

---

## Will Hobbs

**Go Big or Go Home**  
**ISBN13: 9780060741419**

Will Hobbs Talks About *Go Big or Go Home*

**Q: Your title has a familiar ring. Where does it come from?**

A: From extreme sports. The attitude fits Brady and his cousin, Quinn, perfectly.

**Q: Quinn has a GO BIG OR GO HOME T-shirt. Do you have one?**

A: No, but I 'm keeping my eye out for one. I do have a bumper sticker.

**Q: Are *Skateboarding for the Insane* and *Snowboarding for the Insane* actual video games?**

A: Not that I know of. I made those up.

**Q: You dedicated the novel to Clay. Who's Clay?**

A: My skateboarding, snowboarding nephew.

**Q: Does Clay live in the Black Hills of South Dakota?**

A: No, he lives in New Mexico. I chose the Black Hills as the setting because it's always had a pull on me. My first visit was in the family station wagon during a cross-country road trip when I was a kid, and I've been back several times recently. It's an amazing place, loaded with incredible natural and historic attractions.

**Q: I love that part in the story where Brady vaults over the head of the buffalo. Did you see any buffalo when you were in the Black Hills?**

A: They're all over the place up there, along the scenic drive through Custer State Park. Mostly there are no fences, and you can see the herds amazingly close up. I got a little too close to a big bull ([see photo](#)) in the lobby of a Black Hills motel.

**Q: Is there actually a museum in Hill City?**

A: Sure is. It's a two-fer. It houses the Natural History Museum of the Black Hills, which specializes in paleontology, including dinosaur digs, and also the Geological Institute of the Black Hills. Their displays include a number of meteorites.

**Q: The stuff in the novel about meteorites from Mars—is that for real?**

A: Absolutely. Upwards of thirty have been found on Earth, which makes them quite rare.

**Q: Is there really a Center for the Study of Astrobiology at Moffett Field in California?**

A: Yes, it's part of NASA's Ames Research Facility there.

**Q: Dormant microbes from space . . . where'd you come up with that?**

A: I've been collecting articles on extremophile bacteria for at least the last ten years. I find them fascinating, whether they live in boiling pools at Yellowstone, around thermal vents at the floors of the oceans, or on Mars, where NASA has been searching for them as the first evidence of life beyond Earth. I've been thinking that weird microbes would be cool in a story if I ever found the right fit. I'd also been thinking that it would be neat to begin a story with a meteorite crashing through the roof of a house and nearly nailing the main character.

**Q: In *Go Big or Go Home*, the first discovery of life on Mars is actually made on Earth. Could that happen?**

A: Yes, indeed. As described in the novel, it nearly did, with the Mars meteorite found in Antarctica. But the evidence wasn't convincing enough to qualify as proof.

**Q: Can bacteria actually be dormant for millions of years and come back to life?**

A: Yep, and that blew me away. I love weird science. I learned in an article in *National Geographic* that there are trillions of bacteria in our guts that help us digest food. These are non-human creatures. The article went on to say—and this part didn't find its way into the novel—that if you go strictly by cell count, only one tenth of the cells in our bodies are human. That's just bizarre.

**Q: When Brady gets infected . . . where did you get that idea?**

A: From a scientist writing for *The New York Times*. He suggested that we shouldn't bring any rocks or soil back from Mars, because of the possibility, however remote, that Martian bacteria could cause a pandemic on Earth. By the way, it's true, as you learned in the novel, that the first astronauts returning from the moon were quarantined for a period of time upon their return for this very reason.

**Q: Have you ever built a medieval siege catapult, like the one the Carver boys built?**

A: I've never built one myself, but years ago I saw an article about two guys who built one, and threw bowling balls and outboard motors and commodes and such with it. I always thought that would be cool in a story, too.

**Q: How about Attila, the Turkish war dog?**

A: I have friends in Oregon who raise exotic sheep and used to have a pair of Anatolian shepherds (Turkish war dogs) to protect the flock. I was mighty impressed by those dogs. They're massive, and all muscle.

**Q: The bad blood between Brady and the Carvers is over General George Armstrong Custer. Where did that idea come from?**

**A: On a recent visit to the Black Hills, I visited the Crazy Horse Memorial ([see photo](#)), a mountain carving of Herculean proportions that began in 1948, as described in the novel. I've been reading about Crazy Horse and Custer for a long, long time, and I thought that if I was going to write a story that took place in the Black Hills, I should find a way to include this history in it.**

**Q: You made Brady's father one of the drillers on the Crazy Horse Memorial.**

**A: Exactly. It would make Black Hills history totally compelling for Brady. It was also a way to draw in the Homestake Mine in Lead, also in the Black Hills. For a century and a quarter, the Homestake was the richest gold mine in the country. Brady's father and uncle would have grown up in a Lead mining family. With the mine in decline, Brady's father would have taken a job at the Crazy Horse Memorial. Quinn's father would have hung on as long as he could, until finally he got his pink slip. Then he would have gone to Wyoming looking for work in the gas fields, as happened with many Homestake employees in real life.**

**Q: What about the "extreme fishing" in the story. Where did that come from?**

**A: It's autobiographical. My youngest brother and I went on a ten-day canoe trip in Bowron Provincial Park in British Columbia years ago. Believe it or not, we took only granola, thinking we'd be eating a lot of lake trout. Well, we neglected to bring along a net, and our fishing line was only 8-lb. test. From reading the novel, you know how that went.**

**Q: Did you find a cave at the headwaters of French Creek, as described in the novel?**

**A: Only in my imagination. But Jewel Cave is nearby, and the Black Hills is riddled with karst limestone, and therefore caves. There could actually be one there.**

**Q: If you discovered a cave, would you explore it yourself, without any experts along?**

**A: No way. Like Brady and Quinn's fathers, I used to explore abandoned gold mines when I was a teenager. It was extremely dangerous, totally insane. I was very lucky to have lived through it. That's why I suggested that the publisher put the title of the book on a caution sign. As Brady's father says in the story, "Adolescence shouldn't be a fatal condition, son, just a bumpy ride you can get off of when it eventually slows down."**