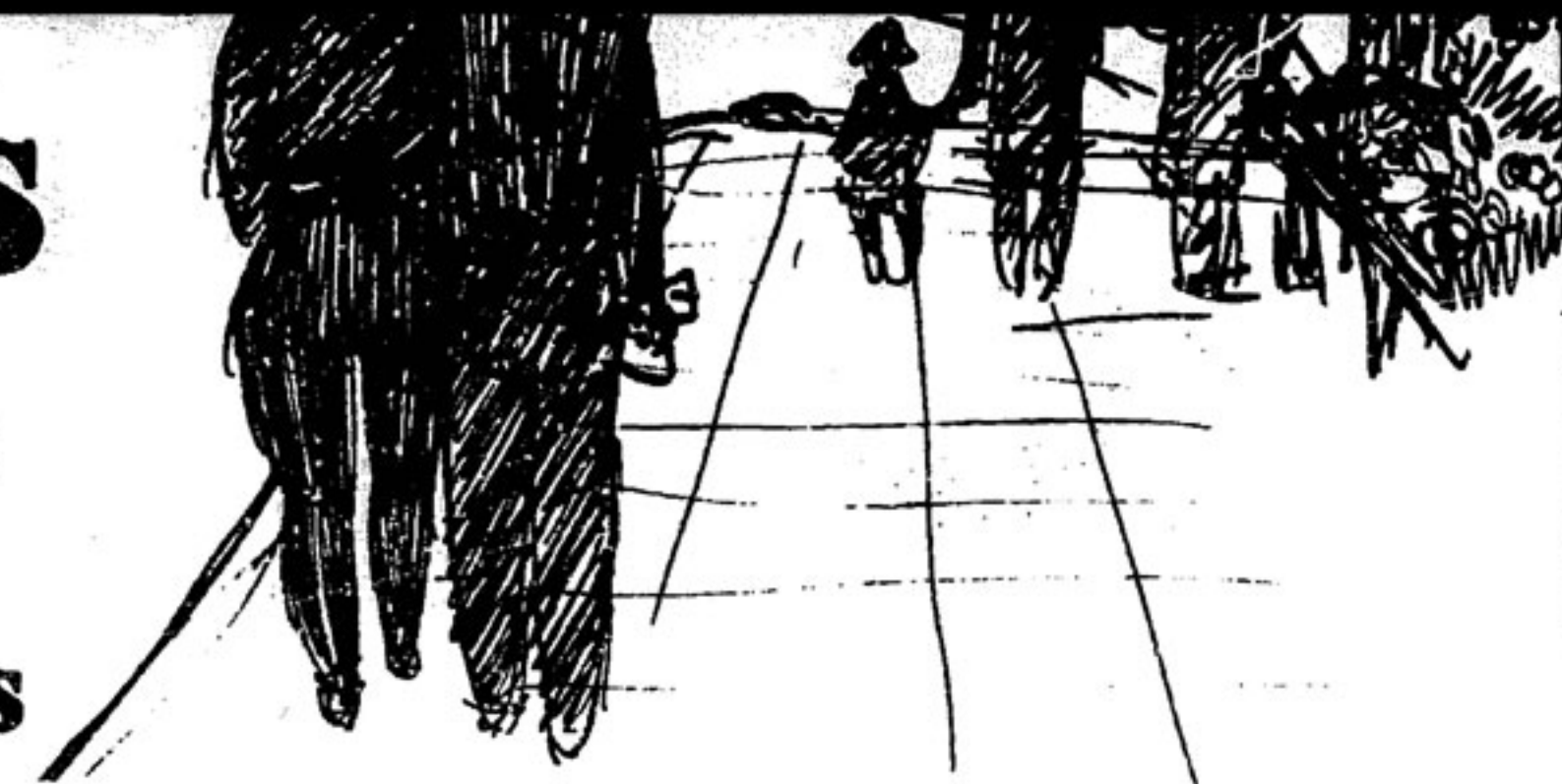


Market Wars

The inside story of how an improbable band of contentious Market activists managed to defy long odds and the Seattle business-media establishment



WEEKLY SEP 23 1981

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by Joyce Skaggs Brewster

NOVEMBER 2 WILL MARK the tenth anniversary of one of the more remarkable elections in Seattle's history. On the ballot in 1971 was the Pike Place Market Historical District Initiative, passage of which would establish a 7-acre historical district around the market and a 12-member historical commission to oversee the "preservation, restoration, and improvement" of the market area. Defeat of the initiative would have removed the last barrier to the city's long-cherished urban renewal plan, which made a much smaller market the center of a high-rise residential, commercial, and hotel complex.

Opposing Initiative One were the City of Seattle, the downtown business establishment, and the editorial voices of the major media. Promoting the initiative were two citizens' groups with a working relationship of uncertain cordiality. Both sides claimed that they would save the market and that the success of their opponents would certainly doom it. Charges of deceit and obfuscation flew back and forth.

Yet the electorate apparently didn't feel confused in the end. When the dust cleared, 53,264 people had voted "no" with Seattle's movers and shakers, and 76,369 had voted "yes" with Victor Steinbrueck.

Ten years later, as the market nears the end of its "preservation, restoration, and improvement," most people agree that the voters have got what they asked for back in 1971, and that it is a good thing. You can still buy lettuce and

berries direct from the farmers and pasta from Pete DeLaurenti; you can still eat the Athenian Cafe's special steak while watching the ferry boats and then wander through the lower labyrinths of the main market; you can still visit the Seattle Garden Center for hard-to-find spring bulbs.

Celebrating the victory of the initiative campaign is therefore important, but it is also important to understand it. The David-and-Goliath version of the struggle that has entered the city's mythology is only partly true. Profit and power were certainly issues in the market battles, but equally at issue were two conflicting visions, not only of the market itself but of civic good.

The story begins in 1958 with the formation of the Central Association of Seattle. This group of downtown businessmen, concerned about the lack of forward-looking drive in both the central business district and the city government, was soon working closely with the City Planning Commission to formulate a comprehensive plan for the central city.

An area that the downtown planners found especially worrisome was the Pike Place Market and its surroundings. Founded in 1907 to allow farmers and customers to meet without middlemen, the market had seen its heyday in the 1920s and 30s, when as many as 500 farmers a day rented stalls to sell their produce. Almost half of these farmers had been Japanese, and their internment during World War II dealt the market a serious blow. The explosion of suburbs after the war, the advent

of supermarkets and frozen foods, and the gradual transformation of farmland into housing tracts or industrial sites—all this further eroded the market's ability to draw both producers and consumers.

As the market's economic health declined, its physical structures decayed and its surrounding residential community, mainly single men, grew older and poorer. From the perspective of Seattle's downtown merchants and property owners, some only a block or two away, the whole area took on the unmistakable aspect of urban "blight," threatening to creep out and engulf the central business district itself. Even if the blight didn't spread, it was already depriving Seattle of a "higher and better" use of some prime real estate and holding down the city's tax returns.

What to do? The answer, unveiled jointly by the city and the Central Association in 1963, was the Downtown Plan for 1985. What this plan envisioned for the Pike Place Market area, and the shocked response to it by critics, early set the terms for a debate that was not to be resolved until 1971.

Briefly, the plan called for razing everything between First and Western Avenues from Union to Lenora, thus making room, in the words of Central Association president Ben Ehrlichman, for "3000 parking spaces on the terraced hillside below First Avenue with direct access from the inner ring road; to the north, ideal view sites for high-rise apartments plus a magnificent site for a new hotel; a large open plaza area creating a critically needed downtown park within which the Pike Place Market can be rebuilt; and, south of the plaza

and market, sites for several high-rise office buildings." Ehrlichman, writing in the *Argus*, went on to point out the advantages of this scheme for the ailing market itself, which could "truly become a Market Place and a visitor and tourist attraction quite equal to the Los Angeles Farmer's Market."

