



The Contemporary Sportsman

BAR & GRILLE



**Pike Place Market:
Meet the Producer**

~ Frank Barnett ~

Photograph by Frank Barnett

Pike Place Market

“Meet the Producer”

By Frank Barnett



*W*hen my editor suggested that I contribute an article on Seattle's Pike Place Market I thought to myself, "Hey, great subject." Seattle's only a quick train trip from my home-base in Portland; I can visit my son Anthony (who has a medical practice there), and I love taking Amtrak just about anywhere that the tracks will lead me.

Just give me an excuse and I'm on board. As I began my usual pre-photographing and interviewing research, I became more and more enchanted with the project. It turns out, I discovered, that between 1906 and 1907, the cost of onions had increased tenfold on the West Coast.

On August 17, 1907, Seattle's City Councilman Thomas Revelle, also a lawyer and journalist, introduced the enduring concept of "Meet the Producer," the underpinning premise behind Pike Place Market that is alive and well to this date. As the price of onions rose steadily throughout the year, Seattle's citizenry became more and more outraged with the concept of a middleman. That's when Councilman Revelle proposed a public market that would directly connect farmers with consumers.

But I'm going to back up a bit and tell you about my Dad. My father was the first of nine children to be born on this side of the Atlantic, in Chicago in 1906. You'll recall that 1906 was exactly when all that hubbub was taking place over the escalating price of onions all the way across the continent in the rugged, rough and tumble Pacific Northwest.

As the price of onions rose steadily throughout the year, Seattle's citizenry became more and more outraged with the concept of a middleman.

My father's entire family, well, at least my grandfather and his seven sons would all end up working as produce men from their wholesale produce company in Chicago's famous South Water Street Market. In those days, the Market was located on South Water Street at East Wacker Drive and State Street, where it had been since 1880 when Chicago was just a mid-western mud-hole-of-a-city – "the Hog Capital of the World."

So quite naturally, I grew up, the son of a produce man, visiting packing sheds, wandering through fields with rows and rows of sweet yellow casabas and bright red tomatoes, and that's when I learned to tell the ripe cantaloupes from those that weren't ready to eat, just by their smell. I also remember spending the summer of 1947 with my Dad when we stayed at the El



Rancho Motel in Fresno. Thinking back, I vividly recall the day we were sitting together in the middle of a highway somewhere in California's Central Valley, eating watermelons – right there on the painted median strip that ran down the center of that hot country road.

We'd been driving along, minding our own business, Dad quietly humming to himself while I was standing on the cushy red front seat (no safety belts back then), "conducting" with my imaginary baton the classical music that came wafting from the radio's speaker in Dad's brand new Lincoln Continental. The Lincoln was a deep cobalt blue, the spare tire was concealed in the "continental kit" on the trunk and Dad was tapping out the rhythm of the symphony on the most beautiful translucent red steering wheel I'd ever seen. Breathtaking! With this understated beauty, Lincoln was signaling to the world that it had seriously entered the luxury car market. But I digress.

As I said, there we were, hurtling down the two-lane back-country road with the eucalyptus trees clipping past us every second or so. Suddenly Dad braked to a sharp halt to avoid hitting an open-staked flatbed truck that had been overloaded with ripe watermelons and had just simply toppled over like some giant off-balance prehistoric beast, and in the process had dumped its entire burden of deep green melons all across the road.

Since my Dad was a resourceful guy, the next thing I knew, he had pulled out two folding canvas chairs that he had stored in the trunk of the Lincoln for golf tournaments. In addition to being an avid fisherman (nearly every picture I ever took of Dad

included a fish of one species or another), Dad was also a semi-pro golfer. So there we sat, smashing our faces into the sweet red flesh of the broken melons.

We'd been driving along, minding our own business, Dad quietly humming to himself while I was standing on the cushy red front seat "conducting" with my imaginary baton the classical music that came wafting from the radio's speaker in Dad's brand new Lincoln Continental.

I'll never forget that afternoon – it was just me and my Dad, a very disoriented truck driver muttering the same phrase over and over again as he paced back and forth along the irrigation ditch that ran next to the highway, several hundred melons strewn from one side of the road to the other, and the occasional passing driver who would slow down to view the bizarre scene out his car window before roaring off again down the hot shimmering two lane road.

As I happened to have my Kodak "Brownie" box camera with me on that sweltering afternoon, every so often I run across the black and white photo I took of Dad leaning back



in his folding chair with a grin a mile wide and a melon lifted up to his moist lips still dripping from the juice of his last bite. That was, no doubt, the beginning of my long career as a photojournalist and probably also marked the onset of my interest in the produce industry as well. So this story seemed to be one that had been tailor-made for me and has just been waiting for the telling.

