FIELD HOUSE

With the growth of the University of Puget Sound, it became apparent that the small gymnasium which was on the campus was not large enough for our physical education needs. The varsity basketball games were played there for awhile, the women had their physical education classes there, and the intermural program, both for women and for men was held there. It was teeming at all time and was inadequate.

Because it was not large enough for intercollegiate basketball, the University at times played in the Armory downtown and for many years rented a warehouse down by the Puyallup River viaduct to play the games there. It was totally unsatisfactory for it was very difficult for the students to get there and the floor was not what it should have been.

The Board of Trustees set up a special committee headed by Mr. J. D. Shotwell, who was an alumnus and a man who had lettered in football at the University about 1930. Mr. Shotwell and his committee very carefully analyzed the situation and decided that the University needed a new Field House. There was considerable discussion on where it should be located and I suggested to them that we might be able to acquire the property which was south of the campus. This property had been owned by Mr. John S. Baker for some twenty years and had been carried as a tax loss during that entire time. During the war he had tried to get the federal government to put a
low-cost housing development there but it went to Salishan down on McKinley Hill instead. A part of the original campus was purchased from him.

I made a presentation to Mr. Baker that we would buy the land from him for $5,000. He could take a major portion of it as a gift to the University and could remove it as an asset from his estate and he would have the satisfaction of doing a great deal of good for the City of Tacoma. At first he said, "It will not work and I cannot do it."

However, I presented him a copy of it as structured by my office, by our tax men, and our attorneys with a copy for himself, his tax man, and his lawyer. He told Mr. Kilworth, who was Chairman of the Board of Trustees that he was interested. I visited him again and he agreed to all of the various possibilities except he said he couldn't sell it for $5,000. I went to see his manager and the manager said he would sell it for $15,000 and give us the first $10,000 toward the $15,000. Thus the eleven acres where the Field House is now located were transferred to us.

At that time it was a swamp, there was a deep gully, there were springs, and it was a place used by many of the neighbors to throw their refuse.

Mr. Shotwell, who is a heavy equipment contractor, moved what was called Huckleberry Hill - a very beautiful hill covered with lovely dogwood trees and all kinds of berries which stood at the corner of 11th and Union where the University stadium
now is. He moved the hill, put it in the ravine or gully and made the parking lot out of the swamp.

The field house was constructed in 1948 and 1949. The committee studied many outstanding field houses and many other university facilities for physical education. In many ways it was regrettable that 1948 and 1949 was about three to four years before laminated beams came into construction for gymnasiums and field houses. It would have allowed a different kind of structure completely. However, as it was, Weyerhaueser put together the beams that are used for the roof and they were the largest and longest wooden beams used in any construction at that time. It was the request of the Fire Commissioner that wood be used instead of steel because steel bends in fire and is much more disastrous than slow burning wood.

The Field House is 200 x 180 feet. Its original cost was $405,000 and at that time it seated 6,600 people. It was used for indoor sports. There were four basketball courts, dressing rooms, showers, offices and class rooms. The Air Force ROTC had its offices in the Field House and they used the floors for their drill procedures.

The contractor was Roy T. Earley Company and it was supposed to be finished in time for the State basketball tournament. It was not finished but they put down a temporary floor. They used the plywood which they had used for forms for the temporary floor. When the teams started playing, the oil oozed...

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out of the plywood and it became very, very slick. After the first game it was necessary to move the tournament elsewhere. It was a very great disappointment to Mr. Shotwell and myself because everyone had looked forward eagerly to the coming of the first tournament.

Mr. Shotwell leveled off and paved the parking lot without cost to the University so it could be used for the Field House.

The Field House has been used for many civic affairs. We have had President Eisenhower, General Wainwright, President Nixon and many national leaders as well as very unusual cultural events. The City has used it for special meetings, the Shrine Circus uses it, the high school basketball tournaments and basketball games are held there.

In 1978, a building was added to the rear of it with enclosed tennis courts and racquet ball courts. It was a very fine addition and doubled the size of the facility. Then, following that, a new contract was let to renovate the Field House and one-third of the space was taken from the playing floor, a partition was put in and ceiling so that there is a basketball court up above, the weight room is below (which was taken from the playing floor) and their was considerable renovation in the offices, classrooms, and other areas. The renovation cost approximately $800,000.
COMING OF THE FIELDHOUSE

In the aftermath of the War, it was quite obvious that the University of Puget Sound needed better athletic facilities. The gymnasium, as it was called, was one of the original buildings, built in 1924 when the College moved from Sixth and Sprague. After the war, when it was found that there were war surplus buildings, the administration tried to secure the fieldhouse in Idaho built by the Navy. This was not feasible because the finding was not proven to be adequate and Eastern Washington College of Education seemingly had a greater need and the Navy fieldhouse went there.

