

And Donald Johnson, trustee of the Kreielsheimer Foundation (which poured more than \$10 million into McCaw Hall), calls her "the sine qua non" of the McCaw Hall project: "Without her I think it is doubtful it could have happened, certainly not with the speed and excellence of design and execution which has been achieved. I believe McCaw Hall is her crowning achievement to date."

### Discovering a 'different way'

Anderson stays on track like a freight train, in a job that could eat up 80 hours a week of her time if she let it. Not even the arrival six years ago of her long-sought, deeply-loved adopted daughter Maile has derailed her career, her commitment or her effectiveness in the nearly 10-year battle to turn the Opera House into McCaw Hall.

What makes Virginia run?

"What motivates me is the desire to give other people what I didn't have," she reflects.

"I don't come from a high-arts background; I never saw a performance until I was in my 20s. Access is a big motivator for me. Our glow at the Center is the reflected glow of the resident theaters and the Sonics and the Seattle Storm. It's the International Fountain that alternates Nirvana and Pearl Jam with Beethoven. What we have here isn't for a select few or a subset of society. We come together here for renewal."

Immaculately turned out in well-cut, stylish suits, Anderson didn't grow up in the lap of luxury. She grew up on the South Side of Chicago, a city full of great culture — none of which Anderson saw as the eldest in a single-parent family with six children.

"My mom was a waitress, and our life was about survival. She worked nights, so I was the baby-sitter for my younger siblings. I was the first person in my family to go to college."

Anderson knew there was more out there. In high school, she dated a boy — later her first husband — whose parents took her under their wing, taking her on vacations and to "lovely family dinners." She knew there was "a different way."

"I was smart and fortunate, and I did well in high school, but it wasn't a happy time. I knew I'd need scholarships and loans in order to go to college, so I worked hard. I was elected to offices and that sort of thing, but my emotional energy was at home. I was very serious; I worried a lot."

#### Virginia Anderson

**1947:** Born, Grand Junction,

Colo.

**1970:** Bachelor of arts degree, Southern Connecticut State

College.

**1973-1974:** Planner, King County office of budget and management.

**1974:** Master's degree in public administration, University of Washington.

**1974-1979:** Project manager, City of Seattle office of community development; budget analyst, office of finance and budget.

**1979-1988:** Senior vice president, Cornerstone Development

**1988-present:** Director, Seattle Center.