

Chapter Eight

Three Major Accomplishments Recalled

By Opal A. Lovett

Though Dr. Cole accomplished so much on the road to building a university during his term as president from 1942 to 1971, three achievements deserve special mention because they are so close to his heart and have meant so much to so many people: the International House Program; the popular television program, "What's Your Problem?"; and the Teacher Hall of Fame.

The International House 1945 - 1971

The story of the International House began in August 1945, the brainchild of Dr. James H. Jones, a member of the language department.

Dr. Jones had just returned from France where he spent several days on vacation. During that period he conceived a program which he said, in substance, would add quality to the language department, provide a bit of world understanding, and create a source of expanded publicity for the college.

The process of implementing the program obviously involved financial contributions from the college. The plan would bring to the campus five students from France in the fall of 1946. Students would enroll in suitable courses under the direction of Dr. Jones,

and the college would take care of all expenses with the exception of travel.

The plan was funded for the duration of one year with the understanding that it would continue the second year if results justified.

In the fall of 1946, the program got under way with the enrollment of the first five foreign students from France.

At its inception the program had a dual purpose: offering the opportunity for academic development in foreign languages for American students and building world brotherhood through the association of foreign and American students.

Initially only American students willing to enroll in foreign language courses could participate directly in the International House Program. During these years the foreign students taught language courses to college students under the supervision of Dr. Jones. They also worked in an experimental program at the elementary school where young children were introduced to foreign languages, notably French and Spanish.

The project was destined to occupy four different homes — first, basement quarters in Bibb Graves Hall; second, a white framed bungalow located just north of Bibb Graves Hall. In 1953, a small house was built on the circle drive around the campus. This house



A group of foreign students is welcomed to the International House.

was financed by public contributions of \$5,000. It provided offices and dining facilities, but no classrooms.

Foreign students were assigned to men's and women's dormitories, usually with American roommates studying a foreign language. All of the language students were required to eat lunch and dinner together in the International House (whether Bibb Graves basement or the first permanent building) and were assigned a table where the use of the language being studied was required.

In addition to teaching, the foreign students enrolled in the classes of their choice, many of them remaining to earn degrees. They also traveled in groups or singly, appearing at public schools and before men's and women's civic and professional organizations, explaining their culture and customs and emphasizing the importance of developing expertise in two or more languages. They were always well received and early on succeeded in touching people who cooperated in seeing the need and working for world brotherhood.

The present and final structure was erected in 1964 at a cost of \$300,000. One-third of the cost was provided by public contributions with the remaining \$200,000 coming from the university.

The building, named in honor of C. W. Dauge, a former board of trustee member, provides offices, quarters for a social director, a living room, a dining room, recreation facilities, and housing for the students — twenty for the foreign students and twenty for the Americans.

On February 4, 1953, the International Endowment Foundation was created and the International House Program extended a new phase of service which was begun in September 1946. Trustees of the Foundation established an endowment fund to assist in providing scholarships for students.

Officers and trustees have given generously of their time and money. In 1963 they initiated a drive to raise money for a new building which would provide adequate facilities for the increasing number of students. The campaign culminated in funds sufficient to start the present building which was dedicated on October 11, 1964. It now stands as a monument to all who made contributions and worked for its completion, as well as to those who continue the interest and belief in the original purpose for which the program began.

At the 1955 annual conference of Rotary which was held in Gadsden, a resolution was passed to adopt the International House Program and its sponsoring organization, the International Endowment Foundation as its special Rotary International Golden Anniversary project. Since that time Rotarians have been very

generous in their support of the program and have granted many scholarships to students from foreign countries. The Anniston Club provides one scholarship each year and the Rotary District does likewise.

Each year students at the International House spend their Christmas vacation as guests of Rotary Clubs in Florida. The Sarasota Club reported about the guests on one occasion the following:

From expressions received from these of our membership who were fortunate enough to meet and escort these young people during their stay among us, together from our own observations and conversations with them, we feel something well worthwhile has been accomplished through their visit and which, it is hoped, will further promote a mutual understanding through these representatives between our people and their people of their respective countries.

Then, too, the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs has been a consistent supporter of the program for years. Mrs. Ernest Stone must be given credit for bringing this group into the picture. For years it has sponsored the program, the International Endowment Foundation. Students have been invited to appear on the annual convention programs. Many members of the State organization have campaigned for funds, both for the Foundation and for the construction of the International House.

Mrs. Stone gives the history of the involvement of the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs:

In 1951, at State Convention in Huntsville when Miss Mary Kysar was President of Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs (AFWC), the International House students from Jacksonville State College were presented for a luncheon program. Mrs. Frank Stewart, Director of District II, presided at the luncheon.

