

# A New Yorker Goes to the Fair

By ROBERT F. WAGNER Mayor of New York

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Once more the lights go up, and another season opens at Flushing Meadow, beginning Wednesday. This night view

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By **ROBERT F. WAGNER**  
Mayor of New York

**D**RIVING along the Long Island Expressway one day last winter, I passed the World's Fair, looking like some ghost town on Mars. The Unisphere was capped with ice. At the Fountain of the Planets, in summer bright with colored lights, the wind whipped scraps of debris along the bare concrete floor. It was all rather depressing, since fairs are built for people, and this one was deserted. No crowds. No noise. No flashing signs to light up the sky.

Now, the big sleep is over. On re-opening day this week Bob Moses will be the master of ceremonies for a happy day of blaring bands, speeches (brief ones, I hope) and a banquet. At night, fireworks will shower down on the Fountain of the Planets. As the ancient Greeks celebrated the arrival of spring with a great feast and lively entertainment,

New Yorkers will gladly welcome a new season with a new Fair—an entertaining feast for the mind, the eye, and even the stomach.

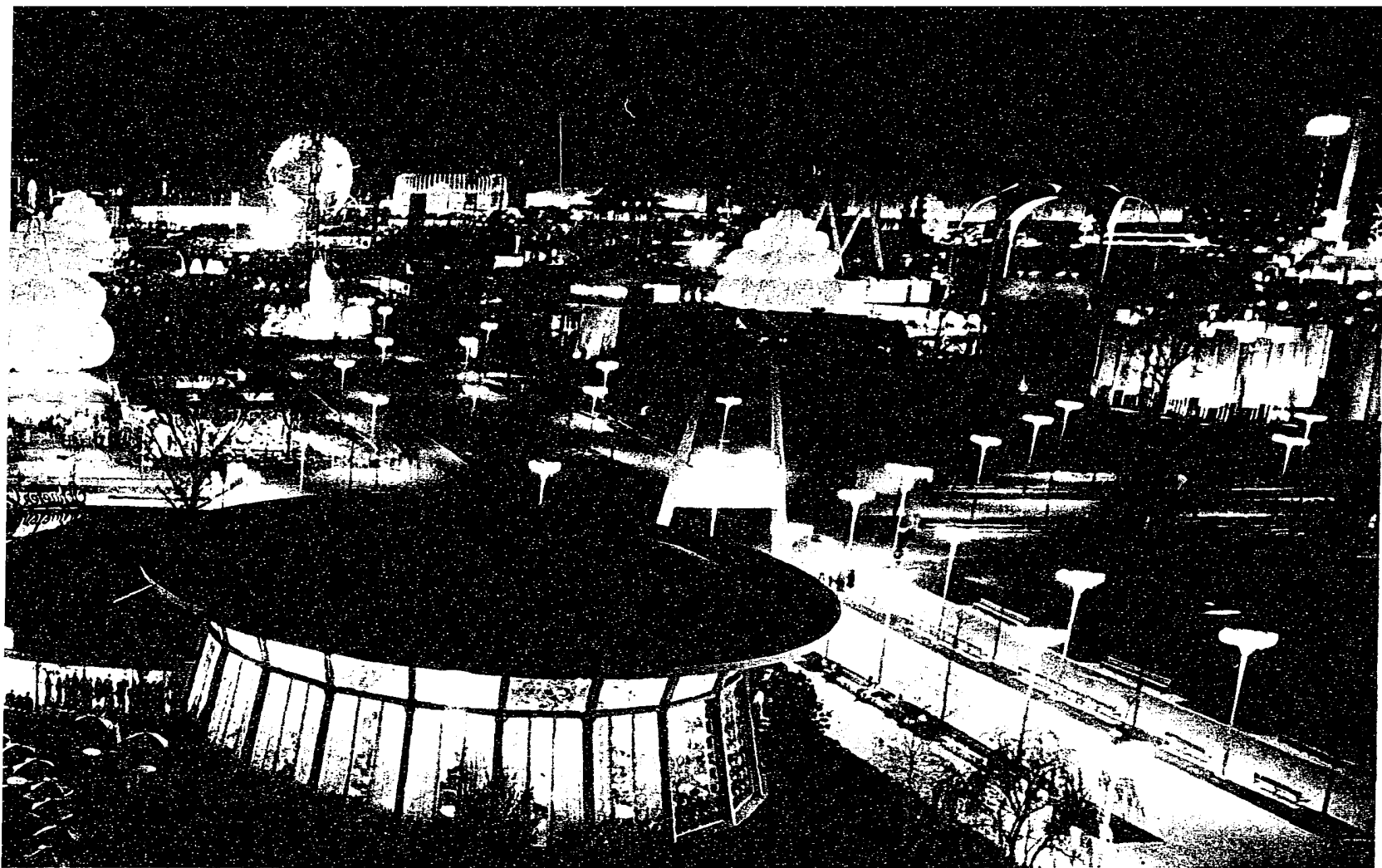
About \$5,000,000 has been spent for new exhibits, including a show of 60 modern artists and sculptors and a tribute to Sir Winston Churchill that features an exact replica of the study of his country home, Chartwell; 30 Churchill paintings, many of them never before shown in public, will be on display. In addition, some \$2,000,000 has been spent on revamping and improving many of last year's favorite pavilions. So if you "did" the Fair in 1964, going back in 1965 ought to be even more fun. It's the most fascinating square mile in town, a meeting place where people from all parts of the world share and compare the best products of their skill, imagination and culture.

