

The Blonde on the Prairie on highway rumble strips

There I was last week driving to work, just minding my own perky business. The sun was rising, the birds were chirping, and I was out there soaking up God’s Immaculate Creation like a vitamin D-deprived sunflower as I prayed for the day. Praying prior to being present is paramount to being perky, I’ve learned.

I was feelin’ great despite my high sensitivity to everything in Creation. I was refreshed-Enlightened even. Basically, I was like one inspirational quote away from floating.

I was on a two-lane, 55 mph, hardly traveled road that meets a 65 mh, two-lane county, busy, highway. (Hwy 200 east of Cooperstown, ND to be specific.) I was coming upon the turn.

And then it happened.

RUMBLE STRIP #1: A sound erupted from beneath me that can only be described



as a cross between a robot growling and an elderly, tired tractor eating gravel. My entire truck shook like it was possessed by the ghost of highway maintenance past. I jumped, let out a noise that wasn’t quite a word, and questioned my life

choices.

RUMBLE STRIP #2: My eyelid started twitching. My jaw clenched. My spiritual alignment wobbled. The vibes? Off. My chakras? Scattered. I was no longer a morning person. I was a person on the edge. And that feels foreign and horrid to me!

RUMBLE STRIP #3: I felt my DNA unraveling. Like, please hear me! I know they say it’s a safety feature but what about my emotional safety?

The sound vibrated at a frequency that I’m pretty sure dislodged a childhood memory of some sort!

RUMBLE STRIP #4: At this point I was ready to turn the car around, drive home, and tell the world to carry on without me. My soul had been shaken. Not stirred. Just full-blown jackhammered.

I started wondering—what

IS the actual frequency of a rumble strip?

Is it 666 Hz? Those strips sound like the pesky devil must yawn!

Is that why I feel spiritually attacked when I hit those evil sounding yuckies?

Is this a government experiment to test the limits of sensitive people? Because as someone who is wide awake even in my sleep, I can assure you- I do NOT need help staying alert.

But hey- I know, I know—they’re for safety. They’re supposed to keep sleepy drivers from drifting off the road. Which is great! Truly! Bless those little ridged life-savers. But to those of us who are already painfully aware of our surroundings at all times (and also might be holding a hot coffee), they mostly serve as mood assassins.

Anyway—drive safe, stay alert, and brace yourself for the

emotional rollercoaster that is the rumble strip experience in North Dakota and beyond! Call the state and ask them to change all the rumble strips into singing rumble strips like they have in New Mexico or the Netherlands!

May your frequency remain at a comfortable and healing Hz so your coffee can stay in the cup and your sensitive soul can remain intact. It’s over now. Unclench your jaw, relax your shoulders. Exhale

Now-in order to miss the emotionally jarring noise that upsets my soul hugely-I drive into the other lane to miss them! They’re too powerful an immediate mood disruptor! I protect my mood like I protect my Hello Kitty collection!

If you’re tired or prone to fall asleep behind the wheel...

Maybe, just get a horse instead.

Local Students Graduate from U of M Crookston



CROOKSTON, Minn. (June 12, 2025) - The Office of the Registrar at the University of Minnesota Crookston recently announced its list of spring semester 2025 graduates. Spring 2025 graduates include:

- Nathaniel Grafsgaard, Natural Resources B S,

Devils Lake, ND

- Braden Schmitz, Management B S, Devils Lake, ND

About U of M Crookston: The University of Minnesota Crookston is one of five campuses in the prestigious University of Minnesota System offering students an exceptional, hands-on

learning experience in a safe, close-knit community. Known for its #1 best value ranking, NCAA Division II athletics, affordable tuition, #1 ranked dorms, and a supportive environment, U of M Crookston provides personalized attention and mentorship to help you thrive academi-

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Decline

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one, located in Mountrail County, adjacent to a mosque constructed in 1929 by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants.

On bright summer days, Sagsveen often sets out with his DJI drone and plenty of backup batteries to visit cemeteries across the western half of the state.

He’ll take photos, survey and see if they’re well-kept or abandoned. If abandoned, he’ll try to determine ownership or who can take care of the site, whether it’s the county or a former con-

gregation member.

Most are well-kept, he said, even if no church or congregation exists. Sometimes, family members remain nearby, or they’ve scattered across the country.

