



### ***The World's Wonder View Tower, Genoa, Colorado***

Vince Pitelka, ©2025

The World's Wonder View Tower is situated on the Great Plains just off I-70 at the west edge of Genoa, Colorado. The observation deck atop the tower was confirmed by *Ripley's Believe It or Not* to be the highest point between New York and Denver. That's a false claim. The elevation at Genoa is 5600 feet and the Tower is 65 feet tall. There are at least 54 peaks in the eastern U.S. that exceed 6000 feet, but as you will discover below, the allure of the Tower was built on such dubious claims.

The seven-story tower was built in 1926 by Charles W. Gregory and his partner Myrtle LeBow as a tourist attraction and way-station along US-24 and the Rock Island Railroad. Car ownership in the U.S. tripled in the late 20s and early 30s, accompanied by an explosion in roadside businesses catering to the new fascination for tourist travel. The tower makes the dubious claim of offering a view of six states, which was enough to draw crowds of visitors. Business was brisk, and Gregory and LeBow added other amenities including a trading post, store, café, gas station, roadhouse, and a group of stone "grotto" rooms decorated in a variety of themes.

The Wonder View Tower thrived before and after WWII. Jerry and Esther Chubbuck purchased the property in 1967. Just eight year later in 1975, Interstate-70 opened, rerouting traffic south of the site. Visits declined, but Jerry continued to operate the facility as a museum for his highly eclectic collection of antiquities and curiosities. The tower survives as a symbol of the rapidly expanding popularity of automobile tourism in the middle of the 20th century.

Sadly, Jerry Chubbuck passed away on August, 4, 2013, and the tower has been closed since then. The extensive contents were auctioned off in 2014, and unfortunately, the auction took place at the Tower and did not attract the anticipated crowds. Jerry's wife and children were

hoping that the auction would raise significant funds and they would be able to donate the site to Lincoln County for a museum. But despite the amazing and extensive collections of so much miscellanea that Jerry had accumulated, the auction didn't raise anywhere near the amount the family had hoped for. They put the World's Wonder View Tower on the market, along with the plentiful remaining contents. Unfortunately, that did not go well either, and a first bid involving crowdsourcing fell through.

In 2018, a group of long-time Tower fans were able to raise the funds and purchase the Tower. A nonprofit organization called the Friends of the Genoa Tower has been formed and is raising funds and working to restore the World's Wonder View Tower with plans to eventually reopen it to the public. It will be very different, since so much of the character of the Tower and adjoining rooms was in the mind-boggling array of contents, all of which were auctioned off. All of the contents of the Tower and adjoining museum rooms were auctioned off, and a new vision for the site involves making it an activated space for art, music, and community events, with plans for lodging, EV charging stations, and updated traveler amenities.

I feel it is important to include Jerry's obituary:

Gerald Allen Chubbuck was born on Oct. 22, 1930 to Melden and Ruth Chubbuck in Arriba, CO. Gerald or Jerry as most people knew him grew up on a farm north of Arriba and graduated from Arriba High School in 1950. Jerry enlisted in the Marines but later received an honorable release from duties because of health complications and returned home where he worked on the farm. Jerry's passions included hunting game from rabbits to deer and elk but then later turned to artifacts. He enjoyed playing cards with the guys and later with the guys and their wives. Jerry developed an obsession for hunting Indian artifacts. He discovered on Dec. 8, 1957 an archeological site, later named the Olsen-Chubbuck bison site. He also discovered an Indian princess burial and a prehistoric mammoth tusk and skull. He collected bottles, insulators, rocks, Indian artifacts, antiques, and much more. He married his wife Esther of almost fifty years on Sept. 9, 1963. Together they have three children, Allen, Connie, and Ann. In 1967, Jerry purchased the Genoa Tower where he lived out his dream of collecting, trading and displaying his Indian Artifacts along with many other collectables. He enjoyed entertaining, visiting and meeting all the people that toured his museum. He was well-known for his sense of humor, his free spirit, his knowledge of artifacts, his friendly smile, and his jokes and for his dedication to the Genoa Tower establishment. Jerry and the Tower, with its many unique items, were featured in numerous books, magazines, newspapers articles and television and news broadcast. Jerry would often receive countless letters and cards from delighted visitor that had toured his museum thanking him for their wonderful time. Jerry made a living, loving what he was doing and doing what he loved and it showed. Jerry was diagnosed with diabetes in 2000 had been struggling with health issues. He died on Aug.4 2013 at Penrose Hospital in CO Springs due to complications. Jerry leaves behind a legacy that will forever be missed. He is