However, the Building Committee of the Board of Trustees had talked in terms of building an athletic fieldhouse and a president's residence. Careful studies were made concerning various types of athletic facilities. The Committee visited the University of Washington fieldhouse and discovered that what they called a fieldhouse was a building with sides and a roof and a dirt floor. It was where the football team practiced and it was impossible to keep it clean and there was no heat. So the Committee soon decided that the kind of facility which should be built at the University of Puget Sound should be an enclosed building with a solid floor which could be used both for physical education and basketball. In the discussion which ensued, it was determined that it should be somewhat of a civic auditorium because of the fact that the City of Tacoma had none. When the needs for athletic facilities, particularly basketball, outgrew the smaller gymnasium on the campus, the University played its basketball games in the armory and also in a warehouse which was down by the base of McKinley Hill. These proved
inadequate and difficult for the student body to attend and they were makeshift arrangements.

The Committee then decided they would build a building which would be in size, that it would seat approximately 5,000 or more, depending upon the seating arrangement; that it would be used for physical education classes as well as athletic events; that it would be available as a civic auditorium. It was recognized that this would cause some problems in scheduling, both from the standpoint of the city and also from the standpoint of the academic classes which were to be held in the fieldhouse.

The fieldhouse was a memorial to the 138 men and alumni and other members of the University family who lost their lives in World War II. There is a plaque inside the door in commemoration to those men. The site for the fieldhouse had been prepared by Don Shotwell when he moved Huckleberry Hill down into the ravine which had been in the John S. Baker twelve acres which had been acquired for this site for some kind of physical education facility.

The trustees advertised for a bid and bids were opened. Counting the alternatives which were accepted, Roy Early Company was the successful bidder. Mr. Early was very much interested in the University as was his son, and Donald Shotwell was Chairman of the Board of Trustees Building Committee for the fieldhouse. In the process of preparing the site, it appears that Mr. Shotwell moved some 51,900 cubic yards of earth.

The original plan called for a fieldhouse, a swimming pool, a running track, and many other aspects to the facilities. However, it appeared that this was not feasible at the time. The architects were Weyerhaeuser engineers and
they structured the longest beams used in any building prior to this time.

There was considerable experimentation in the beams and, in a way, it was unfortunate that we did not delay the building of the fieldhouse because it was just about three years prior to the laminated beam type of construction, which would have made an altogether different kind of design of the fieldhouse possible. I think the beams are 286 feet end to end, which were historic at the time of construction.

The fieldhouse was so designed to allow classrooms on the second floor on both sides of the balcony. There is a broadcasting booth in the upper part of the fieldhouse.

There was a very unusual problem with acoustics and we brought in acoustical engineers and they suggested that the roof be coated inside with some acoustical material. This was done and the acoustics were still difficult. Finally, it was necessary to put in a false ceiling which has helped the acoustics considerably.

The offices which are on the east side of the balcony were allocated to the Air Force when it came on the campus. Below the balcony on the east side was to be structured, ultimately, for a women's side and all the plumbing and foundations for the partitions were roughed in. However, this has never been done because there was such very great need for storage space, bleachers, and other University materials.

At the time of the coming of the fieldhouse, the gymnasium was earmarked as the Girls Gymnasium and with the coming of the Hugh Wallace Memorial Swimming
pool in 1956 the entire lower floor of the gymnasium was renovated, but this will be covered in the section on the coming of the Hugh Wallace Swimming Pool.

From the very beginning, the fieldhouse was a very popular place in Tacoma. It allowed us to have full-sized crowds at basketball games. It allowed us to have the State basketball tournaments, the A-AA-and AAA playoffs and these have been at the fieldhouse now for nearly thirty years. It was a very sad thing that the first tournament which was held was done before the building was completed, although it was past the date for completion. In order for the teams to play, the contractor put down plywood for a plywood floor. He took the plywood which he had used as his forms for pouring the concrete and the teams had not been on the floor ten minutes when it appeared that every step they took oozed the oil from the plywood which had been put on the plywood so it wouldn't stick and it became as slippery as an ice arena. It was only a little while until the authorities decided that they could not play on the floor and the tournament was taken to Pacific Lutheran for completion. I shall never forget talking to Don Shotwell at that moment and he looked at me and said, "I'm sick. I'm going home." I said, "I am, too. I'm going home." Both of us went home and it was a sorry day for Mr. Early, the contractor.

Through the years, there have been most outstanding shows. We have had the University commencements there; we have had the Tacoma high school commencements for many years—a week or ten days every spring when each high school has its commencement there. Shows such as Horace Heidt, Madam Flagstad, President Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, General Wainwright and others have filled