Personal Writing by Tyler Reece

The mountains have always had an interest to me. As a young child when we were on the road I had seen the mountains before, but never had the chance to climb them. When we went on our vacation to South Dakota I had a chance to do this by going on a trail ride. That morning had an impact on my life because I finally had the chance to do be out among the mountains that admired.

It was a sunny and cool spring day with the sky a brilliant blue. My parents and I along with the guide made four riders. The horses were young, not too jittery and seemed to know how to get to the destination we were going. They did get spooked a little by the local wildlife, but nothing to serious. The horse that I was riding was a dark grey, almost black like charcoal.

We first started off at the depot where there were horses around; we then made our way up the side of the mountain after crossing a creek and through tall grass. After we made our way through the tall grass we were able to wind through trees and climb over steps in the trail. As we continued up we ran into a clearing to where we could see a valley to the north of us lined with trees. Once we made our way out of the clearing we were able to see the local wildlife and witnessed the pine beetle with dead or dying trees that made a huge pile the size of a big barn. Seeing trees that were piled together was depressing, yet astonishing. To avoid spreading the pine beetle epidemic, the healthy trees were left with spaces around them. Once we made our way through the pine devastation we were able to see healthy trees again. Among the trees were flowers, rocks, and drop-offs.

When we reached Split Rock we made a choice to rest and explore a rock that was at least four tons that had been split in half from water freezing and thawing over many years. After seeing Split Rock we saw rocks that were almost like caves towering high in the sky. They had indentions in the rock where a person could find shelter if needed. The quietness in the environment was relaxing and enjoyable. Without the loudness of people around, you could hear the birds, insects and other critters talking as if you were a part of them, and whenever the wind blew you could hear the trees talk. The serenity of the environment was a change in life compared to living around cornfields.

As we went on the trail ride it had a way of changing the family and making us feel closer and how the little things count more often. The trail ride had a way of changing me because it gave me new ideas were I would want to live at like south Dakota. The things that I liked about South Dakota were the valleys, trees and high rocks, this had a way of changing were I wanted to live, comparing South Dakota and Nebraska. Compared to where I live in the plains of Nebraska, South Dakota has more of forested areas where we were at in the Black Hills. This trail ride made me realize that my future may be outside of Nebraska.