

1989

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Paul D. Jones
Montezuma Community School

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Recommended Citation

Jones, Paul D. (1989) "Woodrow Wilson National Science Leadership Program: Princeton, 1989," *Iowa Science Teachers Journal*: Vol. 26 : No. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/istj/vol26/iss2/5>

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WOODROW WILSON NATIONAL SCIENCE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: PRINCETON, 1989

*Paul D. Jones
Physics, Chemistry and Biology Teacher
Montezuma Community School
Montezuma, Iowa 50171*

"Gee, Dad, Princeton! Do you realize that Einstein was at Princeton?" This is what my son said as I read my acceptance letter from the Woodrow Wilson Institute. I thought of his words as I turned off the highway onto Nassau Avenue in the heart of the Princeton campus. The old ivy-covered buildings interspersed with new modern research facilities are my idea of what a college campus should look like. After finding my dorm and getting settled in, I began to explore and to learn about my colleagues. The group consisted of people from all over the United States, truly a nationwide collection of teachers from New Jersey to Hawaii. Two of us were from Iowa.

I was one of fifty teachers assigned to develop the first science course (many times the only science course) that a student would take. The topic we chose was "In the Middle of Science." We began to work on developing the new curriculum, which is not an easy task. We broke up into smaller groups of approximately ten teachers and developed, in my opinion, a pretty good course. A lot of compromising occurred as many pet projects and demonstrations simply could not be included because of space considerations.

A science group such as ours could not attend Princeton without visiting Palmer Laboratory, the place where Einstein worked. The old lecture hall still looks the same, and we were fascinated by the demonstrations presented there. John Crawford and Murry Dickinson, members of Princeton's physics staff, do macro-sized demonstrations with great showmanship and skill. We were certainly impressed with their outstanding talent and concern for our group.

During our four-week program, we worked with many interesting people. Some presented new curriculum ideas and others demonstrated various teaching techniques using all sorts of equipment. Our program ended with a day's visit from Dudley Hersbach, the 1986 chemistry Nobel prize winner. He was an excellent lecturer and very easy to meet and talk with. He really had some good ideas for middle school science.

The N.S.F. seems to be encouraging more teacher participation in summer institutes. The 1990's will very possibly be like the good old days of the 1960's (that I remember well) when most college campuses had a summer science program. I would encourage people to apply; my experiences have been GOOD!