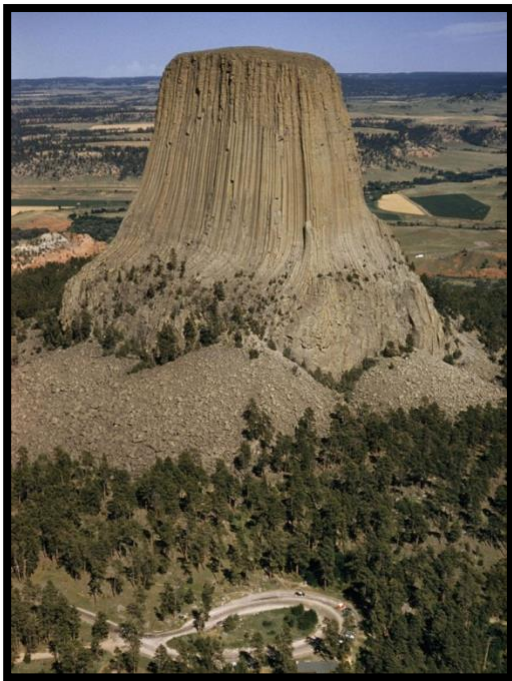


This Means Something

May 7, 2022

Devil's Tower, Wyoming

We left Billings on July 1, 2005, with a shiny new alternator under the cowl, and continued our journey on a direct flight path to Rapid City, SD. The route took us over the northeast corner of Wyoming where we caught a bird's-eye view of Devil's Tower. We are tracing the same route today, from the ground.



The Kiowa tell the tale of a giant bear encountering seven young girls and chasing them. The girls climb onto a rock and pray. The *Great Spirit* saves the girls from the bear by causing the rock to rise from the ground as a tower.

The Kiowa believe that the vertical gouges in the tower are claw marks, made by the bear while trying to climb it.

The bear didn't reach the top, but the girls could not return to their village. They ascended to the sky as stars, transforming into the Pleiades, or "Seven Sisters," constellation.

Devil's Tower found its way into popular culture in 1977 in the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. In the movie, Richard Dreyfus's character builds a tower in his living room, made of dirt, garbage, and mashed potatoes.

Dreyfus can't explain why he has done it, but he is convinced that, "*This Means Something*".





Dreyfus sees an image of Devil's Tower on television and realizes he has built an exact replica in his living room.

In the movie, aliens are working through Dreyfus to make contact with the human race. Dreyfus travels to Wyoming and has a *Close Encounter of the Third Kind* with the space creatures.

These are both captivating stories but, in my mind, the science of why Devil's Tower exists is far more intriguing than the spiritual or new-age renditions.

Devil's Tower is an igneous intrusion.

Miles beneath our feet, in the core of the earth, it is so hot that rock is in liquid form. Lava constantly boils and percolates beneath the earth's surface. Occasionally the molten rock will find a crack and rise to the surface, which is what happened in Wyoming, about 40 million years ago.

The area where the lava reached the surface is covered in sandstone, which is much softer than igneous rock. Millions of years of sun, and wind, and rain eroded the sandstone and exposed this spectacular pillar of rock from the earth's core.

The vertical gouges on the tower aren't the result of a Great Spirit and a mythical bear, or fork marks in New Age mashed potatoes. They are the rivulets worn by a billion, billion rain drops.

... This Means Something