survived by wife Esther, children Allen, Connie, Ann, his sister's Yvonne (Rob) McCaleb, Sharon (Bud) Johnson, and brother Don (Delorse) Chubbuck, six grandchildren numerous aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

In March of 2000, on my way to the NCECA Conference in Denver, my friend David McBeth and I stopped at the World's Wonder View Tower on the western edge of the little town of Genoa, Colorado. Jerry Chubbuck showed us around, but we had limited time and did not go up in the Tower itself. Many items in the complex were for sale, and I purchased two antique salt-glazed ceramic beer bottles. I am very happy to have something physical that came from the Tower complex in addition to an original arrowhead purchased on my second visit. The whole layout greatly impressed me at the time as an amazing example of the kind of oddball roadside attractions found along two-lane highways all over the U.S., and I always planned to stop again.

I've passed the Tower quite a few times while traveling west or east through Colorado on I-70, but was stuck in destination-travel mode. In his 2000 book, *Out West: A Journey through Lewis & Clark's America*, Dayton Duncan talks about *destination travel*, where we stick to the interstates and minimize distractions and stops in order to reach our destination quickly, and *discovery travel*, where we avoid taking the same route twice, leave the interstates, and stop at interesting sites along the way. I am too often guilty of destination travel. As with so many oddball roadside attractions, I was worried that the World's Wonder View Tower will simply disappear one of these days.

On my way west in 2008 on Friday, June 13, armed with my Nikon DSLR to record the experience, I took the Genoa exit and found my way to the Tower. I parked out front and walked up to the main entrance. A sign on the door said "OPEN," but a stout padlock on a heavy hasp contradicted that claim. I walked around the corner to the attached residence built onto the front of the Tower and knocked on the door. From the outside, the place looked humble, with stained white curtains obscuring the windows. After a few minutes, an elderly man answered the door and it was obvious that he had been sleeping. I asked if I could see the Tower, and he nodded and said "Let me get the key." He was pleasant, with a warm smile and a gentle demeanor. Inside his apartment, the small living room and kitchen had a patina acquired from human beings existing in a closed space with no scrubbing or repainting for a very long time. A sink in the back was piled with dirty dishes. None of the kitchen appliances and fixtures dated beyond the 1950s.

As we walked to the main entrance, the man introduced himself as Jerry Chubbuck, and explained with considerable pride that he has owned the Wonder View Tower for over 40 years. He unlocked the front door, and I entered and paid the one-dollar admission. That's right, one dollar. Jerry said that I'd get my admission back if I bought something. I wondered if they have anything for a buck.

This place is astounding in its scope and depth. An online blurb explains that the tower was “the promotional invention of Colorado’s version of P.T. Barnum, C.W. Gregory, and his partner, Myrtle LeBow.” Known to locals as the "Genoa Tower" the structure includes a six-story (seven counting the rooftop observation deck) tower of wood and concrete plus a sprawling complex of 22 ground-floor rooms, some built from mortared rock with vaulted ceilings. The rooms are packed wall-to-wall with displays of minerals, arrowheads, bones, antique tools, farm implements, antique guns, Indian artifacts and countless curiosities and oddities including a giant 18”-diameter amethyst geode (illuminated from within) and a stuffed, mounted two-headed calf.

