

Corps Trainees Don't Like Classrooms

(Editor's Note: Job Corps trainees are almost all high school dropouts. Most of them dropped out of school because they didn't like the regimented classrooms and book-learning offered in high school. They wanted to work. But they found they didn't have the skills they needed to get good jobs, so they joined the Job Corps. But most of them aren't used to learning and don't want "that bookwork stuff." How do you teach them what they need to know? This second of four articles on the University-operated urban Job Corps center discusses Tongue Point's answer to that question.)

By PHIL SEMAS
Associate Editor

TONGUE POINT (Special)—Job Corpsman Miguel Miranda has spent 739 hours in classrooms and shops studying auto mechanics, 200 hours more working in local auto shops. Last month he came back here from vacation and was offered a job by an Oregon company.

Corpsman Alfred Harsha tried several vocations, was above average at everything he tried, but didn't get very far in any of them. For the first time in his life he found he was learning something, but he couldn't settle on one field.

So he quit the Job Corps before he could learn enough about any one skill to assure himself a job for very long.

Neither of these boys is typical of trainees at Tongue Point. The general rule, says Vocational Training Director Ernie Lareau, is "somewhere in between."

But almost all the trainees create problems of one kind or another for Lareau, a big, good-natured, hearty man with a long background in vocational education.

Most trainees come to Tongue Point with no desire for classroom work. "They say, 'don't give us that bookwork,'" Lareau grins.

So Lareau and his vocational education staff—all men who've been top mechanics in industry—don't give them any.

At most vocational schools the emphasis is on classroom work from the beginning. At Tongue Point it's just the reverse. Unless they ask for classroom work, trainees start out with all work in the shops.

"After they've worked around the shop for awhile, then they realize they need the classroom work and they start asking for it," says Lareau. "When they do, we give it to them."

But he emphasizes: "We don't put them in the classroom until they want to. Not when we think they're ready, but when they want to."

For some it takes six or seven months to get them into the classroom. Some, of course, drop out without ever getting that far.

That's one of the major features of the training program at Tongue Point: trainees proceed at their own rate.

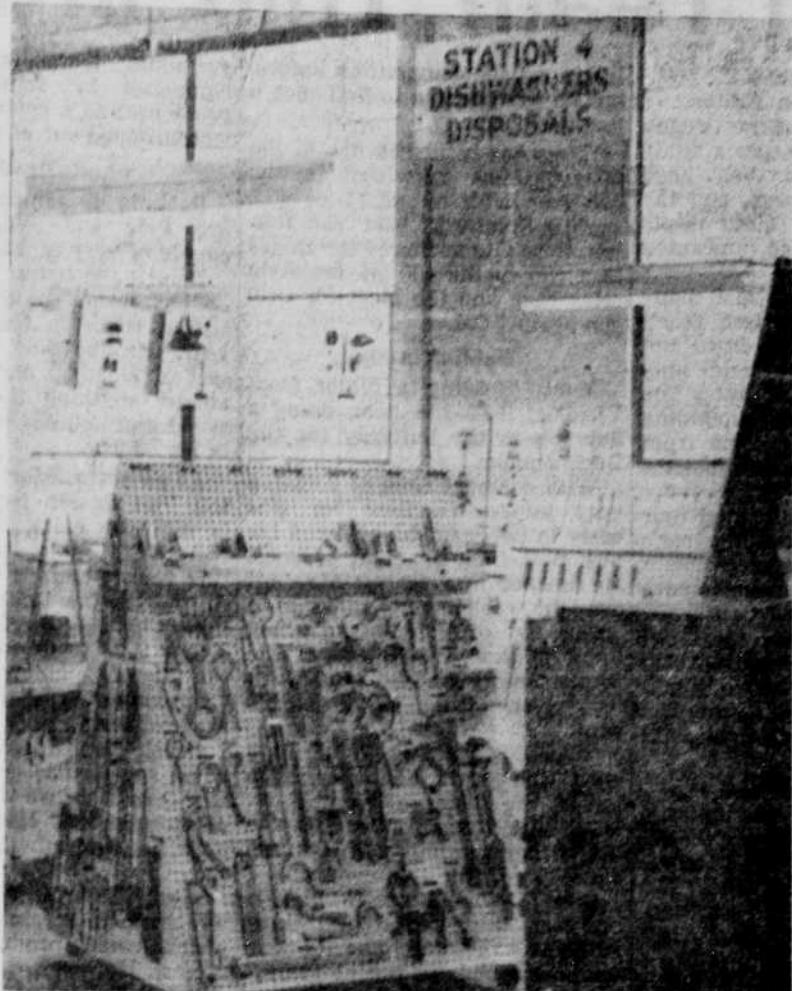
When they first come to Tongue Point trainees look around the center at the various programs. The trainee picks his own program and he decides it all the way along—with advice from a staff member.

"Everything is elective because if the boy has a hand in his own program it works better," says Lareau. "That's why he dropped out of school: because they were telling him what to take."

Most of them start in a class of about 10. But they work at their own rate of speed. "It's possible to have boys in the same group at 10 different levels," according to Program Analyst Ira Heard, whose job it is to check on instructor's efforts.

But when a trainee drops far behind the others in his group, he

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THIS IS SOME of the equipment used by Tongue Point Job Corps trainees in the appliances workshop. Instructors at Tongue Point say there's plenty of equipment available. Philco Corporation provides the equipment and instructors for the vocational education program on a sub-contract from the University.



AN INSTRUCTOR (white coat) watches as a Job Corpsman works on an outboard motor in Tongue Point's boat repair division. Instructors attempt to give trainees as much individual attention as possible. The boat motors are used over and over by trainees.



ERNIE LAREAU



A GROUP OF JOB CORPS trainees work at a table in the Tongue Point center's small appliance division. The man fourth from the left is the instructor. The center also offers a program in automobile repair.