

THE FAIR THAT MADE SEATTLE

What an extraordinary time it was in the life of this oh-so-young city, this Seattle of well-kept lawns, so wholesome and outdoorsy, wearing not much adornment except for maybe

the Smith Tower, an elderly skyline bauble toward which we pointed with much pride.

The Seattle of the mid-1950s to early '60s had a nice little downtown, a quaint but crumbling Pike Place Market, a ratty-looking Civic Auditorium, a dungeon-like Ice Arena and a bunch of happy hooligans running around in pirate costumes at Seafair time.

The symphony conductor, Milton Katims, had to play his orchestra in an old movie house, the Orpheum. The UW's football team was a beaten-down doormat trying to recover from the stench of a recruiting scandal. Excitement, if any, centered on the hydroplanes, the minor-league baseball Rainiers, and, as one wag suggested, "maybe some illegal fishing."

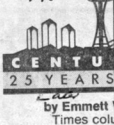
Seattle was Doug Welch's town. It belonged to Green Eyes, the McMurtys, the Widow and Al the used-car dealer. In other words, Seattle was a nice little downtown surrounded by a placid, middle-class cluster of neighborhoods, the perfect fodder for Welch, a P-I writer noted for his satirical wit.

Most civic concerns centered on Children's Orthopedic Hospital, the Ryther Center, the Christmas Ball and unneutered pets. Little old provincial Seattle looked at the world through the eye-smarting haze of backyard barbecues and meekly watched as highball glasses were snatched off the table at midnight on Saturday.

Then somebody made an incredible suggestion: "Hey, why don't we have a world's fair?" It began that simply, the fair that opened 25 years ago Tuesday.

The "somebody" turned out to be three or four guys at a bar in

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the Washington Athletic Club. The 1950s also saw the flowering of the three-martini lunch, and it must have taken that many — at least — to dream up this dizzy confection. A world's fair? In Seattle?

What happened was that these three guys, City Councilman Al Rochester, political writer Ross Cunningham of The Times and Don Follett, manager of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, got together for lunch at the WAC. They differed as to whether businessman Denney Givens was there; later, in fact, nobody was sure if they even had lunch.

But they did propose this idea of a world's fair in Seattle. Best evidence suggests that the words first popped out of Rochester's mouth, so if anybody gets credit for this pipe dream it should be Rochester.

Anyway, Al got this world's fair resolution through the City Council, and word got out. It instantly turned into a runaway joke. In fact, somebody got the bright idea to call Tex McCrary, the famous New York publicist, to see if he would help us publicize the fair.

"A world's fair? In Seattle?" McCrary is reported to have said. "Frankly, I've always thought of Seattle as a place where the town prostitute has a pull-down bed."

THAT WAS A REAL thigh-slapper in those days. And in those days, too, we used to gather for lunch down at Victor Rosellini's 610, one of Seattle's first classy post-World War II restaurants. There you would find press agents, newspaper guys, artists, creative advertising types — the whole schmeer of non-Establishment wits and sages.

So we would gather at the lunch ritual at Victor's, and really cut some beautiful wisecracks about this ridiculous notion that a silly, Seafair-happy, bush-league, ex-fishing village could actually pull off a world's fair.

You see, we didn't know much about Eddie Carlson in those days. We had never heard of Ewen Dingwall. We knew that William S. Street was a big shot at Frederick & Nelson, and some of us had heard, vaguely, about Mike Dederer, State Rep. Ray Olsen and State Sen. Bill Goodloe. Of course, we knew about Joe Gandy, because some of us bought Fords from him at Smith-Gandy, the auto agency that bore his name up on Olive and Boren.

Now, put all these people together, especially Ray Olsen and Bill Goodloe, along with Bob Block and State Sen. Al Rosellini, who was bucking for governor, Mayor Gordon Clinton, and a few others, and you had an interesting but not inspiring mix.

BUT AMONG THEM they got a city bond issue passed for \$7.5 million, and they tried another \$7.5 million out of the state Legislature.

