

# The 1964 World's Fair: Magical Memories

by *Jacque Boyles, PassPorter Guest Contributor*

In 1964 my grandmother managed to persuade my parents to let me go with her on a trip to the World's Fair in New York City. I was sure that this would be a once in a lifetime experience. In fact, it was only the beginning of a lifetime of magical memories as the wonder of Walt Disney World keeps that World's Fair experience alive for me, even after 45 years! I made my first trip to Walt Disney World in November of 1972, just years after my World's Fair trip. So many attractions at Walt Disney World has their origins at that World's Fair! So I'd like to share with you some of my magical memories of the 1964 World's Fair

There have been many World's Fairs besides the one in 1964, but there haven't been any others that were envisioned or realized on such a grand scale. From the unprecedented participation of industry, entertainment and international governments, to the creative forces of Walt Disney and his Imagineers, it is still a cultural phenomenon.

The Tomorrowland Transit Authority (TTA) in the Magic Kingdom brings back memories of the Ford Motor Company-sponsored pavilion at the World's Fair. Walt Disney and his team created a journey through time in actual Ford automobiles, including the brand-new Mustang (my dream car!). The attraction introduced continuous-loading ride vehicles as well as a new method of moving the vehicles called linear induction, which the TTA still uses today. The ride was both a journey through time and a vision of the future. The ride moved through time-travel scenes in the Ford pavilion buildings and then outside for sweeping views of the amazing architecture and brilliant colors of the World's Fair, much as the TTA does today in Walt Disney World. One of my favorite moments of the TTA is inside of Space Mountain when the narrator announces that "The Tomorrowland Metro-Retro Society presents Walt Disney's vision of the future." And there, on the left, is the same sparkling model of Walt's city of the future as it appeared in the final scene of the Ford ride, with its elevated roadways, elegant buildings and magical fair with the double Ferris Wheel. Now I don't have to worry about losing one of my most vivid memories of the Fair, because I can see it again every time I visit Walt Disney World.

Before we leave the Ford pavilion, there's another magical memory of that trip back through time that Walt Disney World helps me to remember. On Ellen's Energy Adventure at Epcot's Universe of Energy, the scenes of the primordial earth and the Animatronic dinosaurs come

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from the Ford pavilion. I don't remember the smell from the Ford ride (although that doesn't mean it wasn't there), but experiencing the Epcot attraction, I once again see the pterodactyls, brontosaurus and fiery sky of the Ford pavilion ride.

Continuing on my way through Tomorrowland on the TTA, the narrator says "Now approaching Walt Disney's Carousel of Progress." I remember that General Electric's Progressland pavilion at the World's Fair is still quite famous for introducing the amazing innovations on display at its Carousel of Progress. I always get a thrill and a lump in my throat when I hear the first strains of "There's a Great, Big Beautiful Tomorrow" and the theater begins to move. My memories of the 1964 Carousel of Progress stay fresh in my mind as I visit once again with my Animatronic friends and try to pick out the changes in the attraction since my last visit. And, yes, I sing along!

One of my most amazing experiences at the World's Fair was the Illinois pavilion's "Salute to Mr. Lincoln." Walt Disney's incredible Animatronic figure was so life-like, I could hardly believe that it wasn't real. I had to see the show twice just to be sure. While this wasn't the most dynamic of the pavilions or exhibits, it left one of the most lasting impressions. Now, with the Hall of Presidents at the Magic Kingdom, I can experience Mr. Lincoln again, and keep another memory magically alive.

I don't know if Walt Disney had anything to do with the symbol of the 1964 World's Fair, the Unisphere (which still stands in the old fair grounds at Flushing Meadow Park), but Epcot's Spaceship Earth and the Fountain of Nations definitely invoke memories of the Unisphere and its fountains. Seeing the Unisphere now, my mind's eye recalls the beautiful expanse of the World's Fair beyond, much as seeing the icons for the Disney parks bring memories of their sights and attractions.

To me Walt Disney World is designed so that I'm always looking up at something. From the spires of Cinderella Castle and the whirling planets of Astro-Orbiter, to the World's mountain ranges, Spaceship Earth, and the Tower of Terror, my eyes are constantly drawn upward. At the World's Fair, too, I felt as though I was always looking up. The Observation Towers at the New York State pavilion seemed to touch the clouds. The avenue of international flags reached to the sky on impossibly tall poles, while the AMF Monorail and the tracks of the Ford pavilion soared overhead.

When I think about the World's Fair or Walt Disney World, my first impression is of the shapes and colors and sense of movement, both from the unique shapes and sizes of the buildings, combined with the

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brilliantly colored banners and flags everywhere. And at night, the lights and shadows changing the shapes and perspectives, and the dazzling colors of the lights adding more energy, are magical memories of both.

Every time I step into Innoventions Plaza behind Spaceship Earth at Epcot, I'm reminded of another magical memory of the World's Fair. The spinning, shining, multi-colored spirals surrounding the Plaza are reminiscent of The Tower of the Four Winds at the entrance to the Disney-designed Pepsi pavilion, and I still have that pavilion's "It's A Small World After All" running through my head after 45 years! Yes, those dancing dolls and droll little ditty are another Disney hold-over from the World's Fair, when Pepsi and UNICEF took their guests on a short boat journey celebrating all the children of the world. The recent rehab has brought the Walt Disney World attraction back to the brilliant colors and whimsical feel of the original.

I still have so many memories of the 1964 World's Fair. And although some of those other memories don't have any direct ties to Walt Disney or Walt Disney World, I experience them all again when the magic and wonder brings them back to life each time I visit Walt Disney World.

*About The Author: Jacque just completed her 22nd trip to Walt Disney World and is looking forward to number 23 this fall!*

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