

NATION & WORLD

Home for giant animals found in North Dakota

BY JOHN MACDONALD
ASSOCIATED PRESS

STEELE, N.D. — The world's largest rock pile didn't make the cut. The tallest haystack probably would have just been blown over by the winds of the Upper Plains.

And so, after a couple of years of toying with giant ideas, Susie White went with the bird option — namely, the 40-foot-tall sandhill crane anchored deep in the ground by her motel parking lot.

This bird of steel is really, really big; and just odd enough, White hopes, to capture the bored eyes of motorists driving along this largely featureless stretch of North Dakota highway.

"I look out the window sometimes and see people drive up and they laugh and laugh at the bird," White said, beaming with pride. "But they're stopping, and that's what's important."

And if only a few of each day's 5,500 passing motorists stop by her Lone Steer motel and steakhouse, it'll have been worth it, she says.

But is it just a rather desperate gimmick for roping in customers? Or is there more to this curious spectacle of the

big bird and all the other bizarre statues that dot the Northern Plains?

Passing the giant buffalo, then the giant bird, the giant cow, the giant grasshopper and the giant turtles, you can't help thinking you've walked in on the punchline of an obscure, Upper Midwestern joke. Or maybe, as one expert suggests, it's a way of carving out an identity in a landscape of unremitting sameness.

In New Salem, in west-central North Dakota, it is 38-foot-tall New Salem Sue, surely the world's largest Holstein cow, made of steel and fiberglass, standing halfway up a small butte along Interstate 94, the state's main east-west highway.

Elsewhere on I-94, in Jamestown, looms the 60-ton buffalo, also the world's largest. Bottineau, Turtle Lake and Dunseith offer variations of oversize turtles, including one riding a giant snowmobile and another made of automobile wheels.

On a 32-mile stretch of road in southwestern North Dakota known as the Enchanted Highway, retired school teacher Gary Greff has created his own horde of giants — a family of tin people, a covey of pheasants, a 40-foot-long grasshopper. More giants, he says, are in the works.

FBI provides less protection for whistleblowers

BY MICHAEL SNIFFEN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Ten years after Congress ordered protections for whistleblowers throughout government, the Justice Department has set up a system to shield FBI agents, but they will have less shelter than other federal employees who report waste, abuse and crime by their co-workers.

The new final rules drew sharp criticism from a national whistleblower group and a key FBI overseer in Congress.

Under the final rules published this month:

- Unlike other federal workers, FBI whistleblowers are not protected from reprisal for reporting misdeeds to Congress, in court during a trial or to immediate superiors. FBI employees are protected only if they report to a short list of top officials and internal investigators at the FBI and Justice.

- Other federal workers can have an administrative hearing if they believe they have suffered retaliation for turning in co-workers, but it is entirely up to

the FBI director whether bureau employees get a hearing.

- When other federal agencies decide whether a whistleblower has suffered retaliation, the employee has the right to have a federal court review that decision. FBI whistleblowers were not given that right.

Sen. Charles Grassley, chairman of a Senate subcommittee that oversees the FBI, said Sunday the rules "represent crafty lawyering rather than good public policy."

He said the Justice Department "interpreted the law to protect its own interests rather than the public interest in exposing fraud and mismanagement," Grassley said.

An attorney for four FBI whistleblowers, David Colapinto of the National Whistleblower Center said: "At a time when the credibility of the FBI is being called into question in light of the Waco, Texas, scandal, the FBI Laboratory scandal and other serious wrongdoing at the FBI, the need for strong FBI whistleblower protection could not be greater."

Justice officials counter that they ended a long his-

tory of inaction and met the law's requirements.

The Whistleblower Protection Act was enacted in 1989 to shield federal workers who report misdeeds from reprisals by their superiors. Examples include being threatened, fired, disciplined, denied promotions or shifted to less desirable work or schedules.

Because their jobs are so sensitive, FBI workers were excluded from the act's general protections. But the law required the president to set up a separate FBI whistleblower system with protections equivalent to those guaranteed other federal workers.

President Bush ignored that requirement. It wasn't until 1997, amid a scandal in the FBI Laboratory brought to light by FBI whistleblower Frederic Whitehurst, that Clinton ordered the Attorney General to devise protections.

The argument now is how different FBI protections should be from those for other federal workers.

Grassley, co-author of the 1989 Whistleblower Protection Act, says the new rules fall short of the law's requirement for equivalent protections.

No sure winner in Democratic nomination

BY RON FOURNIER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — A funny thing happened on the way to the presidential election: A campaign broke out.

