

01-74-04 SIDE B

Symposium on Alaska earthquake 1964 with Jerome Saroff and Agnes Sinel

Recorded in August 1964

University of Alaska Fairbanks

Fairbanks, Alaska

Beginning of recording has very poor audio

Recording starts with presentation in progress. Much of the recording is difficult to understand. Unidentified people talked about reactions of people with mental disease to the earthquake. One person said within the months after the quake there was an increase in anxiety reactions including outside of the Anchorage area.

[19:14] Speaker introduces Jerome Ronald Saroff. His paper is titled "Reaction to the Good Friday earthquake: leadership in Anchorage." Jerome Saroff talked about the definition of crisis. Essential to the concept is a timeframe. Crisis implies a well-defined occurrence. It is conceived to have a beginning, middle and end. In Anchorage investigations into the reactions to the disaster have been limited to three or four weeks after the disaster. It is not a complete or accurate representation of crisis. Stress has continued long after the last tremor, after the utilities were restored, and after evidence of the quake has been removed. He said it is his intention to briefly discuss three leadership reactions to the crisis. The first reaction is government by technician. Conventional wisdom is policy decisions are made by representatives of the people. The function of a technical professional municipal staff is to translate policy determinations into practical administration. Though a certain degree of technical flexibility exists in the carrying out of the policy there is no doubt that it is the elected officials who should generate the guidelines by which the municipal staff operates. Though formally this was the situation two or three weeks after the quake it was not the situation in fact. Emergency ordinances, temporary operating procedures, and policy decisions were acted on by council which met almost every night and on weekends. The crush of work was such that coun-

cil could not effectively initiate many motions. Policy did not filter down from the top. Decisions as to areas in the city which repair of infrastructure would be allowed were made by the city manager and his professional staff. It was then presented to council for what was ratification. The decisions for urban renewal as a tool for reconstruction was taken by council with a minimum of discussion. Even though council had declined to undertake renewal projects in the downtown area only a few months previously. The suggested use of renewal came from the technical professional members of the city administration and the Alaska Housing Authority. The usual processes of local democratic government aren't geared to crisis situations in which a large number of unusual, unfamiliar, and novel decisions are required within a very short time span. The bureaucrats are forced to take over until the usual functioning of the elected body is reestablished. In Anchorage this took about a month. The second situation is called the power structure. Within 48 hours after the quake the mayor had appointed an Anchorage reconstruction commission. This body was created to bring together all those individuals who were considered to be influential and was to be an extra governmental leader which would harvest nongovernmental resources and energies for the tasks ahead to reconstruct Anchorage. Members included presidents of banks, representatives of labor, chambers of commerce members, etc. The Anchorage Reconstruction Commission included financial, industrial, business and government leaders. It was an example of local leadership in action, an example of the private sector helping the city to rebuild rather than completely relying on the state and federal government for assistance. It was to be an example of Alaska self-reliance. The Anchorage Reconstruction Commission was stillborn. It floundered because people weren't willing to take to the time for it or take charge of organization. Almost total emphasis was given to obtaining federal aid. One of the members of the commission recently complained that control of reconstruction was from Washington with no opportunity for local leadership and local control. The final situation is amateur leadership city council. Anchorage, Alaska has a council manager form of government. All administrative and managerial responsibility is in a professionally

trained government administrator, the city manager. Municipal elections are non-partisan. Political organizations do not effectively operate. Council are amateurs in government who run as individuals. Council is basically a body of equals. It is councils function to dictate policy and to manage it. It should be known that the council manager form of government has been most successful in those communities where the electorate is relatively homogeneous and/or where general community agreement to major civic policy exists. Policy decisions become technical issues and technical decisions. Before the earthquake the city council and city manager tended to run a tidy operation. It was efficient. It was apparent that council had great difficulty with decisions if the community was divided on an issue. The mayor is not much more than an ordinary council member. If he is to be a leader then he is to lead by persuasion. No matter how efficient the council functioned before the quake it is clear that it has not functioned effectively since the earthquake. He talked about the distinction between efficient and effective government. Basic decisions as to the future direction of growth still have to be made. Decisions about certain programs such as urban renewal have to be made. He believes the crisis in Anchorage is greater now than the several weeks after the earthquake. Immediately after the quake there was little time and less choice of what to do. Emergency repairs were required and done. The crisis has heightened in the intervening months because basic decisions as to alternative methods of reconstruction and the future economic development of Anchorage must be taken. Time pressures still exist. The crisis is great because the future of community development is so central. Weeks are not enough to make a decision particularly when community consensus and well-defined leadership does not exist. There are several major reasons for the continuing state of crisis in Anchorage. One. Major changes must be made too quickly and this is sufficient reason for the crisis. Two. Community consensus has not developed. Three. The council mayor's group does not provide the structure which would bring forth leadership in a strong executive nor does it provide any mechanism for the resolution of conflict. Four. The community leaves government the role of responding to challenges and as usual gov-

ernment is the initiator of action. Five. The quality of local leadership private and public. The impact of the earthquake on local government must be viewed over a longer timespan than the immediate post disaster period. There is general appreciation of interest resurging on the individual under stress. Now is the time to broaden the concept of stress to include governmental units for a considerable time after a disaster.

Agnes Sinel is introduced. The title of her recording is "Housewives: on the reactions on the earthquake to their own households." Agnes Sinel said since her material is on tape she'll introduce her guests who are on the tapes. She thanked six Homemaker Council friends who were in Fairbanks in June. The women were from Seward, Anchor Point and Anchorage. They talked informally. The recordings took place on June 1, 1964. They mainly recalled how things looked. She said the women showed stress. She decided it was more meaningful to have the ladies voices instead of reading a transcript. The first speaker is the postmistress from Anchor Point, Alaska. [The recording is very difficult to understand.] The second speaker was getting her family ready to go to church and preparing dinner when the quake hit. [The recording is very difficult to understand with a lot of feedback.] [technical difficulties] The next two speakers were from a family that depended on fishing for a living. They are from the Anchor Point River area. [The recording is very difficult to understand.] The next speaker was from Anchorage. She was a social worker at the Anchorage Psychiatric Institute. [The recording is very difficult to understand.] The next speaker was from Seward and talked about the tidal wave that came in. [The recording is very difficult to understand.] Sinel said none of the women talked about death. They talked about concern for their children especially if they were away from their children and other people's children.