

WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE? OTHER WONDERS WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION ■ THE ALLEGAN JOINNY FAIR TAKES BIG TIME SHOWS WITH SMALL DOWN-FUN ■ BELL'S BEER, HOPS AND BARLEY TRIP: BEERY INSIDE ■ WEST LAKE DRIVE IN: INDEPENDENT HOOD AND A LAFESH

## JUST WONDERFUL

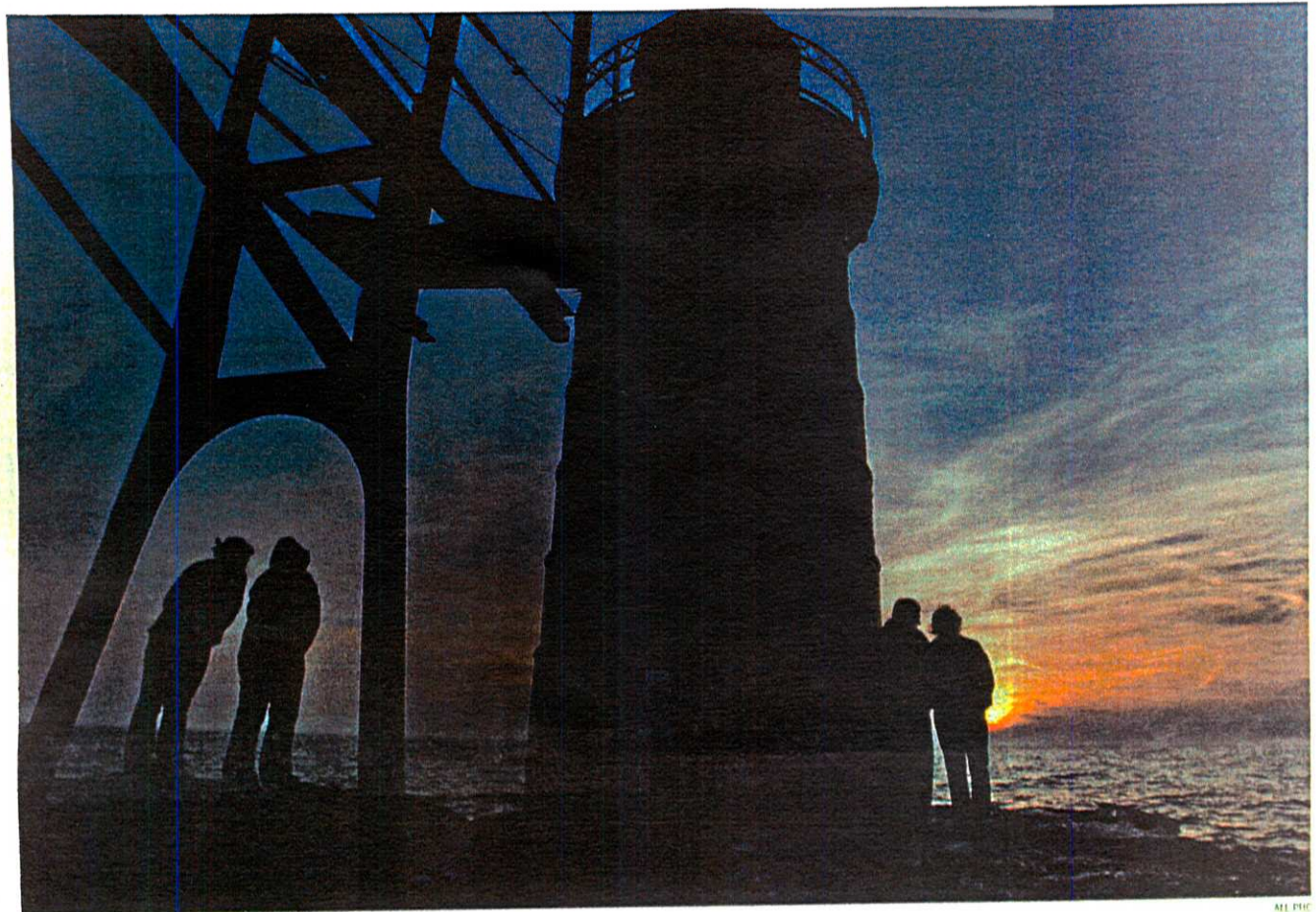
**A**fter perusing the new Seven Wonders of the World list released on 7/7/07 in Lisbon, Portugal, I thought to myself, what the heck is so wonderful about this? Sure, the Taj Mahal, the Great Wall and all are pretty cool, but the creators of this list of world highlights had the entire globe from which to choose.