Republican Gov. George W. Bush of Texas and Democratic Vice President Al Gore were the pick of every pundit, poll and poll to win the nominations. They had money, momentum and ready-made political organizations; it was going to be so easy.

Instead, both front-runners were surprised by potent rivals, jarred by their own gaffes and stripped bare of any hope that victory was inevitable.

Conventional wisdom was proved unwise first with Gore, who shed his cloak of inevitability by July. The vice president had ignored the warning signs, including:

- Mid-year financial reports that showed rival Bill Bradley had raised nearly as much money.

- Democrats showing up at Bradley's events to check out the candidate who wasn't associated with President Clinton and his sex scandal.

- Americans telling pollsters Gore

was a phony, a stiff — certainly not presidential. He claimed credit for inventing the Internet, and comics had a punch line for months.

"We're focused on Bush," Gore campaign chairman Tony Coelho said in the summer. And he meant it.

While Gore eyed Bush, Bradley consolidated the anti-Gore, pro-underdog vote and narrowed the gap in polls throughout the Northeast, including the first-in-the-nation primary state, New Hampshire.

Gore refused to utter Bradley's name in public until the day he pushed the panic button, announcing in September that his campaign would move to Tennessee.

He slashed his oversized budget and retooled his campaign style. He started to look more like a candidate who hopes to be president, and less like a vice president expecting coronation.

Gore waged political war. He questioned Bradley's party loyalty, his stand on school vouchers, his health care proposal, and accused the former New Jersey senator of a "foxhole conversion" on raising the retirement age.

Bradley, trying to appeal to voters

who say they're tired of political attacks, refused at first to respond to Gore. As the vice president's national and New Hampshire poll numbers strengthened, Bradley began to fight back.

He accused Gore of being timid, poll-driven and betraying core Democratic principles.

Gore advisers have scoured Bradley's voting record and writings for weaknesses they can exploit during what now appears to be a long nomination fight.

"Though Bradley is just as dull as Gore, he has appeal to a lot of Democrats with his honesty, his seriousness and his above-it-all-ness."

Gene Bregman
Democratic consultant

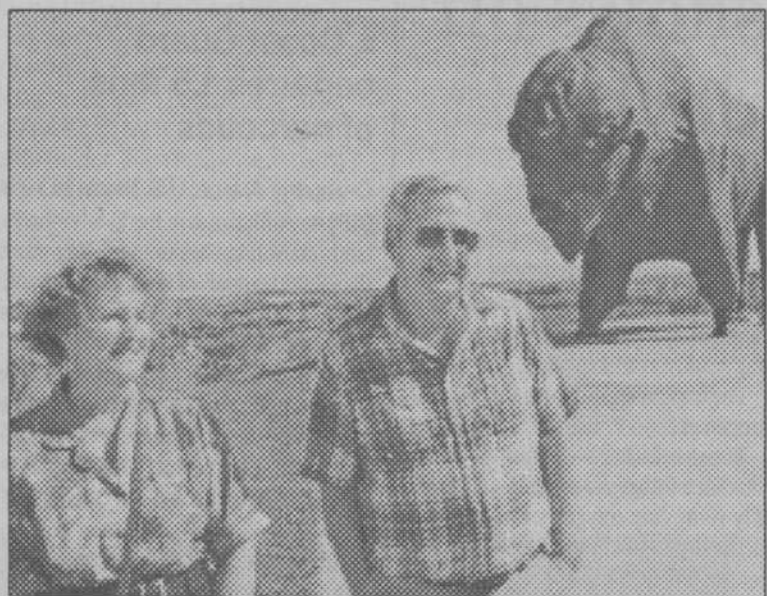
"I don't think this should be such a surprise," said Democratic consultant Gene Bregman of Washington. "Though Bradley is just as dull as Gore, he has appeal to a lot of Democrats with his honesty, his seriousness and his above-it-all-ness."

RIGHT-TO-DIE from page 5

actually prolong their lives, just to know that that was a way to end their suffering that was quick, gentle and certain." Others fear that making suicide so neat and tidy could fan the concerns of

right-to-die opponents who say the movement devalues human life and could pressure vulnerable people to choose death.

But streamlining suicide — or "self deliverance," as right-to-die activists prefer to call it — was a main reason the 30-some attendees traveled here in the first place, some from as far away as the Netherlands, France, Germany and Australia.



SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

Lois, left, and Lavern Hansen of Fairfield, Wash., pose before the world's largest buffalo statue at Jamestown, N.D. It was conceived by the chamber of commerce to honor the bison herds that once roamed the area.

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