Meanwhile, there was Harold Shefelman. He was a very sharp bonding lawyer and finance man, and before

long a few local business people found themselves sharing pancakes with him at 7 a.m. planning meetings at the old Olympic Hotel Grill. They began to call it "Sleepy Time with Shefelman."

At the same time, Eddie Carlson was holding his own breakfast meetings because Eddie was a very busy fellow who was heir-apparent to the business of running Western Hotels, a burgeoning chain. In those days, Eddie was not very many years removed from checking lost keys and testing doorknobs.

As it turned out, Shefelman became chairman of the Civic Center Advisory Committee and Eddie Carlson became chairman of the Washington State Fair Commission. Later on, Carlson would also become president of the Century 21 Exposition, which became the eventual and official name of this civic daydream that made so many people laugh in derision. But the appellation "world's fair" hung on because these idealistic instigators wanted to make it sound big when they went after appropriations and status.

There was very little of either in the beginning. To understand those seven years, from 1955 to 1962, the year Century 21 opened, you have to think of them not in chronological terms, but as an era.

They were marked by ups and downs, cynicism, and a lot of negative talk because the Seattle of those days had what the pop psychologists of today would call "a very low self-image." The city at large didn't think we'd ever have a world's fair. If we had something, say a regional exposition, it probably wouldn't even rival the Puyallup Fair.

SO ALONG THE WAY you took your good breaks where you found them and exploited them to the limit. For example, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer of that era was fairly ho-hum about the whole business. A young reporter off the P-I, Jim Faber, was an early convert, and one of his jobs was to hammer out press releases in hopes they would generate "favorable coverage."

So Faber would amble into the P-I editorial offices where he'd encounter his old friend, Nard Jones, then chief editorial writer. As Faber dropped off his press releases, Jones would perform a broad charade, feigning elaborate yawns as he made a big show of depositing Jim's literary creations in the wastebasket.

But one day Faber halted Nard's little routine. "Wait," Faber said, "you'd better read this one first."

NARD SQUINTED at the press release, which said, in effect, that William S. Street would be taking on an increasingly larger role in the fair. Furthermore, it quoted Mr. Street as being very enthusiastic about the fair. And of course, Bill Street was a sizable wheel at Frederick & Nelson, one of the city's largest advertisers in newspapers.

Nard looked up from the press release, fixed Faber with an owlish gaze, and a tiny smile turned up at the corner of his mouth. Then he said: "Well, I see where the P-I's attitude toward the fair has just taken a radical 180-degree turn."

Of course, The Times was already "aboard," as they say. After all, Ross Cunningham, a strong voice in the paper's political affairs, was in on the founding meeting. And Bill Blethen, the paper's publisher, early on took a supportive view of the fair.

But all the same, Blethen, Cunningham and The Times' managing editor, Henry MacLeod, played it safe. They knew that in a world's fair, such things as public money, concessions, private bank accounts and so forth needed watching. There were deals to be cut and favors to be had — in other words a

lot of sweet goodies to attract the fruit flies.

So they assigned The Times' ace reporter, Stanton H. Patty, to cover the goings-on. Patty would write news stories, of course, but his other role was to act as sort of a house dick to see that things stayed honest.

Looking back on it many years later, Stan Patty would say: "The thing that kept it honest was the presence of Eddie Carlson. Eddie had this great integrity, and everybody knew he wouldn't stand for any funny stuff."

SOMETIMES OUR fair-happy enthusiasts got real lucky. As Murray Morgan wrote later in his official history of the fair:

"On Oct. 4, 1957, there occurred far from Seattle an event destined to change the nature and, it can be argued, to make possible the success of the Seattle World's Fair. Russian scientists launched the first man-made satellite, Sputnik I, a 180-pound sphere which, circling the Earth about every 90

minutes in an elliptical orbit, went 'beep ... beep ... beep.' A month later the Soviets sent up Sputnik II, weighing 1,120 pounds and carrying a live dog."

On the day this second event happened, a friend of mine, Bob Ward, dropped by with a message. "Do you realize what this means?" he said. "It means that the Russians can orbit one of those things and bring it right down on the 'I' key of Jim Hagerty's typewriter." Hagerty was President Eisenhower's press secretary, and the message was plain.

