

Buddy Bison Visits Mount Rushmore

by Rob Cohen

On a warm summer day, Rancher Roy told Buddy Bison, “Today, we’re going to a National Memorial, Mount Rushmore, in South Dakota. You can help me look for a big sculpture when we get there.”

Buddy Bison liked the idea of helping Rancher Roy hunt for something. *A sculpture shouldn’t be hard to find*, he thought. He had seen a lot of sculptures and stone carvings in the local museum.

They drove through the hilly, winding roads of the Black Hills of South Dakota and soon arrived at the parking area for the memorial.

“Now remember,” Rancher Roy winked as he helped Buddy Bison out of the trailer,

“We’re looking for a large stone carving of four American Presidents. We’ll walk along this nature trail and you let me know when you see it.”

Buddy Bison was eager to find the sculpture for Roy. He looked closely through the forest of Ponderosa Pines as they slowly walked down the path. *It may be hard to find a sculpture if it's hidden in the trees*, he thought.

A large round rock just off the trail caught his eye. *Is that it?*

But it was just a large round rock. Buddy Bison kept looking as they continued down the path, enjoying the many varieties of wildflowers as they walked. Roy stopped to admire the orange and yellow blanket flowers, the wild blue flax and the purple clover that painted the landscape.

“Many of these little flowers were used by the Native Americans for food and medicine,” Roy explained.

Peering through the trees Buddy Bison saw something large and white with two eyes.

Is that the sculpture?” he asked himself.

He jumped back when the large something with two eyes moved.

“Look, a mountain goat!” Rancher Roy shouted.

The goat looked at the bison, then scurried off to climb a steep, rocky hillside.

“Remember, we’re looking for four *big* sculptures--all in a row,” Roy said as they continued down the trail.

Far up the path Buddy Bison spotted the back of four large heads. One was bald, one had long white hair, one had curly hair and one was wearing a hat. *That may be it!* he hoped.

But as they got closer, he saw that it was just four men sitting on a bench. Certainly not a sculpture and certainly not four presidents!

I may never find the sculpture, he worried.

They arrived at a large open plaza area with lots of people walking around.

Rancher Roy said, “Are you sure you’re thinking big enough? These carvings are HUGE---GIGANTIC—HUMONGOUS! Think BIG, Buddy Bison!”

Buddy Bison slowly raised his head. He looked past the path, beyond the plaza, over the trees and . . .

THERE! On the side of the mountain were four ENORMOUS faces carved into the side of a tall, granite mountain. Buddy Bison recognized Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

Buddy Bison spun around with excitement. He felt a little embarrassed that he had missed something so large. He just wasn't thinking BIG!

“Each nose is longer than your trailer” Roy exclaimed.

Buddy Bison looked cross-eyed at his own nose. It was big, but not nearly as big as the trailer.

“You could park a car inside one mouth!”

Buddy Bison wondered how you could drive a car up the steep, rocky mountainside.

“Two full-grown bison could fit in one eye!” Roy continued.

Buddy Bison wondered why a bison would bother to climb all the way up there.

“The entire head of each president is as tall as a six-story building!”

Buddy Bison tried to picture a six story office building on top of Lincoln’s head.

“It took 14 years to finish the sculpture.”

That took some really big thinking . . . and a lot of hard work,
Buddy Bison thought.

“Our national parks and memorials are an amazing collection of the very big and the very small,” Roy said.

Buddy Bison thought about the tiny flowers in the fields and the giant carvings on the mountain.

“Adventures big and small are waiting for us all around the country,” Roy said as he took out his camera. “Smile, Buddy Bison! Think of something funny!”

Buddy Bison imagined his head sculpted into the mountain next to the four presidents. Buddy smiled.

About Buddy Bison® and National Park Trust

Buddy Bison is the mascot of National Park Trust (NPT), the nation's only organization dedicated to the completion and full appreciation of the American system of national and state parks through the identification of key land acquisition needs. In addition, NPT's Buddy Bison School Program is designed to fulfill our vision that everyone will have an American park experience, especially those from underserved communities. For more information visit: www.ParkTrust.org.

About the Author

Rob Cohen of Potomac, Maryland is the author of several original children's musicals which have been performed by elementary school students around the country. He has recently turned his creative efforts to writing picture books which capture the same spirit of youthful discovery, humor and imagination of his plays.