

FIGHTING CHANCE

John 8: 31-32

Proverbs 22: 3

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CIVIL DEFENSE IN 1994

In 1985 Laurelee and I decided to make an effort to help improve the availability of civil defense facilities and knowledge to the American people. In the beginning, we thought that there might be some way in which our abilities as scientists were needed in the development of equipment or techniques. Our first step was for me to attend an annual meeting of the American Civil Defense Association where I met several of the most outstanding civil defense professionals including Dr. Conrad Chester and Greg Zimmerman of Oak Ridge National Laboratory. This led to an opportunity for an extended visit to Oak Ridge and the Emergency Technology Library which, under the care of Dr. Chester, housed the most complete collection of technical civil defense information available in the United States.

That library included about 5,000 books, reports, and other documents recording billions of dollars worth of civil defense research and development that had been carried out by American scientists and engineers during the preceding four decades. Chester and Zimmerman had selected about 1,000 of these documents which comprised the best of the information. After reading these 1,000 documents (and some of the other 4,000) under their direction, it was evident to me that the lack of civil defense for Americans was entirely a political problem. There were no technical problems that had not already been adequately solved.

Some of these problems had been solved in numerous ways. For example, many different nuclear defense shelters had been built and tested with good results – cylindrical or rectilinear, concrete or steel, and single-use or dual-use. Blast valves, blast doors, air filtration systems, and other essential items had been manufactured and successfully tested in many different designs. With their help and that of several other experts, we selected a single combination of these techniques that represented a good, cost-effective design for a national shelter system. This design served as the basis for our cost estimates for national civil defense.

The records also included reports of the outstanding Oak Ridge “expedient” civil defense research effort that had been carried out by and under the direction of Cresson Kearny and Conrad Chester and summarized in the book *Nuclear War Survival Skills* by Cresson Kearny.