

BY JOHN FERRILL

AM riding my bicycle down Wells Street at 10:30 a. m. when the civil defense siren goes off, spiraling higher and higher above Old Town. The usual Tuesday morning civil defense alert is an auditory landmark so familiar that we no longer associate it with the unreality of an atomic blast. But we do still have a Civil Defense Department, and in Chicago the most obvious proof of that is Fire and Rescue Service at 1244 N. Wells, where I am headed on my bike to interview Chief Charles [Jimmie] Johnson. . . .

I have already talked with Fire Commissioner Robert J. Quinn, the titular director of civil defense for Chicago. Commissioner Quinn has been busy with his plans for the lakefront Police and Fire Thrill Show, but that's over now and I can interview him at his office in Room 105 of City Hall. The old municipal cubbyholes in Room 105 have been modernized with glass and Masonite, carpets and fluorescent lighting, which give them the rectilinear spiffiness of motel rooms.

In the anteroom where I sit, two silent red telephones squat next to a silver bell-shaped apparatus that resembles the stock market ticker in a La Salle Street broker's office. Dashes of red ink on the moving strip of white tape pinpoint locations of Chicago fires. Next to it a telegraphic key clicks out in code the whereabouts of engine companies as they move around the city. All combine like institutional props to simulate the drama and nostalgia of

a real firehouse. A 6-foot mirror stands near the modern glass doors. MY APPEARANCE in gold letters is stenciled near the top and reading down the glass:

Hat.  
Tie & Shirt.  
Uniform Coat.  
Pants Pressed.  
Shoes Shined.

Like reminders in a boot camp. Fire marshals, looking like admirals, push in and out thru the doors of Room 105.

On one wall there is a tinted picture of Commissioner Quinn wearing full rain gear and fire helmet, showing a formidable looking man with steely gray eyes accustomed to high command and generous in fire fighting wisdom. His reputation as a fire fighter was capped in World War II when he was placed in charge of all fire fighting operations for the United States Navy in the Atlantic theater. I soon learned the commissioner does not look like his picture. He has reverted to civilian dress. Got up now in a Mod blue suit, he is sitting behind his desk flanked by the American flag on his right and the blue and white city banner on his left. He says he is sorry to have kept me waiting but he had to prepare lunch for his 99-year-old mother. The commissioner is a bachelor.

He is going thru the mail sifting envelopes with a gold letter opener. His desk is covered with mementoes collected thru the stormy years: trophies, battle ribbons, Daley campaign posters. Photos of

young Quinn the handball champ wearing 1890s-style gym shorts. Young Quinn the boxer with his dukes up. Quinn the Older shaking hands with Democratic Presidents Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. His hands are tanned; his grip is strong.

"Did you see the Police and Fire Thrill Show over the weekend?" Quinn asks. "It was great. The men were just great. It would have done your heart good. Men of our Police and Fire Departments are doing a great job for the great city of Chicago and for our great mayor."

The commissioner hands me a mimeographed chart which diagrams the bureaucratic hierarchy of the Chicago Civil Defense Corps. Richard J. Daley is at the top of the chart. Robert J. Quinn is in the box just beneath. "The 400 men in the corps—including myself—are volunteers," Quinn says. The men are scattered willy-nilly thru every department of city government like invisible gears and pinions of Democratic politics. "For example," the commissioner says, "I might have five civil defense men in Transportation and Traffic . . . 15 or 20 men in the Water Department. . . ."

Quinn considers Chicago a prime target for nuclear attack. In wartime, bombs and/or missiles would be directed at the Loop. "I have never considered evacuation of the city feasible," he says.

Evacuation of a large American city like Chicago is indeed unlikely. After the atom bomb exploded over Hiroshima, many survivors left the city by way

# Civil Defense marches on

You may not think about it much these days, but there's still a Civil Defense network in Chicago—400 men, 7,740 fallout shelters, a fleet of emergency vehicles—just waiting to cope with the Big Bomb. Or the Big Insurrection.

of a narrow dirt trail that ran beside a paved road. Thousands of people filed along this trail as if they were part of some atavistic nightmare, skies aflame, the dawn of a new creation driving them back to the caves of their ancestors.