BEEP ... BEEP ... BEEP. The space race was on, and the United States was off and stumbling. So, quite abruptly, everybody got interested in

science, and not long after that the fledgling Seattle booster party began to take on a scientific coloration. Doors began to open, even if purses did not.

The Seattle business community was not yet buying, and not all the negativism and poor-mouthing could be found in bars at martini time. After one particularly chilly fund-raising attempt in the Olympic Hotel, a community leader grasped Eddie Carlson's arm and said, "I fear you are leading the community by the hand down the road to bankruptcy."

There were land mines of lawsuits ahead. Alfred J. Schweppe, a prominent attorney, sued to prevent the use of public money for an opera-house conversion job on the old Civic Auditorium, rather than a new one, as a 1956 bond issue provided.

There was a mare's nest of suits and threatened suits involving property in the civic center owned by the Nile Temple, the Catholic Church and the Seattle School Board. At one point Eddie Carlson was heard to remark wryly: "Well, at least we've brought them all together."

Years passed, or at least it seemed like years. But because of the keen interest in science, Sen. Warren Magnuson thought he could now pry loose enough federal money to make a contribution to the Century 21 Exposition. It took some doing, but Maggie, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, was able to push through a \$9 million appropriation to build a U.S. Science Pavilion on the Century 21 Exposition site.

He did it by attaching an amendment to a huge, \$5 billion mutual security bill, and the \$9 million for Seattle slipped through practically unnoticed. Maggie banged his gavel and congratulated his Senate colleagues on their vision and wisdom.

He would get more. In all, he would get \$12.5 million in federal appropriations, more than for any other such fair or exposition in U.S. history.

SOMETIMES YOU HAD to create your own good breaks. Jim Faber, a wise old newshead, who traveled to Washington, D.C., on many occasions to help lobby through the federal appropriation for the fair, found himself testifying before a group of hostile congressmen. They demanded a list of countries and corporations that "had shown an interest in your World Science-Pan Pacific Exposition." That's what it was called at one point.

Faber went into his briefcase and began reading off the names of countries and exhibitors. "Actually," he confessed years later, "they were just letters wanting information about the fair, mostly from people trying to sell us something."

"I didn't lie. I gave them a list of exhibitors who had 'shown an interest' in the fair. But to tell the whole truth, we didn't have a single exhibitor signed up."

THERE WERE ALSO money problems at home. Ewen Dingwall, who had become director of the project in 1957, had his first offices in the dark, forbidding recesses of the Ice Arena. On some occasions, he and his staff would conduct business in a tavern across the street — anything to get out of the penitentiary-like labyrinth of ramps and stairways.

There were times when he could scarcely meet the payroll, but Ding was a man of talent and ingenuity, and he had, as was once said, "the constitution of an ox." During those tough years he would give dozens of presentations, and some of those who attended remember how he cajoled, persuaded and ended in drenching perspiration.

"What is sometimes forgotten about those days," Stan Patty reminds people today, "is that all the travel was by prop planes. We didn't have jet planes."

And there was constant travel, to Washington, D.C., New York, South America, Europe, the Soviet Union and Asia. They would get off those vibrating old prop planes and their heads would be clanging like a marble caught in a Mixmaster. By 1959, even Eddie Carlson was wearing down.

After all, he was president of both the World's Fair Commission and the Century 21 Corporation, and he was trying to run a big hotel chain in addition to that. Plainly, if he kept on this way they would carry him out in a box, so he went to William Street and asked for relief. A day or two later, Street tapped Joe Gandy, who was still wearing his Seafair king's playsuit, to take over as head of Century 21.

NOW, HERE IS JOE and this is why so many people liked him: He was a big man, rugged-looking, ruddy-faced, with a long nose and a great shattering laugh that fell somewhere between a sonic boom and the last note of Aida. Joe often used these laughs in telling stories on himself, which was one reason people liked him.

Joe took a leave of absence, without pay, from Smith-Gandy and plunged into the fray. Long afterward Joe would say, the big laugh exploding: "The boys forgot to mention to me that we were broke."