Enrolled at that time were young people from Belgium, Cuba, Switzerland, Canada and the United States. Dr. and Mrs. J. H. Jones, Director of the Program, told of their dream to promote better understanding and to build a lasting foundation for world peace by bringing students from other countries to the Jacksonville campus to live with American students and to have an American father and mother during their stay in Jacksonville. Following the plan of the program, American and foreign students lived, worked and played together in an effort to better understand one another.

Club women became interested in this unique program — a practical and constructive program planned to promote better international understanding. On a Friday evening, at 10:45, June 23, 1953, Mrs. Ernest Stone, AFWC Education Department Chairman, was granted five minutes by Mrs. W. M. Beck, AFWC President, to present a summary of the International House Program to the Executive Board of AFWC. Mrs. Stone asked for the endorsement of the Federation, as well as financial support in the way of scholarships. Mrs.

J. F. McVay, Director of Fourth District, moved that the Alabama Federation endorse the program and serve as one of its sponsors. Mrs. Carl Strong, First Vice-President of AFWC, moved that a \$300 balance in foreign scholarships be used to start the first scholarship.

Odile Sawicka was brought from Paris, France, in the fall of 1953, for one year of study at the International House. To bring her to this country and to give her one year of study at Jacksonville amounted to \$1,000. It was decided that if the program were continued, it would be a better investment if a permanent scholarship could be established.

In 1954, at State Convention in Jacksonville, Mrs. Stone presented a plan whereby the AFWC would make yearly contributions toward a permanent scholarship trust fund of \$25,000. All monies contributed by AFWC would be credited toward the permanent trust fund. During that time the AFWC would have the privilege of selecting a scholarship girl from another country each year to receive a \$1,000 scholarship even though all monies contributed were being credited to the permanent fund. AFWC, in assembled convention, voted to accept the contract with the International Endowment Foundation whereby the Federated Clubs of Alabama would make contributions until a total sum of \$25,000 would be reached.



Dr. Cole shows appreciation to the Pilot Club International for the scholarship awarded to Patricia Verano, a member of the International House Program from Colombia. Left to right: Miss Verano, Dr. Cole and Miss Dorothy Adair and Mrs. Tom Cornell, Pilot Club members from Huntsville.

During the administration of Mrs. Dan Waite, Centre banker, Mrs. Stone presented the last check to Dr. Cole and the International House Foundation, completing the \$25,000 trust fund, October 14, 1967. It had taken fourteen years to complete the fund representing thousands of contributors from AFWC Clubs down through the years.

Thirty-five young ladies have received the AFWC scholarship. Each student is an individual. Each makes her contribution here and is destined to make a special contribution when she returns home because of her experiences at International House, Jacksonville State University. This is the real story of international good will and professional opportunities for young women in many parts of the world — all made possible by the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs and Dr. Houston Cole, President, Jacksonville State University.

Many study clubs, book clubs, civic organizations and individuals are responsible for the continued interest and support which the program has enjoyed throughout the years.

The program had been approved by the Department of State for cultural exchange, information, understanding, and appreciation. Though equal emphasis was placed on languages, greater concern is now placed on the overall aspects of cultural understanding.

It can be said that this part of the university provides what we might call a "window opening in the world" for the entire student body at Jacksonville State University. Some have called it a "zoo," a little United Nations, a laboratory in human relations.

Letters and numerous articles and comments prove Dr. Jones correct in realizing that such a program would net excellent results as a public relations tool. Several of the hundreds of messages received over the years offer their own testimony.

Drew Pearson, national columnist and guest at the college expressed pleasure and excitement after his visit:

Down here in northeastern Alabama where the hard rock of the Alleghenies tapers off into the soft limestone of the Black Belt, I found a surprising monument to people — to people friendship. This is about the last place in the world you would expect to find such a thing. In New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans you are not surprised at finding International Student Houses. But not relatively obscure Jacksonville State Teachers College in the foothills of Alabama. The International House is just as fine in its way as anything in the great cities of the north. It is located in Alabama but it is for the world.

Miss Oswald B. Lord, United States Representative, Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations, assured Dr. Cole, "As I have told you before, I think it is one of the outstanding experiments in the country, and I have referred to it in many of my speeches."

Karl Krueger, editor of *The Rotarian*, wrote: "You have a unique and splendid institution which ought to be known about

on campus after campus in many countries. And this magazine is going to make the story known.”

Though many individuals were supportive of the International House Program between the years 1946-1971, three deserve special recognition, according to Dr. Cole.

Colonel Harry M. Ayers, editor and publisher of *The Anniston Star* could be called the physical and fiscal father of the International House. He was chairman of the public drives that raised \$5,000 for the original cottage in 1948 and \$100,000 for the present building erected in 1964. Ayers organized the International Endowment Foundation in 1953 and assisted in getting the support of the State Rotary Program as supporting agency in 1955. He helped bring to the campus for the dedication exercises in 1947 prominent guests including the French ambassador, Henri Bonnet, and Drew Pearson.