I decided to climb the tower first. The route from the main room to the base of the tower passes through a very long narrow gallery packed with a bizarre range of collectibles and oddities, with the primary focus being antique tools. The walls and even the ceiling are completely covered. I pride myself in identifying old tools, and had fun gazing at them.

The room at the base of the tower is crammed with the most eclectic variety of oddities, but I decided to let that wait. The staircase hugs the outer wall. The first flight leads to a room painted a rather garishly-bright medium blue. Surprisingly, it is mostly filled with worthless trash, including crappy prints and oil paintings, boxes of empty picture frames, broken furniture, cheap vases, glassware, old bottles, and other similar stuff. One item, an enormous paper mâché model of Pike’s Peak, was obviously constructed on this floor, being way too large to fit up the stairs. I am sure it dates back to the Tower’s heyday as a popular travel stop along US-24.

The whole tower is tapered, with each floor slightly smaller than the one below until you get to the fifth, which expands outwards to a considerable size with concrete braces on the outside walls supporting the extension.

I proceeded up the next staircase to the third floor, where the room is painted a garish bright yellow and contains a similar array of trashy odds and ends, with just enough space to walk through the room and get to the next flight of stairs. The room on the fourth floor is even smaller and is painted a brilliant blood-red, which seemed even more surreal, especially with windows fogged with grease and dust revealing a filtered view of the surrounding farm fields. Unnervingly, the next flight is attached to the outside of the building. As mentioned, the fifth floor extends out beyond the fourth, similar to an old-fashioned water tower, which was obviously the inspiration. If the stairs to the next floor were inside the room, they would come out in the middle of the larger room on the fifth floor. I don’t see how that would be a problem, but instead, they hung the staircase on the outside of the building. I think that it is all rather sturdy, but who knows, and I must admit to some nervousness as I climbed that flight.

The fifth floor is surprisingly large, with windows all the way around. It is also painted red, but there are so many photographs, paintings, old license plates, and other miscellaneous things tacked up on the walls around the windows that you don't see very much of the red paint. Once again, there is a dense, motley assortment of junky furniture and other odds and ends that required serious effort to haul up four narrow flights of stairs. The windowsills are filled with old bottles of many colors, creating a sort of stained-glass-window effect.

Near the center of the room, I climbed a steep ladder to the sixth floor, a very small room with large windows similar to a classic observation tower. The interior is painted white with bright red trim, and with the large windows it is almost glaringly bright compared to the lower rooms. At one edge, an even steeper, narrower ladder leads up to the seventh level, an observation platform on the roof. The stair treads on the latter were worn to a smooth concave profile on the top surfaces from the thousands of people that climbed to the observation deck during the Tower's heyday. The portal to the roof was open, but barely wide enough to squeeze my shoulders through. Someone slightly larger wouldn't make it.

I emerged on the roof, where two very ratty stuffed mannequins are perched on chairs, having a perpetual party. It would have been a shame to climb all the way up there to discover nothing more than the view. I had seen these mannequins from the ground outside the tower, and up close they do not disappoint.

The roof is officially the seventh story, and you are a heck of a long way up. I do suffer from vertigo, and the railing does not look sturdy, so I stayed towards the center. I shot some pictures, including a panorama series, but from the top of the tower there is a spectacular view of not much. I mean, it's just the Great Plains, and although the tower is built at the edge of a high plateau dropping off to the west, it just overlooks a very large expanse of Great Plains. I gazed into the distance, looking for something, anything, but could see nothing of note.

There is some fanciful writing on the back page of the brochure. It says, "Believe it or not, six states can be seen from the Tower: Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, New Mexico, and South Dakota. Also, the Grand Tetons, 500 miles distant, proved by Ripley. Highest point from East Coast to West Coast outside of the Rocky Mountains – 5,751 feet elevation."