The key to this dream was the federal urban renewal program, which could give the city both the funds and the legal authority to assemble the checkerboard of small private properties in the area into one package, resaleable at low prices to private developers. Accordingly, a citizens' advisory committee called Seattle Urban Renewal Enterprises joined the Central Association for the next phase of planning, and in August 1964 these groups produced a report and drawings for the Pike Plaza Redevelopment Project. Like the earlier version, this one proposed to demolish everything within its 125-acre boundaries and to build a new market atop the "terraced" parking garage. A major hotel, a 200-room motel, a 1500-person apartment complex, a park, and office buildings would comprise the market's new neighborhood. Made modern, safe, and clean, the market would thrive. Seattle would replace blight with some sparkling new amenities, would lure back from the suburbs a community of middle-class residents, and would multiply the value of its tax rolls in this area by a factor of 10. (A few developers would also make a great deal of money.)

The logic of this vision seemed compelling—unless, like a small band of "market freaks" who had been keeping an ear to the ground for several years, you cared a great deal about

CONTINUED ON weekly page 21
NEXT FRAME

what was already there. For Victor Steinbrueck, a University of Washington architecture professor who was quickly to become the Don Quixote-Joan of Arc of the market crusade, the Central Association's plan was "a major catastrophe" and its version of the market amounted to replacing a "grandmother with a chorus girl." (Steinbrueck was always quotable, no mean advantage in the struggle that was to ensue.)

Steinbrueck and architects Ibsen Nelsen and Fred Bassetti had long been discussing the need for some sort of organized resistance to the rumored designs of the Central Association. During the summer of 1964, officers of Allied Arts of Seattle (Nelsen was then president of this association of Seattle arts groups) hosted a champagne breakfast at Lowell's Cafeteria, with the idea of bringing together supporters of the market and publicizing the need for action. About 60 people came and heard speeches of tribute to the market, and the event received wide coverage in the press. Out of this and subsequent meetings came a steering committee to lay plans and monitor developments; by September, when the city was applying for federal feasibility studies of the Pike Plaza Redevelopment Project, the Allied Arts steering committee had become a separate organization, the Friends of the Market, with Steinbrueck and attorney Robert Ashley as co-chairmen.

Minutes of these early meetings reveal that the participants had no very precise ideas about what they could or should do for the market, but were very clear as to what they thought about it. Fred Bassetti's statement for the champagne breakfast, read in his absence by architect Laurie Olin and several times reprinted, became one of the rallying cries of the long campaign. The market, Bassetti wrote, "reveals the face of truth. Its roughness reminds me of Seattle's beginnings, its luscious past, the vitality that gave it national notice long ago. It is an honest place in a phony time. . . . It needs the hammer and paint brush, not the black ball of destruction. . . ."

Painter Mark Tobey sent a letter from Basel which became the introduction to his book *The World of a Market* (just reissued this anniversary year by the University of Washington Press): "this fabulous array of colors and forms," wrote Tobey, "alive with all kinds of people from everywhere," made the market "a refuge, an oasis, a most human growth, the heart and soul of Seattle." Lou Guzzo, then arts editor of *The Times*, chided the city for its "blind, foolish rush to eliminate one of its irreplaceable treasures."



Steinbrueck at the Market: the man who said 'no.'

Dan Lamont

Out of all this emerged the Friends' idea of the market, the best primer for which is Steinbrueck's *Market Sketchbook* of 1968. "We discovered the word 'ecology,'" recalls Steinbrueck wryly, and the densely detailed sketches and text of his book, recording the market's spaces and wares and people from every conceivable angle, do indeed portray a living organism whose nature is inseparable from its environment. The message is clear: these humble, haphazard, peculiar buildings, these scruffy, colorful characters are the market, and embody a whole constellation of values—historic, educational, aesthetic, social—that make the place unique. Vitality and fragility are the counterpointed themes of the book: the market is alive and well, if a bit run-down, but its particular nourishing web of conditions, once torn apart, can never be recreated.

The Friends' mission was to open other people's eyes to the market they saw before it was too late. Their goal was preservation, perhaps accomplished by some sort of public agency (an idea first suggested publicly by City Councilman Wing Luke), but the most urgent task was always holding off "the black ball of destruction." In November 1964 they opened a booth in the market to dispense information and sell Tobey's newly published *World of a Market* and Steinbrueck's earlier *Seattle Cityscape*. Other fundraising events—auctions, tours, parties—followed, always made part of the larger educational campaign. For the press and the public, Victor Steinbrueck and the Friends became synonymous. Rumped and owlish in appearance, somewhat dour and acerbic of temperament, with a fine relish for

the absurd and a disinclination ever to give opponents the benefit of the doubt, Steinbrueck was a familiar figure around the market and in the hearing rooms where its future was debated, and he always provided good copy.

By January 1965 the Friends' efforts seemed to be having some effect. Co-chairman Robert Ashley emerged from a meeting with Paul Seibert of the Central Association announcing "a great area of agreement" between the two groups. "Retention of the general heart of the market," said Seibert, "is possible and desirable." This was an important concession in principle, but translating this "area of agreement" into specifics turned out to be much harder than either man anticipated.

Meanwhile, the redevelopment plan was inching its way down the long, slow road to approval and funding. In September 1965 the city asked HUD (which administered urban renewal) for a surveys-and-planning grant, but HUD could not come up with the requested \$370,000 until December 1966. Mayor Dorn Braman had by then appointed a Pike Place Advisory Committee headed by Donald Voorhees, previous chairman of Seattle Urban Renewal Enterprises. When this committee issued an interim report in June of 1967, Voorhees echoed the earlier assurance that "we would like to preserve the market pretty much as it is"—if the physical condition of the buildings made this possible. Various studies were commissioned: a structural survey, a sociological study, an economic-feasibility study. And in August the Voorhees committee announced selection of its design and planning team, to be led by highly respected local architects Paul Hayden Kirk and John Morse.

Without public fanfare, another design team from the Naramore Bain Brady and Johanson firm was already at work for a group of private investors. Mayor Braman, leery of turning the market area into the sort of wasteland that urban-renewal demolition was producing in other cities, had earlier sought "assurance from private enterprise that the property will be fully utilized and that the money we are talking about is within sight." About 20 local investors responded by incorporating in April 1966 as the Central Park Plaza Corporation. Attorney William H. Ferguson, who had been chairman of the Central Association's Pike Place committee, headed the new corporation; other officers were Gus Doces of the furniture store, William Bain Sr. (NBBJ), Robert Banks (Henry Broderick real estate), and John Sellen (Sellen construction). The group immediately hired NBBJ as its architect, began investigat-

ing financing, and started buying up property (at distressed prices) in the project area.