It was a Saturday, the 17th of August, less than a year after Dad's birth, that Pike Place Market was also ushered into the world. On that day just eight farmers rolled their loaded wagons to the corner of First Avenue and Pike Street. It must have been a somewhat pandemonious gathering since there was a reported 10,000 eager customers waiting to "meet the producers." By 11:00 am, the wagons were empty and the would-be buyers' disappointment was probably also tinged with hopes for the Market's future. Within a few months, in fact before the end of the year, the Market's first building had been completed and every space was occupied.

Today, a little more than a century later, Pike Place Market has a worldwide reputation as America's premier farmers' market, attracting 10 million visitors annually to its sprawling complex, situated on nine acres and now housing more than 200 year-round commercial enterprises, 190 industrious craftspeople, roughly 100 farmers who rent stalls by the day and 240 street performers. What most visitors don't realize is that there are also more than 300 apartment dwellers living within the market complex who are lucky enough to enjoy





the benefits of living within a public market that overlooks the spectacular Elliott Bay.

On a number of past trips to Seattle I had visited Pike Place Market and, in fact, had even had a photo shoot there for the Washington Restaurant Association. But I hadn't recalled just how truly amazing a place the Market really was. If you're prepared to do some serious walking and stair climbing, a visit to the Market is every bit as exciting as any of the other grand markets of the world.

Early on my first morning, I asked my son to deposit me at Rachel the pig, a giant bronze cast piggy bank that serves as the unofficial mascot for the Pike Place Market. Rachel has been located in the same spot under the red neon "Public Market Center" sign at the Market's entrance for the past quarter of a century. She's actually a real piggy bank that was designed by Georgia Gerber, a local artist and was modeled after a pig of the same name that resided on Whidbey Island. Annually, tourists stuff bills and coins from just about every imaginable country into the coin slot on her back and those funds help support the Market's social services. As luck would have it, there were already three tourists, one who was lovingly "petting" Rachel's ear, who agreed to be my first "photographic victims" during my shoot at the Market.

Pike Place Market was built at the edge of a steep hill and the hundreds of shops that are crammed in throughout the complex on the main and lower levels can be reached by elevator or stairs that lead down from the street level. I decided to begin

my exploration and photographing at the top and work my way down to the shops below that included just about every kind of enterprise you can imagine, from antique, magic, import and luggage shops to vintage clothing stores and family restaurants that serve food from almost every corner of the globe.

The street level arcades house the businesses that I had remembered best from my past visits – the fishmongers with seafood piled high on chipped ice, the produce stands groaning under the weight of beautiful fresh fruits and vegetables, the flower stands that reminded me of my travels to European flower markets and the countless stalls featuring the artful products that had been designed and created by talented craftspeople.

The morning was chilly and the clear air was filled with the sounds of truck engines, honking horns and the elevated voices of their drivers waiting to unload their fresh cargos. Then there were the friendly calls from the fishmongers to the growing throng of visitors, some still with their morning coffee in their hands and others who were already snapping photos of the colorful sights that surrounded them. “Here take a taste of this crab meat, go ahead, you’ll love it,” someone called out to me. Down the aisle from the fish market was a fruit stand with the vendor patiently slicing wedges of apples to share with her potential customers. I stopped shooting long enough to sample a freshly harvested Grannie Smith, noting its crisp bite and tangy tart flavor. “How do you like it?” she asked, “It’s great just eaten as a snack or you can make a wonderful baked pie.” She was a fantastic salesperson. In fact, that’s one of the notable

characteristics of so many of the vendors at Pike Place Market. Watch out if your sales resistance is not up to par; you may go home with more than you planned.

The morning was chilly and the clear air was filled with the sounds of truck engines, honking horns and the elevated voices of their drivers waiting to unload their fresh cargos.

The early morning Market was a picture of pure kinetic energy and I began spotting photo opportunities wherever my eyes landed. Right behind Rachel the pig is perhaps the most famous fishmonger in the world, the Pike Place Fish Market. Back in 1965, John Yokoyama decided to purchase the business after first having initial doubts. After all, John had to keep up payments on his brand new Buick Riviera, which was already consuming much of his weekly salary. He was 25 back then and he decided he might just be able to do better on the earnings of an owner.