Now here was a man who could sell Fords. Now he was ready to try his hand at selling diplomats, scientists, government officials and foreign dignitaries on the greater grandeur of Seattle. This was a hard sell, Joe would remember, as he told the story of how he tried to persuade an official of a Middle Eastern country to put an exhibit at the world's fair.

The official demurred. "Mr. Gandy, the climate is so bad in Washington. It would be a disservice to the people of the world to encourage their presence there."

"You've been there yourself?" Joe asked. "Six weeks ago," the man

applied. "And what did you find objectionable about the climate?"

"My dear Mr. Gandy, it rains all the time and very hard. Why, it rained so hard there I could not see the top of the Washington Monument."

Joe crisscrossed the country and the Atlantic Ocean. By playing a cool game, he miraculously gained accreditation from the Bureau of International Expositions, designating Seattle as a "second category" world's fair. "That gives us our hunting license," Joe said. "Now we go out and sell."

ON ONE DOOR-BANGING trip to Paris, Joe asked the heads of both papers if he could take the P-T's Jack Jarvis and The Times' Stan Patty. If he was going to call on people, he figured it helped to have press clout at his elbow.

Years later, Stan Patty recalled: "We really didn't have one exhibitor, but that didn't stop Joe. He went out knocking on doors, and Jack and I followed along. We wrote stories about

it, but mostly we just stood back in awe of Joe's guts."

On these hunting trips, Gandy found that several countries and foreign companies had sour memories of the 1939 New York World's Fair. They remembered vividly a host of labor troubles.

Joe saw another chance. He flew home to Seattle and huddled with Harry Carr, president of the King County Labor Council, explaining the situation. The labor community responded, and Joe Gandy went back to Paris with a set of no-strike pledges in his pocket and began spreading them around like ticker tape.

"When you think back on it," Stan Patty says today, "that time in Seattle's history had just the right people in it. We had Ewen Dingwall to run the thing, we had Joe Gandy to sell it, and we had Eddie Carlson to give us integrity. They made one hell of a team."

And they had Ned Skinner. It was Ned, young, well-connected, strong-minded and creative, who headed the

private fund-raising for the Century 21 Corporation. It took a lot of talent and a lot of prestige; Ned had both.

OF COURSE, not all the efforts were visible, and there were still doubters. Probably the one single thing, the one element, the one symbol, which finally convinced a skeptical city that we would, at least, have a world's fair began as a sketch on a place mat in a restaurant in Stuttgart, Germany.

It would be Eddie Carlson's greatest legacy to Seattle.

Eddie and Nel Carlson were on vacation with two old friends, Virginia and Webb Moffett, founder-owners of the Snoqualmie ski area. On their one night in Stuttgart, the foursome dined in a strange-looking restaurant, 400 feet in the air, perched atop a barrel-shaped

superstructure. Eddie, the hotel man, couldn't believe his eyes. The place was packed with people enjoying the view.

THAT NIGHT Joe thrashed about, sleepless, and thought about this restaurant, which was really a TV tower. He began sketching on a place mat. The next morning he bought some postcards, sketched some more, then mailed one to Ewen Dingwall, and penned the message: "Why don't we build a Space Needle for the fair?"

A Space Needle, by God. Something to knock your eye out. Well, what with one thing and another, Ned Skinner came in on it and so did Bagley Wright and Howard S. Wright and Jack Graham. They fiddled and fussed and drew more sketches, and finally Vic Steinbrueck was called in as a design consultant.

Steinbrueck, along with John Ridley, finally hit on the tripod design you see today. Of course, it was pretty, but when it came to financing, the concept could get you laughed out of a bank. Months dragged on, but the whole thing finally came together.

On May 26, 1961, there began the biggest pour of concrete in anyone's memory — certainly in Seattle's history. In all, 2,800 cubic yards of concrete went into this big hole that was the Space Needle's anchor, 5,600 tons and 470 truckloads of it, until the center of gravity was actually below ground.

Once started, the spindly-legged tripod went up very fast, and people began to notice and some of them were saying, if not quite believing, "Hey, that's for the fair, isn't it?" All through the summer and early fall of 1961, the spire rose, and now it was beginning to dominate the skyline and on clear days you could see it from Bainbridge Island.