Assuaging Mayor Braman's fears was clearly not the corporation's only motive: the investors stood to profit hugely if Central Park Plaza should be chosen as the main developer of the project. This in itself is not necessarily sinister, but it does raise certain questions about the close working relationship Ferguson acknowledges between the investors and the public officials charged with shepherding the project along. "They were relying on us to make the thing go," says Ferguson simply, at the same time denying—as the city always did—that the corporation had any "inside track" on the development contract. Despite holding land in the area by 1971 (the corporation owned or had development rights to almost 15 percent of the project's 22 acres) and having been in "close contact" with the city from the beginning, Ferguson maintains that in any ultimate competition "we would have had to have the best deal" to offer the city in order to win. To the Friends, however, it seemed self-evident that Central Park Plaza would be the preferred developer if the project went through, and no other would-be developers ever surfaced. **WEEKLY SEP 23 1981**

The investors ran a quiet operation. The next flurry of public attention to the project came in late winter of 1968, when the Morse-Kirk design team presented five different preliminary plans to a festive dinner meeting of the Seattle Planning and Redevelopment Council. The designers' own preferred "Proposal 21," a model of which went on display in the market, was a "super-block" treatment of the area. It featured a "rehabilitated and expanded" market with a new copper roof, a 29-story hotel between Pine and Stewart near First, four apartment towers averaging 28 stories each, a 30-story apartment building for low-income and elderly residents, an ice rink,

parking for 4000 cars, and 300,000 square feet of office space. The only existing building to be preserved was the main L-shaped market building; everything else would be razed.

This plan provoked the first painful split in the previously united market-savers. Retention of the main market building and provision of housing for the low-income and elderly were clearly a response to concerns of the Friends, and Robert Ashley, who was then chairman of the Friends while Victor Steinbrueck spent a year in England, immediately praised the plan. A few days later, architect Kirk and Tom Gay, the city's manager of the project, made an official presentation (one of their earliest in the weeks of soliciting public reactions to the plan) to the Friends, and Gay's memo about the meeting reported "no adverse reaction" but rather an apparent "acceptance and enthusiasm."

The presentation to Allied Arts a couple of weeks later was a different story. By this time Steinbrueck had taken a look at the plans and had fired back a long letter from London, which was read at the meeting. His verdict: "As proposed, the market can only be a shell of the things that we want to save." Fred Bassetti had also weighed in with a letter to Morse

Braman's former partner) and Kirk that was circulated to other interested parties; construction of all the new towers, he wrote, "leaves the Market isolated and adrift in an alien environment." Comments from the floor were in the same vein: "It's not the kind of place," said one man plaintively, "where little people come and shop for lettuce." Morse and Kirk of course had many friends and admirers in the group, which only made things more difficult for everybody. Attorney Jerry Thonn, who was then president of Allied Arts and dates his involvement with the market battle from that time, remembers the meeting as "stormy"; *The P-I* account records a "general

feeling of dismay"; and Tom Gay's report on the presentation is mainly a two-and-a-half-page list of all the critical questions raised.

In the end, the official Friends of the Market position paper on the plan granted that "a sincere and professional effort has been made by all concerned" but warned that the proposal "could have a brutal and overpowering effect upon the intricate social and merchandising conditions in the Market." The statement called for retention of more farmers' stalls and old buildings, more low-income housing, assurance that rents would remain low enough to keep present merchants, and establishment of a "watch-dog" committee to prevent development unsympathetic to the "established character" of the market.

Those (including Robert Ashley) who believed that Proposal 21 made a reasonable effort to satisfy the Friends were unhappy with continued opposition. These "nitpickers" were standing in the way of progress, Mayor Braman told the Rotary Club in April. Characterizing the project area as a "decadent, somnolent fire-trap," the outspoken Mayor asserted that "we don't have to leave these people [the current residents] in the middle of this choice area." Clearly, much of official Seattle still found the Friends' vision of the market unpersuasive, not to say incomprehensible.

The design team, however, and the city's project managers continued meeting with the Friends, market operators, and other groups as they modified and refined their plan for eventual submission to the City Council. Letters were exchanged between Paul Kirk and Victor Steinbrueck, still in London. (Kirk regards Steinbrueck's year-long absence during the design process as "unfortunate—Vic could have made valuable contributions.")

By September, when the City Council finally authorized submission of Scheme 23 (as it was now called) to HUD for its review, the plan contained further concessions to the Friends' objections. The copper roof was gone from the main market building, which would be restored "as close to a historic duplication as possible"; the Economy and Corner Market buildings would also be retained, and the LaSalle and Leland Hotels would be remodeled and kept as low-income residences; the four original 28-story apartment buildings were now six towers ranging from 11 to 27

stories; and the 30-story public-housing tower had become a complex of buildings from five to eight stories high.

This was better—but not good enough. Too many old buildings would still be lost, too many boxy towers loomed. The market's "intricate social and merchandising conditions" were still at risk. Again acknowledging the good intentions of the architects "within the limits of their directives," the Friends in mid-October launched a campaign for 50,000 signatures on a petition headed "Let's Keep the Market." Of the five "beliefs" to which signers of the petition committed themselves, the last was most to the point: "Conservation and sympathetic rehabilitation of most of the present buildings and existing businesses is essential." In November the Friends celebrated the appearance of another weapon in the fight, Steinbrueck's newly published *Market Sketchbook*.

The Friends' petition was meant to be presented at the City Council hearings that would take place once HUD had pronounced the plan acceptable and sent it back to Seattle for final approval. Typically, this took longer than expected, and the hearings didn't begin until March 19, 1969.

The Friends were ready. Spirits roused by a rally at the Moore Theater a few days earlier, a

throng of market-savers marched on City Hall the day the hearings opened, bearing signs, daffodils, and 53,000 names on their petitions. Then began Steinbrueck's virtuoso performance at the long and complex hearings (which eventually totaled 33½ hours of testimony in 12 sessions between March 19 and April 25). Orchestrating evidence of all sorts, cross-examining the city's experts, hectoring, badgering ("victoring," in fact, might be a meaningful addition to Seattle's political lexicon), Steinbrueck made the hearings into real courtroom drama.

Histrionics were the order of the day in the streets as well. One broadside issued by the Friends toward the end of the hearings leads off, "Citizens of Seattle and King County: In the name of common decency, and the tradition and heritage of our region, the Friends of the Market summon you to our cause." After a few preliminaries we learn that "the central business MERCHANTS OF GREED are using URBAN RENEWAL to MURDER THE MARKET: by strangulation and rape thru demolition and disruption... by taking the heart of the market to give life to their swank hotel and luxury apartment plaza development"—and so on. This is not the ordinary rhythm and diction of Seattle; in fact, it comes straight from the inflammatory handouts of the Irish Rebellion, which Steinbrueck and his actress wife Marjorie Nelson had been researching to prepare for her role in *The Hostage*. (Try reading it in a brogue.)

Such tactics, both in and out of the hearing room, infuriated some people on the other side. Yet it is questionable whether the outcome—the City Council finally voted unanimously to approve Scheme 23—would have been much different had Steinbrueck been more politic. His intimate knowledge of the market and of preservation (gained from the Pioneer Square wars) had scored a good number of points; "even people who hated my

guts," he recalls with satisfaction, would consult him on the fine points of urban-renewal law during the hearings' frequent moments of confusion. Moreover, in the months after the hearings, private exchanges between City Council members and project officials continued to reflect concerns raised by the Friends, such as problems of relocation and the phasing of the project to avoid massive disruption of business. When the City Council finally made its official request in August for funds to begin the project, it was with recommendations for three additional buildings (along First Avenue) to be rehabilitated, for a lower hotel tower, and for a Design Review Board to monitor development.

WEEKLY SEP 23 1981
The Friends were down but not out, and during the fall the Nixon Administration gave them a gift of time by freezing funds for urban renewal. Meanwhile there were two new faces on the city's new Department of Community Development, which would administer urban renewal projects; and Wes Uhlman had been elected mayor.

The Friends' next maneuver was a quiet one, but it established the beachhead from which the war would eventually be won. Steinbrueck and Laurie Olin drew up, documented, and submitted to the Washington State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a 17-acre Pike Place Market Historic District, and in February 1970 the Council approved the placement of the District on the National Register of Historic Places. Apparently a few corners were cut in the effort to take the city by surprise, but Steinbrueck regards official protests of his "secrecy" as a bit disingenuous: "What did they expect us to do, advertise?"

