Because of the great uncertainty concerning youth and their possibility of continuing their education beyond high school, every college and university was reassessing its projection and future.

Curricula adjustments had been planned and made. Faculty cut back and adjustments were made according to the decrease in enrollment of all schools.

It appeared that universal military training was about to become established nationally. In 1950 we were receiving many inquiries as to the possibility that there might be an Army, Air Force, or Navy training unit on the campus.

Because of this, I recommended to the Board of Trustees on October 25, 1950, that such a unit be established and the following resolution was adopted.

"Resolved, that the Board of Trustees hereby endorses in principle the recommendation that a ROTC or similar military or naval unit be established at the College of Puget Sound and the President is authorized to negotiate and make the necessary arrangements with respect thereto."

(Page 152 meeting of October 25, 1950, Vol. X, meeting of the Board of Trustees)

The resolution carried with the fact that Trustee Beadles, Marcy, and Stanton each cast a negative vote.
These trustees were all ministers in the Methodist Conference. While we did not have a great amount of criticism concerning the establishment of the ROTC on the campus most of the criticism came from the ministers and the Conference, and their sons and daughters who were in the student body. Most of them were on special financial aid programs.

In structuring the coming of the unit our National association predicted there would be sixty-two Air Force units established among the 2600 universities. This was to train a special group of young people to fulfill the needs of the Air Force. We especially worked on Air Force units because of our proximity to McChord Air Force Base.

I flew to Washington, D. C. and in conferences with our Senators and our Representatives concerning the possibility of a unit being located at the University of Puget Sound, I was well received. I was practically assured that if we were sincere in our application and if we correlated our asking with the University of Washington unit, it was very probable we would receive the unit. This work was done and particularly in relationship to Col. Dietz who was then the Commanding officer at the University of Washington.

We were then assured from Washington, D. C. and
from Sausalito, California, which was the western staging area, that the unit would come to us. The schedule was that it would be established on July 1, 1951. We were fortunate in that one of the officers who was then at the University of Washington, Mr. Fred H. Newman, would be assigned as our commanding officer. I met Col. Newman and it was a very congenial meeting and he was assigned to us as our first officer.

I invited him to come down to the campus. We walked over the campus and determined that possibly the best place to house a unit would be in the Field House. At that time we had a retired army colonel who was the director of the buildings and grounds and he was very congenial in helping arrange for the coming of the new unit.

Col. Newman immediately set about securing the materials for the unit and had some difficulty because, as he laughingly told me later on, they sent very large uniforms and very small uniforms but no middle-sized uniforms. However, by calling to the headquarters in California, he was able to arrange for the necessary equipment, uniforms, and other materials which he needed for the unit.

Dr. Gerard Banks who was the Bursar of the University was very much military minded and had a great
appreciation for the coming of the unit. His cooperation made the coming of the unit easy and smooth.

As a little aside, Mrs. Thompson and I tried to entertain the officers and their wives but somehow or other they were somewhat reluctant to socialize with the administration at the University. This was a little different than I had experienced because the University had been somewhat of a "big family" and their reluctance made me wonder. We had a professor by the name of John O'Connor who was one of the most popular professors we ever had. He was director of band, orchestra, and special musical events. However, he was a reserve office and he was called up twice while he was with us and the last time to remain in the service permanently until he retired some years ago. One time when he was visiting me I said, "John, it is a little difficult for me to understand why I can't get really close to the ROTC officers. They do not seem to want to fraternize or socialize with the Administration at the University." John laughed a hearty laugh, as he always did, and said, "Dr T., did you ever read the manual for the ROTC officers?" I said, "No, I have never seen it." He said, "Well, you will understand if you read it because the first twenty pages are how to get along with the University President." Evidently in some of the Universities and some of the units there was a difficulty with the Administration as to responsibility and authority but we have never had
that problem in all the years that we have had the
ROTC on campus.

When the unit started we have five airman and
five officers including the Commanding Officer. We had
approximately two hundred men take the course the first
year. This was required to begin with for Freshmen men in
lieu of physical education. After awhile there was a strong
feeling on the part of a good many Freshmen that they did
not want to take it. They had been given draft deferment
if they took ROTC and then with the understanding that they
could continue at the University until they graduated. Then,
if they chose, they could go on and take six years and become
a bonafide officer in the Air Force. Many young men chose to
do this. The ones that were in the best physical condition
became pilots and many of the others became navigators. After
a number of years it was opened to women and our unit has had
many women through the years. After several years, taking the
course was made voluntary.

