

*[explosion sound effect]*

**VANCE:** At 8:32am Mar 26, 2000, the equivalent of a 2.3 Richter earthquake shook Seattle.

**SUE:** and it wasn't an earthquake, but the demolition of a stadium, and it only took 16.8 seconds!

**VANCE:** That's right - the Kingdome.

**SUE:** Oh, the Kingdome! Home to the Seattle Mariners, Seattle Seahawks, the Sounders, and Seattle SuperSonics! It also hosted rock concerts and other events too, right?

**VANCE:** Right. More fun memories. So why was it demolished?

**SUE:** To make way for a new stadium. It was in pretty bad shape. July 19, 1994: the Mariners were prepping to play the Orioles, when a 26 lb ceiling tile crashed to the field. A total of 4 tiles fell. The falling roof became one of the arguments in favor of a new stadium for the Seahawks, now Centurylink Field.

**VANCE:** By the end of the 20th century, domed stadiums were falling out of fashion. The Astrodome, Metrodome, Georgia Dome, and RCA Dome have all been abandoned or demolished, despite their history and capacity.

**SUE:** People have always had a love/hate relationship with the Kingdome, haven't they?

**VANCE:** Yep! Ever since the idea for it was proposed...

*[intro music plays]*

Voice 1: Seattle is...

Voice 2: Well, we don't use umbrellas.

Voice 3: Coffee.

Voice 1: Computers?

Voice 3: It's a city with a needle.

Voice 2: Home to Sasquatch!

Voice 4: Home to the Museum of History and Industry.

Voice 2: Innovation.

Voice 1: Rain!

Voice 3: A story.

Voice 4: A history.

*[intro music finishes]*

**VANCE:** I'm Vance.

**SUE:** And I'm Sue. We're youth advisors at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle.

**VANCE:** And this is *Rainy Day History*, a podcast by the MOHAI Youth Advisors that explores inclusion, exclusion, objects, people, and how the Seattle we know-

**SUE:** the questions we grapple with now about what it means to be a Seattleite...

**VANCE:** — Are all part of a bigger story.

**SUE:** This season we're taking a closer look at the physical and intangible marks that aspirations of growth have left on the city, and ways periods of growth have impacted Seattle communities differently.

**VANCE:** This season was also recorded from our homes via the wonderful internet during the coronavirus pandemic.

**SUE:** So stay safe, stay healthy, stay at home, and enjoy the show, whether it's raining outside or not.

*[rain sounds fade in and out]*

**VANCE:** The beloved Kingdome came into being in the 1970s as a result of Forward Thrust.

**SUE:** Forward Thrust was a series of ballot initiatives that were introduced to voters after the Century 21 Expo in Seattle to help improve the city. The package was put together by the Forward Thrust Committee, founded by Jim Ellis.

**VANCE:** Jim Ellis was a bold visionary and civic activist who led the cleanup of Lake Washington in the 1950s, and helped found King County METRO, which at the time focused on sewage collection and treatment, with transit added later.

**SUE:** He once said (quote) “with the tools of urban design, a regard for human values and plenty of work, we could build one of the greatest cities of man”. (end quote)

**VANCE:** The committee, made up of businessmen, elected officials, attorneys, civil association members, utility company heads, one architect, and a UW professor -

**SUE:** - a committee that was 90% white men -

**VANCE:** - built a package that would address some of the city's woes, but also set it up for a future population boom. They put together more popular initiatives, like professional sports and community centers, along with more controversial ones, like a rail transit package in the hopes it would increase their chances of passing.

**SUE:** Each initiative required a 60% supermajority of the voters agreeing to the proposition, so this was no small feat.

**VANCE:** In 1968, 12 propositions were voted on by the Seattle public, and 7 of them passed. 4 out of the other 5 were repackaged and voted on again in 1970; all four failed.

**SUE:** Voters approved measures across King County, including community centers, highway improvements, parks, the Aquarium, and the Kingdome.

**VANCE:** The Aquarium?

**SUE:** That's right. The Forward Thrust plan included a proposal for a massively improved park system that would add over 70,000 acres of protected green space, both north and south towards Everett and Tacoma, and also included an aquarium.

**VANCE:** Something like that could not have been cheap.

**SUE:** You're right. The parks and rec bond cost a total of \$118 million (approximately \$865 million today).

**VANCE:** The aquarium got a lot of hate from environmentalist groups who claimed that its proposed location north of the local Golden Gardens Park in Ballard would destroy the last natural Puget Sound beaches.

