

October 20, 2009

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A few weeks ago Nancy and I went to the West Baden Springs Hotel in French Lick Indiana. It is a beautiful resort about two hours from Cincinnati.

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The area is composed of the French Lick Springs Hotel, a large Casino and of course West Baden Springs Hotel

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While we were there we were repeatedly told that the huge Dome on the West Baden Springs Hotel was the Eighth Wonder of the World.

It is America's Pantheon.

It is 60 meters in diameter, and was the largest dome in the world until the Houston Astrodome was built in 1965.

The Dome sits 110 feet above an Atrium that is 200 feet in diameter. We all know that an Atrium is an interior covered court.

The Pantheon built by the Romans in AD 128 had a dome of 43.4 meters in diameter and was the largest until 1781 when the Benedictine Monks built St. Blasé's Abbey in Germany which had a Dome 46 meters in Diameter.

The U.S. Capitol with a 39 meter Dome was built in 1864 and was the largest in the U.S. until 1902 when the Dome was placed on the West Baden Springs Hotel.

Remarkably, it took less than 12 months to build this incredible Hotel.

In order to complete this Hotel in time and avoid a \$100 dollar a day penalty, which was considered huge in those days, the contractor employed 516 men working 60 hours a week.

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He used more than 1200 railroad cars of materials and 10,000 square feet of glass. This was more glass than any building in the world had at that time in history.

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My research gave me two different numbers on the square footage of The Atrium. One said it has 31,416 square feet of floor space.

Another source said it was twice that at 62,832 square feet of floor space. Take your pick.

It has 2.73 million cubic feet of air space. It is really breathtaking when you walk in and see it for the first time.

Back to the Dome. The hub of the Dome is 10 feet long, 16 feet in diameter and weighs 8 ½ tons. It has 24 steel ribs which connects the hub to the wall. Each rib weighs 4 ½ tons. The total amount of the steel in the Hub weighs 120 tons.

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The ribs to the Hub rest on rollers on top of the supporting columns which allows for the expansion and contraction of the metal.

Everything about this Dome and Atrium is so large and bigger than life it was only fitting that they installed a 13 ½ foot high fire place that burned 14 foot logs. The glazed Rookwood Pottery Surface around the fireplace has by itself been appraised at one million dollars.

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Why am I giving you all of these boring statistics? Because it is necessary to provide you with a full understanding as to why the immensity and complexity of this building is often described as the Eighth Wonder of the World.

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In 1923 the Hotel was sold and it became a center for illegal gambling. A few years after the crash in 1929, in 1934 to be exact, the hotel was sold to the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits for \$1.00.

The Jesuits have a vow of poverty and decided it was too luxurious for them, so they removed much of the ornamentation and operated it as a seminary for 30 years.

The removal really hurt the appearance of the Hotel. It was a silly move to harm this extraordinary structure.

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Bill and Gayle Cook of Chicago bought the West Baden Springs Hotel, the French Lick Hotel and built a gambling Casino which sits just between the two Hotels.

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Up to this point the Cooks have invested 500 million dollars in the restoration of these properties.

Now who are the Cooks and why did they take such an interest in these hotel properties?

Prior to this acquisition, the Cooks had restored a number of historic buildings in Indiana and had established a reputation for good works in this area.

The Cooks, Bill and Gayle, began their business with fifteen hundred dollars in their apartment in 1963. They constructed wire guides, needles and catheters for the medical industry and grew it into a multibillion dollar business. Their business later became known as the Cook Group.

As they expanded their business in many different fields they became a huge conglomerate, creating a number of corporations

Now I am not here to be the marketing person for the Hotels. When I heard the constant reference to the "Eighth Wonder of the World" it made me very curious to go back and research the

“Seven Wonders of the World” as I remembered them from my school days.

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I was astonished to find out that there are many ‘Seven Wonders of the World’.

For example:

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There are the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World with which we are most familiar.

However, there are:

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The Wonders of the Medieval World

The Wonders of the Modern World as listed by The American Society of Civil Engineers

New 7 Wonders Foundation’s Seven Wonders of the World

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USA Today’s New Seven Wonders of the World

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Seven Natural Wonders of the World

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Seven Wonders of the Underwater World

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Seven Wonders of the Industrial World

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Travel Wonders of the World

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## Man Made travel Wonders

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### Natural Travel Wonders.

Now I don't intend to go over all of these but I thought it might be interesting to review some of them and see if it rings a bell for some of you.

After that I will give you my uninformed and uneducated opinion of what I think are currently the seven wonders of the world. I am sure each of you will have your own ideas of what they should be.

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The original Seven Wonders of the Ancient World were started by Herodotus in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C..

Six of them no longer exist and we can only imagine what they were like.

There is even a question as to whether one of them ever existed, The Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

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## The Seven Wonders of the Ancient Worlds

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The Great of Pyramid of Giza is the only one still in existence. It was the tallest man made structure for over 3800 years.

