

## *Health Center*

## CHAPTER XIII

World War II brought new demands on the city of Boise; demands that could not have been met except for the planning of alert citizens. At the same time the College was being made a public one, most of the group who were working on this were also interested in improving the airport.

The plans stretched out into the future many years to make the College a more significant institution and also to give a like position to the Municipal Airport. Both of these institutions made it possible to bid for a military installation in the city. The army saw the possibilities for training service here and by 1940, plans were being made for what later became known as Gowen Field—a military aviation station.

This led to another demand—adequate health facilities—which could only be taken care of by what later turned out to be a county-city health unit. “The unit would take care of all duties of the present city-health office, including milk inspection, water control, sewage and trash disposal, and quarantining.”<sup>1</sup> This program would require a full-time physician, six public health nurses, two sanitarians, and possibly other workers. The cost for all of this was to be initially \$5,000 for both the city and the county with the major expenses to be paid almost entirely

by the State and Federal Departments of Public Health. This all required a modern health unit.

In early June of 1941, it appeared that the Boise Public School District would be the cooperating sponsoring organization, but by September nothing had been worked out with the Boise schools. As a result, in that particular month, L. J. Peterson of the Idaho State Department of Health came to the president of Boise Junior College urging that that institution furnish a site so that a regional health center could be developed for Southwest Idaho.

This health center was to be built according to the specifications of the Director of the Federal Services, United States Treasury, and would require facilities for immunizing both civilian and military personnel in connection with the need for such a center to accompany the military installation at what was to become Gowen Field. It would have X-Ray equipment and could be used not only as a health center for the city of Boise, but also for Boise Junior College.

On October 31, 1941, President Chaffee carried this proposal to the Board of Trustees who voted to donate a parcel of land 125 by 117.5 feet, located on Shoshone Street—later to become known as Sherwood Avenue—to the State Health Department.<sup>2</sup> This location was near the southwest corner of the campus, close enough to be used by the College for its health program, but off to the side so that it would not prevent further development in the heart of the campus where other buildings had been located just a year earlier.

Since the land had been originally donated to the College by the city, a counteraction to give it back to the city was necessary so that it in turn could present this parcel to the Federal Government. The only stipulation that the College required was that the building be constructed in the same style and of the same material—dark red brick and white stone—as the other College buildings and that the architects would be Hummel, Hummel, and Jones who had done all of the College's planning up to that time.

The building was constructed during 1942 and its first medical director was Dr. Paul R. Ensign who was suggested to Mr. Peterson by President Chaffee. Chaffee knew of the excellent work done by his old high school classmate since they had graduated in 1923 and had become better acquainted in Voorhees Hall while both were freshmen at the College of Idaho during that fall. Their paths crossed often though Dr. Ensign graduated from Kansas University with a Bachelor of Science degree at the same time Chaffee graduated from Occidental College in California with a Bachelor of Arts. They both taught the following fall—Ensign at Franklin High School near Boise and Chaffee at Meridian.

Dr. Ensign assumed his position as Director of the Boise-Ada County Health Center in April of 1942, some two months prior to Chaffee's departure for the United States Navy. He became discouraged over the lack of support he received as Medical Director and Health Officer and felt that his efforts would be far more productive in Georgia where he had once been than in the city of Boise. As a result, by late 1943, he was filling a very responsible job in the State Health Department in Atlanta, Georgia.

The position of medical director has, with the exception of Dr. Terrell Carver who served from September 1952 to February 1958, been one of short tenure. Doctors Jacob E. Wyatt and Fritz R. Dixon each served for three years, the longest periods served to date. Both of them were promoted to State public health positions and remain in Boise at the present time. (1969)

The Health Center has proved a real asset, not only to the people of Idaho and the military, but also to the young people who attended the Boise college and to them later as parents. It was particularly important during and immediately after World War II when the College's enrollment skyrocketed from some 200 students toward the end of the war, to 916 in the early years following that conflict. It became valuable to the young married

students as a place for them and their families to get the medical attention they needed while attending Boise Junior College. They received the same assistance that other families in Ada County received through not only the clinic on the campus, but extended services. It meant that the children of the service men and likewise their mothers could get such service without great cost at a time when income was restricted to educational benefits under the G.I. law.

The assistance provided by the College and the health service was a mutually beneficial operation for young people of the area and was done without any friction whatever in their common job of assisting returned veterans and their families.

The College at first paid for half of the nursing charge for a public health nurse and maintained this service until such a time as a full-time nurse was required. When a College physician was needed during the 20 years between 1947 and 1967, Dr. Bruce Budge, who had served as the College lecturer of zoology from 1937 to 1939, became the College physician with office hours restricted to one hour a day during this 20 year period. By 1967 the needs of the College made it necessary to double the amount of time for this five-day period, and Dr. Budge added this to his busy schedule.

Dr. Budge has given of his time and energy in a truly dedicated manner to the young people; never restricting himself to the clock. In fact, many of the students who have health problems arise go directly to his office downtown if it is impossible to see him during the regular scheduled hours.

By 1946 it appeared that the Health Center, the property of the Federal Government, was to be sold to the State of Idaho, but since the State did not have the finances to purchase the building, it was to be sold to any bidder. President Chaffee made the suggestion to Mr. Peterson that since the State did not wish to take its option and as the original site for the building had been donated by the College in 1941, it should be offered to the Board of Trustees of Boise Junior College. He

then recommended to his board that the center could be purchased for roughly 50 percent of what the original cost had been. As a result, the College acquired this valuable property in April of 1947 for \$20,000.<sup>3</sup>

Until 1968, the building housed the City-County Health Unit and was rented by the College to the State Department of Health for over the 20 years, 1947 to 1967, after its transfer to the College. In 1968, President Barnes recommended that it be used as a faculty office building and that is its use today. In the meantime, on September 1, 1967, the College health center was moved into the west end of the old student union building with Dr. Budge continuing as its head and Mrs. Jerine Brown as nurse. It is hoped that in the not too distant future, the health building can be returned to its original use with an infirmary addition on the east end to cover the needs of college students who require hospitalization.

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<sup>1</sup>*Idaho Daily Statesman*, June 10, 1941.

<sup>2</sup>Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College District. Minutes, October 31, 1941.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, March 31, 1947.