Highest point outside the Rocky Mountains? Those claims were published in *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, and date back to C.W. Gregory and Myrtle LeBow. Apparently, they hadn't traveled out west much. They seem to have overlooked the Sierra Nevada, thinking that once you get past the Rocky Mountains, a gently sloping plain leads all the way to the Pacific Ocean, as was the wish of the early explorers. And there is no chance that you can see the Grand Tetons from here. There is too much curvature in the earth for that possibility. And regarding seeing six states, how would you know? I mean, other than the Rockies to the west, which are in the same state as the tower, everything else is pretty much featureless rolling Great Plains

extending to oblivion in all directions. At the time of the Tower's rising popularity, I think that *Ripley's* was inclined to publish things based on sensationalism and public popularity rather than any semblance of fact.

The wind was blowing hard, as it generally does on the Great Plains, so I didn't stay on top very long. I gingerly made my way down the ladders, and was especially light-footed descending the staircase hanging from the fifth floor. The rest of the way down was easy. Back on the ground floor I examined the contents of the room at the base of the tower. There were glass cases filled with Native American stone tools, and collections of old pharmacy jars filled with suspicious objects in cloudy formaldehyde. There were wood wagon parts, and various stuffed and mounted animal heads including Moose and Elk, plus the promised two-headed calf, which seems authentic. The brochure says that it is one of three two-headed calves in the collection, but an online site says they have two three-headed calves. Jesus, can't people read? Or count? Maybe it's just the American inclination to sensationalize. I haven't yet encountered a claim that they have just one six-headed calf, but I could imagine it appearing in Ripley's.

Jerry wandered in as I was finishing my circuit of the room, and began pointing out highlights as we started down the corridor towards the main room. As mentioned, this corridor is lined, walls and ceiling, with old tools. Jerry delights in asking visitors to identify specific tools and other objects, and as he quizzed me, I was able to answer almost every example until he stumped me on a few. Denver artist/musician Reed Weimer and his wife, artist Chandler Romeo visited the tower several times with their two kids. Chandler wrote, "He [Jerry] was proud of all his stuff, and so he would quiz you on what things were. The better you did, the stranger the things he would show you.... I watched him do that to our teenagers and put things in their hands that they would never have picked up if they had known what they were — and today they fully remember it." I can imagine the thousands of people who have such memories of Jerry and the Tower.

Jerry has a compulsion towards bad puns and stupid jokes, and has a variety special objects and gimmicks secreted everywhere, which he delights in pulling out for visitors. A good one is a well-used, duct-tape-reinforced cigar box. Jerry handed it to me with instructions to open the lid. I did, and when a spring-loaded lizard reared up and startled me, Jerry giggled with delight. The routine immediately seemed familiar, like some kind of surreal and slightly-disturbing déjà-vu. It dawned on me that back in 2000 when I stopped here with David McBeth, Jerry brought out the same trick cigar box. I had a momentary vision of Jerry stuck in some sort of space-time anomaly, going through the same routine with every visitor who tours these rooms, decade after decade, like some kind of Twilight Zone endless-loop nightmare, or Bill Murray in "Groundhog Day." This place is like that.

Back in the main entry room, the back walls are covered with framed collections of arrowheads under glass. There are thousands and thousands of arrowheads, and the brochure says that the

Tower Museum contains over 20,000 Indian artifacts. I believe it. When I enquired, Jerry explained that all of the arrowheads were collected within fifty miles of the Tower. It used to be easy. Standard farming practices of the past dictated that field stubble was plowed once the crops were harvested. All of that churned-up dry dirt sat exposed through the winter until spring planting. The wind on the Great Plains is a defining feature of the region, and unless there was good a covering of snow, every good wind would blow off a layer of dirt, leaving behind the clods and pebbles. After a good dust storm, a farmer could walk his land and pick up dozens of arrowheads, and practically everyone had framed collections of points hanging in their homes. Children or grandchildren eventually sold or gave them to Jerry Chubbuck.

