

**Pine Jog is: Historical Perspective Part I**  
**Written in 1984 by Pat Welch**  
**Printed in the Pine Jog newsletter titled "Chulesassa Talk"**

Pine Jog Environmental Sciences Center occupies 150 acres of land which is representative of the natural plant communities of south Florida and representative of changes which take place in these communities due to man's use of the land. Pine Jog has a fascinating history, rich with the pioneer flavor of historical Palm Beach County, and steeped with the inspiration and dedication of its founders, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Kay, the members of The Garden Club of Palm Beach, and many other supporters.

Pine Jog was first owned by Henry M. Flagler who purchased the land shortly after 1893 and for several years the property was held by Flagler's company, the Model Land Company. In March of 1929, the land, including Pine Jog, was offered for sale at the West Palm Beach Court House and control passed to the Lake Worth Drainage District in 1930. During this time and until 1946, the land was occupied by a few "squatters" and various farm plots were operated without regard to ownership. The main crops grown were squash, tomatoes and peppers. In addition, much of the land was open range used for grazing by semi-wild cattle. The cattlemen burned the property annually. The fires were intended to stimulate growth of tender forage for cattle and to eliminate competition from other plants. The annual fires, cattle and farming plots impacted significantly on the natural vegetation of the property.

The Pine Jog property lies within a shallow drainage basin between the Loxahatchee Slough on the west and the Lake Osborne Basin to the east. Since the land lies between ridges on both sides, water originally flowed through the area as indicated by the remaining cypress trees. Early records indicate that Pine Jog was predominately wetland from the late 1800s to as late as 1940. Between 1929 and 1940, pine trees were harvested from the area and by 1934 there were few seedlings over one meter tall.

Thus, the present pinewoods community at Pine Jog contains trees no older than perhaps 50 years. Drainage projects in South Florida began as early as 1870, and the first effective projects occurred in the early years of 1900. Before the Palm Beach Canal was finished in 1917, water was high enough in Lake Clarke that Seminole Indians canoed along the marsh edge to a trading post near what is now Dreher Park. Prior to drainage, Pine Jog consisted of three plant communities: wet prairie, marsh and low hammock.

In 1946, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Kay purchased property including Pine Jog, and decided to provide Palm Beach County with an environmental center. Early in 1960, Pine Jog was established as a conservation center and is now affiliated with Florida Atlantic University.

Literally thousands of school-aged children and adults have had the opportunity at Pine Jog to observe remnants of historically significant plant communities and explore changes in these communities. All of the plant associations, containing approximately

175 different species at Pine Jog are now in different stages of succession or what scientists call “secondary succession.”

The low hammock is similar in shape to the 1940s. Though it has decreased in size, it still contains many of the plant species originally present. Eight percent of the plant species at Pine Jog are found in the low hammock.

Two of the original marshes have been completely destroyed by drainage, farming and excessive burning. A pond was created in the third marsh area in 1974 and native plants were introduced to stabilize the soil. Thirty percent of the plant species at Pine Jog are found in the marsh.

The most altered community on the property is the wet prairie. A great portion of this original community is now pinewoods. Due to drainage and fires, the pine trees established themselves in the 1930s and records show that the pine flatwoods community is approximately 40 years old and contains 17% of the plant species at Pine Jog.

Many wet prairie species no longer exist at Pine Jog and now account for only 10% of the total plant species. It is still possible though, especially after a period of heavy rainfall, to find specimens of yellow-eyed grass, umbrella grass, pipeworts and the insectivorous sundew.

Introduced plants (Exotics) account for 35% of the total number of species at Pine Jog. These non-native species are considered by many to be detrimental to the native plant associations as well as the wildlife of south Florida. Among these exotic, or non-native species, are the Melaleuca tree (paper tree) and the Brazilian Pepper which many people incorrectly term “Florida Holly.” The Brazilian Pepper is not botanically a holly, but is in the same family as poison ivy. In 1946, there were only six Melaleuca trees on the property and few numbers of other species. Today, there are several extensive pockets of Melaleuca and Brazilian Pepper.

With the philosophy of conservation and protection of the environment, which is an integral part of the guidance received from Pine Jog’s founders and supporters, Pine Jog will continue to preserve part of the history of south Florida.

Reference: “Vegetation of Southeastern Florida – I Pine Jog,” by Daniel F. Austin, Department of Biological Sciences, Florida Atlantic University.

## **Pine Jog is: Historical Perspective Part II – The Evolution of an Idea**

Written in 1984 by Pat Welch

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So many human beings take for granted the simple, natural things life has to offer like a walk in the woods, watching the moon appear at twilight, listening to the birds call, or inspecting the most delicate of tiny wildflowers springing from the earth. So many human beings take these everyday sights and sounds for granted. How many ever stop to wonder with us about the how and why of the natural world? Pine Jog offers the opportunity to adults and children alike to become aware of, to develop an interest in, and to immerse themselves in the wonders of the world around us. The opportunities afforded by Pine Jog are made possible by the financial support of local organizations and numerous individual donors as well as the commitment of volunteer time by many dedicated individuals. The organizations and individuals who support Pine Jog with both time and money are an example to the community of citizens concerned about the environment, concerned about teaching ecological principles to our children, and concerned enough to donate time, talent, and funding towards positive action.