Because of the feeling that women wanted to be a
part of the program, an auxiliary was organized called Angel
Flight. These women had uniforms and performed outstanding
duties in helping to entertain visiting officers and also to
help with the review.

Each year there was a President's review and at
that review, the cadets marched in front of the reviewing
stand. This was the President, the Commanding Officer and the McChord Air Force Base Commanding Officer. Often times the McChord Air Force Base band would furnish the music for the review. At the end of the review, awards were given for the best cadet and other special citations. The cadet officers are the same as in the real Air Force, only with a smaller responsibility. These reviews were well received. Many of the people in the town came and, of course, many of the parents came. Many young men received awards for their outstanding excellence.

During the time of the Vietnamese War, when there was such a heavy student protest on all 2600 campuses of the various universities, we did have some people who protested the review. There were mainly about fifty young people and I regret to say, many of them were children of Methodist ministers who were practically on a free ride at the University. They would, on occasion, carry signs outside of the University Stadium. On many occasions I met with the protestor to discuss the situation. They wanted me to abandon the unit and come out with a strong statement criticizing the U. S. government because of the Vietnam War. I told them each group had a right to its point of view but I would not be pressured by one to the disadvantage of the other. One son of a Methodist minister stood up and said, "Damn it, Dr. Thompson, I am going to spend the rest of my life on top of Jones Hall protesting this unit and the War!"
I remember saying, "Well, Son, just analyse what you have said. It's raining, there is no shelter up there, no heat, no sanitary facilities, no food - go ahead!" After two hours in the rain he seemed to disappear. I shall never forget on one occasion, there must have been about fifty who carried signs concerning ROTC on a Methodist campus, etc. When the review was over I said to Dick Smith, who was with me, "Why should we face that line? Let's go out the other gate which is closer to the University offices." Which we did. I am sure that the young protestors were very frustrated and two or three later came to me and said, "Why weren't you a good sport and go through the line?" I said, "Why should I have to take that kind of guff?" The next year, at the suggestion of the Commanding Officer, it was held at McChord Air Force Base. After that, the protests seemed to dwindle away.

When the students came in to talk to me about it, I very frankly said, "There are two hundred men in the unit, there are fifty of you - each man has a right to his own point of view and I, as the University President, have to respect their point of view and their decision to be in the ROTC as well as your decision to not like it." These young people who were protesting did not seem to understand that there was another point of view and they certainly were very aggressive in trying to put their point of view across. I never quite remember seeing as much immaturity in students as at that time. I have a feeling that when it is looked at in
perspective of history, it will be like the Children's Crusade of the Middle Ages when everyone seemed to have a romantic and childlike sense of what the real facts were.

One day about ten or fifteen years after the Unit was established, I received a wire from Air University asking me to come to a meeting over a weekend. As was customary, I called the Commanding Officer and asked him if he would represent me. The next day he came over and said, "Dr. Thompson, they do not want me at the meeting, they want you. They want the University Presidents." This was the first time this had happened and I wondered what was the cause. I called President Herbert Smith at Willamette University and said, "Herb, did you get a call to Air University?" He said, "Yes." I told him I had asked my Commanding Officer to go but that he had come and said they wanted the presidents. Herb said, "I did the same thing. I understand the plane will leave from McChord Air Force Base, land in Portland, then land in Denver to pick up the Chancellor of the University of Denver, Chester Alder, where they also have an Air Force Unit." I boarded the plane at McChord, we landed in Portland and then we landed in Denver. When we got to Denver I asked Chester Alder, whom I know very well, if he thought we were being called in to be phased out. He said, "Good heavens, no." He said he was on the Advising Committee for the units on the various campuses. He said, "Franklin, you should know that your unit is one of the most productive units in the United States. You have produced more
officers than Princeton or Harvard. There is no possibility
of your unit being phased out because it has been so
productive and the quality of students and quality of
officers have been so very fine." This raised my curiosity
more than ever as to why we were being called in. When we
arrived late in the afternoon at Air University we were
wined and dined and given very fine quarters. The next
morning we were assembled and the Commanding Officer of the
Air University gave a speech. He said that the Presidents
of the Universities were called together in order to evaluate
the teaching of the various units. When he finished he said,
"Are there any questions?" There was a very great silence
and nothing happened when all of a sudden one of the Presidents
got up and said, "Well, General, inasmuch as you have asked
for our recommendations I think probably we should give them.
In the first place, get rid of the blankety blank Mickey Mouse
matinees and do some real teaching rather than having movies
all the time." There was a general feeling that some of the
courses on Air Force organization and other technical aspects
should be delayed until the third and fourth year. In general,
there was considerable change in the curriculum after the
meeting of the Presidents at Air University. It was a good
meeting. It was one in which the men were sincere and
genuinely appreciative of the opportunity and the Air Force
officers responded accordingly.