People today have a hard time believing that arrowheads were ever so abundant, but it's important to remember that before White settlement, the Great Plains were shortgrass prairie, with a thick stand of grass concealing stray arrows or loose arrowheads. Prairie fires periodically burned off the grass, but arrowheads accumulating over the millennia would become embedded in the humus formed by successive generations of shortgrass. It was not until 19<sup>th</sup>-century farmers plowed the prairie and disrupted the dirt beneath that the arrowheads were brought back to the surface. Consider the reality of the indigenous nomadic hunter-gatherers wandering these plains for at least three or four millennia and you begin to get some idea of the vast numbers of arrowheads out there. Jerry confirmed that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, after a good dust storm, a committed person could collect as much as a hundred arrowheads in a single day.

The sheer quantity of interesting and valuable stuff in the Tower Museum boggles the mind. I have seen plenty of good antique and second-hand stores, plus a few eccentric small museums that arose from the collecting and archiving endeavors of a committed individual, but this one stands out for so many reasons. Jerry seems to be hanging onto the tail end of a good thing while barely scraping by in his dismal little attached apartment. I wonder if he even realizes what he has here. Without making much of a dent in the holdings of the Tower Museum, a savvy person could list a few things on eBay now and then, and in reasonable time become wealthy, ready for retirement somewhere with warmer winters. That's probably an impossibility. Jerry is too dug-in, too committed to a deeply entrenched routine as he waits for throngs of tourists to reappear.

Moving east through the connected rooms, you enter a completely unexpected fantasy world of stone chambers with vaulted ceilings. In one large room, several worse-for-wear stuffed mannequins sit at a round, badly-stained rattan table, with enormous mounted moose and elk heads suspended above. A deck of cards, liquor bottle, and glasses sit on the table. Both mannequins hold revolvers in one hand, laid at the ready on the table. One mannequin holds a hand of cards, while the other has laid his hand on the table. There's a third hand laid on the table and a chair pulled out as if someone has just stood up. The implication is that the person

is the viewer observing all of this. A fourth chair holds an old guitar covered with decals of strawberries. What will happen next in this scenario?

At one end of the room is a stage, and Jerry explained that this end part of the establishment once contained a popular restaurant, dance hall, and bar, a convenient stop on the old two-lane highway that once paralleled the railroad tracks just north of the Tower. Now the railroad tracks are gone. The old highway and the slow pace of life has been supplanted by Interstate-70 and people in a hurry. The World's Wonder View Tower still makes an intriguing sight for people passing by, but few take the time to stop anymore. No doubt the obviously seedy appearance of the Tower and surrounding buildings offer little encouragement to potential visitors.

At the end of the big room, the stage is an oddity in itself. It is steeply canted backwards, and I could not figure out whether it was built that way, or has simply sagged at the back edge. Jerry claimed it was designed and built that way specifically to prevent drunken performers from falling onto the dance floor below, but I would think that the angle would have the opposite effect, making it even harder to negotiate, especially for any performer under the influence. Several strips of non-skid tape offer some attempt to adapt to the incline, but I can imagine what it would be like once a few drinks were spilled on the surface. I think that the slope results from deterioration of the substructure, and it does give pause to wonder about structural deterioration elsewhere in the complex.

At the far eastern end of the rooms are several that once housed the kitchen and dining area. They are now crammed with the most eclectic assortment of things including a few worthwhile collectibles and vast quantities of completely worthless kitchenware and tableware. The sheer amount of stuff is mind-boggling. It's entirely possible that local residents simply boxed up their old glassware, dishes, and kitchenware and dropped them off with Jerry. That may have been much easier and cheaper than taking them to the county dump.

One of the most surreal features of the grotto rooms in the eastern portion of the complex is the collection of paintings and pictographs supposedly created by Lakota Sioux Princess Ravenwing. Many of the rocks cemented into the pillars, walls, and ceilings are decorated with multi-color pictographs, and several large imbedded stones feature elaborate paintings. The pictographs were probably painted by C. W. Gregory or Jerry Chubbuck, or some out-of-work farm hand with an artistic bent. It doesn't make the place any less fun or intriguing, and in fact, the opportunity for such conjecture is perhaps one of the best things about the Wonder View Tower.