**SUE:** After a long debate over its location, the aquarium was eventually built along piers 59, 60, and 61.

**VANCE:** It would take a long time for the aquarium to be finished, but even before it opened, critics were raving about it. The American Consulting Engineers Council awarded the aquarium the Grand Conceptor Award for the highest achievement in engineering in 1977.

**SUE:** It wasn't just the engineers who loved it, either. More than 1,500 people toured the aquarium on its first day.

**VANCE:** the aquarium is still one of the coolest things about Seattle. Inside, you can see all sorts of marine life, including sponges, clams, crabs, jellyfish, and a whole host of other marine plants and animals. Inside the glass Aquarium Dome, you can even sit on a bench and look up at the fish who are looking at you.

**SUE:** Have you seen those octopi? Those things aren't kidding around!

**VANCE:** Voters also approved funds for arterial highways in King County and SeaTac improvements.

**SUE:** Neighborhood improvements (such lighting, signals, and beautification) fire protection, and a better sewer system were all passed by the citizens and played a large role in protecting and upholding the infrastructure of Seattle's residential areas.

**VANCE:** Voters also passed a proposition to build a Youth Service Center for children waiting to be put in foster care or in group homes. This was a huge hit with the voters, passing with an astonishing 72.4% of the vote, more than 12% higher than the threshold for passing.

**SUE:** So, what sorts of things didn't pass?

**VANCE:** Some social programs on the ballot ultimately did not make the cut. The Health, Safety, and Welfare subcommittee called for \$2.5 million for mental health facilities, \$6 million for health and social service centers, and \$5 million for community centers, which was in total a project containing 11 different multipurpose community centers.

**SUE:** it was wrapped together with the Culture and Entertainment Committee's proposals, which added a request for rec and community centers, plus an additional \$10 million to improve Seattle Center. The total cost was an impressive \$26.3 million.

**VANCE:** Ultimately, it would fall at the hands of the voters. 58.7% voted "Yes" on the proposition, which was a mere 1.3%, or just under 3,000 votes shy of passing.

**SUE:** Ouch! That must not have been fun for the subcommittee.

**VANCE:** Another thing that didn't get passed (and this is a throwback to our Bogue plan episode) was a subway system.

**SUE:** Really? A subway system?

**VANCE:** Seattle citizens voted strongly against both of the transit propositions, and they were actually the least popular on the entire Forward Thrust ballot.

**SUE:** The beloved Kingdome, which we mentioned at the top of the episode, was a result of Forward Thrust as well. However, the story of the Kingdome began a long time before that.

*[jaunty piano music starts playing and fades out in underneath]*

**VANCE:** In 1959, Seattle restaurant owner David Cohn wrote a letter to the Seattle City Council, suggesting that Seattle needed a major-league sports team, and considering the rain in the city, that the stadium should have a domed roof as well.

**SUE:** In 1960, City Council put forward a \$15 million bond measure on the ballot to try and build a stadium, but because there was no guarantee of a team playing there, voters rejected the plan. A second bond initiative in 1966 also failed.

**VANCE:** When it was put on the ballot as part of Forward Thrust in 1968, the \$40 million dollar proposal passed by 62.3%. It was pitched as a job creator to lift the region out of the 1970s recession.

**SUE:** Although it passed, the struggle to find a location for the stadium was far from over. Between 1968 and 1972, more than 100 sites were considered, the County Executive was sued, and there were lots of protests.

**VANCE:** The Seattle Center was proposed repeatedly, but neighborhood and preservation groups opposed and successfully campaigned for the location to finally be rejected in 1970. A feasibility study found if located off King St, it could cost \$40 mil without parking.

**SUE:** This was not welcomed by the nearby Chinatown International District (also known as the CID) community, especially given that I-5 was just built right through the heart of that neighborhood in the 1960s. CID residents protested, and organized a march that disrupted the groundbreaking ceremony.

**VANCE:** Activists held a community meeting to decide how to follow up on their protest. They decided to march on the Seattle Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to demand funds to preserve the neighborhood.

**SUE:** The CID anti-Kingdome activism sparked a larger neighborhood preservation movement and tied to multi-racial civil rights coalitions that addressed housing and development.

**VANCE:** It was a movement whose legacy extends beyond the life of the Kingdome.

**SUE:** Bob Santos was the most publicly recognized spokesperson and leader of the movement that began in the 1970s to preserve the CID. Santos had many roles in the community, but from 1972 to 1989, he served as Executive Director of the International District Improvement Association (also known as Inter\*Im). In this role, he was an important liaison (lee-ay-zon) between community activists, private businesses, and government agencies in developing and overseeing CID preservation plans.

