

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 everything, as he discovered in courses in psychology, sociolo-



MAURICE JONES
--- gets his degrees

gy, 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.



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What a difference week makes

By Don Gibb
of The Free Press

Had Maurice Jones not had a week to mull things over back in 1969, he might well have been working in one of the kitchens at the University of Western Ontario Saturday — not picking up a master's degree in history.

"I've often thought about that," the 68-year-old former farmer said after picking up his diploma on the final day of convocation. "One week made a terrific difference."

Jones embarked on his second career at a time when most people are safely ensconced in their jobs waiting for retirement day.

But when arthritis inhibited him from doing the heavy farm work, he was forced to give up his first career on the 100-acre (40-hectare) family farm at Mining Station, about 14 kilometres northwest of Barrie. That's where he was born and that's where he toiled in mixed farming — poultry, beef and some dairy — until he was 55.

A lifetime in farming over, he moved to London in 1969 to live with his daughter, Eleanor, who works in the university's law library. Coming to grips with hanging up his hat and eventually selling the farm wasn't so difficult, he said, "when I realized I was no longer capable for it."

Besides, he had a job to come to at Western — something to do with kitchen work, he recalled, which would involve making food and taking in truckloads of supplies.

However, the woman who got him the job took a week's

holiday and, in the interim, Jones made a trip to Fanshawe College to see about enrolling in an evening course. There, he was encouraged to enter the general arts program and, in spite of the fact it "sort of frightened me," that's where Jones went for a year.

With still more encouragement, he transferred the next year to Western where he "felt like a stranger in a foreign land," partly because of his age, but also because of the complexity of the language associated with social sciences. "I just came in from the farm, I didn't understand a lot of the terminology."

Since then, Jones has been pressing ahead with an academic career that had been stalled years earlier after he had completed Grade 8 and one year of continuation school in an era when "farmers didn't educate their sons that much."

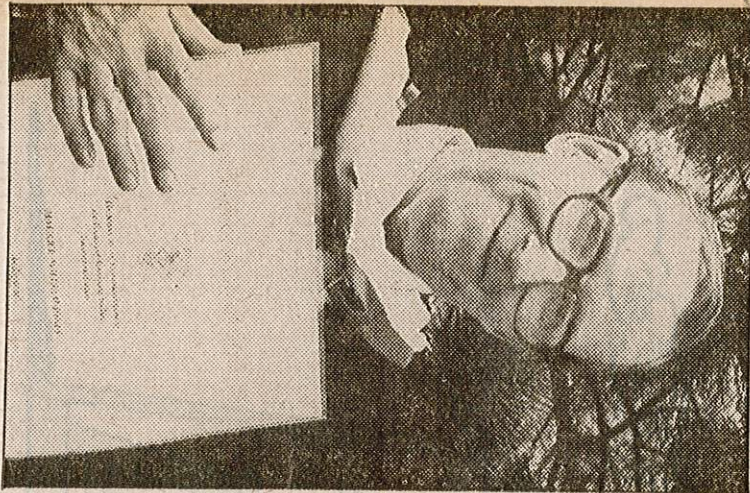
In the spring of 1973, he received his bachelor of arts degree. Three years later he had his honors BA and this year he added an MA in history.

His history thesis dealt with the early court of error and appeal (now the court of appeal) from 1850 until it became part of the Ontario supreme court in 1881. And he'd like to do more in-depth research on the topic: "I have hours and hours to spend now."

More courses at Western? "I'm interested" is as much of a commitment as a man with a great respect for the university environment is willing to make now.

The cost of tuition, at least, is no obstacle.

Once he reached the plateau of 65, it was no charge from that day on.



MAURICE JONES
--- a second career

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