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The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were built by Nebuchadnezzar around 600 B.C. The terraces were said to rise from 75 to 300 feet.

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The Statue of Zeus made of gold and ivory by Greek Sculptor Phidias about 500 B.C. It was supposed to have risen 40 feet high. It does not exist except for its appearance on coins.

The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was built about 350 B.C. in honor of goddess Diana. The temple had columns 60 feet high. It was destroyed by invaders about 260 B.C.

The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus was built for King Mausolus of Caria about 353 B.C. Some remains of the structure are in a British Museum. His name is the source of the word Mausoleum.

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The Colossus at Rhodes was a bronze statue of Apollo about 105 feet tall. It apparently took 12 years to complete in 280 B.C. but it was destroyed in an earthquake in 224 B.C.

The Pharos or Lighthouse of Alexandria was built during the third century B.C. on the island of Pharos off the East Coast of Egypt. It was also destroyed by an earthquake in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Let's skip forward to 1999 when a new Seven Wonders of the World were developed in an entirely different way. A Swiss named Bernard Weber started collecting ideas in 1999 and compiled a list by having people vote. He claims more than 100 million people voted as he narrowed down the list.

Egyptian officials were incensed that the Great Pyramid had to compete with others to be selected.

Since they were the only one left from the Ancient World list of the Seven Wonders they felt privileged.

They felt they should be automatically on the new list. It was then decided by Weber that he would remove the Great Pyramid from the voting and make it an honorary choice.

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Weber still wanted a vote for the Seven Wonders of the World. The result of all of this was that the Honorary Choice, The Great Pyramid, became the Eighth Wonder of the World.

The new list is as follows:

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### The Great Wall of China

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This wall was built to protect China from the invading Huns, Mongols and others and is 4,160 miles long. The fortification was begun in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century and took hundreds of years to build. It is reputed to be the longest man made structure and the Astronauts say it is the only one visible from space.

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Petra, Jordan. This was an ancient capital city that was built around 9 B.C.

It flourished during the period of the Roman Empire as it was on all of the trade routes that existed at that time in that part of the world.

The Christ Redeemer Statue. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.  
This statue stands 125 feet tall and is visible for miles around the entrance to the harbor.

It sits on top of the Corcovado Mountain. It took five years to build in France, was shipped in pieces to Brazil, carried up the mountain and reassembled there.

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Machu Picchu, Peru. It is known as the “city in the clouds” and is 8000 feet above sea level. It was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was built by an Incan Emperor.  
It was later abandoned and not re-discovered until 1911.

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The Pyramid at Chichen Itza, Mexico. It was the center of the Mayan civilization in its day. It has several structures still visible including the pyramid of Kukulkan.

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The Roman Colosseum in Rome, Italy. This is an extraordinary structure.

It is a 50,000 seat amphitheater in downtown Rome. It was built more than 2000 years ago.

Its design still influences the design of the sports stadiums in today's world.

The Taj Mahal, India

This is one of the most beautiful buildings I have ever seen.

It was built in 1630 by a grieving emperor, Shah Jahan in honor of his dead wife.

The white marble combines Islamic, Indian and Persian architecture.

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Then of Course the Great Pyramid in Egypt which we discussed earlier.

The Wonders of the Medieval World. There were many lists during this period, but a representative list would be as follows:

Stonehenge, which has been much in the news lately.

The Roman Colosseum.

Catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa.

The Great Wall of China.

The Porcelain Tower of Nanjing.

Hagia Sophia.

The Leaning Tower of Pisa.

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Some other Honorable Mentions at that time were: The Taj Mahal  
The Cairo Citadel  
Ely Cathedral  
Chuney Abbey

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Many lists exist of the greatest structures built in Modern Times and the American Society of Civil Engineers compiled such a list.

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The Channel Tunnel finished in 1994 better known as the Chunnel. It runs from the United Kingdom to France.

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The CN Tower finished in 1976 is the tallest freestanding structure in the World. It is in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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The Empire State Building was finished in 1931 and until 1967 was the tallest structure in the World. It was the first building with more than 100 stories.

The Golden Gate Bridge finished in 1937. It is located in the Golden Gate Strait which is just north of San Francisco.

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The Delta Works/Zuiderzee Works completed in 1997 and is located in the Netherlands.

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The Panama Canal completed in 1914 in the Isthmus of Panama.

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To give you more I will provide you with the New Seven Wonders of the World as compiled by USA Today in conjunction with Good Morning America.

The Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet, China.

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The Old City of Jerusalem in Jerusalem, Israel.

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The Polar Ice Caps in the Polar Regions.

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in Hawaii

The Internet

The Maya Ruins in the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico.

The Great Migration of Serengeti and Masai Mara in both Tanzania and Kenya.

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The Grand Canyon in Arizona is the Eighth Wonder as chosen by popular demand via voting.