But once they have left the city, what then? The Los Angeles Times, in August, 1961, reported a speech given by the civil defense coordinator for Riverside County, Cal., warning citizens to arm themselves, defend their homes against hordes of refugees who would flee in their direction if the city of Los Angeles were bombed. In September, 1961, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that the civil defense coordinator for Kern County, Cal., planned to divert thousands of possible refugees fleeing Los Angeles into the desert, using armed police. So evacuation is a dubious solution.

Commissioner Quinn has an alternative: "The heart of the civil defense program is not evacuation but fallout shelters." He hands me a civil defense booklet entitled "In Time of Emergency." If you are not close to an officially designated fallout shelter when the civil defense alert is sounded, an indoor shelter can be quickly improvised. A sketch in the booklet depicts a typical American family in their split-level home. Husband, wife, and 12-year-old son crouch on hands and knees beneath a clever arrangement of furniture, appliances, doors, and boxes. If you are outdoors, take cover in any kind of building, subway station, underpass, culvert, ditch, sewer, cave, or duck behind a train, bus, automobile, or any piece of heavy furniture. If no

cover is available, the booklet says, "simply tie down on the ground and curl up."

In face of the destructive capacity of modern atomic weapons, these precautions may seem a little inadequate. A 20-megaton bomb [20 million tons of TNT] is 1,000 times more powerful than the type of bomb dropped on the cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. If a 20-megaton bomb were dropped on Chicago the shock wave would travel away from the center of the blast at the speed of sound, creating a massive low pressure area. Heat traveling at the speed of light would expand in two instantaneous pulses: the first ultraviolet pulse is harmless; the infrared pulse that immediately follows would cause first degree burns to people caught outdoors in towns as far away as Grand Beach, Mich., Morris, Ill., and Kenosha, Wis. Forty-nine miles from the center of the blast, fabrics such as rayon spontaneously ignite. Forty miles distant, a reflex glance at the fireball would cause permanent blindness.

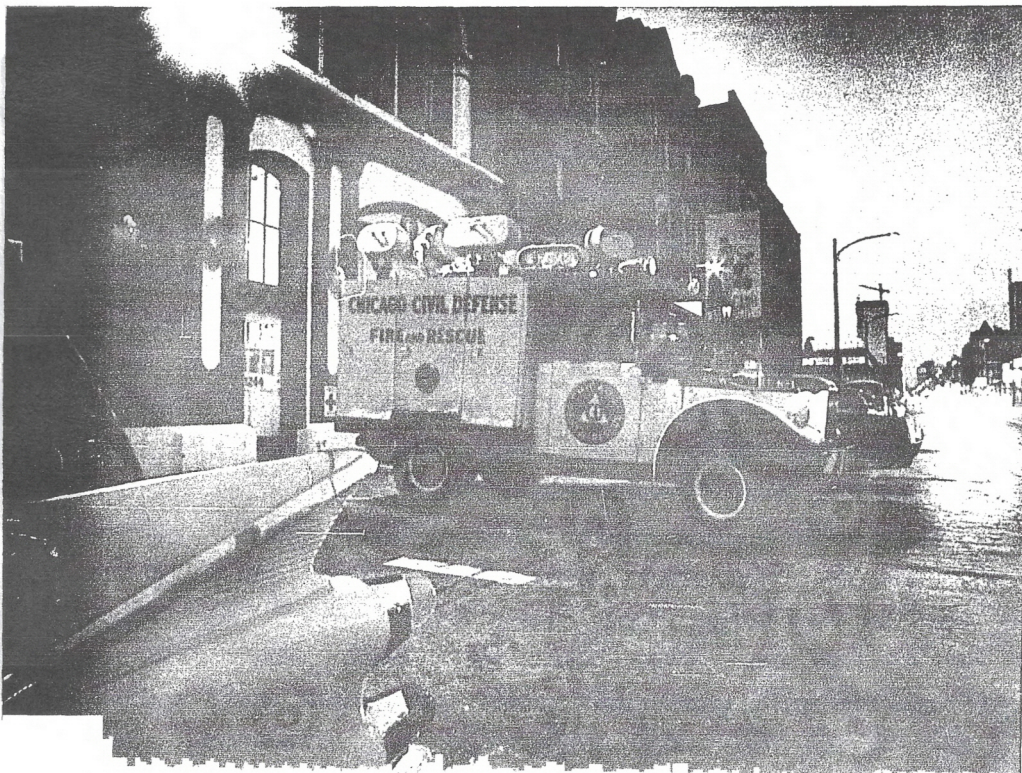
Furthermore, it is estimated that American cities have from 5 to 25 potential ignition points per acre: oil tanks, gasoline pumps, houses, etc. Thermal radiation 31 miles from the center of a 20-megaton blast would be so intense that people in the streets of towns as far north and west of Chicago as Lake Zurich, Elgin, and St. Charles would suffer fatal third-degree burns. Within a 15-mile radius of the central crater [300 feet deep and half a mile across], in such places as Kenilworth, O'Hare Airport, Blue Island, and Whiting, Ind., most trees