We, at the Kalamazoo Gazette, have narrowed it down a bit. After much consideration, research and an idle Friday afternoon, we have formulated *(drum roll, please)* "The Seven Wonders of Southwest Michigan." Those are highlighted below, and circling the page are other



**Jeff Barr**

wondrous things in the region. You might think some of the seven we chose are truly wonderful, others may leave you wondering. Regardless, we think you'll come away with one conclusion: Southwest Michigan is a land of wonders.



**LAKE MICHIGAN / SOUTH HAVEN BEACHES:** We can't lay sole claim to the whole Great Lake, but the South Haven shore undoubtedly is all ours. Less than an hour from downtown Kalamazoo North and South beaches, the pier, the lighthouse and even the touristy town are simply wonderful. Mammoth Lake Michigan stretches to the western horizon to form a panoramic mosaic of water and sky. It's as if one beautiful day, God scratched his finger in the sand and called for rain.



**KALAMAZOO PROMISE:** All you have to do is graduate from a Kalamazoo Public Schools high school and your college tuition is free? KPS Superintendent Janice Brown must have felt like Wonder Woman when she made this announcement late in 2005. The Promise offers many Kalamazoo kids a chance they might not have had to further their education and improve their lives. I wonder who the generous benefactors are.



**A) KAL-HAVEN TRAIL; B) PORTAGE CREEK BICENTENNIAL PARK BIKEWAY:** Looking for two ways to enhance your bicycling pleasure? Wonder no more. These two majestic trails offer cycling in contrast. Whether you want to weave throughout the city of Portage, or take a straight path down an old railbed in Van Buren County, this is biking at its best. The city of Kalamazoo once promised to build its own trail to connect these two great paths. I wonder when.



**STATE THEATRE:** A fixture in downtown Kalamazoo since 1927, the State Theatre is a great place to take in a concert amid some of the most awe-inspiring interior decor you'll ever see. The combination of tradition, meticulous renovations and an interior laden with color, texture and ornate fixtures is what makes the State great. It was closed in 1982, but a "Save the State" committee formed and the community celebrated when the Hinman Co. re-opened it in 1985. Wonder when Stevie Wonder's gonna play there.



**GENE THE PUMPKIN MAN:** The guy with the orange Cadillacs on M-43 in Van Buren celebrates his 25th year in the business of pumping out pumpkins. Gene's actual name is Rhodes, but to most of us, his surname is "the Pumpkin Man." His good up or become an autumn landmark. There's so much orange up there, it's as if the air itself is enough to leave you wondering.



**SUNSET AUTO THEATER:** A double feature at 12 bucks a carload? What year is this, 1956? Not quite, but it sure feels like it when you drive to Hartford to take in a couple of movies at the old-fashioned drive-in. The concession-stand ads are vintage, but the flicks are first-run. No more of those speakers that hang from the windows, either. Simply tune your radio to 93.1 FM and relax. Come early because the place is packed on Friday and Saturday nights. No wonder.



**PLAINWELL ICE CREAM:** It comes to frozen treats, the reason to wonder which is the best. Plainwell Ice Cream was founded by Art and Judy C. in 1978 and has become a countless palates in Plainwell beyond. The small brick by Plainwell churros out 35 years. The top five sellers: pecan, cougar tracks, con amoreto chocolate cherry salt. Plainly wonderful.

— Jeff Barr can be reached at 388-8581 or [jbarr@kalamazoo Gazette.com](mailto:jbarr@kalamazoo Gazette.com) ... WHAT DID WE MISS? SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH JEFF

A PHOTO BY JEFF BARR FOR THE KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

UNDER CONSTRUCTION ■ DISC GOLF COURSES ■ DENTONVILLE'S COVERED BRIDGE ■ THE ALLEGAN ANTIQUES FAIR ■ ECHO VALLEY TOBOGGAN RUNS ■ SARNOZI'S APPLE AND CREAM CHEESE PASTRY ■ BOODY'S OLD-FASHIONED SANDY MARKET ■ EAST HALL AT WMU ■ KALAMAZOO MAJURE CENTER ■ LOWRY'S BOOKS AND TOYS ■ KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE

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