I will give you just two more before I give you mine. Some in the last two categories are not quite as exciting as the ones previously mentioned.

The Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

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The Grand Canyon

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The Great Barrier Reef

Harbour of Rio de Janeiro

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Mount Everest

Aurora

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Victoria Falls

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Now the Final one The Seven Wonders of the Underwater World. This list was compiled by a panel of Marine Scientists.

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Palau

Belize Barrier Reef

Great Barrier Reef in Australia

Deep-Sea Vents

Galapagos Islands

Lake Baikal

Northern Red Sea

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Now two things you have all been waiting for:

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The end of this speech and my personal selection of the Seven Wonders of the World

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October 20, 2009

The Seven Wonders of the World by my measure.

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The Taj Mahal

It takes your breath away to see it and to walk through it. It is one of the most beautiful masterpieces of Architecture ever constructed. It is located in Agra, India.

The Taj was built by Shah Jehan in honor of his wife who died in childbirth in 1630. She had given birth to 14 children in their 18 years of marriage.

The Empress used to go on military campaigns with her husband the Emperor. Her tomb is inside the Taj.

Next:

The Terra Cotta Soldiers or Warriors in Xian, China.

It is regarded as the greatest discovery of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was during the Qin (Qin Shi Huang) Dynasty when the Emperor unified all of China, a country that had been in chaos for years.

These thousands of Terra Cotta soldiers that were made about 220 B.C. were discovered in 1974 by some farmers trying to drill a well.

The Terra Cotta soldiers are positioned in strict accordance with ancient directives on the art of war.

Each figure differs from the others in facial expression, clothing, gestures, hair style and so on.

The soldiers each held real weapons from that period. They were in excellent condition when they were found.

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The colors on the soldiers tunics were well preserved and very bright even after all of these years.

These soldiers were all life size and expected to accompany the Emperor into immortality.

The Great Pyramid at Giza.

This great Pyramid is 30 times larger in mass than the Empire State Building.

It is larger than St. Peters in Rome, the Cathedrals in Milan, Florence, Westminster and St. Pauls all put together.

With the materials from the Pyramid you could build a wall 10 feet high and 1 foot thick and it would go around the Country of France.

The interior stones fit so well a card can not fit between them.

There is less than one tenth of one per cent difference between the lengths on each side of the pyramid.

There are two million blocks of stone, each weighing 2 tons. It took 20 years to build and is 481 feet high. It was built by Pharo Khufu about 2560 B.C.

These statistics may seem boring but I find them very fascinating.

The Great Wall of China.

Though, as I stated earlier, it was started in the 7th Century B.C. It received its greatest building progress during the Ming Dynasty from 1368 to 1644 A.D.

It is speculated that 2 to 3 million people died while working during the hundreds of years it took to complete the project.

The Grand Canyon National Park.

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Some of the oldest human artifacts are found here, some of which date to the Paleo-Indian period 12000 years ago.

It has the longest Gorge in the world some 290 miles long and 18 miles across. It is one mile deep.

The river drops 2200 feet from its entrance into the Canyon and where it exits. Along the way it has 200 rapids.

Some of the rock in the bed of the river has been determined to be 2 Billion years old.

The human presence can be traced back 4000 years. And it is interesting to note there are 5 million visitors every year.

The Colosseum

Nero had a statue of himself built that was 100 feet high and was supposed to be the god of the sun.

Emperor Vespasian, I suppose by eminent domain, took over that ground and decided he would build something for the people to enjoy.

Hence the stadium which he started in 70 A.D. and his son Titus finished in 80 A.D. It is 527 meters in circumference and 50 meters high.

It had 80 entrances and exits and if you can believe it, the crowd of 50,000 could exit in 5 minutes.

The 7th and final choice may surprise you. There are great many places and structures in the world that could qualify as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

I tried not only to pick the obvious but to look at their unique place in the history of The World. I have even second guessed myself up to the time I walked through the door this evening.

Nevertheless, the final pick is St. Peters Basilica in Rome, not only for the Basilica itself but for the complex that surrounds it.

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The location was symbolic and was supposed to be the place where St. Peter, the chief apostle was buried. A shrine was built followed by a new building and church in 349 A.D. and then followed by the present day Basilica which was started in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

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Michelangelo designed the imposing dome and drew the plans for what was to become the largest church in the world. The interior has 45 alters and has many fine works of art such as the Pieta by Michelangelo, the papal alter and Throne of St. Peter by Bernini.

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There are many museums in the complex with beautiful and famous works of Art.

Then there is the Sistine Chapel with Michelangelo's famous ceiling and of course The Last Judgment on the altar wall.

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The Piazza is spellbinding. The square or circle was laid out by Bernini and is surrounded by two colonnades with 284 Doric columns in four rows with 140 saints on top. The amount of artwork inside the Basilica itself is unbelievable.

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In any event you have my story which started in Southern Indiana and careened out of control around the World.

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Thank you for listening.

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