side. It took an amazing 14 years to complete with 400 workers working daily to ensure its completion. Those workers often worked in dangerous situations, using dynamite to carve out the rough outlines and then using precision tools, they were able to fine tune the faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln whose likenesses stand 60 feet tall.

The project was led by sculptor Gutzon Borglum. He used dynamite to remove the majority of the rock with the remaining ten percent using precision tools to “fine tune the rest”. The best part of all this heavy, tiring and challenging work resulted with an astounding feat. All the time this was in progress, there was not one fatality. Unbelievable. Compare this to the Hoover Dam where 96

people died during its completion.

Originally Jefferson’s face was initially planned to be on Washington’s right, but the rock proved unstable, so he was moved to the left of Washington. Washington’s face was completed in 1934, followed by Jefferson’s in 1936, Lincoln’s in 1937, and Roosevelt’s in 1939.

Borglum chose these four presidents to represent key periods in American history,



with Washington representing the country’s founding.

The metamorphic rocks on Mount Rushmore began as sediments at the bottom of a shallow sea during the Precambrian period, sometime between 1.6 and 2.5 billion years ago. Mount Rushmore is carved from granite. It is extremely resistant to erosion but will eventually crumble. But don’t fret about it. Estimates suggest that the faces might lose definition after about 500,000 years, and the feature could take around 2.4 million years to completely disappear. So, you see, the granite of Mount Rushmore erodes at a very slow rate which is roughly 1 inch every



10,000 years. ( Whew! I was worried for a minute). The primary erosive forces are wind, rain, snow, and frost wedging.

Now for a fun fact about Mount Rushmore. There is a secret room behind Mount Rushmore. Behind Mount Rushmore, in a small canyon, lies the “Hall of Records.” It is a repository of records intended to preserve the history of the monument and the nation. What I wonder is, if it is a secret, how does everyone know it exists? I guess because it is not accessible to visitors. The Hall of Records was envisioned by sculptor Gutzon Borglum and was meant to house historical documents such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, along with information about the monument and its creation. This did not come to fruition. It is a repository that contains

a teakwood box, a titanium vault, a granite capstone, and sixteen porcelain enamel panels inscribed with the story of Mount Rushmore as well as the reasons for selecting the four presidents chosen and a short history of the United States. I am sure that the History records there are very accurate.

The Hall of Records is located behind Abraham Lincoln’s head and is accessible through a small canyon.

The day that we went there was a gorgeous day in early October. There is an Avenue of Flags in which all states are represented leading up to the memorial. The cement veranda that overlooks the monument was lined with people from all over the world. I had to laugh as one teenager was telling his peers that it was Andrew Jackson ( not Thomas Jefferson) who was next to Washington. Really, honey, what school did you graduate from?

We took an elevator down to the floor below the viewing area and they had a neat little history area and showed some smaller sculptures used as prototypes for the larger faces. It was interesting and informative. Back up at the beginning of the Avenue of Flags was a restaurant and gift shops of course.

I think that the thing that struck me the hardest was that I was there as a very young adult. I was about twenty but I did not have the feeling of patriotism that I do



now. I was almost crying because I realized all that was done to get this country to where it is today. The American Dream is real for all who want to work hard, who are willing to persevere and who are willing to make sacrifices to get to where they want to go. I am not rich in money but I am rich in spirit. I have the freedom to worship as I believe. I am safe and God forbid, should the time come, I have the right to defend myself. Freedom has to be fought for and I am glad that I am aware that freedom is not to be taken lightly. Looking at those four faces of our history made me realize that my own history over the last 50 years since I had been there last, has been a marvelous roller coaster ride of ups and downs. Just like this nation, my growing pains have been hard at times but have been so well worth the journey. My only hope is that I can live long enough to see each one of my children be as happy, content and at peace as I was standing right there, right then, and looking at a beautiful place of living tribute to our nation’s rich history. I wish that everyone in our country has an opportunity to go see this magnificent place.

Next week is Crazy Horse monument.

Photos: Avenue of flags, monument, sculptures, what the mountain looked like prior to beginning monument.

Be Wise...



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I promise I will not talk about my ducks and chickens, whose exploits and malfunctions I have burdened you with in many a column, except to say that my biggest disappointment with these critters is that my daffy ducks simply will not go into my pond, which is why I got them in the first place. But guess what? Geese will!

