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Ernie Bonner and the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Jerome L. Kaufman

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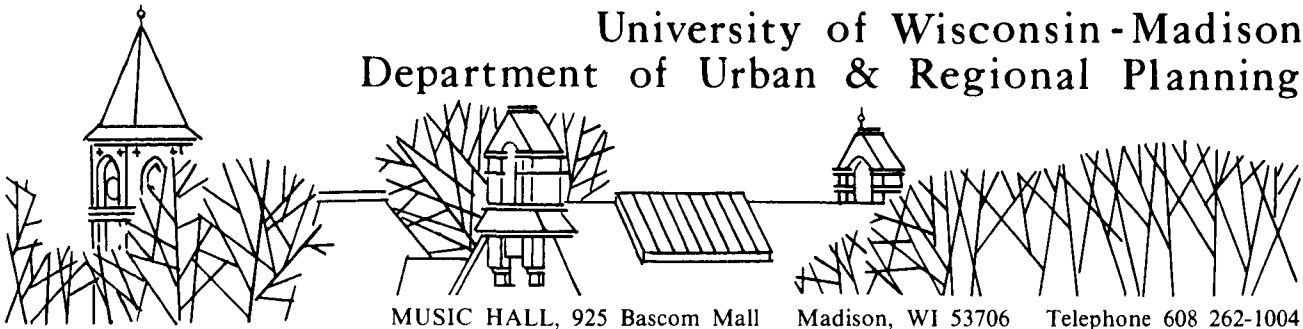
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University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of Urban & Regional Planning



April 9, 1987

Mr. Ernest R. Bonner
2836 S. E. Main
Portland, Oregon 97214

Dear Ernie:

Since the Department of Urban and Regional Planning will be having its 25th anniversary October 16-17, 1987, we thought it would be interesting to record some of the history of those years, as well as those of the committee degree program that came before. We thought that the most straightforward way to do this would be to ask all the people associated with the Department, especially during its formative years -- the late 50's to 1972 -- to write their own recollections of what they think shaped its development. If enough people respond to have a fairly comprehensive view, we will put the pieces together into some kind of publication to be available in the fall. Because of the diversity of views on the Department's history, there will be no effort to create a single "history" by combining or reinterpreting individual peoples' accounts. You are free to choose your own time span -- the late 50's to 1972 is just a rough guide; and what you want is what will go in.

We hope very much that you will be willing to take the time to do this. The present members of the Department think it is important to understand where the department has come from, and the forces that have shaped us into what we are today.

If you want to respond in time for a 25th anniversary publication, we need to have your piece by July 15th. We will all look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

Jerome L. Kaufman
Professor and Chairman

JLK:ick

Jerome L. Kaufman
Professor and Chairman
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
University of Wisconsin - Madison
925 Bascom Hall
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Prof. Kaufman:

Thanks for the note. I didn't realize it had been so long ago that I was at the University (I joined the department in Fall of 1968 and left after Fall term 1969). How time flies, as they say.

I would offer only a few items--probably commented upon by others as well.

The Omnibus Course: All entering students in the Fall of 1969 took the same omnibus course. I remember students and some faculty being quite excited about it in the beginning. Coleman Woodbury (and maybe one or two others) were nervous about such a new kind of graduate teaching. I remember him during the evaluation of this new kind of curriculum wanting to know why the University should continue the Omnibus course. I answered him simply. Why not? It was easy for me to say. I was soon to leave for the (relative) safety of the City of Cleveland. I am not now proud for my wise crack back to him, but it was a good description of the split in the faculty at that time. We saw ourselves as the wave of the future and, I am sure, Coleman saw himself as a protector of academic excellence against the marauders of the progressive left. As we now know, neither of us was entirely correct.

The students really got into the omnibus course and soon had nicknamed it OmniBull. They even had a cute little bull for a logo--and, of course, we had t-shirts. I taught a course on the side called Bull Stat--an introductory set of lessons on statistics for those who can't stand statistics. But there was much more discussion of the great issues of war and peace, poverty and social justice than work on the development of skills or techniques. That was, of course, back when everyone had the great hope that all the wrongs and injustices we saw all around us could be righted. I felt very close to the students.

I was very angry when Dave Ranney didn't get tenure at Wisconsin--clearly because of his ever more radical beliefs and actions. Ved Prakash and Leo Jakobson were good friends, and remain so. And, of course, it was Leo's and Ved's willingness (as senior professors) to explore new ideas that permitted the conduct of the Omnibus course.

The ideas developed and made a part of the Cleveland comprehensive plan were really being formed while I was on the faculty at Wisconsin. And Janice Cogger, a member of the Omnibus class, joined me at Cleveland and influenced the plan a lot.

That 's about all that comes to me now. The project sounds interesting. I would, of course, appreciate seeing a copy of the final product.

Respectfully,

Ernie Bonner
Past Assistant Professor
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