At any rate, over two-thirds of the project was now effectively out of bounds for Scheme 23, as no public money could be spent there unless plans were first approved by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The ball was in the city's court.

In April Mayor Uhlman, Jim Braman, and Tom Gay met privately with representatives of Central Park Plaza Corporation and apparently decided to attack the Historic Site designation head-on. Accordingly, the city asked Charles Odegaard, who as State Parks Director was also head of the State Advisory Council, to call a special meeting of the Council in Seattle to reconsider its action.

In August the Council came, saw, and was conquered. City officials conducted a tour of the project area, pointing out blight and decrepitude, and explaining why rehabilitation was not feasible, and then the Central Association (including, of course, some of the Central Park Plaza investors) hosted a luncheon at the Rainier Club. The Council's formal meeting, attended by the press and Victor Steinbrueck, followed in the Club's library. Like the market, the Rainier Club has a special ambience. Two weeks later the Council came up with its decision: the historic district was reduced to the 1.7-acre "core market" of the Pike Plaza plan.

The Friends responded in December by filing suit, together with Allied Arts, the Wash-

ington Environmental Council, and three market merchants, to have the original district restored, charging that Odegaard had changed it "arbitrarily and any mere administrative fiat." (The suit went through various motions and continuances but never came to trial before the passage of the Initiative made it immaterial.)

Meanwhile the biggest news in Seattle was that the bottom had dropped out of the economy. From an urban-renewal point of view, the recession had two effects. First, it gave the Friends additional grounds for attacking the project's credibility, based as it was on economic projections from a much rosier era. But it also gave Seattle high priority for federal

assistance, and late in 1970 rumors were rife that the HUD grant for Pike Plaza was going to come unstuck at last.

The Friends decided to try a last round of negotiations. Before and after Christmas, Steinbrueck and Jerry Thonn (now vice president of the Friends) met several times with Bill Ferguson and a few other Central Park Plaza investors. "We certainly would have settled for less," says Thonn, than the Initiative finally won, but the meetings never got to the point of discussing possible compromises. For Ferguson, a soft-spoken, grandfatherly man whom Thonn describes as "hard as nails," the issue was one of simple economics. "A residential community in an area like that had to be large enough for security and high enough to get maximum economic return to satisfy the mortgage holders. It just wasn't feasible to scale it down." But it's clear that Ferguson also believed the project would be an attractive one: he was planning to sell his Mercer Island home and move into one of the new penthouse apartments. It was the old problem of irreconcilable visions. "Victor," he says drily, "thought the 'flavor' of the market was the bums."

Another problem in these negotiations was the refusal of Central Park Plaza to divulge exactly what their NBBJ plans looked like. Although Ferguson remembers that "everything was public," no plans or models show up in the newspapers of the period, and Steinbrueck says he had to rely on sketches of the plans shown him confidentially by a double agent. The NBBJ concept, he recalls, was very different from Morse-Kirk's Scheme 23—the hotel, for one thing, was not a tower but a long horizontal bridge—but the same elements were there, and the market "as we know it" would have been eliminated as effectively by the one as by the other.

Early in 1971, as the Friends were rallying volunteers to picket City Hall, Jim Braman ini-

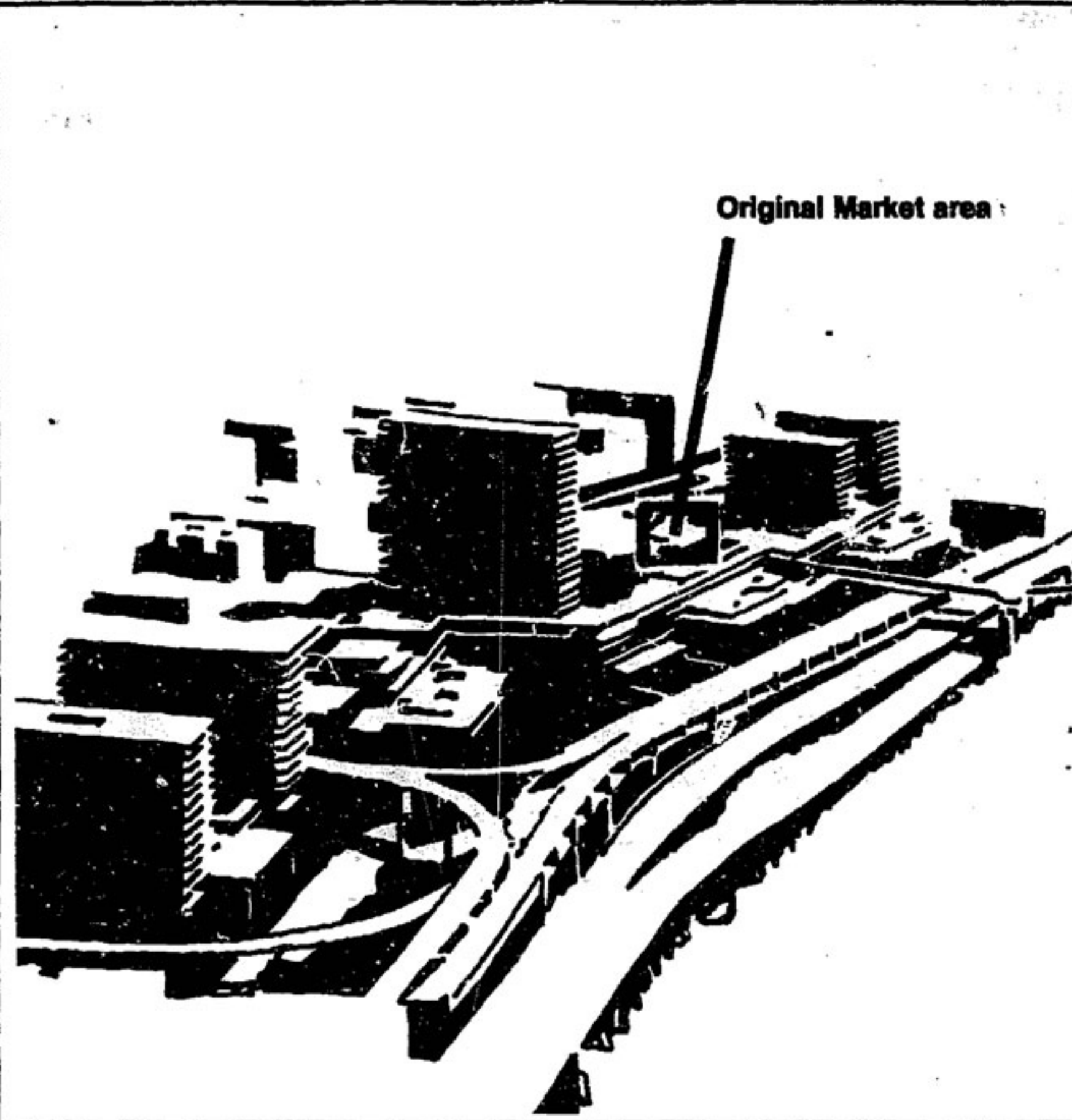
tiated yet another series of negotiations. He and other DCD staff had several breakfasts with Steinbrueck, Thonn, and Laurie Olin, trying to find an approach that would satisfy the Friends without completely transforming Scheme 23. Braman still shakes his head over these meetings, which seemed to be making progress and which cost him considerable time and effort in preparing amendments and resolutions—when Steinbrueck suddenly and “mysteriously” backed off.