Google A.I. says, "Lakota Sioux Princess Ravenwing is not a real historical figure. The phrase likely refers to a fictional character or a name created in a non-Indigenous context. The trope of the "Indian princess" is a stereotype rooted in racist and romanticized ideas of Indigenous

people and does not reflect actual Indigenous history or cultures. A character named Raven Wing appears in the book *Raven Wing, Inc.* by Carlisle Cavender, where she is a business mogul with a past connection to the Lakota people. A sign for "Stone Paintings by Ravenwing, Sioux Princess" appears at the World's Wonder View Tower in Genoa, Colorado. This is an example of fabricated roadside attraction lore." So much for Princess Ravenwing.

I returned to the main entrance, where Jerry was waiting. I expect that a significant part of his life these days consists of waiting for whatever or whoever comes next. On the counter was a metal cookie tin filled with reproduction arrowheads, probably made in China. I fingered them for a moment, and then said "Jerry, I would love to buy a real arrowhead, one that was picked up by a local farmer walking his land after a dust storm." Jerry eyed me for a minute, and said "I don't usually sell those." But then after another moment, he turned around and opened a cabinet behind the counter. Inside was a motley stack of what appeared to be more of the old, framed arrowhead collections like the ones mounted on the walls. Who knows how many he has in storage. He took a mounted frame from the top of the stack and set it on the counter. From a drawer beneath the counter, he retrieved a pair of pliers. With considerable effort, he extracted a series of rusty pins that held the cover on the frame. The pins came out rough, having rusted in place over a long period of time. Removing the glass, he said "Which one would you like?" Initially it felt a little like we were violating a piece of history, but considering the sheer quantity of such framed collections, and the apparent lack of real provenance on any of them, I chose an arrowhead. Jerry asked \$30, and I did not hesitate to pay his price. He wrapped my arrowhead in newspaper and fastened it with tape, and I pocketed it.

For an arrowhead without provenance or any real proof of its authenticity, \$30 is too much to pay. But my own provenance relates to this time and place, the experience of the World's Wonder View Tower, and the interaction with Jerry Chubbuck. Even if those framed collections piled in the cabinet are a well-orchestrated fakery to capitalize on gullible tourists, like so many things at the Tower, my arrowhead still represents the whole aura and story of the place, and will be a treasure to me.

Anticipating my departure, as a parting ritual Jerry led me over to an adjacent cabinet and pulled out an odd-looking fixture. Once he slipped it on his and pulled down the cuff of his green canvas coat, his palm appeared to be pierced by a long carving knife, half protruding from each side. I was glad for the opportunity to photograph him with one of his cheesy gimmicks. Jerry's normal facial expression is rather weary, but as I took a picture, his smile was genuine. It occurred to me that this scenario might represent a moment of joy in what is otherwise a pretty tedious and repetitive life. Even this is part of the repetition, but repetitive parts of our lives become ritual, and some of those rituals are cherished even when repeated innumerable times. If that's the case, I am very glad to have provided a little joy in Jerry's day. At the same time, I felt a little anxious to leave the premises, for fear that I might be sucked in as a permanent prop in this endless-loop space-time anomaly.

Jerry offered my dollar admission fee back, but I refused. I shook his hand and headed out the door.

Before leaving the World's Wonder View Tower, I spent an hour and a half documenting the exterior of the complex. I took my time and walked the circumference of the grounds, shooting pictures of the building and checking out all the oddities left from the heyday of the establishment. At the northwest corner of the property about 100 feet from the tower are two ancient outhouses caught in suspended motion of slow collapse. One is far beyond utility. The other looks like it might have still been in use until recently, but is standing at a precarious angle, propped up by a weathered gray fence post. The "MEN" sign had been removed from the more derelict of the two, and was tacked above the "WOMEN" sign on the other – a unisex bathroom ahead of its time.