Of course, the Fair has helped the

city's economy also. The Convention and Visitors Bureau estimated that Fair visitors spent \$400,000,000 in New York. Our construction industry got a big boost, too. And though attendance was somewhat below expectations, 27,000,000 people paid their way in—and that's a lot of people. But to me, the real significance of the Fair is a matter of spirit, not statistics. It gave everyone—New Yorkers, Americans from across the country, foreign guests—an unparalleled opportunity to take pride in each other's accomplishments. Like a king-size country fair, it was the atmosphere, as well as the dazzling architecture, that made it memorable.

The industrial exhibits were exciting and educational. The handicraft displays and foods in the foreign pavilions were almost like taking a trip abroad. The United States Pavilion was a stimulating, painless re-

# THE WORLD'S FAIR: ACT II



of the Fairgrounds, made last year, shows the industrial exhibits in foreground and the foreign, Federal and state areas clustered around the Unisphere.

fresher course in United States history. In our own New York City Pavilion (still standing from the 1939-40 World's Fair) 1,117,557 visitors saw a collection of paintings, sculptures, historical items and photographs from 34 of the city's museums and libraries. There is a model of the city as it was in 1664 and another, incredibly detailed, mock-up of New York today that includes almost all of its 335,000 buildings, and all of its streets, docks, ferries, bridges and airports. The scale is 1 inch to 100 feet (the Empire State Building is 15 inches tall) and the effect is enormous, especially when experienced during a simulated helicopter ride.

The exhibits today, I think, are more elaborate than at the 1939 fair. New materials have opened up new possibilities which have been daringly exploited: translucent walls made from thousands of pieces of colored

glass, the world's largest suspension roof, a floating cement carpet, a huge steel "egg" and aluminum prisms that echo a Gothic cathedral.

**T**WENTY-FIVE years ago, the exhibits I recall were comparatively functional. An air-conditioning company built a massive Eskimo igloo, complete with a display of Northern Lights. A can company exhibit was a huge, revolving can. An electronics firm was housed in something designed to resemble a radio tube. And the world's largest cash register, built by a firm that manufactured cash registers (you guessed it), rang up the fair's visitors one by one.

Maybe because I was younger then, it seemed like a very gay fair. I was a member of the State Assembly in those days, and I remember that on opening day all the members of the Legislature came down from Albany for the occasion. Franklin Roosevelt

performed the honors. Herbert Lehman was Governor. My father was a United States Senator and he'd treat me to lunch at the old Terrace Club. Grover Whalen was president of the fair, and somehow he got across the impression to people that the fair was *the place to go*. And they did.

I used to go as frequently as I could. I'd just walk around with a group of friends in the evening and maybe have a beer. I remember one night we put on funny hats and had our picture taken on a wooden horse. One of the most popular shows was a baseball toss; when someone hit the target, a trigger mechanism toppled a girl into a pool of water.

Nowadays, I'm sorry that I can't get out to the Fair as often, or as informally, as I'd like to. Still, I managed to visit there with my two sons, Bob (Continued on Page 78)

**Back for a second year is New York's New York-sized World's Fair. "It is," says Mayor Wagner, "the most fascinating square mile in town, a carnival and a campus, an international showcase with a hometown flavor."**

# A New Yorker Goes to the Fair

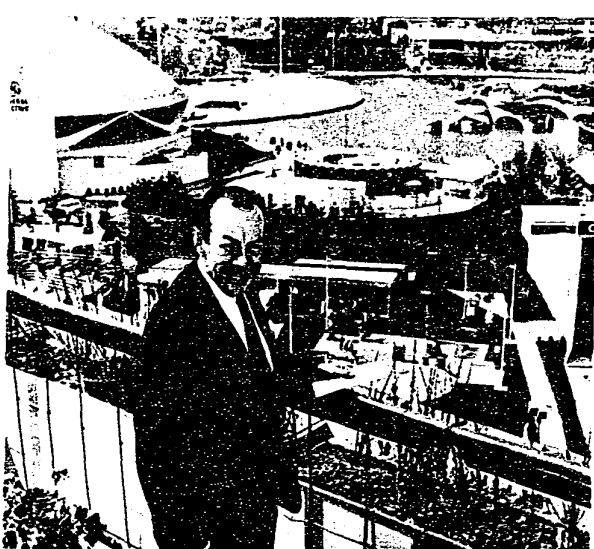
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and Duncan, several times last summer and saw quite a bit. We walked around, stood on a few lines and talked to the other people who were waiting, and managed to take in most of the major exhibits. I also took my mother-in-law to dinner there, and, though she's getting on in years, we had a marvelous time visiting a few pavilions, enjoying the lights and seeing how many other families were having a good time, too. The Fair is a family place, friendly and hospitable. It is a wonderful way for everyone—but especially children—to get a panorama of the world's achievements, from heavy industry to the fine arts.