What intervened was the long-awaited announcement, on May 15, of the federal grant award for the Pike Plaza Project. (Although the Friends had expected the funding announcement to come from the local HUD office, one of the targets of their picketing, word in fact came from Washington, D.C.—probably because Ferguson and the Central Association had been working the John Ehrlichman connection.)

WEEKLY SEP 23 1981

It was now too late for negotiations; more drastic steps were in order. The Friends' board had been meeting weekly for some time to discuss available options, and the idea of an historic-district initiative had gradually evolved. There was no real precedent for the form of such an initiative, and after a few early stabs at drawing up drafts the Friends consulted another of their double agents, this one in city government, for help. By May 10 a long, detailed draft was ready, and the day after the federal funding was announced the Friends launched a drive for 20,000 signatures to put the initiative on the ballot. “It was a hectic and exciting time,” recalls Jerry Thonn. By June 14, Friends at street corners and rallies had gathered over 20,000 signatures (15,560 were legally necessary) and filed their petition to submit the initiative to the voters at the next election.

The initiative would create a seven-acre Historical District from Virginia to a line between Pike and Union and from the middle of First to the middle of Western. It also established a Market Historical Commission, specified the sources of its membership (almost all groups sympathetic to the Friends), and gave as its purpose “the preservation, restoration, and improvement of such buildings and continuance of uses . . . as . . . shall be deemed to have architectural, cultural, economic, and historical value.” The emphasis throughout on saving market “uses” as well as buildings was central to the Friends' long campaign—and, incidentally, makes the market unique among historical-preservation projects in this country.



Scheme 23 for urban renewal: surrounding flowers with towers.

From the first, the city took the threat of the initiative campaign seriously. As the signature drive kicked off, Mayor Uhlman proposed his own ordinance to preserve “the historic character” of the market (that is, Pike Plaza's 1.7-acre market), a proposal approved at a packed hearing of the City Council Planning Committee on June 10, when the committee also voted to recommend authorizing Uhlman to accept \$10.6-million in HUD funds. Throughout the summer and fall, both Jim Braman and City Councilwoman Phyllis Lamphere were working on compromise proposals to woo the voters away from the Initiative. (Mrs. Lamphere, who as Chairman of the Council's Planning Committee had presided over most of the Pike Plaza hearings, was a particular object of the Friends' wrath. They

felt she had betrayed her progressive principles, and their early support of her, by lining up with the urban-renewal team at the critical moments.)

No doubt the city was uneasy at the national attention the battle was beginning to attract. The June issue of *Gourmet* magazine featured a rhapsodic article about the market, and *The New York Times* of June 6 carried one of a series of Ada Louise Huxtable articles on historic preservation, this one focused on the market. “The old arguments,” she wrote, “of obsolete plant and structural and fire hazards that worked so well for the bulldozer and brought 12-percent returns for a few shrewd and aggressive investors don't convince people any more. Too many have learned too much from watching the wreckers, and the results.”

An earlier *Newsweek* story was also mainly sympathetic to the preservationists. *Newsweek* quoted Uhlman as saying, “I never promised we would preserve every piece of lettuce. I only said we would try to retain the flavor.” Emmett Watson, himself a long-time Friend, reported Steinbrueck's riposte: “Last time the mayor came down to the market we gave him lettuce, crabs, and fruit. Next time he comes we'll give him a bag of flevor.”

Having risen phoenix-like from the ashes of so many defeats, the Friends were now paid the ultimate compliment: their opponents adopted their language and their tactics. DCD, urged on by the mayor, prepared a sheaf of “informational materials” about the urban-renewal plan, which stressed that the whole raison d'être of the Pike Plaza Plan was to save the market. One large two-color brochure provided atmospheric photos and sketches of the market amid assurances about “preservation,” “sensitive staging,” “new homes” for market residents, “minimum possible changes in appearance,” and so on. Conspicuously absent was any visual portrayal of Scheme 23, any reference to tearing anything down, or any indication that urban renewal's market was only a fraction of the market other people wanted to save. DCD also sent on the road a folksy, ain't-it-grand slide show; one typical passage warns that without urban-renewal funds (available, the text strongly implies, only by way of Scheme 23), market rents would have to rise—“It might result in a different kind of tenant in the market, and we wouldn't want to see that happen.”

The city, however, was legally constrained from outright electioneering against the Initiative, and so the Central Association began preparing its own imitation-Friends campaign. Early in the summer (according to a KOMO-TV documentary by Patrick Douglas, later the basis of a *Harper's* magazine article), James Walsh of the Bon Marche met with advertising executive Irving Stimpson to plot anti-Initiative strategy. Stimpson then hired Mike MacEwan, a 27-year-old public relations consultant, and the two had further meetings with downtown businessmen. The plan that emerged was to open headquarters in the market and recruit market property owners and merchants to form a “citizens' committee” with no visible ties to the Central Association.

On August 20 the Committee To Save the

continued on page 28

Market (I) held its first press conference. Mike MacEwan, campaign coordinator, introduced the Committee's officers (Reid Lowell, in whose cafe the Friends had been born, and two other market merchants) and backers (Richard Desimone, owner of the main market buildings, and two other market property-owners). The Committee, said MacEwan, planned a \$60,000 fund drive to help defeat the Initiative, because its passage would “lead to the destruction of the market by endangering funds needed for its restoration.” Steinbrueck immediately charged that the Committee was just a front for “the downtown establishment” and Central Park Plaza; MacEwan denied “absolutely” that this was the case. (Another Friends secret agent was at work here, sending Steinbrueck minutes of every Committee To Save the Market meeting.)

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MacEwan began meeting weekly with DCD staff to coordinate activities and exchange information, an arrangement whose propriety neither party seems to have questioned. He also became a regular feature of the market lecture-debate circuit, speaking three or four times a week all over town.

Among MacEwan's adversaries at these meetings, besides Steinbrueck, was a young doctor named Jack Bagdade, who was responsible for the entry into the fray of one last group: the Alliance for a Living Market.

Formation of the Alliance was announced on September 7, but its origins, like the Committee's, went back a few months. Bagdade, a regular market-goer since coming to Seattle for a medical residency in 1965, had joined the Friends' picket lines back in the spring. He began going to meetings and paid dues, but came to believe that the movement needed a broader base and different “image” than that of the rather shaggy, artsy, or academic “disciples of Victor Steinbrueck.” Once the Initiative process began, Bagdade was convinced that the Friends' political inexperience, lack of organizational skills, and “blind optimism” would spell defeat for the cause unless other forces were brought into play.

An energetic and striking figure, Bagdade began putting together his Alliance. At the suggestion of Gerry Grinstein (recently returned from his years in Washington as Senator Magnuson's chief aide), he recruited a couple of high-powered graduate students as political operatives (one was Al Pierce, who had worked for the Kennedy machine in Massachusetts). A speech at a market rally led Bagdade to Frank Miller, a member of the cooperative that ran the Soup and Salad restaurant on the market's lower level. Miller, who was indepen-

dently organizing a Merchant's Association as a forum for discussing the market's future, was important in giving the Alliance a base of operations in the market and contact with the merchants. A couple of young attorneys, Susan French and Tim Manning, rounded out the steering committee.

Bagdade had spotted Manning on a tv newscast of the July 28 City Council hearing on the Initiative petition, where Manning testified as a representative of CHECC (Choose an Effective City Council). This group of young political activists was then headed by John Hempelmann, very much a rising star and a colleague of Manning's in the Perkins law firm. Although Manning had only been in town since the previous December, Hempelmann had already got him involved in CHECC and Manning in turn had got CHECC involved in the market, forming a committee and doing

CONTINUED ON
NEXT FRAME

WEEKLY SEP 23 1981

the kind of thoughtful, meticulous research that was his forte. The result was Manning's City Council testimony, a carefully argued case against the economics of the urban-renewal plan.