Some are more forlorn and forgotten, overgrown with grasses, home to badger dens and pheasants rummaging in the brush.

Zion Baptist cemetery in McLean County is one. The church was active between 1904 and 1931 but is now long gone. The sexton has died, and it is only occasionally mowed.

A lens into rural decline

For Sagsveen, these explorations have uncov-

ered what he sees as a microcosm for the larger issues shaping rural North Dakota.

While farms grow larger, small towns struggle to retain congregations, grocery stores, schools and other services.

Farm residents move into town or relocate to larger communities, particularly if they’re older and in need of medical care. Older, isolated cemeteries are left behind.

Though headlines say the population is growing in North Dakota, that’s mainly the major metro areas, Sagsveen said.

Shifting demographics continue to hollow out smaller communities across the state.

All used to have a house of worship nearby. Many of those are long torn down with lumber and foundation stone hauled away for scrap.

Some were moved in their entirety to nearby towns, like the one that stood next to the Bethel United Methodist Cemetery. It was relocated to nearby Mercer and is now

a Lutheran church.

Lori Walcker and her husband, Jeff, care for Bethel United Methodist Cemetery. Her parents and brother are buried there.

It requires an hour or two of mowing and checking the fences each week or two in the summer, depending how much rain falls and how fast the grasses grow. They donate their time and gas costs tending to the site.

That’s the case with most of the smaller rural cemeteries. Nearby farmers with family buried there end up caring for them.

Occasional donation campaigns can help pay for fences. This is how Lori’s uncle helped pay for a new chain-link fence about 15 years back, she said.

“We’ve done a lot of improvements throughout the years,” she said. “Of course it was, you know, just a cemetery like all the others that had a wire fence around it many years ago.”

Only a handful of rela-

tives of those buried in Bethel visit these days. Most who knew the deceased are now gone themselves, Lori said.

Several relatives of farmer Lamoyne Vossler are buried at Bethel. He pulls up on a seeder next to another nearby cemetery, Zion Lutheran.

“This is where I’m going to end up,” Vossler said, pointing to the well-maintained Zion cemetery, “in this hill here.”

As for the shrinking of the community, Vossler said if not for the coal mines and power plants nearby, the community would be even smaller.

He mentions the loss of the high school in Mercer in 1972, where he graduated from, and the dwindling number of current students at the high school in Turtle Lake as a sign of the times.

While ever larger farms mean more workers need to be hired, the reliance on seasonal H-2A visa workers, who only stay half the year and don’t put down roots, doesn’t help grow the community, he said.

“If it wasn’t for the people at the (power) plants over there, it would be pretty desolate around here,” Vossler said.

Beverly Peterson, a rancher who also owns Frontier Floral flower shop in Washburn, got to know Sagsveen after two cemeteries near her, Basto and Birka, were close to being encroached upon by a coal mining operation.

Determining ownership and ensuring the plots were registered helped preserve them.

“I think they’re worth saving, I really do,” Peterson said.

She said they’re down to about 10 regular churchgoers at rural Birka Lutheran Church, and while some younger board members are keeping it alive, they know their time might be limited.

While Washburn is active and thriving to a degree, and the promise of jobs related to Talon Metals nickel processing plant at a former coal mine near Beulah will help the larger communities, she doesn’t see the new facility reviving the countryside.

“That’s something to ask some of the smart people on the planet, is how do we keep these hometowns,” Peterson said. “It’s so important to keep that vibrancy going because of our kids.”

The North Dakota News Cooperative is a non-profit news organization providing reliable and independent reporting on issues and events that impact the lives of North Dakotans. The organization increases the public’s access to quality journalism and advances news literacy across the state. For more information about NDNC or to make a charitable contribution, please visit newscoopnd.org.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

North Prairie Ag Annual Meeting
June 26, 2025 | 5:00 p.m.
Barley Hall Osnabrock, ND

In accordance with the By-Laws of North Prairie Ag, you are hereby notified that the 2025 Annual Meeting will be held at 5:00 p.m. on the 26th day of June at the Barley Hall in Osnabrock, ND. The purpose of the meeting is to update the patrons on cooperative news, financial status, and to elect 2 board members. Absentee ballots can be obtained by communicating with any North Prairie Ag director. Ballots must be returned by June 25, 2025. We hope to see you at the meeting and appreciate your continued support. A meal will follow the meeting.

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