PEOPLE GATHERED on corners near the fair site to watch this spire go up, and one of those who came to watch was Eddie Carlson, whose sketch on a postcard had become an enormous, physical reality, a towering omen that the good guys were finally going to win.

And years later, this tough, pragmatic hotel executive and civic doer of good confessed that he stood there and watched the Space Needle take shape, "and I cried a little."

The Space Needle was twice pictured on the cover of Life magazine and, believe it or not, the Needle, the symbol of the fair and already a trademark for Seattle, appeared on a U.S. postage stamp. Twenty-five years ago. The stamp cost four cents.

By now the fairgrounds were teeming. Buildings went up almost overnight, and the old Civic Auditorium was gutted and transformed into a magnificent opera house, just as the architect, Minoru Yamasaki, said it could be.

And Yamasaki, a graduate of Broadway High, designed the stunning, futuristic U.S. Science Pavilion that became another centerpiece for the — for the what? For the world's fair. Our world's fair. You better believe! If you don't believe that, why do you think they're building a monorail to connect downtown with the fairgrounds?

By now the exhibitors were signing up, and at the rate things were going the fairgrounds were in danger of overcrowding. Joe Gandy and his helpers no longer had to pound on doors. Corporations and nations, big and small, had their exhibits and sent their dignitaries and heads of state. Ultimately, 59 nations were represented at the fair.

SCIENTISTS CAME in abundance because Century 21 had a science theme for the future, The World of Tomorrow, and now, too, the ominous beep ... beep ... beep was no longer on anybody's mind because ... we have John Glenn at the fair, the greatest ticker-tape astronaut of them all!

So for 184 days of that long-ago summer of 1962, Seattle basked in the world's spotlight, taking its bows, looking very pretty and proud of it all. Architectural journals, travel magazines, the big general-circulation slicks, the nation's largest newspapers, as well as magazines and newspapers from across the world — they came to write about Seattle and the fair, and most went away enchanted.

Jay Rockey, the young public-relations head of the fair, logged press credentials for 1,163 reporters from 12 countries on opening day.

Every one of the 184 days was 'a special event — for some state or other, for a nation here, a celebrity there; Elvis Presley came and made a movie, and people chewed on Belgian waffles and Mongolian steaks and they ogled the bare breasts in Gracie Hansen's Paradise International.

THE CROWDS CAME, softly at first, but they grew through the

summer. In all, more than 10 million people paid to see the Seattle World's Fair. Prince Philip came, the big names of show biz — even John Wayne himself, by cracky — they all came for summer fun and ogling and eating and laughing at a historic party that seemed it would never end.

But it did have to end sometime. On a cool October evening 20,000 people gathered in Memorial Stadium to witness the closing ceremonies. About 1,600 bandsmen gathered on the stadium floor. Patrice Munsel, the opera star, sang "Auld Lang Syne," backed by Jackie Souders' band.

a 25-year-old coordinator of special events, remembers the way people cried and how, at the end, the UW Husky band played the school fight song, and big Joe Gandy banged his gavel down to bring the fair to a close.

"And then," Dave said, "we went back to being a small town again."

Ah, but did we, really? The celebrants went home, the rent-gougers disappeared into the wood-work, you could get a seat someplace without waiting in line, and Seattle went back to being about the same size it had been always before. But back to normal? Not quite.

You could feel it rather than hear it — something you could scarcely define, could scarcely put into words, something in the way of a gentle rustle that intruded into your consciousness. What was it?

Why, it was the sound of a city slipping out from under its shroud of fancied inferiority, its cloak of defensiveness, its half-apologetic view of itself. That silence you heard was the blessed, confident

silence that now replaced the babble of negativism, of low civic self-esteem. That is what, in the end, the world's fair gave us.

NOT THE BUILDINGS. Not the grounds. Not any of the things we talked about getting from the fair. What we got was a kind of spiritual legacy, a renewal of belief in ourselves, as a city, a community, a region.