Lady Luck, in the form of an old friend, Karen Bergquist, smiled on John when she introduced him to her husband, Jim. He owned bizFutures – an enterprise that offered its clients business coaching. BizFutures coached John and his fellow fish-



FRESH TONGUE SIZE \$1499.00
FRESH SHAD \$699.00

FRESH ARRIVAL SIZE \$1300.00

FRESH THAI PINE FISH \$1199.00

FRESH TROUT \$999.00

FRESH BLACK COD FILET \$2299.00

FRESH YELLOWTILE ROCKFISH FILET \$1199.00

FRESH KING COD FILET \$999.00

CHILEAN SEA BASS FILET \$1999.00

FRESH ALBACORE TUNA FILET \$799.00

FRESH CRAB WITH MEDIUM CRAB \$1499.00

JUMBO KING CRAB \$1999.00

KING CRAB PIECES \$1999.00

FREE DELIVERIES TO ALL DOWNTOWN HOTELS

WHOLE COOKED DUNGENESS CRAB

PACKED UP TO TRAVEL HOME!
24 HOUR PACK \$5.00
48 HOUR PACK \$10.00

mongers in creating an “empowering company culture.” The result was nothing short of miraculous.

In discussions with his employees and his new coach, John set about to make his enterprise world famous. Just what that meant, at first, was not at all clear but everyone set about make the dream a reality. They asked themselves, “What does it mean – being world famous?” They created their own unique answer. In an earlier interview, John had observed, “For us it means going beyond just providing outstanding service to people. It means really being present with people and relating to them as human beings. You know, stepping outside the usual ‘we’re in business and you’re a customer’ way of relating to people and intentionally being with them right now, in the present moment, person to person.”

The story behind The Pike Place Fish Market is not the only unusual tale. Each of the Market’s unique enterprises has a rich history that often can be traced back several generations.

Many have heard the amazing story of John’s success and about his company’s record-breaking performance year after year. The Pike Place Fish Market has been featured in *Fast*

Company Magazine and *People Magazine* as well as on *Good Morning America*, and *CBS’s Sunday Morning*, identified The Pike Place Fish Market as “The Number One Most Fun Place To Work in the States.”

As I photographed the antics of the fishmongers and witnessed the delight and joy of the spectators, it was clear that nothing of what I had heard about the Pike Place Fish Market had been an overstatement. As fish flew past the visitors that morning, the reasons for the company’s huge success were obvious. “Watch out!” I ducked my head and held my camera close to my chest to protect it from the spray of ice from the next flying fish sailing just above the crowd. “Hey, one more – one more!” yelled the guy behind the counter as he hurled a second and then a third giant silver-scaled fish to the waiting arms of the fishmonger standing next to me. Wow! This is fun and the spectators were simply squealing with glee! Then I turned my attention to photographing the abundant display laid out on the chipped ice in the large stainless steel bins – whitefish, fresh salmon, raw shellfish, lobster tails, Dungeness crab and a few specialty fish that I hadn’t seen before.

The story behind The Pike Place Fish Market is not the only unusual tale. Each of the Market’s unique enterprises has a rich history that often can be traced back several generations. It’s really more like a bustling village within a larger city. Often there’s a business behind the enterprise one sees at the Market. For Rick and his wife Terri Martin, it’s a farm that now encompasses 80 acres in East Wenatchee where the Martins have their

home. With the help of their three sons, their orchards produce tree-ripened apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, pears and apples – all of which are sold at the Market. During the peak of the season, Rick and Terri have over 50 people working their orchards at any one time.

The rich fertile Snoqualmie Valley is another region that serves as home to several Pike Place Market farmers, including Tong and his wife Maika as well as the couple's son Tuz and daughter Paja. The Xionsg's 10-acre farm in eastern King County grows beautiful dahlias, lilies, gladiolas and sunflowers that are arranged into eye-catching bouquets. The couple originally arrived in Seattle in 1980, having lived in refugee camps in Thailand for half a decade. They've been selling their flowers in the Market since 1992.

And then there's The Souk, which means, "market" in Arabic. The owner of this postage stamp-sized specialty market is Manzoor Junejo who decided to specialize in spices – particularly curries that he personally mixes at his grocery store. Manzoor was originally from Rajistan, which is the north Indian desert region. His arrival dates back to Seattle in 1969 when he came to visit his brother who was working at Boeing as an engineer. In 1971, an important year for Seattle and for coffee-drinkers around the world because that's when Starbucks opened its first location at Pike Place Market, Manzoor opened up The Souk just two doors away. His shop was also one of the first to cater to Muslims in the Northwest and today it's still serving many customers who have been regulars for two decades or more and





frequent The Souk, which is considered by many to be their social gathering place. Among his loyal customers are professional chefs who rely on The Souk for unusual spices and foods.