WEEKLY SEP 23 1981

The Friends had raised some of the same issues, but Bagdade and Manning felt that the economic argument had to be made more forcefully, and this became the focus of the news conference announcing the Alliance (Manning and Jack Levy of City Fish, co-chairmen). Contrasting the current depression with the city's own 1967 economic study, which had cautioned that the boom conditions then prevailing were "of vital importance to the Pike Plaza Project," Manning pointed out that apartment vacancy rates were up from 1967's 0.6 percent to a current 13.2 percent and that Seattle's present luxury hotels were having a hard time keeping their rooms filled. Consequently, "both demand and available financing" for two key components of Scheme 23 "are severely limited." Resulting delays in construction could turn Seattle into another Baltimore, where 35 acres still lay vacant nine years after federally funded demolition for urban renewal. During the delay no new jobs would be created, but hundreds of people currently working in the market area could be expected to lose their jobs, as the network of small businesses there endured the uncertain fate of relocation. (Small Business Administration) figures showed that 31 percent of dislocated businesses failed, 50 percent if they were food-related.) Finally, in the "tiny" rehabilitated core market itself, the city's own study predicted a tripling of rents and the return of only a third of the current tenants—the rest to be replaced by "chic Ghiradelli Square-type" enterprises. In short, Scheme 23 would be "an economic disaster," and the Friends' Initiative was the only way to stop it.

Manning was careful to pay tribute to the Friends in his press release, and he now says that he (unlike Bagdade) never saw the Alliance as a criticism of the Friends but only as a different and complementary kind of organization. "Victor was more like Saul Alinsky; we were more concerned with putting together a coalition that could work with the city later if we won."

Nevertheless, the Friends did not exactly welcome their new allies with open arms. Steinbrueck, who was in London for a month when the Alliance went public, still believes that the group did little but add to the confusion that "was our most serious problem,"



The Market scene today: more than a tiny core was saved.

Dan Lamont

though he acknowledges that there were "good people" working in it. For its part, the Alliance seems to have recognized only rather late in the game that, in the public mind, Steinbrueck was the crucial symbol of the "real" market-savers. A handsome silk-screen poster that said only "Vote Yes—Market" had to be reprinted with Friends of the Market and Alliance endorsements added on, because people wouldn't display the poster until Steinbrueck's imprimatur told them what it really meant.

Still, the Friends and the Alliance did manage to work together, thanks largely to the efforts of Jerry Thonn. An affable, low-key conciliator whom many regard as the unsung (or at least undersung) hero of the later stages of market-saving, Thonn held Saturday-

morning meetings of the two groups in his living room. There the delicate issues of who did what and with which funds were plotted out.

By this time a last, indispensable member of the Alliance team, campaign coordinator Harriet Sherburne, was hard at work. Recently returned to Seattle from political work in Chicago, Sherburne had run into old acquaintance Tim Manning late in the summer and been instantly recruited to replace Al Pierce, who had to return to school. (The Friends had expected to get the Initiative on the September primary ballot, but the City Council delayed taking action until it was too late—a ploy, according to the Friends, that allowed the urban-renewal forces more time to organize against the Initiative.) Sherburne found that Pierce had done little but antagonize a few im-

portant people, that the Friends were in very low gear because of Steinbrueck's absence, and that money was short, but she plunged in.

The first step was to get out a mailing to all the signers of the Initiative petition. Jean Falls contributed \$1000 and carloads of volunteers from Bush School to this effort; after endless nights of addressing envelopes and piling them up in hallways, as well as a last-minute printing fiasco, the letters went out. Although the mailing didn't really make money, it brought in "heartwarming" letters of support and a cadre of volunteers.

Sherburne also worked on putting together an advertising and media campaign, enlisting volunteer services wherever she could. One tricky moment, she recalls, came when Steinbrueck (whose market sketches and posters were not universally admired in the Alliance) wanted to do the art work for the ads. The ad agency searched through the *Sketchbook* and managed to find a single little shopping-bag lady, seen from the rear, whose magnified image satisfied everybody and became an effective emblem for the campaign. Another potential crisis arose late in October, when Sherburne desperately needed funds for a last tv blitz and the only resources available (aside from Jack Bagdade's mortgage payment, which he contributed) were 30 lithographs that Mark Tobey had sent to the Friends. Only one of the prints sold at a Highlands party held for that purpose, but the Friends were persuaded to use the rest as collateral for a bank loan, and Sherburne got her tv ads.

While Sherburne was managing mechanics, the strategists were also busy. On September 21 the Alliance announced the results of its poll of market merchants: of 82 merchants who responded to the questionnaire (160 received them), only 11 percent favored Scheme 23 when its details were spelled out—although 41 percent replied "yes" to the more generalized question, "Are you in favor of the urban renewal project?" Mike MacEwan immediately denied that the poll proved anything, since by his count there were 230 merchants in the market. MacEwan's Committee To Save the Market also replied with an ad headed "Pike Place Market Merchants Ask Your Support" and listing about 35 merchants as endorsers, including such stalwarts as Pete DeLaurenti and Sol Amon. "We've been analyzed, scrutinized, and idolized by every hippie, dogooder, and dilettante who has needed a special project to earn a market merit badge," read the ad. "We're sick of it—vote No." Then

the Friends issued a flyer listing 79 merchants (among them several farmers) on their side.

Clearly, the presence of landlord Desimone on the urban-renewal side of the fence put the merchants in a tricky spot. Desimone, according to Frank Miller, was a strong daily presence in the market, a kind of benevolent feudal lord who took seriously every market transaction and the quality of every head of lettuce. Both personal allegiance and prudent self-interest undoubtedly influenced some merchants to line up with Desimone or to sit out the battle. There also seems to have been deeper and widespread concern among merchants about the "winos-bums-and-hippies" problem then the Friends ever wanted to acknowledge. Still, except for a contingent of the more substantial merchants who genuinely believed that urban renewal offered their businesses a better chance to thrive, Miller thinks the majority of market tenants supported the Initiative. The Merchants' Association itself never took an official stand—"We knew we had to go on living there after it was all over," says Miller.

WEEKLY SEP 23 1981

On another front, the city's efforts to come up with a compromise were now in high gear. Both Phyllis Lamphere (running for re-election against Bill Harrington, a candidate backed by the Friends) and Jim Braman were behind a set of Scheme 23 amendments proposed to the City Council by DCD late in September. The changes: expand the zone reserved for market uses from 1.7 to 3.5 acres, which would include among other things the Sanitary Market, the Triangle building, and City Fish; prohibit demolition in the project until the City Council should have approved redevelopment proposals in hand; eliminate the double-deck distributor road; and make provision for more low-income housing, for relocation of tenants near the market, and for "reasonable rent schedules" in rehabilitated buildings.

For the Friends and the Alliance, these proposed changes were too little, too late, and too untrustworthy—"clearly a political maneuver designed to mislead the voter," the Alliance charged. The City Council then put off even acting on the amendments until it could also consider a review of the economics of the urban-renewal plan, recently commissioned from the same consultant that had done the

original 1967 study. In mid-October the consultant presented his preliminary conclusions: the hotel "might" be feasible in another eight years or so, there would be no demand for first-class office space until 1975, and the 1400 apartment units of Scheme 23 should be scaled down by half. While the Friends and Alliance were "heartened" by this report ("The experts have finally caught up," said Steinbrueck), the City Council Planning Committee took it as a sign that still further hearings were needed on the plan; rather than adopting DCD's amendments it therefore sent them off to the law department for drafting into an ordinance for

public debate—a step that could not be completed before the election.