The door hung partially open, seeking the lowest point determined by the tilt of the building. Along the edge are eight sets of hinges. That got my attention, and I took a closer look to discover that on all but two, the hinge pins had worn through to nothing. Each time a hinge failed, they left it in place and tacked on a new one above or below. I tried to imagine the number of times this door was opened and closed to wear through that many hinge pins, and decided that the Great Plains wind probably had a lot to do with that.

Turning back towards the tower, I was startled by its appearance from this vantage. The town of Genoa is off to the east, the Interstate to the south, but no one sees it from the northwest other than occasional farmers plowing the adjacent fields. This side has been left untouched for at least thirty years – or, since the Interstate went through. It looks incredibly derelict, with peeling paint exposing bleached wood and crumbling concrete. Had I seen it from this angle first, I doubt that I would have trusted the structural integrity of the tower.

Along the back side, facing the grades of the former highway and railroad track, it is clear that this was once the front of the facility. There are still large, crude wood tables loaded with old bottles, rusty car parts, rocks and minerals, and other "collectibles" that date back three decades before the Interstate came through, and apparently did not warrant moving to the large, crude wood tables displaying similar treasures along what is now the front of the building. Upon and between the objects on the tables, dust has settled heavily, and weeds have taken root.

Closer to the old highway grade stands a large concrete stele-like structure with jagged stones embedded around the sides and top, and a large flat face front and back. I realized that it must have been an old advertising sign to draw in tourists passing by on the old highway. Whatever message was once painted or mounted on the faces is long gone. Beyond the old sign and parallel to the highway grade stands a long row of objects including old brown enameled cast

iron parlor stoves, a large metal cabinet, a stack of dented galvanized washtubs, and a pair of wagon axles with iron spoke wheels. I could imagine the life of the tower just before the Interstate came through, when people were already in more of a hurry, less inclined to stop at such places, and the owners were diversifying, offering this motley assortment of objects for sale. At that point, the World's Wonder View Tower had become a glorified second-hand store and yard sale, with the museum and six-state view of secondary interest to most passers-by. The place has changed little since then except for the effects of age – the peeling paint and accumulating layers of dust and weeds.

Circling around the east end of the building and back to the parking area, I came across one of the most surreal details of the whole place. Two huge derelict American sedans from the sixties sit there in normal parking position, but with grass growing around them and all tires flat, the chassis settled close to the ground. The windows are rolled up and intact, but a little fogged with age and lack of cleaning. The interiors of both sedans are completely filled with antique bottles up to and above the bottoms of the windows. What an eloquent statement, a decaying exclamation point at the end of the tale of the Tower. What more could you say about this place?

I finally climbed in my car and drove away, feeling a combination of sadness and relief. Back on the interstate heading west from Genoa, the Great Plains roll gently but relentlessly to the horizon. For a thoughtful and observant person, the immensity of the landscape and timelessness of this scene necessarily illuminates the entire span of human existence as a miniscule spec on the life of the land. In the grand scheme of things, the World's Wonder View Tower is of little consequence, like so many works of man that will amount to no more. Here and now, I find it a little tragic that such an expenditure of creative energy and hard labor has come to this, fading into obscurity as an anomaly in the peripheral vision of travelers on I-70 – “Jesus, Bernice, did you see that? What the hell was that weird building?” “Was” is keyword in that rhetorical question, and five minutes later the traveler's focus has shifted to some anticipated destination, with no more thought of this oddity. I had a momentary inclination to mount a sandwich board and stand at the appropriate highway offramp – “DON'T MISS THE WORLD'S WONDERVIEW TOWER! ONE-OF-A-KIND! EXPERIENCE THE INCREDIBLE VIEW OF SIX STATES! SEE THE TWO-HEADED CALF!”