

# Porcine Birthdays Reminiscent of Swine Times

BY JOHN LIVINGSTON

There are at least two celebrations in store for Rachel, the big bronze pig statue that is the cornerstone of the Pike Place Market.

Rachel will celebrate her 20th birthday this summer, also the fifth anniversary of our hog-wild extravaganza, "Pigs on Parade." While details of Rachel's birthday party are still in the planning stage, Rachel is also the focus for celebrating National Pig Day, according to Marlys Erickson, executive director of the Market Foundation.

"We always decorate her, and put a sign next to her saying 'Happy Pig Day, Rachel!' Everyone has a happy time," Erickson said.

Rachel is not the official symbol for the Pike Place Market—or the Market Foundation. But every day, scores of tourists climb aboard the 700-pound piggy bank to have their pictures taken. And when people agree to meet at the intersection of the Main Arcade and the Economy Market Building (where Pike Street meets Pike Place), you'll hear them say, "Meet you at the pig," or "see you by Rachel."

Rachel's image *is* intertwined with the

Foundation's history and mission. According to its website, the Foundation was established in 1982 to support the Pike Place Market's services for low-income people, including its Clinic, Senior Center, Food Bank and Child Care & Preschool. The Foundation supports the Market's heritage programs, public improvements and repairs to the Market's historic buildings, development of new low-income housing in the Market, and programs that assist the Market's farmers.

The Foundation began working on the concept of a piggy bank statue in 1984, to help commemorate the Market's 79th

birthday.

"We had a bunch of artists give us their concepts, and Rachel was one of about 30 different ideas," Erickson said. "Georgia Gerber, an artist on Whidbey Island, came up with the bronze piggy bank concept, and she modeled after a real Rachel, a 700 pound pig (who also was the 1985 winner of the Island County fair)."

The bronze Rachel, weighing in at 550 pounds, arrived at the market August 17, 1986. Since then, she has been bringing in the bacon. People from all over the world feed Rachel with pennies, quarters, checks, pesos, lira, yen, and rials, contributing \$6,000 to \$9,000 to the Market Foundation each year.

## PIGS ON PARADE

When Rachel was 15 years old, she suddenly had a lot of company—more than 160 life-sized fiberglass pig statues, situated all around downtown Seattle. It was part of Pigs on Parade, which raised funds—and public awareness—for the Foundation, and helped improve Seattle's image.

Other cities began decorating city streets with animal statues in the late 1990s, and the inspiration for Pigs on Parade came from Chicago, which had used cow statues. Since Rachel the Pig was the most visible symbol of the Market, it seemed only natural to decorate downtown with statues of pigs, instead of cows.

"We wanted everyone to know that Rachel is also a piggy bank—a very *good* piggy bank," Erickson said. "It took 18 months to put this together."

A number of organizations and businesses joined the Market Foundation to present Pigs on Parade, including the Metropolitan Improvement District, the Downtown Seattle Organization, the Retail Core neighborhood, and commercial sponsors AT&T Broadband and Starbucks.

The bronze Rachel's creator, Gerber, created full-sized fiberglass reproductions of Rachel, according to *Pigs on Parade*, a fund-raising book published by Garrigan-Lyman, a creativity company. The artists turned the statues into works of art using paint, neon, and electronics parts.

The pigs went on display from Memorial Day through September of 2001, and they were all auctioned off on October 13 of that year. The celebration included a real piggy parade, and a Metro bus painted in a pig theme.

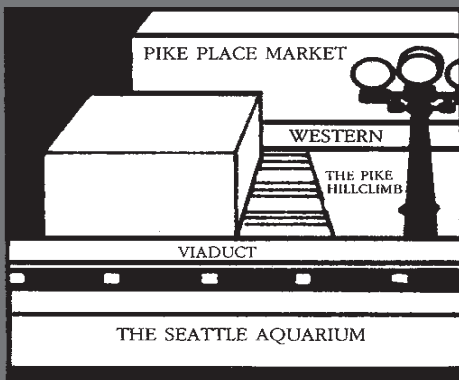
The decorations ranged from a paisley pig, to a pig covered with copper pennies to a swinosaurus.

"It was great fun! People were really into telling stories about their favorite pig," Erickson said. "I was worried that it might not put Seattle in a good image, but it was fantastic. It put Seattle in a good light. I still get a call a week from other cities wanting to copy us."

Almost all of the pigs were all shipped by the end of December. Pigs on Parade netted the Foundation \$500,000, which helped build an endowment fund.

**PIGS continued next page**

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