Hence the city's "compromise," whatever its merits, was only a promise on election day. But then so was the assurance by the Friends and the Alliance that urban-renewal funds would still be available if the Initiative passed. By now both sides were agreed that these federal monies were essential to whatever form of market-saving each espoused, and the most damaging charge of the anti-Initiative forces, constantly repeated, was that the Initiative would in fact "doom" the market by delaying or eliminating altogether the funds HUD had already promised for the city's plan. The Initiative, the argument ran, would in effect create a whole new plan, subject to all the funding delays and uncertainties that Scheme 23 had at last successfully negotiated, and would perhaps, by all its restrictions, so discourage private investment that HUD would find it unfeasible. To this the Friends and Alliance always replied that they were not against urban renewal but only wanted to channel the funds into a more sympathetic treatment of the market area, and that since HUD had never withdrawn funds from an approved project there was no reason to expect that now.

In the last weeks before the election everybody was trading quotations from four shadowy letters written by HUD's regional director in Seattle and two from an Assistant Secretary in Washington. None, unfortunately, made a definitive commitment one way or the other. But the Alliance cited one letter's expectation that funding would continue after passage of the Initiative "to the extent that the project remains viable" and another letter's promise that HUD "is deeply committed to historic preservation." And on October 27 Braman, announcing that his worst fears had been confirmed, offered his HUD quotation: passage of the Initiative would "remove the project status from one of certainty based on known plans and agreements to one of uncertainty due to a multitude of new factors." Concluded Braman, "This is clearly a risk that the people of Seattle cannot afford." (Braman now confesses he didn't actually believe the risk was all that great, though he had a "real concern." Harriet Sherburne, for her part, admits that there were a lot of crossed fingers behind the Alliance's confident predictions.

So much for campaign rhetoric.)

Voters who really wanted to save the market thus had to choose on November 2 between two unverifiable promises: 1) that the city would have the will, muscle, and understanding to preserve not merely the name but also the essence of the market; 2) that the forces behind the Initiative would have the practical resources to carry out their plans. The potential disasters on either side were quite different, but either would suffice to finish off the market. Among the several newspaper columnists who said, in effect, that they would vote "yes" and pray was Don Carter of *The PI*:



Fixing up the hillclimb corridor: finger-crossing time.

"Others should place their votes where they place their trust—because that's the only real issue in this election."

If trust was the issue, the Committee To Save the Market was in trouble—and, by association, the whole effort to defeat the Initiative. Two rocks on which it was foundering were the state's new law requiring disclosure of campaign finances and a KOMO-TV documentary—appositely titled "Who Will Save the Market?"—by Patrick Douglas.

In mid-September CHECC's John Hempelmann had called on all sides "to make at least three campaign finance reports during this month and next," since the legal deadline for the reports, October 31, would be "too late to adequately inform voters casting ballots on November 2." (The Alliance was annoyed that CHECC, on whose early endorsement they had counted, did not in fact come out for the Initiative until late in October; but raising the financial-disclosure issue turned out to be more significant.) The Friends and the Alliance immediately complied with the request. Mike MacEwan declined, saying that his Committee would observe the legal deadline. "One can only assume the Committee has something to hide," prodded Hempelmann.

Another exchange followed in mid-October, with CHECC announcing that the Friends and Alliance between them had raised about \$7,700 and wondering aloud why the Committee was afraid to make a similar disclosure. At this point MacEwan conferred with his backers, who apparently decided that valor was the better part of discretion, and on October 15 the Committee released its list of contributors. The largest single contribution was \$3,000 from Desimone's Pike Place Public Markets, Inc., but the rest of the list (\$23,315 total) read like a roll call of the downtown business establishment: \$2,500 from SeaFirst,

\$1,700 from Washington International Hotels, \$1,700 from Safeco, \$1,500 each from Central Park Plaza and Frederick & Nelson, \$1,000 from Doces, and so on.

MacEwan still insists that there was no "conscious policy of confusion" involved in setting up a committee of market merchants "to save the market" and financing the operation with money from corporations whose main interest was saving Scheme 23. At any rate, the Committee's credibility suffered a blow when its long-denied financial ties with downtown were revealed. Douglas's KOMO documentary on October 27 completed the damage, showing that the Committee was indeed the brain child of the Central Association and catching MacEwan in some embarrassing inconsistencies.

Although MacEwan ranked high in the demonology of the market-savers, both Bagdade and Manning today concede that he was "given a bad rap." MacEwan points out that he was hired on as a "legman" for the campaign but ended up as a spokesman "because nobody else would do it," the *eminences grises* not wishing to reveal themselves. A "naive rookie" thrown to the lions (Steinbrueck, Hempelmann, Pat Douglas, et al.), says MacEwan, he came out of the campaign with a permanent conviction that "politics is a dirty rotten business."

MacEwan also contends that "the business community, the people who literally made this city, just got crucified" in the campaign; once the opposition had "sidetracked" the campaign with the "concocted issue" of the Committee's finances and origins, the "real issues" raised by the Committee never got a fair hearing. Would the business community have got a fairer hearing if it had been more open about its position? MacEwan ponders this question as if it had never occurred to him, but then answers no: the political climate was such that overt campaigning by business interests was

out of the question.

This picture of the business community as the underdog of the campaign provokes astonishment and incredulity among pro-Initiative veterans. Certainly he has a one-sided version of who was playing fair and who was not, but MacEwan puts his finger on a truth that all the money, power, and political connections of the Central Association tend to obscure: the cozy, paternalistic team of downtown business, major editorialists, and city hall that had seemed so natural back in 1958 was no longer selling very well in 1971. The 1960s, Vietnam, and a new generation had intervened. Reading the list of Initiative endorsements is like looking into the political future of Seattle: City Council candidates John Miller and Bruce Chapman, CHECC, numerous community councils, the Young Lawyers Section of the Bar Association, the Washington Environmental Council, Young Democrats and Young Republicans. The Initiative campaign was the last hurrah of an older version of civic authority, which has not recovered its stride or self-confidence since.

Not surprisingly, everyone on the winning side remembers the campaign as a grand affair—"the most exciting time of my life," says
CONTINUED ON
NEXT FRAME

Bagdade typically. (For many, incidentally, the campaign was a blessed diversion from marital problems at home.) The pace grew more and more hectic as election day approached. Both sides were giving tours of the market and issuing press releases almost daily; writers and experts from everywhere came to town to pronounce on the fray; the city dramatized its case by closing several market hotels for code violations; the Friends and Alliance held a dizzying round of fundraising parties and benefits (Tim Hill won the City Council candidates' tricycle race); Tim Manning put together his own slide show (featuring markets in Afghanistan and Indonesia) to combat the city's "Utter confusion reigns," said a *Times* editorial.

WEDNESDAY SEP 23 1981

"It looked like a toss-up till the very end," recalls Jerry Thonn, "but during the last week, when reports started coming in from the doorbelling, we were beginning to feel pretty good." By 10 on election night, when the dimensions of the victory became clear, they were feeling very good indeed. The celebration party circulated between the Brasserie Pittsbourg and the Allied Arts office on South Main. "I feel better about Seattle," said Victor Steinbrueck. "This is a people's victory." At about 10:30 Jim Braman appeared at the party "with ketchup smeared over his wrists," as Emmett Watson reported, "and a good-sport smile on his face." And the front page of the next day's *Times* showed Steinbrueck and Jack Levy at a market stall, under the headline "A Real Place In a Phony Time."

