Putting aside the old to learn the new

During his first day of classes at Western, Maurice Jones had a thought common to most freshmen: "I've got to make it."

The difference was that Jones was more than 35 years older than the average freshman.

That was almost 15 years ago. Today, at 70, he has earned a BA over the years and graduated with an MA in history in June, 1983.

He assumes a thoughtful gaze when asked if he is interested in a PhD. "I wouldn't shut my eyes to it," says Jones, who is now taking conversational French classes one night a week at Fanshawe College.

But there was a time when it might not even have occurred to him. For 30 years he was a livestock farmer in Northern Ontario. Arthritis finally discouraged him from farming but encouraged him to take up new pursuits.

People encouraged him as well. He says his wife, who was a teacher, encouraged him intellectually. His daughter, a Western grad and now a librarian at the Western law school, encouraged him to go to the university. And various faculty members encouraged him to enter the classroom.

He says he has never had any problems relating to people, but he admits he was worried about relating to other students who were one-third his age. As it turned out, he was pleasantly surprised.

"They just made you feel right at home," he says, "and there was a warmth. Social grace is really what they showed me."

Unlike a lot of younger people, Jones was without many of the distractions and worries that make education so complicated. He had the added advantage of a life that spans many of the events covered in modern history courses.

But experience doesn't always teach, either, as he discovered in courses in psychology, sociology, English and politics. "In order to accept the new," he says, "I had to put aside the old."

He would encourage other senior citizens to do the same. He compares a new field of learning to seeing a new country and wanting to live there. "What I have now I didn't know was there to be had," he concludes. All it takes is some encouragement.

MAURICE JONES

--- gets his degrees

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Neighborhood News appears Tuesday through Saturday. To tell us what's happening in your neighborhood, write to Neighborhood News, c/o The London Free Press.
What a difference week makes

By Don Gibb

MAURICE JONES

-- a second career

Had Maurice Jones had a week to kill things would have looked bleak for him in 1993.

So he might well have been among those in mourning in the University of Western Ontario student centre if not for the fact that the 68-year-old former farmer decided to take a second chance at education.

He picked up a bachelor of arts degree in history on the final day of convocation.

"I've often thought about it," he said, "and finally decided it was time to do something about it.""I realized I had a whole week to kill".

The former farmer, who was living in London, lived in a summer home on the farm and worked for the university in the summers.

He said he had always been interested in history and decided to take a second chance at education.

He was enrolled in the University of Western Ontario in the fall of 1993.

The course of study was a three-year program in history with a focus on medieval history.

He said he had always been interested in history, but had never had the opportunity to study it in depth.

He decided to take a year off to work on the farm before enrolling in the course.

He said he enjoyed the course, and was glad he had taken the time to study.

He said he would like to continue his studies and take a master's degree in history.

He said he was encouraged to continue his studies by the university, and was looking forward to the future.

He said he was grateful for the opportunity to study at the university, and was looking forward to the future.