Mrs. Ernest Stone, educator in Jacksonville, used her influence to get the support of the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs for the International House Program.

Mrs. Dan Waite, obtained many contributions at the state level through her position as president of the Alabama Banker's Association. As a well known and beloved lady of northeast Alabama, she brought additional support.

Following the retirement of Dr. James H. Jones, founder, John R. Stewart, Superintendent of Fort Payne City Schools, agreed to accept the position as Director of the International House Program. He served in this capacity until he retired in 1985.

Dr. John Stewart is a man of quality, both personally and professionally. Historical facts will substantiate the statement that he provided superior leadership in directing the overall program of the International House. He was demanding, but popular with the foreign students who came to the program from time to time. In the field of public relations, his effectiveness was demonstrated by the public support given Jacksonville State University.

It has been said that a good teacher teaches for eternity as his or her influence never stops. Stewart's influence will last in the minds and hearts of those whose lives he has touched. And in retirement they will shine back over the years to cheer and sustain him.

What started as a dream in the heart and soul of Dr. James H. Jones and developed through his work in cooperation with the fiscal assistance and vision of Dr. Cole has touched and influenced in a positive way thousands of students, both here and abroad. Like a ripple on a lake, it has been far-reaching in its purpose to generate humanitarian sensitivity and go forward in the development of world brotherhood.

“What’s Your Problem?”

Significant events in life oftentimes happen by accident and surprise. That was the case involving the part Dr. Cole was going to play on a television program entitled, “What’s Your Problem?” This program was destined to run for a period of ten years on Birmingham television stations, three years on Channel 6 and seven years on Channel 13.

In 1956 he was invited to speak to the Birmingham Kiwanis Club which met at the Jefferson Davis Hotel. At the conclusion of those remarks, to his surprise, a representative of the French government located in New Orleans proceeded to confer an honor for the service he had rendered in relation to the International House program located on the Jacksonville State College campus.

Another surprise followed. As he was leaving the building after the termination of the program, he observed two men conversing close by on the sidewalk. One was Dr. Dale LeCount, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, and Mr. Herbert Singleton, director of Blue Cross Blue Shield in the state of Alabama. They were waiting to ask if he would moderate a television program, “What’s Your Problem?”, which they had initiated. The program appeared once a week on Sunday afternoon. Cole accepted the responsibility, and he believes it contributed much toward the recognition of Jacksonville State College throughout the area of North Alabama.

At first the panel consisted of Dr. LeCount and Dr. Paul Hardin, pastor of the First Methodist Church in Birmingham. Later Dr. Ed Kimbrough replaced Dr. Hardin when the latter moved to another state.

The program became popular in areas served by Channel 6. Many questions reached Cole weekly with the request that they be presented to the panel. The same situation prevailed later when the program was presented by Channel 13.

The panel was asked to appear before various civic groups in Birmingham and other sections of North Alabama.

Cole said, “We were fortunate to have several distinguished men appear with us on the program. At that time we were inviting well known men and women to speak to our students at the college. We took advantage of the circumstances and asked them to appear on taped programs that would air later on “What’s Your Problem?”.

Among those who appeared were Senator Edmund Muskie, Senator Barry Goldwater, and Senator Jackson — all of whom had sought the nomination for the Presidency. Others involved distinguished ministers from the First Methodist Churches in New York, Detroit, and Akron. Of course, the moderator made use of

prominent local talent, including Coach Bear Bryant of the University of Alabama.

The program terminated at the end of a ten-year period as a result of the fact that Dr. LeCount moved back to his original home in Indiana and other participants elsewhere.

One program that was covered by *The Birmingham Post-Herald* on February 27, 1958, is here included as an example:

A panel discussion on Human Relations was the informative program at the Pilot club meeting this week at the YMCA.

The questions, presented by members, dealt with the personnel problems of the business woman in her job. Dr. Houston Cole, President of Jacksonville State College, was moderator, and panelists included Dr. Paul Hardin, Jr., pastor of First Methodist Church, and Dr. Dale LeCount, pastor of Sixth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Pertinent questions such as how to deal with petty jealousy in ourselves and others in an office were answered by Dr. Hardin: "The two rules that will eliminate envy in ourselves are to honestly appraise our own values and ability, and to pray jealousy out of our hearts."

Dr. LeCount advised that when jealousy is apparent in others, we should be doubly nice to them, giving them praise as often as possible. "Jealousy stems from frustration and a feeling of inadequacy."

Posed with the problem of what to do when a person is received at a business establishment by an unaccommodating person, the panel agreed that the first impression given by a receptionist or switchboard operator makes the visitor feel that all members of the organization will receive him in the same way. They advised that an unaccommodating person should be reported to the boss for the good of the company.