would be uprooted and frame houses would collapse. A huge fire storm rearing in toward the central low pressure area at speeds from 150 to 200 miles per hour would incinerate every living thing.

Within a perimeter bounded by Montrose Avenue on the north, the Museum of Science and Industry on the south, and Cicero on the west, the fire storm would consume all oxygen. The heat would be so intense that automobile sheet metal would be vaporized.

Not a single building would be left standing from Armitage Avenue south to Cermak Road and west to Damen Avenue. "Civilian Mortuary Service and Thermonuclear War," a special study conducted for the Department of Civil Defense, examines the fine rubble left by the theoretical 20-megaton blast and decides: "The city is lost and rehabilitation is unthinkable until residual radioactivity has effaced itself. It may be far simpler to build new cities elsewhere and allow the dead to sleep in their memorials." The Chicago Civil Defense Corps maintains 7,740 fallout shelters.

City Hall's fallout shelter is not open for inspection, so I am sent instead to inspect the fallout shelter at St. Joseph's Hospital, 2900 N. Lake Shore Dr. The uniformed security guard at the door sends





me to the personnel office. The secretary in personnel sends me to the general administrative office. The receptionist in the general administrative office picks up the phone and dials the engineering office in the basement.

Five minutes later, Chief Engineer Harry Lubawski, a big, open-handed man wearing a brown suit and tie, and Thomas Duffy, the uniformed assistant chief of security, take me on a search for the hospital's fallout shelter. We cut across the doctor's parking lot, duck into a steaming room where black faces sweat over tubs of dirty linen like convicts in a prison laundry, and walk down a flight of concrete stairs. I begin to look for yellow arrows on the walls, or the familiar "CD" shelter sign. "I think it's down here someplace," Duffy says.

Lubawski strokes his chin. "I've only been with the hospital since December," he says, "but when I first took the job I remember seeing some water cans and hard candy in a basement storage room." Hard candy in 32-pound cans is standard shelter issue.

Following a trail of electrical conduit and hot water pipes, Lubawski leads Duffy and me down through underground hospital corridors. "These walls," he says, "are made of reinforced concrete." He finally stops in front of two varnished plywood doors. "Who's got the key, Duffy?" Duffy does not have the key, but when he tries the door it opens easily.

Inside, lengths of 2-inch pipe, folding chairs, boxes of lightbulbs, cartons of toilet paper, and other miscellany are piled helter-skelter. But what about civil defense rations, 17½-gallon water cans, medical supplies, radiation kits . . . ? Duffy shrugs his shoulders. Lubawski points. "I think we put all that stuff back there," he says.

Chicago's annual civil defense budget is \$375,000, matched 50 per cent by federal civil defense funds. The U. S. Office for Civil Defense is part of the Defense Department and is headquartered in the Pentagon. The national civil defense director appointed by President Nixon is John E. Davis, a lieutenant colonel in the Army during World War II and former national commander of the American Legion.

Only six people in the Chicago Civil Defense Corps receive salaries: four office girls who sit behind metal desks in City Hall's Room 105, one fallout shelter inspector, and Chief Gerald Slattery, assistant director of civil defense.