**VANCE:** Here to tell us more about the history of InterIm CDA and the community organizing that emerged in the wake of the Kingdome construction is Gary Iwamoto.

*[jaunty piano music starts playing and fades out in underneath]*

## THE INTERVIEW

**GARY:** My name is Gary Iwamoto and in regards to this podcast, you could say that I've been associated with InterIm CDA on and off for the last 40-45 years. I was a volunteer and then I was on the board on two different occasions, in the 70s, and then more recently since 2004. In professional life I'm a non-practicing lawyer, and I was also a hearing officer for the Seattle school district in which I presided over disciplinary appeals of students who were suspended or expelled.

**SUE:** How did you get involved in this sort of work?

**GARY:** I was one of the college-educated students that was, that got involved in InterIm. In the early 70s there was a great movement of student awareness about civil rights and giving back to the community and finding our identity as Asian Americans. And groups of college age Asian Americans began getting involved in the actual neighborhood structures of their communities because of that, because of a need to preserve what was left of these neighborhoods. For many years these neighborhoods throughout the country – Chinatown, Little Tokyos, the International

District – they were neglected. And one of the things that was foremost on the minds of people like myself was: this was a cause to be involved with, because it was not only a way to be involved in the community, it was also a way to find our identity. So in the 70s I was like a student in college, and when other students were getting involved in ways to work in the International District, I found that was my way in as well.

**GARY:** A lot of these are student leaders, people who were developing their own leadership skills and their identities as Asian Americans. I mean you know, I think as Asian Americans there was always that stereotype of being a model minority, so that we have no problems, and that we were success stories in nature and culture. But there were things that...about the community that were often neglected – the needs of the elderly, the healthcare needs of immigrants, those things were never a part of the stereotype for Asian Americans. So one of the things that social activism for Asian Americans was, well not only do we have an identity, but this is our community. And so being attached to the community gave us a relationship with the outside. I mean this was beyond the campus, this was beyond you know, what was being taught in the classroom, or discussion groups. I mean this was action, this was a way to save our community, and in a sense by saving our community, we were saving ourselves.

**GARY:** And some of these Asian American activists who were there...they became leaders in other fields. Like one of the leaders was Al Sugiyama and Al became a member of the Seattle school board. And Sharon Maeda who's now the general manager of a community based radio station in Rainier Valley. There were other people who became heads of social service agencies and politicians. So I mean this was like an internship of sorts in public relations and community service.

**SUE:** At the time of InterIm's founding in the 1960s and 70s, how would you describe the International District at that time? Like how did the neighborhood look and feel like?

**GARY:** In about 1970-72 the neighborhood was really in a serious state of decay. There were - of the 44 apartment buildings in or around the International District 28 were closed because of fire code violations or dilapidated housing conditions. They were not in a good condition to house people. So one of the immediate goals of the group of the activists involved in saving the district was to lobby for more affordable housing. Businesses were decaying. The International District had gone through a real state of deterioration from the 1940s to the 1970s. One of the things that happened in the 40s was that the forced relocation of Japanese Americans basically destroyed what was left of Nihonmachi or Japantown in the northern part of the International District. In the 60s, the freeway (I-5) cut the International District in half, so about half of the buildings in the International District were condemned for the use of the highway so that they could build a freeway there. So by the time the 70s came around the district was in real sad condition. There were no social services – the closest social services for people to go to were in the Central District and Pioneer Square. And then the International District itself had become a neighborhood of elderly and low income. And basically it was a dwindling population. So as people moved out a lot of times the housing just closed up.

**SUE:** So what would be some of the specific ways or examples of how the community would've been impacted by the Kingdome construction?



**GARY:** Well, I think the major impact was traffic. The major impact was from the football games. Cause the football games would be on Sundays, which often impacted the way the district ran its you know, its restaurants. Because football crowds would take up all of the parking. And really that was one of the major impacts after the stadium was built, was the impact on parking and traffic. There were other things about the fact that there was an increase in land value cause by the stadium. Because of the crowds, it was attracted things like secondary crime and things like that – break-ins in parking lots and things like that – and so those things are really hard to ignore. So it was a matter of the district finding ways to get around it.