Dr. Hardin added that his "pet peeve" is when an executive has a secretary call him, and he has to wait until the executive answers the phone. He claims it is discourteous and the practice openly says, "I am busier than you are."

The remedy for clock-watchers and "pouters" was quickly answered with "Pouting is a result of immaturity and is best ignored. Clock-watchers should create an interest in their work, and if that is impossible, they should change to a more interesting job."

The panel felt that the American custom of coffee breaks is generally a good practice because more efficiency is gained after the short period of relaxation. However, they claimed, "When it is abused, it is demoralizing."

Dr. Hardin answered a member's question, "What produces real satisfaction in work?" He explained, "Work is its own reward accompanied by a sense of creating something that would not have been done in the same way without you. Work well done gives a feeling of warmth while shirking only leaves a person with a sense of shame."

Dr. LeCount added that "You should relate your job to a cosmic significance . . . no matter how small the job, its relationship to others makes it important."



Dr. Dale LeCount, Dr. Edwin Kimbrough and Dr. Cole show pride in the award received for the popular panel, What's Your Problem?, presented by the president of the American Legion Auxiliary.

General advice from the panel stemming from questions asked by the attentive audience was, "Progress is of utmost importance but good relationships in an office are necessary . . . a boss's interest in the welfare of his employees would be balanced with skill and poise . . . when both husband and wife are breadwinners, the husband should help carry the load . . . and, complacency should not be tolerated within oneself; it is the striving to improve that gives life meaning."

Chairman of program arrangements was Mr. Francis Hill, and the speakers were introduced by Miss Lois Barringer. Pilot president is Mrs. Alma Alexander.

The program, "What's Your Problem?", was amazingly popular among all ages from young teenagers to the elderly. Often entire families gathered to watch the program and then discussed the answers of the questions featured each week. Many parents found that the program encouraged more open communication with their children, especially their teenagers.

Through Dr. Cole's moderating the program, the institution gained much recognition in both the entire state and the Southeast. Many parents encouraged their children to enroll at Jacksonville State because of their familiarity with the program and with Dr. Cole whom they felt they knew.

Teacher Hall of Fame

In 1969 Jacksonville State University initiated a Teacher Hall of Fame to pay tribute and honor and give recognition to the classroom teachers of the public schools of the State of Alabama.

Each public school system in the state is asked to nominate one elementary teacher and one secondary teacher each year to be considered for this award. These nominees are selected in accord with certain criteria. One criterion is that the nominee must be currently teaching subject matter to students fifty percent of the time or more of each school day. No preference is given to nominees who may have attended Jacksonville State University. The recipients of this award are chosen after a personal interview by a competent, impartial ten-member Final Selection Committee, and the selection is made by secret ballot.

An editorial in *The Birmingham Post-Herald* stated:

Halls of fame honoring sports, political and industrial figures have become fairly common in recent years. Now Jacksonville State University has taken this idea and given it a new and long overdue twist.

The school has inaugurated the Alabama Teacher Hall of Fame . . . The great work done by classroom teachers is often overlooked or taken for granted while attention is directed toward fancy new teaching aids or gadgets. There never has been and very likely never will be any substitute for the teacher who can open the mind of a child to the wonders of the world.

Such teachers do indeed belong in a Hall of Fame, and we're glad to see that that is where Jacksonville State University means to put them.

Teachers who receive the Hall of Fame award will have a plaque in their honor placed in the lobby of the Houston Cole Library on the Jacksonville State University campus.

Dr. Theron Montgomery, president of Jacksonville State University, said of the unique program: "We, at Jacksonville State, believe classroom teachers are often the unrecognized heroes of public education in Alabama. We consider it an honor and a privilege to bring recognition to the outstanding teachers in Alabama."

Dr. Cole was writing a speech he was scheduled to make to the teachers of the Birmingham City School System when he decided that classroom teachers deserve a Hall of Fame. Since 1969

thousands of teachers have received much deserved recognition as a result of having been chosen to represent their systems. Several hundred have been named to the top ten level, and forty have been named finalists and Hall of Fame recipients.

Until his retirement, Dr. John Stewart served as chairman of the selection committee for the Teacher Hall of Fame. He was followed by Dr. Robert Hymer, Dean of the College of Education. The flash of inspiration and the planning executed by Dr. Cole so long ago will continue to recognize the value of good teachers and those who dedicate their lives to this humanitarian task.



U.S. Senator Henry Jackson, speaker for the installation of the first members of the Teacher Hall of Fame, poses with the first two inductees, Mrs. Dora Gene Hill, of Gadsden City Schools, Mrs. Jessie Freeman, of Tuscaloosa County Schools, and Dr. Cole.