CIVIL DEFENSE AND THE UNIVERSITY

In the early part of the 1960's, there was great fear among the military leaders that the United States would be bombed with nuclear or atomic bombs and there was a very definite program on the part of Congress to make people aware of the danger and also to provide for their protection.

I went to a conference with Brig. Gen. Ensley Llewellyn (an alumnus of the University of Puget Sound) on April 20, 1962, concerning civil defense and the University of Puget Sound. At that time, we were informed that Congress had allocated for civil defense $700,000,000; that $425,000,000 was for the construction of shelters at various places and that it was to be allocated at the rate of $2.50 per square foot or $25 per shelter space, and they figured $10 per person as a square foot unit. This money was to be used for multipurpose use and one-fourth of a square foot was to be allocated for storage of food and supplies by the government, which were to be used only in case of a disaster.

Following the meeting, we were to have the architect make a detailed study of the method of construction and have the study available to Civil Defense, Sitts and Hill or Whitacre Engineers of Tacoma who had been approved by Civil Defense as advisors in this kind of construction. They were in hopes that the shelters could be ready by January 1, 1963 and that 50 percent of the cost of the shelters and multiple-use structures would come from Civil Defense.
I then called the science faculty together and told them it appeared that we might be able to get a very large sum of money for the construction of shelters in a multipurpose building if we adhered very closely to the suggestions made by Civil Defense.

On June 12, 1962, I received a letter from the State Director of Civil Defense saying that he was absolutely sure that incentive money could be available and that we should work with the U.S. Army Corps and the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks in planning the new building; that the University of Puget Sound was first in line for it, particularly if it would construct the underground science building as projected for January 1, 1963. He was quite sure that we could receive 50 percent of the cost of the building and that this would provide shelter for 4,000 to 5,000 and it could be used not only as a shelter but as a hospital and as a community kitchen, if necessary. He thought at that time we could get $25 per square foot for the construction.

I had asked Richard Dale Smith to act as representative from the University with Civil Defense and he served very well in this capacity. He was very much aware of the political scene, both state and national, and he alerted Tom Swayze who was involved in the political affairs of the State; Thor Tollefson who was a Republican representative, and Senators Magnuson and Jackson. Also, Governor Rossellini was very much interested in the possibility of the money coming to us. On many
occasions, he told me, "You know, Doctor, I am an alumnus of Puget Sound and very proud of it." He did use his Governor's office to try to get an allocation for us, but Congress was very reticent about appropriating the money which had been allocated.

While the political aspects of this were evolving, I called the science faculty together on many occasions to discuss the possibility of building the science building on the north side of Sutton Quadrangle with a series of laboratories built underground which would be connected with Howarth Hall, Jones Hall, and the above-ground section of the new science building. We spent a great deal of time on the plans and there were many sets of preliminary plans drawn.

The plans called for construction of a facility 300 feet long, 250 feet wide, with a ceiling four feet underground. The ceiling was to be of very strong reinforced concrete covered by four feet of earth. At first, the science faculty appeared to be quite enthusiastic about it, and we discussed the location of the various departments and eventually had a rather satisfactory and workable set of plans. I remember giving the plans to the science faculty on a Friday and saying that, in order to get the asking to the Civil Defense and Mobilization Department for some $500,000, which was 50 percent of the cost of the construction, we would need to work rather rapidly.

Dr. Robert Sprenger was Chairman of the Science Committee but each
science faculty member was asked to carefully study the plans and give a written analysis concerning his particular area.

I had taken a set of plans home with me to study over the weekend. On Monday morning, when I arrived at my office about 7:45, the science faculty to a man was standing outside with its rolled-up plans. Dr. Sprenger and I looked at each other and I said, "Bob, did you come to the same conclusion I did?" He asked, "What was that?" I replied, "Well, this underground plan is just not feasible. It would be very expensive and it is just not feasible." Seemingly, there was a sigh of relief from all of them and they said they had come to exactly the same decision— that it was not feasible for many reasons— the circulation of air, the circulation of fumes from the science laboratories, particularly chemistry; the fact that all liquid waste would have to be elevated by pump some 40 feet to get it into the sewer system; the fact that we would have to have an underground power supply in case the main power failed; and for the amount of advantage which we would get from the allocation of Civil Defense funds the disadvantages of impracticality and added expense were so unusual that the science faculty hoped we would not spend any further time on it.

I brought out a map of the campus and we talked about the possibility of moving the proposed science complex over to Union Avenue and locating the proposed School of Business building in the area of the north edge of Sutton Quadrangle. Howarth Hall then could be used for whatever disciplines would need space, which, at that time, in my thinking would be the School
of Education. In this way, the School of Business would be located on the north side of the Sutton Quadrangle, liberal arts study would be in Jones Hall, and the School of Education would be located on the south side of Sutton. By using this kind of a plan, we could use the entire area facing Union Avenue for the science building where there was much more space for a beautiful building.

After some discussion with the science faculty, there seemed to be unanimous agreement except for one professor who did not particularly want to cooperate with his department.

I then strongly suggested that we terminate our relationship with the Civil Defense group. Rather interestingly, shortly after we had come to our decision that we would no longer try to work in a special defense and mobilization program, we received a letter from Mr. Frank S. Evans stating that the asking for a grant had been denied. Evidently, the central construction program of Civil Defense and Mobilization was not underwritten to the extent that President Kennedy had hoped and that the Civil Defense people had hoped and it was not possible to subsidize the building of shelters, the main theory being that they would take over shelters that were already constructed and would work out the details with the existing institutions so it would not be necessary for them to build new ones.

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In 1967, a survey was made of Pierce County locating 1197 areas for protection of people at the University of Puget Sound. A man by the
name of Frank S. Evans was the Shelter Officer in Pierce County and Mr. H. E. Link was State Director. On January 20, 1967, Mr. Link wrote me that he would like very much to have the University of Puget Sound take the lead in the designation of shelter space, particularly as it related to protection from radioactive fallout and from nuclear bombing. The areas at the University were to be marked and signs placed at strategic spots, and the shelters were to be stocked with food and water and with radioactive detection equipment. There was particular emphasis on the fact that the design of any new buildings should be done in correlation with the Civil Defense and Mobilization Bureau, both locally and at the State level.

It was a sort of "of-again, on-again" situation. The Civil Defense people kept writing and calling us, saying that we had the most ideal location for the north end of Tacoma and they wanted us to designate Collins Library, Men's Group Housing, the Student Center and the Music Building as shelters, with particular emphasis on the tunnels in the Men's Group Housing which they thought would be the most ideal kind of shelter. However, this was to be done without remuneration; there would be no maintenance cost allocation, and we would be responsible for keeping the stored material in good order.

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Brig. General Llewellyn was a very loyal alumnus of the University and did his best in trying to secure the allocation from Civil Defense appropriations.
This Civil Defense inquiry of 1962-63, however, was the beginning of serious thoughts in the minds of the science faculty concerning the possibility of a science building. We knew that the laboratories had been so crowded that we had only been able to allocate two-hour sessions of labs in chemistry, biology and in other classes due to the heavy enrollment and the fact that our facility was limited. This made it mandatory that we begin to think in terms of building a science building at the earliest possible moment.

R. Franklin Thompson
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