**GARY:** There have been threats to the International District before, as I've said. The Kingdome was the first opportunity in which the Asian American community as a whole was able to organize themselves into a political force. I think prior to the Kingdome, I mean any efforts at political organizing were kind of haphazard and unfocused. But the Kingdome itself was such a symbol of outside threats to the security and the stability of the neighborhood that it was an easy issue to be organized around. The symbolic nature of the sports fan versus the community activist...whatever connotations you want to put about money and downtown interests in supporting a stadium versus the little neighborhood that's trying to survive against all odds... I think the symbolism was right for being involved in a cause.

**SUE:** Then, could you tell us a bit more about the role InterIm played in the community response to the construction of the Kingdome.

**GARY:** Well by the time – the Kingdome was going to be built, I mean, there was no getting around it. But what InterIm was able to do was present a list of demands of mitigation to counterbalance the effects of the stadium. So they were able to get housing; they were able to get funding for a health clinic; they were able to get seed money for social services. So with InterIm as basically the conduit, funding came to InterIm to fund pilot programs: the health clinic which became the International Community Health Services, social services which became HDLS, a daycare center which became Denise Louie, as well as the formation of the public corporation, or what we call the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority. So InterIm was able to coalesce the interests of community activists, small business people...and like I said at that point of its existence InterIm was basically an advocacy group – they didn't provide direct services themselves. Oh and another amenity it got through the negotiation with the county was control of the parking underneath the freeway. So the money, InterIm was able to control that as another means of funding other services in the district. Another example is the garden, the community garden was also an offshoot, was one of the recommendations made to...as a mitigation to balance the impacts of the stadium.

**GARY:** A lot of credit to what we did at InterIm is...should be justifiably directed at Bob, Bob Santos. Cause Bob, you know Bob was a visionary. You know it was his ideas, you know, you make the best out of the worst situation. So it was just not enough to demonstrate against the Kingdome. There has to have a positive plan to deal with the Kingdome. And Bob had the magnetism to attract people like me and other professionals to bring their ideas, to develop into programs and services for InterIm and the International District. So I can't stress this more, how much of the ability of InterIm to survive was because of Bob Santos.

**SUE:** What did it feel like to be at these sorts of events and to participate in the work?

**GARY:** I think it was a sense of doing something you believed in. Taking, not only doing not only thinking about and saying about what was right, but putting words into action. Because the demonstrations and marches that I was involved in...it was just part of a strategy. I think you know, it's the short game in terms of getting the attention, but the long game was to work and negotiate and come up with viable plans and proposals to fund housing and services and that takes a long time. It's not as glamorous as you know, marching and demonstrating. But in the long run it's things that are tied together as apart of a neighborhood strategy to get what you need. And for myself, there's some personal satisfaction in seeing some kind of accomplishment, that what we were doing was substantial, it had meaning.

**SUE:** And I guess kind of zooming out a little bit – what connections do you see between the early this early work that InterIm CDA was doing and the work that you're doing today?

**GARY:** So the work that we did in the 70s was to lobby for services and housing, and the work we're doing today is *creating* those services and housing, and *maintaining* those services and housing. So the things that are associated with InterIm today (social services, development of housing, the garden, the parking lot) those are all things that we lobbied for and got. So the things we're doing today are the direct result of what we asked for. So its more like, you asked for it, you got it, and now you got to keep it, and that's what we're doing today.

**SUE:** What are your hopes and dreams for the Chinese International District?

**GARY:** Survival. We're in a very unique situation, because of the virus and the impact on serving people, and the economic downturn, the ability of restaurants, which is a primary employer in the International District, and its impact on business there. It really is a question of being able to survive, because without the businesses you won't have much of an economic infrastructure in the ID. So that's what I mean by survival.

*[jaunty piano music fades in and plays out]*

**ATUL:** Hello. I'm Atul, one of the producers for this episode. To close out I have a few questions for our hosts about what we've been learning today. So, the first question would be, what did you find surprising or interesting in doing the researching or interviewing for this episode?

**SUE:** What I found most interesting was that all these propositions, which included the Kingdome were sort of add on to this main proposal of rapid transit...and in the end the main section, like the rapid transit, actually didn't get passed and there were only the add on's that ended up being passed, like the Kingdome... yeah!

**VANCE:** I guess what seems most surprising to me is the fact that nowadays Seattle seems like a city focused on progress and technology and moving forward and the ideas of Forward Thrust seems like they'd be extremely popular today, but just that the majority of the projects and proposals failed in a community vote is surprising to me, so...

**ATUL:** So, what do you think this history helps us understand?



**VANCE:** It helps us understand that progress is not always best for everyone. Because the ideas of Forward Thrust, especially of the Kingdome, put minorities at a disadvantage and especially - not just minorities but the people who were living in those areas that the projects would have disrupted. So progress while it seems like it's an all around - not an all around good thing - but in general a good thing...it can seriously hurt others. Um, yeah.