It all seems to flow from that time when a bunch of stubborn idealists took great risks and refused to quit, who brought off what came to be known as the Miracle of Mercer Street.

Now listen to Jim Ellis on that subject: "I was just a young lawyer, a spear-carrier, you might say, when I watched what they were doing. While they were building the world's fair, my people were putting over Metro to get the stench out of Lake Washington. But you didn't see the results of our work until several years later. "But the fair was real and very visible, and by the time we went on to Forward Thrust, the ground had already been seeded."

And hear Walter Straley, former fair activist and president of Pacific Northwest Bell:

"The people who went out and sold Century 21 were the people who made the world aware of Seattle. One great legacy was the immigration of well-educated young people who saw Seattle as the country's final frontier.

disperd a national myth, that we were lumberjacks, fishermen, WASPs and labor radicals. The soaring arches of the Yamasaki science building became a symbol of our technological excellence."

And so it seems. Because of this spiritual legacy of the fair, many of us now believe, we took more risks and moved mountains.

Thus came the renewal of Pioneer Square and the saving of the Pike Place Market and the best rapid-transit system in America. Because we were once host to the world, we gained a tolerance for difference that brought integrated schools, open housing, and a rich, diverse life of culture.

For the first time, we began to believe in ourselves. We set our own standards.



Ewen Dingwall, left, shows the fast-rising Space Needle to space scientist Werner Von Braun in July 1961.

AFTER THE FAIR ...



EDWARD E. (EDDIE) CARLSON, former chairman and chief executive officer of UAL Inc., parent company of United Airlines and Westin Hotels (which was formerly Western International Hotels), is 75 years old. He retired four years ago, served a one-year term as president of the University of Washington, Board of Regents that ended last month, and divides his time between homes in Seattle and California.

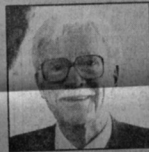
JOSEPH E. GANDY was president of Century 21 Exposition Inc., the nonprofit corporation established to run the fair. In 1964, he sought the Republican nomination for governor but withdrew to support Dan Evans. He died on June 13, 1971, of a heart attack while on a pleasure boat at Shilshole Marina. He was 66 years old.

DENNEY GIVENS served as director of public affairs for the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and executive director of the Seattle Area Industrial Council and was founder and president of the Pacific Northwest Industrial Development Council. He retired in the late 1970s.



EWEN DINGWALL was the first person hired on the staff of the world's fair project, when he became vice president and general manager in 1957. His involvement with the fair led to a career as an exposition consultant. He and his wife, Betty Lou, lived in Virginia, near Washington, D.C., from 1965 to 1974 as he worked as a fair consultant to San Antonio, Philadelphia and New Orleans. He returned to Seattle to manage the King Tut exhibit for the Seattle Art Museum in 1978. His career came full circle in 1982, when he was named Seattle Center director.

MINORU YAMASAKI, a Seattle native who designed the Pacific Science Center and the Seattle Opera House, was one of the premier architects of his time. Among his credits: New York's World Trade Center, the Century Plaza Towers in Los Angeles, the U.S. consulate general's office in Kobe, Japan, Oregon's Capitol and the St. Louis airport. His other buildings in Seattle include the IBM building and Rainier Tower. He died on Feb. 6, 1986, of cancer in Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital at age 73.



WILLIAM S. STREET, chairman of Century 21 Exposition Inc., retired in 1982 at age 58 as general manager of Frederick & Nelson. He then led a six-month study of mammals in Iran for the Chicago Museum of Natural History. He later served as president of United Pacific Corp. and as chairman of the board of Univair, where he still serves as a director. He and his wife, Jan, live in a home they built overlooking Lake Washington. He still goes daily to his office.

DON FOLLETT resigned as executive vice president of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce on Aug. 31, 1961. He was working as a public relations adviser to the San Fernando, Calif., Chamber of Commerce when he died on Jan. 20, 1963, at age 47.

ROSS CUNNINGHAM retired in 1977 as editor of The Seattle Times editorial page. He continued to write columns for The Times for a few years after retirement. He died on March 20, 1986, at age 79.