Last year there was some difference of opinion over admission prices for school children; well, we settled it and kids with a supervisor were admitted for 25 cents on certain days. All year long we didn't have a single incident, and thousands of children went on a parade of new adventures: a replica of Columbus's flag-ship, life-size dinosaurs and cavemen, hundreds of robot dolls of children from 26 lands, the stirring Pieta of Michelangelo. It was all there—religion and history, philosophy and commerce.

**T**HOUGH personally I preferred my informal visits to the Fair, the occasions I was there on official business, making a speech or attending a ceremony, symbolized the many meanings of this vast enterprise. Helping my good friend Gov. Dick Hughes dedicate the New Jersey Pavilion reflected the close ties between neighbors, and the need for even closer cooperation on such mutual problems as mass transportation that affect the well-being of our citizens. On I.B.M. Day at the Fair I paid tribute to this adventurous, civic-minded corporation, one of the many firms which have grown to greatness in New York, and helped to make New York great. Similarly, when the Amalgamated Clothing Workers celebrated their biennial anniversary at the Fair, President Lyndon Johnson and I were happy to salute one of the many organizations that have made this city glad to be a union town. Citizenship Day emphasized the need for every citizen to cast his ballot and take a vital interest in public affairs; at the same time, it underscored the nation's shame when millions of citizens are deprived of their rights by discriminatory laws, or outright brutality.

There was special satisfaction for me in dedicating the Hall of Science, temporarily



**HIS HONOR**—Mayor Wagner pauses during one of his several official visits to the Fair last year. More informally, he also sampled the attractions with his two sons and mother-in-law.

part of the World's Fair, but destined to be a permanent and major building in Queens and an important addition to the cultural and educational facilities of the entire city as the Museum of Science and Technology.

In the days of Galileo and Copernicus, scientific experiment was held to be heretical; science was sacrilegious, especially when it tried to prove, for example, that the earth revolved around the sun, and not vice-versa. Today, science and the scientific method dominate our lives to the point at which we ask: Does mankind control the consequences of scientific knowledge, or do these consequences control mankind? Hopefully, the Hall of Science will instruct, inspire and enrich our understanding of the problems we face. Perhaps it can unify the knowledge that science itself has broken down into smaller and smaller components. To prepare for the day when the Hall of Science becomes a museum for the permanent enjoyment and education of our city, I have named a distinguished board of trustees to study its future role in detail. We are also consulting with the executives of Chicago's justly famous Museum of Science and Industry to get their ideas on how we can best carry out our purpose. And a special committee is examining Fair buildings near the Hall of Science to see if any of them can be used for future expansion of the museum.

**A**S part of its contribution to the Fair, New York City spent \$24 million for permanent improvements on the site, such as lighting, roadways, sewers. At the height of optimism over expected revenues, the city was to be reimbursed for the full sum, and the Fair would have enough money in the till after

paying its bondholders to build a new park in Flushing Meadows.

Well, even though some of the optimism over finances has dimmed, New York will have a park on the World's Fair site. It will also have a new zoo (the geodesic dome of last year's World's Fair Pavilion is being considered as an aviary), and several outstanding buildings will be preserved. The stunning New York State Pavilion and its adjacent observation towers may become a covered area for games, concerts and a marionette theater. The Metropolitan Opera Company is interested in using Singer Bowl as a kind of Tanglewood for outdoor operatic events. The United States Pavilion is under consideration for a variety of educational uses—research, lectures and administration. The Japanese Pavilion with its intricate wall of lava stone may be removed and reconstructed elsewhere in the park in connection with a proposed Japanese garden. The Spanish Government hopes to move its beautiful pavilion to Manhattan, as a new home of Hispanic culture.

There are many other foreign and industrial pavilions that certainly deserve to be retained, but unfortunately the cost of making the modifications necessary for permanent structures is greater than the cost of demolition.

But why talk of demolition on the eve of reopening? The Fair is back, in all its colors, soaring architecture, exciting exhibits. It is a carnival and a campus, a road that leads back to the beginning of man and a path that charts his future. It is a babble of tongues, and an accent that is uniquely American. Mostly, though, I think of the World's Fair as an echo of New York—an international showcase with a hometown flavor.