Every year just after Christmas about 50 or 60 Canada Geese decide to winter (or summer) on my one-acre pond. And every year, about the first week in March, they all leave except for a mating pair that hang around until right about now to hatch their goslings and they are a joy to behold. Snow geese, too, avail themselves of this generational oasis. They have been splashing down here long before I arrived and will no doubt continue long after I’m gone.

And whereas my daffy ducks will not venture into my pond, conversely, these geese have no problem whatsoever visiting the lawn and garden and driveway and patio. They are in no way tame but also seem to sense there is safety here. The cats and chickens and ducks all get within biting range but no drama ensues. And when they do hit the water several times a day, I keep a forlorn hope my ducks will follow. But we all know by now how that will turn out.

Egrets also have no fear of my pond, nor do blue herons, 30 species of bird, painted, slider, box and snapping turtles, and about a million frogs. Deer, raccoon, possum, skunk, squirrel, rabbit, muskrat and the occasional beaver or bobcat will water there. And ducks galore! The kind of ducks that DO take to water like, well, any ducks other than mine. There are pintails, wood, mallards and canvasback, and some I don’t even recognize. This little pond is an ecosystem unto itself, and I haven’t even gotten to the fish yet. Which, though I took a very round-about way to get here, is the real subject of this column.

My pond went largely unfished for almost ten years and was loaded with crappie, bluegill, bass and catfish. But a few years back my channel cat population was running low. So, with the assistance of the Wallace Fish Farm in Allen, KS, I restocked and the populations roared back. This was amazingly easy and inexpensive.

It is time once again to restock and as I mentioned this to friend and neighbor, Matt Peek (a wildlife research biologist for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Tourism) he told me a story that not only fascinated but also worried me a bit. It seems just a couple of miles up the road from me a neighbor with a pond just like mine, who has been lovingly cultivating his catfish for decades, as one would treasured pets, was recently appalled to discover his entire stock had been wiped out. The culprit? Otters. OTTERS?! This is a creature I have yet to have visit and frankly did not even know lived around these parts. So, I will restock, hold my breath, and if nothing else maybe these otters can teach my ducks how to swim.

Until next week—keep your eyes on the stars and your back to the wind.

## Meeting

Continued from page 1

ing, after discussion; Ayes: 3 Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

City Superintendent Report: Jared Wenta discussed with council a storm drainage pump; to buy one with Electric Motor Service at \$5,300 plus freight after discussion;

MOTION by Wade Sunderland, seconded by Erica Olivas for Jared to buy a new pump with Electric Motor Service at \$5,300 plus freight. Ayes: 3 Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

Jared discussed with council the intersection at Shawnee/Pottawatomie needs to have dirt work done because it rains, it floods.

### APPROVAL OF BILLS

MOTION by Wade Sunderland, seconded by Erica Olivas to approve the bills as presented. Ayes: 3 Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

COUNCIL COMMENTS  
Wade Sunderland, council president presented to council a request for a stop sign at the intersection of Sioux and Kaw, after discussion;

MOTION by Regis Sauer, seconded by Wade Sunderland to put up stop sign at the intersection of Sioux and Kaw; Ayes: 3 Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Erica Olivas, seconded by Regis Sauer to go into executive session at 7:35 p.m. for ten minutes to discuss personnel matters of non-elected personnel. Ayes: 3 Nays: 0 Motion Carried. Council returned to regular session at 7:45 p.m.

MOTION by Wade Sunderland, seconded by Erica Olivas to give a 4% increase across

the board, excluding Janine Hendricks per her request; effective May 1st, 2025.

### MAYOR PAT ROONEY

Mayor Pat Rooney appoints Jeff Rollins to resume the position of Benjamin Fuentes, after discussion;

MOTION by Wade Sunderland, seconded by Regis Sauer to accept Jeff Rollins as being appointed to resume the position of Benjamin Fuentes; Ayes: 3 Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

### ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Regis Sauer, seconded by Erica Olivas to adjourn the meeting. Ayes:3 Nays: 0 Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m. The next regular city council meeting will be May 7, 2025.

Shellie Barker, CMC City Clerk  
Pat Rooney, Mayor

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