Toward noon the hunger pangs were beginning to gnaw at me, and as I passed Le Panier, a small French bakery, I decided to drop in for a quick snack. It turned out that Le Panier is its own little piece of Paris right in the heart of Seattle's Pike Place Market. Swinging my camera over my shoulder, I ventured in and purchased a delicious flaky croissant that must have come right from the oven because it was still steaming hot. I learned that this little gem of a boulangerie had been founded by Hubert Loevenbruck and a cadre of French bakers who have been baking breads and pastries in the Market since the bakery's opening in 1983.

When I had finished photographing the Main Arcade, I headed to the stairway that would lead me to the shops on the three lower levels that spill down the hillside. There's a very different feeling down there from that found on the Main Arcade level where there's a faster pace and considerably more activity. I discovered that the farther I ventured down into the bowels of Pike Place Market, the more offbeat – even bizarre, the shops became. It feels cozier down there and at times, more magical. And speaking of magic, the Pike Place Magic Shop – reported to be the Pacific Northwest's longest running magic store is a stop that no one should fail to see.

It's not at all hard to locate. You'll find it blazing in its own eerie neon glow. The first thing you might notice is the antique



booth containing a mechanical fortuneteller behind the glass of her wooden kiosk. It was reminiscent of the fortuneteller they used in Tom Hank's wonderful movie, "Big." Invest fifty cents and she'll actually give you your fortune. The entire storefront was a delightful visual assault of neon signs and giant posters. Inside, the visitor will discover a great selection of books and props for the amateur and professional magician alike, and if you're interested in seeing a great magic illusion, just ask the guy behind the counter. You won't be disappointed.

On the same level as the Magic Shop I discovered another store that also ranked high on my bizarre chart, the Old Seattle Paperworks that looked like it had been in the Market forever. If you love collecting old maps, antique postcards and turn-of-the-century periodicals and advertising art, you'll love this place. Not long ago, its owner, John Hanawalt, conceived of The World Famous Giant Shoe Museum. From the giant poster outside this intriguing shop, I learned about Robert Wadlow, "the gentle giant," who grew to be over eight feet, eleven inches tall. I peered into the viewer on the poster to see "the shoes of mystery," owned by the world's tallest man during his brief life. He was born in 1918 and died in 1940 – just 22 short years.

It was nearly impossible to drag myself away from a wonderful Mexican import and fine jewelry shop called Cintli. At this charming shop, all the employees are fluent in Spanish and I had an eager, knowledgeable and lovely guide named Sarah who majored in Spanish and International Studies. She allowed me to photograph throughout the culturally rich shop where all





of the artists live in Mexico and are friends of the owner, or are local Seattle craftspeople. The owner, Beto Yarce, who is from Guadalajara, is a third generation jewelry designer. Cintli has been delighting customers for the past six years.

I could go on and on describing my discoveries on the floors below the street level arcade. Almost anything might be found there, from an ornately decorated outfit for your favorite belly dancer from the Pharaoh's Treasures, to fair-traded arts and crafts from Hands of the World, to health food or just plain food, food. And before you return to the street level, you can even pose for a caricature of yourself with your best friend or family member.

After exploring all three of the lower levels, I recalled that I had wanted to cover the performers who “work” the crowds at the market as a-capella singers, guitarists, saw players, mandolinists and harmonica and accordion players. At the Market, they use the English term “busker” that means street performer to describe the musicians, puppeteers and jugglers who per-

form in designated places throughout the Market. There are, however, strict rules regarding the performers who entertain their delighted audiences. There’s an hour time limit for each entertainer who is also limited to just 13 designated locations scattered throughout the Market. In addition, horns, percussion instruments and amplified music are strictly forbidden. During the annual Pike Place Market Buskers’ Festival, which celebrated its ninth year last September, there are two amplified stages on Pike Street and one acoustic stage in Post Alley. Don’t miss the event next year.

Since this is an on-line magazine and not an e-book, I’m going to allow my photographs to tell the rest of my story of the Pike Place Market. As the old axiom goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” I’m going to put that old saying to the test. I hope you enjoy the rest of my journey to Seattle’s Pike Place Market, known as “the soul of Seattle” as much as I did. I can assure that it really is Seattle’s soul, and so much more. The Pike Place Market has no parallel anywhere on earth. 