Chief Slattery's office is on the mezzanine floor of Room 105. I climb the spiral imitation firehouse staircase; if Chief Slattery were 10 years younger he might also have a pole to slide down.

In 1962 Slattery retired as Chicago's second deputy fire marshal to assume the duties of assistant director for civil defense. He is sitting at his desk puffing great clouds of yellow cigar smoke like the hookah-smoking caterpillar in "Alice."

"You don't think Russia and the United States want to bomb each other do you?" the chief asks. "I can't give you any details but 99 per cent of the danger to our country is internal." The chief reaches into a bottom desk drawer and pulls out a

bulky yellow booklet called "A Guide to Developing a Company Civil Defense Manual." Chicago area employers such as Bell & Howell, Zenith, and People's Gas are beginning to make plans for possible disruptions caused by "insurrection" and riot. Last spring, in a speech titled "New Emphasis on Civil Defense," national director Davis introduced the "dual use concept," which extends the old fallout shelter program to cover a wider range of domestic emergencies, i.e., civil disorder and natural catastrophe.

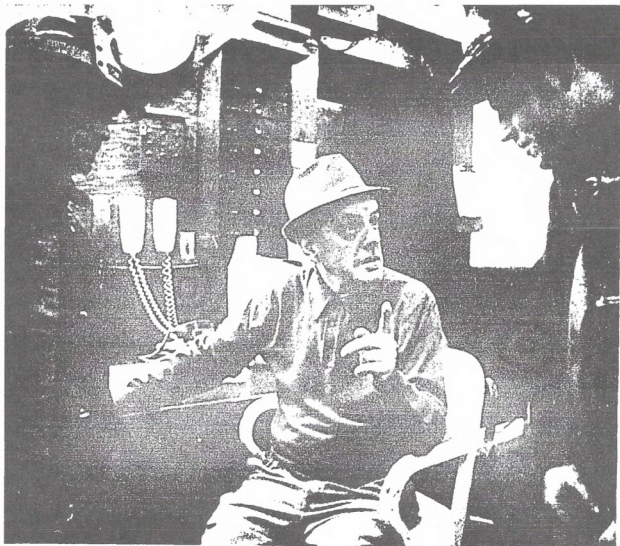
"Corporations are starting to put coffee and sandwich machines into their plants to prepare for these emergencies," says Chief Slattery. "Employees have to be protected. If there's a civil disturbance, I can't send these girls into the streets at 5 o'clock. We have a coffee pot. There's a tunnel over to the Sherman House. We can sneak over and get sandwiches. . . ."

The long, white ash on the end of the chief's cigar drops into his lap. He brushes vigorously at his gold trousers. "The yellow stuff you wash off your car the morning after a Chicago rainstorm is sand carried in the clouds from Texas. It's fallout. The good American housewife dusts her coffee table and the books. What do you do before you open a can of peaches?" The chief pauses rhetorically. "You wipe the dust off the can top," he says.

"Dust is fallout. If there is an atomic blast you stay inside the shelter until levels of radioactive dust are low enough to make it safe for you to come out. . . . You do the same in a civil disturbance."

On the seventh floor of City Hall behind locked doors is the Emergency Operating Center. Mayor Daley, Commissioner Quinn, and Chief Slattery will direct the Chicago Civil Defense Corps from there in case of natural disaster or civil disorder. The Emergency Operating Center is Chicago's answer to the Pentagon's domestic war room. Here radio operators are busy day and night receiving calls and dispatching orders to Department of Streets and Sanitation trucks. Shortwave radios link the center to police headquarters and the fire alarm office. Citizens' Band, channels from Radio Amateur Community Service (a volunteer group of suburban ham radio operators), and fuzzy state police frequencies feed into speakers of a radio surveillance system and advance-warning network that extends like an electronic web in all directions.

The five hospitals closest to the "incident area" of a civil disturbance will activate their civil defense disaster plans. "We learned a lot from the riots in Detroit, Newark, and Watts," Slattery says. "In those places, men of the cloth were allowed into hospital wards because they said they wanted to see how their wounded were being treated. When they



A retired distributor of vending machines, Charles (Jimmie) Johnson, center, is the chief of operations for the civil defense Fire and Rescue Service.