**SUE:** Like, the people who were planning these sort of like, progressive infrastructure projects and all of that... they were not very diverse and were generally a very specific small representation of the total population and in those ways they kind of... I guess they failed to represent a lot of other people in the community and those people were not... I guess...considered in a lot of decisions and they ended up being hurt that way.

**ATUL:** If you had been a voter, which way would you have voted on the propositions?

**SUE:** I would've definitely voted for the transit. It's understandable it didn't pass then, but obviously I would've voted for it because it would have been a much more convenient, possibly cheaper way to get around instead of just being in your car and stuck in a lot of traffic.

**VANCE:** Like from a modern perspective, everything on the list seems like a good idea, like low income housing was a one that failed, and that's a problem in Seattle (chuckles). So yeah, from a modern perspective it certainly seems like I would've voted on, voted yes on all of the propositions.

**SUE:** Yeah now that you bring that up I kind of agree... (laughs)...not just transit...but yeah.

**ATUL:** Alright. So imagine if you were in charge of a second Forward Thrust. What would you guys add? What would you remove? And what lessons would you draw on from the first Forward Thrust?

**VANCE:** Lessons is that you have to watch out for the communities that you would be affecting by implementing the Forward Thrust, the second Forward Thrust. The communities that you would be affecting, and how it would affect them, and what you could do to try and minimize the negative effects. Cause if you're going to put in low income housing um, or rapid transit, that would cause - goodness knows we need *more* construction in downtown Seattle and it would probably have a negative effect on like, the places that it would have to demolish to build up new buildings and um, rail systems, or whatever it is. I don't know what proposals I would add...

**SUE:** Yeah, for what I would like, consider for like, I guess a second Forward Thrust what I would add...I mean, I think this is already kind of going on but biking lanes? Maybe. Having that and like, making sure that they won't really have a high chance of crashing and getting into accidents, and all of that. I think that would have been really nice. Especially and that might help with some of the traffic. A little bit.

*[ending theme music plays music]*

**VANCE:** Well, we learned a lot there about Forward Thrust.

SUE: You can say that again.

VANCE: Well, we learned a lot there about—

SUE: Don't actually say it again. (collective laughing)

VANCE: Thanks for listening to this episode of *Rainy Day History*! We hope you enjoyed what you learned.

SUE: To learn more, check out the show notes for research highlights and places to explore some of the things we mentioned in the episode. You can also visit the MOHAI website at [mohai.org](http://mohai.org) that's m-o-h-a-i-dot-org

VANCE: You can also follow us on Instagram @mohaiteens and follow the museum @mohaiseattle.

SUE: When we can safely re-open, come visit the museum in sunny South Lake Union Seattle!

VANCE: Thanks again to Gary Iwamoto and the staff and community at InterIm CDA

*[jaunty piano music starts and plays out underneath the credits]*

TK: Hello, this is TK, and I'm here with the credits! Stay tuned through the end for a sneak peek trivia question from India.

Thank you so much to Gary Iwamoto for telling us about the history of InterIm CDA and thanks to the staff at InterIm for all the work you do.

The script was researched by India & Ethan, written by Atul, and pedited by India & Atul. This episode was produced by Sue & Atul and edited by Karl & Vance. Show notes and transcripts were built by Julia, Ziah, India, & Ethan. Marketing help came from TK

This season was imagined by the 2020 MOHAI Youth Advisors. The podcast was developed by the 2019 MYA. Grace designed the logo, and Finch wrote the theme music and performed it along with Tyler and friend of the pod Sylvie Wang.

Thank you to all of our MOHAI staff cheerleaders, and special thanks for this season goes to Chris, Leonard, Sondra, Tori, and of course Emily T.

*[8-bit elevator music starts playing and plays softly underneath]*

INDIA: Hi! It's your trivia queen, India. Last time we asked: Which city received the federal transit funding that Seattle voters turned down as a part of Forward Thrust? And the answer was A – Atlanta. One of the Forward Thrust measures was for an extensive rapid transit system. The federal government was offering 900 million dollars of additional funding. However, the initiative

was voted down and the money went to Atlanta, Georgia's MARTA system, which stands for Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority.

Here's a bit of a preview of what's coming up in the next episode. Which Seattle-area band was formed first?

- a. The Postal Service
- b. Soundgarden
- c. Nirvana
- d. The Presidents of the United States of America

Find out the answer on the next episode of *Rainy Day History*!