Our first class graduated in 1952. It was comprised
of two or three cadets who had advanced standing because they
recommendation but they had no power over us. The Methodist Conference was giving us about $70,000 a year at that time but they would not cut down on their financial support even though they disagreed with us concerning ROTC. I made a strong plea to the Conference that many of the young people needed and wanted the training. (They could stay at home and stay in college for four years rather than being inducted in the draft.) I told the Conference it would give stability to the University and said there were many people who were loyal and patriotic and felt that this was a good thing. I am sure that personally this cost me a great deal of popularity in the Conference but it was a decision and the leadership which we needed at that time and I was perfectly willing to sacrifice any Methodist leadership that I might have in order to support and sustain the ROTC on the campus.

There were many good spin offs from the ROTC. There was always the ROTC Ball which was the social highlight of the year. It was a beautiful experience - most often held in the Great Hall with the McChord Air Force Band playing. There was the ROTC rifle team and it competed against Universities like Notre Dame, Gonzaga, University of California, etc. There was also the fact that the young men wore their uniforms and were always clean-cut, good looking and created a good influence on the campus. The Commanding Officers were an exemplary group of men and although we had many, many different officers, they were always a good influence. We had only one out of the entire group that caused any type of problems. I
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shall never forget one Monday morning, the Commanding 
Officer came in and asked for an appointment. He said, 
"Dr. Thompson, I am sorry to say that one of my sergeants 
over the weekend has proved himself to be not the kind 
of man I want on our campus." It appeared that he had 
had a "lost weekend" so far as alcohol was concerned, he had 
been writing worthless checks, and he had been missing from 
work. The Commanding Officer said, "Unless you tell me 
otherwise, I will see that he is gone within eight hours." 
I simply said, "Well, you are the Commanding Officer and I 
will back you up on whatever you feel is the right action." 
The man was gone within eight hours although he was married 
and had two children.

I shall never forget at the first review, I was 
standing to the right of the Commanding Officer and I said 
to him, "Major, I do not know military protocol. You will 
have to tell me what is right and proper." He said, "Well, 
Sir, so far as this review is concerned, you are the General 
and you receive the review. Anything that you say will be 
the highest command." I was somewhat nonplussed and then I 
looked at him with a twinkle in my eye and he got a twinkle 
in his eye and I said, "Alright, Major, as General I ask you 
to take the review. He saluted and said, "Thank you, Sir, 
I shall be happy to do so." From then on I could receive the 
review through the Major and make the awards as they were 
outlined and enjoy the review - which I did.
On several occasions, Unit 900, which was our Unit, has been judged the best in the Nation. It has been one of the most productive of all the unites in the United States and it has been recognized for its leadership. We have sent many young people out who have become leaders in the Air Force and have also become leaders in business because of the unusual training which they received.

With the remodeling of the Field House in the summer of 1979, the ROTC office was put in the gymnasium and it is there now. The Unit does not parade as much as it used to. there is less emphasis upon drill but there is more emphasis on academics and on the structure and service of the Air Force.

When it became part of my duty as Chancellor to structure the historical resources of the University, I wrote to Fred H. Newman, the first Commanding Officer and he was kind enough to send me a tape which I received on July 19th and which is a part of this file on the coming of the ROTC Unit. Also I was able to secure a series of pictures to complete the file. I also asked for ROTC Unit of the Aerospace studies Department to give me a list of the Commanding Officers and they are as follows:

1952 - 1954 Col. Fred Newman
1954 - 1955 Maj. Robert C. Owen (after leaving us was sent to Hawaii and died there of a heart attack)
1958 - 1962 Col. Paul Opi
1962 - 1966 Col. Carl Peterson
1966 - 1969 Col. Robert Denomy
1973 - 1975 Col. Bryce McKee
1975 - 1978 Col. James G. Couts
The Unit served a great service to the campus of the University of Puget Sound. It gave excellent training to many men and has been an excellent patriotic influence on the campus, in the Pacific Northwest, as well as in the Nation.