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went back outside they raised holy hell and pretty soon bricks and bullets were coming in thru the windows. We can't have that in Chicago."

In Chicago the wounded will apparently be given adequate medical care but held incommunicado in hospital wards. "To get doctors and nurses inside," Slatery says, "we pick them up in a moving van at a rendezvous point one mile from the incident area. We check their IDs before they get on the van and when they get off the van and again before they are allowed to enter the door that will be designated as the hospital's security entrance."

Somewhere in the city a neurosurgeon is always on call during times of possible emergency. Since the 1968 Democratic National Convention an operating room has been kept ready. Ambulance and helicopter stand by to pick up a victim of the tent attempted assassination. "If there had been a neurosurgeon more quickly available in Los Angeles," Slatery says, "Robert Kennedy might have lived."

WGN is the key point warning station for the Emergency Broadcasting System. If the Chicago studios are bombed or occupied by "the enemy," civil defense will be on the air from the transmitter shack in Schaumburg. The case-hardened shack is more resistant to explosives than a concrete bunker and is stocked with a two-week supply of food and water.

The city of Chicago is forbidden by law to send firemen and police to outside communities that call for help. In time of civil disturbance or natural catastrophe, the, civil defense—on Mayor Daley's order—can send manpower and equipment to any city or town in the state. Blue and white civil defense trucks are kept ready 24 hours a day at Fire and Rescue Service, 1244 N. Wells St.

I chain my bicycle to a lamppost in front of the bright blue and white facade. This end of Wells Street used to be a busy stop-and-go thoroughfare with hookers leaning in every doorway. But the neighborhood has changed. An old man is out for a morning stroll; several black children are playing near the dripping hydrant. The windows in the corner three-flat are boarded up. Grass grows thru cracks in the sidewalks.

The neighborhood may change again. Bowl & Roll, a restaurant, opened recently. The new Club Matador and Chief Johnson's four-door Fleetwood Cadillac with twin red spots and double trunk aerials parked in front of Fire and Rescue Service remind this end of Wells Street of past prosperity and hint that it may be coming back.

Inside, two barefoot children are putting coins into the Coke machine. Chief Charles (Jimmie) Johnson, salt and pepper mustache neatly clipped, is standing in front of his desk nattily dressed in self-belt slacks and knit shirt, looking not unlike a man who is planning to catch the third race at Arlington Park.

Chief Johnson is a retired distributor for Globe Vending, a coin machine company which is no longer in business. His wife works for Industrial Vending, another coin machine company. As chief of Fire and Rescue Service, Johnson does not receive a salary. "I live by the sweat of my frau," he says with a smile. "I'm 62 years old. What do I want out this?"

The bulletin board is plastered with photographs of civil defense equipment in action, personal thank-you letters to Chief Johnson, and official letters of commendation to Fire and Rescue Service. Tacked up next to a photo of a 2,500-gallon civil defense fuel tanker is a glossy enlargement of the peace symbol with the caption, "Footprint of the American Chicken."

When Fire and Rescue Service was started in 1968, the few vehicles they had were housed in a small garage. The men in the service used to take the watch in sleeping bags. But Fire and Rescue Service is growing. "We wouldn't be anywhere today without the mayor and the commissioner standing behind us," Johnson says. "The mayor is our backbone. I often tell him: 'Your Honor,' I says, 'you and Commissioner Quinn oughta retire to start a

training school for future mayors and future fire commissioners.' It's a shame, my friend, that men of such stature die without passing along their knowledge."

The men who mop the floors and make up the firehouse bunks at Fire and Rescue Service are the men who service and drive the blue and white civil defense trucks. The crew is made up of "volunteer" fire cadets and a few carefully selected, spirited civilians. Bob Rodi, for example, president of Rodi Chris-Craft, Inc., is chief of the marine division. The old firehouse is a garage for the maintenance, repair, and rebuilding of civil defense vehicles. "The men do everything but the letting," Johnson says.

