

Dear Friends,

Greetings from **Rapid City, South Dakota.**

There is so much to see and do in the Black Hills of South Dakota, it's hard to know where to start. You could easily spend three months touring around this area full time and still not see it all. Museums, caves, exhibits, natural terrain, mountain sculptures, mines, gambling casinos, hunting, shooting, wildlife, hiking, boating, motorcycle rides, fossils, historical sites, and on and on.

Right now, the major attraction is **Sturgis Bike Week**. The official Sturgis Bike Rally runs from August 8 through August 14. In reality, the rally is already running and will be in full force by tomorrow, August 6. Last year, there were more than 700,000 bikers attending the 70th rally. We doubt that this year can match that unbelievable number, but who knows. At any rate, the bikes are already starting to swarm and the vendors in Sturgis and every other local town are ready to serve them. If you'd like to know more about Bike Week and see our pictures from a couple of years ago, go to our website and select issue number 83.

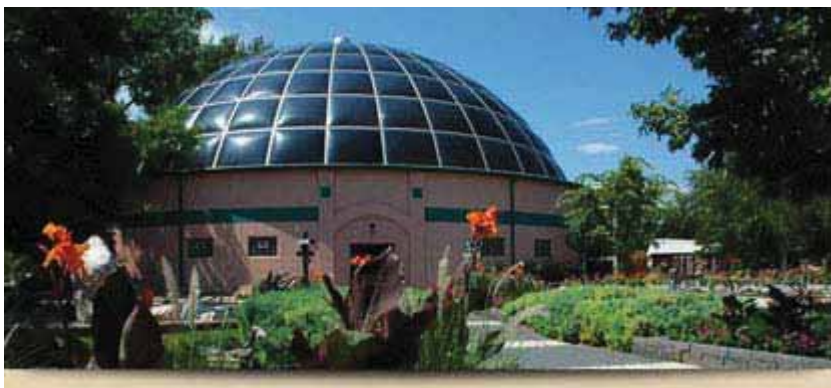
In this issue, we would like to tell you a little bit about an extremely interesting attraction: **REPTILE GARDENS**. The Reptile Gardens was started by Earl Brockelsby in 1937 and is still going stronger than ever.



Entrance to Reptile Gardens.

The Reptile Gardens are on Highway 16 a few miles south of downtown Rapid City. You can't miss it. The parking lot is always full every day of the week regardless of weather. It's a darn interesting exhibit. When you buy a ticket, you actually get a pass that is good for the whole season. The Gardens stay open until November. The season pass is really a nice idea since there is so much to see. It's a big place with quite a bit of walking. As you might guess, there are huge numbers of live snakes from

all over the world. But there is a lot more. They have live alligators and crocodiles, as well as rare giant tortoises and many other animals and birds and lizards and spiders and a prairie dog town. Plus, they have shows and lectures.



Two story dome.

The ground floor of the dome contains many exhibits plus a walk through jungle with many live birds flying about. The second story is full of rare snakes in exotic surroundings. You can easily spend many hours at the gardens. There is a snack bar and two restaurants so you don't really have to leave. Also, a huge souvenir and book shop. But if you do get tired, just come back on another day using your season pass.



One of the many parrots in the dome jungle.



Up close and personal with an albino python.

What the gardens called "a snake show" was actually a first rate lecture and demonstration involving several categories of snakes. At the end of the lecture, the speaker held a live albino python for anyone who wished to pet this very large snake. Not too many adults lined up, but the kids all wanted to pet the snake.



Prairie Dog town.

The prairie dog town exhibit was quite unusual in that you could go underground and come up in a plastic bubble and view the prairie dogs eye to eye.



The gator show.

The gator show involved a young man feeding chicken parts to the gators and lecturing at the same time. Occasionally, it got a little scary as the young man could get himself surrounded by gators. It was a fairly small enclosure with dozens of large alligators. Some were hungry, some were not. Well, he seemed to know what he was doing and he wasn't eaten. At the end of the show, he taped the jaws shut on a small two year old gator and let anyone that wanted to pet the baby. Once again, the kids were up for it and the adults weren't.



Giant tortoise exhibit.

The gardens have two giant tortoises and they are very friendly. They actually enjoy having their necks scratched. Unfortunately, Methuselah, a giant, 130 year old, 500 pound, Galapagos tortoise just recently passed away.

Well, for darn sure, there is a lot more to the Reptile Gardens than we have covered here. But maybe you get a little of the flavor. Without a doubt, it is an interesting, entertaining, and educational exhibit and we highly recommend it.

We write these travelogues in hopes of hearing from you. How is your life going? Are you traveling this way? An email or a phone call would be great. A visit would be fantastic. We will be in the Black Hills about another month and then around Labor Day, we are going back to Medora in North Dakota again. This time we'll take the RV and be joined by our good friends and financial clients, **Bruce and Mavis**. They will also bring an RV and a Jeep so it is our intention to see more of Teddy Roosevelt National Park as well as the Medora Musical.

ATTENTION: All issues of this newsletter have now been indexed and archived. Feel free to look around our website and read old issues to learn about an area of the country in which you are interested.

Until next time, home is where we park it.

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