The market was not really saved, of course, on election day. After the jubilation, John Clise (now Executive Director of the PDA) remembers a sense of panic: "How do we do it?" But somehow the process went forward without any of the possible catastrophes. Uhlman and Braman, far from displaying sour-grapes hostility, spotted the new political order at once, behaved handsomely, and went to work to translate the will of the electorate into reality. The HUD funds did not evaporate but in fact multiplied astonishingly in the years to come, thanks partly to the Magnuson machine and partly to the project's track record of good management under James Mason and Harriet Sherburne. The difficult process of institu-

tionalizing the Friends' vision of the market in a revised urban renewal plan was finally, painstakingly completed (though Steinbrueck never would approve the plan). The young organizers of the Alliance followed through to create, in the Preservation and Development Authority, the sort of non-profit public management agency that had long been considered the market's best hope of survival. And a number of changes in "life-style" have worked to the economic advantage of a central urban marketplace. "A minor miracle," says Ibsen Nelsen of the way it's all worked out. The market had a public mandate, the federal government had money, and the urbanites were coming to town—and it all happened at once.

Jim Braman cheerfully admits that the market today is much better than it would have been if the Initiative had failed (he visits it

every Saturday morning). Architect Paul Kirk, granting that Scheme 23 "did kind of cut a hole in the fabric of that part of town," also now prefers the Initiative's market to his own. John Gilmore, head of the Downtown Devel-

opment Association (successor to the Central Association), calls the rehabilitated market "a tremendous part of downtown."

Even Victor Steinbrueck, always the market's last angry man, is more or less reconciled to the changes that have inevitably attended the practical work of market-saving. He is uneasy (as are others) about the loss of much of the old residential community, the increasing middle-classness of the market scene, and what he takes to be the fancier architectural flourishes of some of the restorations. "It's not exactly what I'd dreamed. But"—he adds immediately—"when I think what it might have been if the Initiative had failed..." And Steinbrueck clearly takes deep satisfaction in the role he is universally accorded: that of the one indispensable man in the long fight against the "black ball of destruction." "Compromise is not Victor's bag," says Jerry Thonn, in one of the more tempered assessments of this side of Steinbrueck's character, "but his anger and stubbornness carried us a long way. It couldn't have been done by calm, rational,

compromising characters like me."

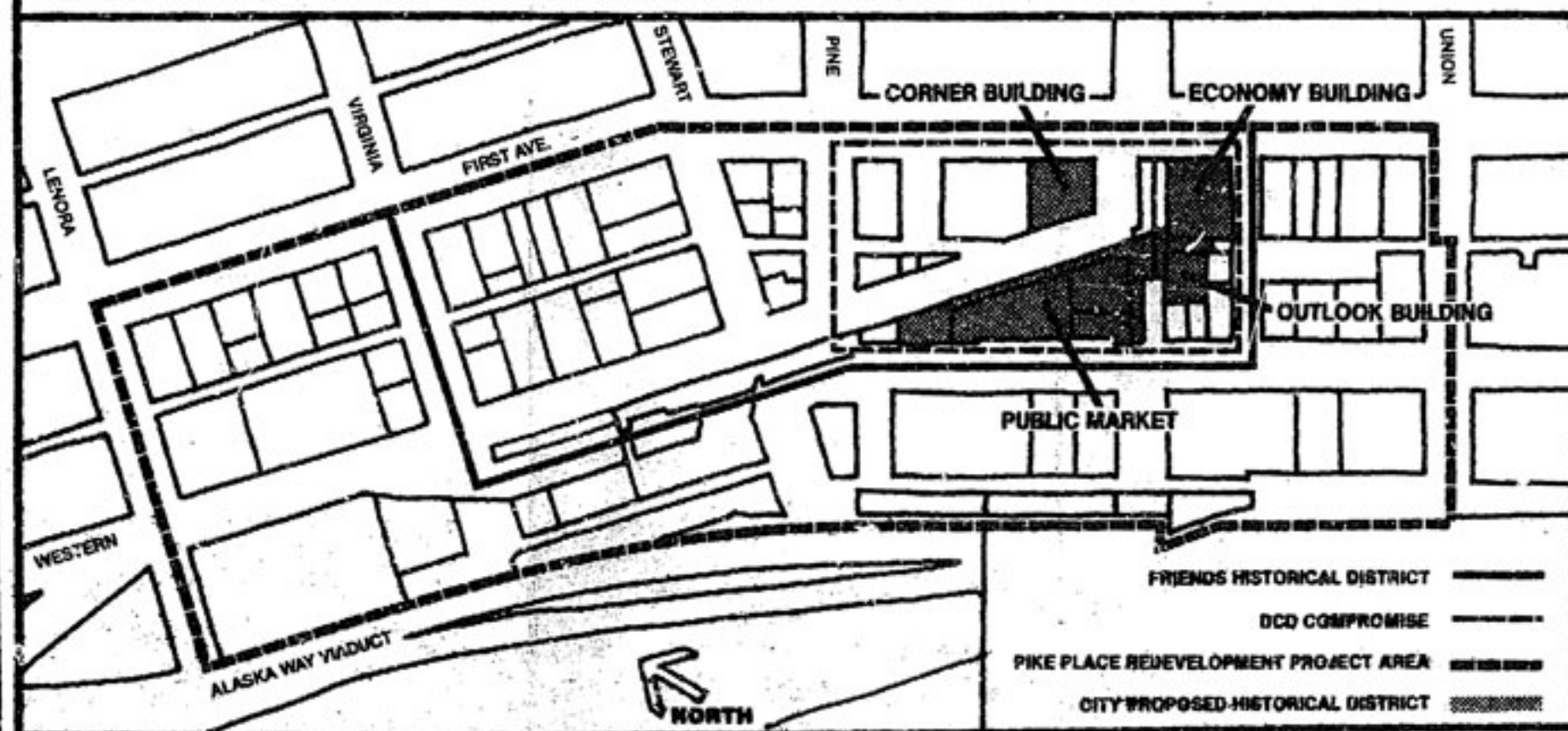
The market victory, which seemed like the dawn of a new political era at the time, has turned out to be somewhat less than that, however. True, the market itself was saved and turned into one of the most successful urban-renewal/preservationist projects in the world—the subject of envy and study by planners throughout North America. But the *annus mirabilis* of 1971 turned out to be short-lived, another example of Seattle's glory and bane: reform by spurts.

The papered-over splits between the pragmatic Young Turks symbolized by the Alliance and the intransigent romantics epitomized by the Friends only grew worse in the years to come. Consequently, the new wave of reform turned into a force mostly designed to block things—I-90, the Bay Freeway, waterfront development—but never gained the coherence to create many projects. The old Order was demolished, but then the New Order never grew up. By the mayor's race of 1977, the progeny of the Alliance had gathered around Paul Schell and the offspring of the Friends had rallied to Royer: the two sides never healed the splits from that race. The battle to save the market was won, but the wider war to transform the city resulted in a negotiated stalemate.

The market has nourished Seattle politics in its many waves of enthusiasm: populist beginnings, social pretensions in her youth, scruffy picturesqueness in the bad times, and the present tide of gentrification. The broad arms of her arcades embrace all comers, all suitors. In saving the market yet one more time, her admirers glimpsed the possibilities of Seattle politics at its most exhilarating and enjoyable.

The old emotions of common cause and noble purpose are being revived in the numerous meetings held this fall by old friends and old antagonists who have gathered for a few more rounds of back-patting and fellow-feeling. There will be parties and street music and pot-latches and a show of Tobey's drawings and a dedication of a new park designed by Steinbrueck. In short, the reunion of that most promising set of alumni in decades, the Class of '71. □

PIKE PLACE MARKET REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT



The battle zone: the historic district kept widening to the Friends' dimensions.