"Big Mo," an awesome firefighting vehicle, was rebuilt here then turned over to the Fire Department. In the bulletin board photograph of "Big Mo," two menacing fire guns twist up off the flatbed truck like headless pythons. Another photograph shows "Big Mo" in action: utilizing only 10 of the possible 32 hose connections, each gun is shooting a solid stream of water 17 stories into the air. "With that kind of pressure," Johnson says, "we can take a building apart piecemeal or knock it down all at once."

Next to the photograph of "Big Mo" is a photograph of the "Sky Hook," a firetruck with a 64-foot boom on which a nozzle head is mounted. The cable-operated nozzle spreads water at a pressure of 180 pounds per square inch. Simply by pressing a button, the operator can change the direction or the pattern of the stream. "It's remote control," Johnson says. "We can back her into a warehouse to douse a fire up under the roof or knock snipers out of the rafters."

Fire and Rescue Service responds automatically to all 2-11-alarm fires with a power unit [Johnson has two mobile power units and five trailer units in the house. All have banks of mounted spotlights and each unit can generate 15,000 watts] and with one of five heavy-duty air compressor trucks capable of removing smoke and toxic fumes from a building at the rate of 5,000 cubic feet per minute. The trucks have four-wheel drive and winches on the front. The winches have a pull of 16,000 pounds. With one of their big cables Fire and Rescue can pull a building down.

All of the civil defense equipment at Fire and Rescue has been purchased from the U. S. government surplus office. "We bought six of these heavy duty rescue trucks," the chief says, pointing to a big square van that might once have picked up wounded soldiers from trenches near the Somme. The van has become a mobile hardware store carrying 380 separate items including forcible entry tools, a 4,000-watt generator and a public address system.

Most of the surplus equipment sold by the Defense Department has never been used by the U. S. military. The chief shows me greasy boxes of nuts, bolts, and screws, new wrenches, sledge hammers, electric and air-powered tools, hydraulic jacks, welding torches, chain hoists, a fork lift truck—all put to good use now.

"They brought this wrecker to us in bushel baskets," Johnson says, reaching up to pat one of the wrecker's huge double tractor tires. "The men put it together." The wrecker weighs 46,000 pounds. The boom extends 16 feet and can lift a weight of 20 tons. It cost Fire and Rescue Service \$400.

Johnson steps on the running board of a 6-10 airport crash truck. "We got this rig for six tanked bucks," he says. A foam nozzle is mounted on top of the cab. The chief opens the door and pulls a lever on the dashboard. Four barrels with ugly round nozzle heads pop out beneath the iron radiator grill like machine guns. Each barrel is capable of delivering a jet of water at a pressure of 350 pounds per square inch. The foam and water nozzles are operated from inside the cab as the truck moves along a street or runway at speeds of up to 65 miles per hour.

It is almost lunch time now. The chief and I

stroll out on the apron to wait for Robert Benker, ex-assistant chief of Fire and Rescue Service and Johnson's protegee. Benker now is president of Abel Fire and Safety Equipment Company.

I unchain my bicycle. "If you want to know the truth, my friend," Johnson says, "most of Wells Street is nothing but grass commercial interests. We got along pretty good in the neighborhood, but most of the merchants won't even let the people in to use the toilets. We let the kids use the Coke machine, we fix their bikes. We leave the hydrant running so they can get a drink of water. I told the mayor, 'Your Honor,' I says, 'you should have portable cans installed along Wells Street.' But like the mayor told me, they would just draw the queers and little-girl rappers."

As Robert Benker drives up and parks his Oldsmobile in front of Fire and Rescue Service, an old man with shoes on his feet but no socks crosses Wells, headed directly for the chief. "These panhandlers are going to wreck the neighborhood," Johnson says. The panhandler's beard is neatly trimmed but his face is creased with dirt. As a miner's face is creased with coal dust. The way I peddle off, Johnson waves his arms in an open gesture meant both to welcome his protegee and ward off the panhandler. When I look back, the three of them are doing what looks to me like a kind of exasperated war dance on Wells Street.



Fire Commissioner Robert J. Quinn doubles in brass as Chicago's civil defense director.