

Required soil tests never taken at school

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

Tests of fill material under Welches Grade School's new \$1.4 million school addition could have identified potential problems associated with the construction and averted lengthy arbitration proceedings, which concluded Tuesday.

Despite the \$5,000 budgeted for soil and concrete testing, the tests requested by a Clackamas County building inspector were not taken.

On this fill sits 12 classrooms, a library, a kitchen, a music room and an office complex, as well as a separate bus facility.

The fill material became a matter of suspicion in the latter part of the summer of 1980, after slabs for two wings were poured without inspection, according to Gary Yeaman, a building inspector for Clackamas County.

When interviewed in 1981, Yeaman said "A" and "C" wings of the project were poured before he had satisfactorily determined whether the fill beneath the buildings could adequately support the weight of the buildings without settling. Settling can result in problems involving the floors, walls and ceilings.

From the beginning Yeaman said the project had problems. He said there appeared to be a problem in determining what the responsibility of the Welches School District was, as well what the role

of the architectural firm, Richard L. Gessford & Associates of Portland, was playing in the construction.

In addition there were coordination problems between the various contractors and sub-contractors involved.

Yeaman said a general contractor, which this project apparently never had, was supposed to oversee construction and make sure the tests were taken on the fill beneath the buildings. These tests were supposed to be taken for every eight inches of fill material added to insure it had no organic material mixed with it.

With no person acting in the capacity of the general contractor, Yeaman said his primary contract was with a construction supervisor, Phil Fleming of Glynbrook Construction, Salem. Glynbrook had the contract for doing the actual construction of the additions along with the bus barn.

In the early part of the summer Yeaman said problems developed between himself and Fleming, who was not calling for inspections. He said he warned Fleming, on a number of occasions, that this was the normal procedure for construction projects.

Upon visiting the site a short time after construction had begun, he discovered the footings for "A" wing had already been poured.

Yeaman said he again warned Fleming and was

assured it would not happen again. On July 7 an entire slab was poured without an inspection.

When the slab for "A" wing was to be poured, Yeaman said he was called the day before with a request for an inspection for the next morning. When he arrived he discovered "90 percent of the concrete was already in place."

Dick Dopp, administrator of the developmental services section of the Environmental Services Department, who also doubles as the building official for the county, explained that it is not unusual for a contractor to get ahead of the inspectors. He said it is something county officials don't like, but it does occasionally happen.

"It'd be pretty fair to say that everybody is in a hurry to get a job going and most contractors, when they call for a footing inspection, we have to hustle to get there before they are ready to pour," said Dopp.

"Often times they are there waiting with a concrete truck when the inspectors come up to make an inspection. So it's not like he (Fleming) did anything more or anything less than any other contractor would do."

A few days later he poured again without the required inspection. Yeaman said he did not give permission for the "C" wing slab to be poured because of the organic materials he saw in the fill. No tests on the fill had, thus

far, been presented to the county as he had requested.

Yeaman said after "A" wing had been poured he both telephoned and wrote Gessford, and told him that the county had to be called, prior to the pouring of any more slabs or footings, so the necessary inspections could be made.

Gessford, according to Yeaman, assured him the concrete had been placed properly and done to code. He said Gessford had taken photographs of various phases of the work.

The concern, however, said Yeaman, was not the slab itself. Rather, it was what was underneath the slab.

THE MISSING TESTS
The "A" wing site was in an area that had been excavated so there was little concern about the fill underneath. There was a concern, however, that the site's excavated materials had been used for fill underneath "C" wing.

"When I walked up there and saw the concrete was in place (on "A" wing), I started looking around to see if it was all right," said Yeaman. "For the most part, what I saw from the exterior surface ground, and how the thing was excavated, it was okay. It was "C" wing that was for sure in trouble because of

fill. Everything had been scrapped off the "A" wing area and pushed into "C" wing area.

"I looked at that and told them, 'Now you're not going to be able to pour concrete over there until we have some testing done.' And that superintendent, Mr. Fleming, assured me they were going to dig down to solid ground for the footings. But that left fill in the center."

A few days after "A" had been poured, Yeaman said Fleming called him back and told him that the testing had been done. Yeaman said he was assured that he was to receive the test results shortly. Today, nearly two years later, the test results have yet to be sent to the county.

The only tests received by county officials were taken shortly after the site was cleared in March of 1980, and only the top 12 inches of soil was analyzed. The tests requested were to analyze every eight inches of fill added.

Yeaman said he gave Fleming permission to pour "subject to the testing approval."

Organic material from the excavation of the "A" wing site had been moved over into the "C" and "B" wing areas, said Yeaman. As a result rotted wood,

grass, logs, stumps and large chunks of wood were mixed in with the fill.

After "C" wing was poured Fleming quit and the superintendent's position was taken over by Emil Fahrenkrug of Almsville, Ore.

Fahrenkrug said from the time he arrived on the job, Yeaman kept pressuring him for the test reports. He said he asked the architects, Richard L. Gessford and his partner, Leon Hamblin, who both assured him the tests had been taken and were already in the county's file.

"At first I thought Gary (Yeaman) was a kind of hard-nosed son of a bitch," said Fahrenkrug. "I thought, 'Jesus Christ, I tell me he's got 'em' (the soil tests)."

Fahrenkrug said Gessford had even assured him that "he personally sent them in."

"I told Gary this and he said, 'I ain't got a damn thing,'" said Fahrenkrug.

Upon learning the county had still not received the soil reports, Fahrenkrug said he again approached the architects. He was reportedly told by Hamblin that Northwest Testing Laboratories of Portland had taken the tests. However, when he contacted Northwest Testing for a copy of the reports, Fahrenkrug said he was told they had conducted no such tests.

It was about that time Fahrenkrug said he began to get nervous. He said he "started to notice the floors (in "C" wing) were beginning to buckle."

In the fall of 1980, Glynbrook prepared the footings and concrete slab for the school's new \$55,505 bus facility. When Yeaman arrived to inspect the job, he said there was already

three inches of crushed rock in place and compacted.

Yeaman said the site "looked good" to him, but underneath was organic fill. As a result, the entire slab had to be torn out and redone.

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1939-44 reunion planned

The combined classes of 1939 through 1944 at Gresham High School are planning a reunion party for Aug. 18 at the Thunderbird Inn at Jantzen Beach.

Festivities will include dinner, and dancing to music of the 1940s. Activities will begin at 6 p.m.

Class members are being asked to call organizer Pete Carlson at 668-4101 for an invitation and additional information. They may write him at P.O. Box 636, Sandy, 97055.

Carlson is asking for any

names and addresses of members of these classes, particularly the class of 1941.

Kubitz completes basic training

Pvt. Leroy A. Anderson Jr., son of Leroy A. Anderson of Sandy, and Carolyn Kubitz of Isleton, Calif., has completed one station unit training (OSUT) at the U.S. Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Ga.

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