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AND THEY PAY THEIR OWN WAY

Piney Woods Pupils Too Busy for Trouble

By JIM NESBITT

How to control today's turbulent, impetuous youths?

Put 'em in school 12 hours a day, 12 months a year, says a famed educator from the Deep South — Dr. Laurence C. Jones.

And let them pay their own way.

That's how he's been running the Piney Woods Country Life School, Piney Woods, Miss., for the past 58 of his 82 years. And, he swears, the kids love it.

But then, Piney Woods is a special place — and Dr. Jones a remarkable man.

He antedated the "war on poverty" by over half a century when, fresh out of Iowa State University, he traveled south in 1909 as a

one-man VISTA corps to see if, with his education, he could be of help to the masses of indigent, illiterate Negro sharecroppers.

PINEY WOODS, in forested southeast Mississippi, is mediocre cropland, but Jones found fertile ground for his ideas there one day when he sat under a cedar tree and ventured to teach a boy how to read.

The boy brought along a horde of friends for the second day's lesson.

"Nearby was an abandoned log cabin occupied by a flock of sheep," Jones said this week in a talk to Long Beach Rotarians. "We drove out the sheep, moved in, and that was the start of Piney Woods School."

For a while the school

survived on eagerness alone. Then Jones revealed a talent for fund-raising.

HE CAJOLED friends up North, university acquaintances, bankers. A Piney Woods sawmill operator donated lumber for a new schoolhouse, and Jones and his pupils built it.

The school began acquiring land, at \$10 an acre, for campus and for crops. A herd of Ayrshire cattle was donated.

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More buildings went up and were equipped: a machine shop, a wood-working shop, a dairy barn, dormitories, more classrooms. A newspaper, "The Pine Torch," was established.

Southern whites as well as northerners contributed.

WHEN THE pupils were not studying they were working — in the shops, in the fields, in the kitchen. And when Jones wasn't

teaching he was out looking for more money.

He found a lot of it in 1955 when he appeared on Ralph Edwards' "This Is Your Life" show in Hollywood.

"Edwards made a pitch at the end of the program for every listener to send us \$1," Jones recalled. "I hadn't even left for home when I got a telegram from Piney Woods asking what should be done with the 60 sacks of mail that had arrived.

"Within a couple of weeks we received \$1,017,000. Some of those people were careless — instead of enclosing \$1, they dropped in \$10 or \$20."

THE SCHOOL now has an endowment fund of \$4

million and 1,600 acres of land. Jones has won degrees from three universities and a medal from the Freedoms Foundation.

For the 350 boarding students who are striving for high school and junior college diplomas at Piney Woods, it's a rigorous regimen: up at 5 a.m., breakfast at 6, work or school at 7 (they spend mornings at one endeavor, afternoons at the other), athletics at 4 p.m. and then study, study, study.

"Desire" is the only qualification for enrollment," says Jones.

Dropouts? "Hardly any." Disciplinary problems? "None."

"Everyone's too busy to get into trouble," Jones explained. "Wouldn't it be

grand if every school were run this way?"



DR. LAURENCE C. JONES
One-Man VISTA