The evolution of Pine Jog into a place with the perspective of introducing people to the natural world traces the evolution of an idea and the history of Pine Jog offers a fascinating story.

Historical Perspective Part I focused on the natural plant communities of Pine Jog and changes which have take place in these communities due to man’s use of the land. Historical Perspective Part II will focus on the evolution of Pine Jog as an idea and as an institution of environmental education. The answers to such questions as: What is Pine Jog?; Why was Pine Jog created?; How was Pine Jog created?; How did it get its name?; and, What do you do at Pine Jog? will be found in this test. And, so the story begins.

One evening many years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Kay were discussing the reports of vandalism appearing in the press and on the radio. As their discussion progressed, they both agreed that people of all ages were finding more time available for leisure but with little or no preparation as to how best to spend their time wisely. Mr. and Mrs. Kay believed that those people who had healthy interests and hobbies lead happy and constructive lives and knew from personal experience that scientists, whether amateur or professional, were an outstanding example.

The Kays personal experience stemmed from their interest in nature and quality of life and from a long term association with Dr. David Fairchild, founder of Fairchild Tropical Gardens in Miami. The Kays owned an experimental garden near Boynton Beach where David Fairchild grew and experimented with rare and introduced plants.

From David Fairchild’s example, the Kays knew that for scientists, especially those involved in the natural sciences, each day was a delight and a challenge. Scientists, young and old, rarely have a dull moment as they devotedly pursue knowledge, collect, record, observe and experience. Thus, the inception of an idea. Since the Kays greatest

interests centered in children, children became the focus of that idea. To take a child, make that child aware of his environment and develop in that child a desire to study, to care for and to protect the natural world became the objective of the idea. A child who feels the fascination and challenge of the living world around him develops a sincere desire to care for its plants and creatures and to learn more about them. In fact, people of any age, who become aware of the meaning of “ecology” (the interrelationships of all living things), find their days filled with new interests as they unconsciously become explorers, discovering fascination on every side. So, back in 1960, when few people had even heard the word “ecology,” Elizabeth and Alfred Kay set out to interest both children and adults in the natural world – “opening windows” – as they called it.

As you will recall, from reading Historical Perspective Part I, the Kays had purchased the present Pine Jog property from the Lake Worth Drainage District in 1946. On this property, a wildlife sanctuary, named “Pine Jog Plantation,” the Kays grew flowers, fruits and vegetables. The Kays decided to turn this “pine and palmetto” land into a creative teaching center, an out-of-doors classroom, and “Pine Jog Plantation,” so called because the “Pine” land bordered Jog Road, has become known as Pine Jog Environmental Sciences Center.

From 1960 to 1962, trails were cleared through the pinewoods, two main buildings, which housed classrooms and offices, were constructed, and, even before the completion of the physical plant, a teacher brought his class from a nearby school to experience learning in an outdoor laboratory. From this small beginning, the idea and the dedication to seeing an idea evolve into a reality, Pine Jog grew into an institution which now instructs over 19,000 children and adults yearly. In the beginning, Pine Jog Conservation Center operated under the sponsorship of the Florida Audubon Society, its president, John H. Storer, and the first director of Pine Jog, Rex Conyers.

In a short time, teachers were telephoning to ask when they might bring their classes to Pine Jog; while, without exception, departing children were asking, “when may we come back again?” The amazing success of Pine Jog seemed proof that the center was filling an aching void!

From the moment that Pine Jog opened its doors, high standards for excellence were established and recognized. By the second summer of operation, Florida State University was giving teacher credits for the courses they completed at Pine Jog. Pine Jog conducted conservation workshops which were the first of their kind in Florida and, at the time, Pine Jog was the only nature center in the country empowered to give college credit for teacher workshops and courses. By 1962, Pine Jog, within two short years, had established itself as a natural science education center of considerable excellence and reputation.

Between 1962 and 1970, Pine Jog continued to grow. A small auditorium was added to the original buildings and, in subsequent summers, a library was built as well as two additional offices. In 1965, it was a great assistance to Pine Jog when Florida Atlantic

University offered off-campus courses at Pine Jog and much practical assistance for the future.

In 1968, interested friends made possible the construction of a pond, authentic Seminole Indian chickee and boardwalk in the marsh. The pond and access to the marsh proved to be valuable tools in teaching the ecology of aquatic and semi-aquatic organisms. The pond was subsequently enlarged in 1975 when Pine Jog received the Founder's Fund award from The Garden Club of America. The Garden Club of Palm Beach sponsored Pine Jog for this national award and Pine Jog is honored to have the continuing support of the garden club and its members. The job of director of Pine Jog changed hands several times during 1962-1970, with each new director meeting the challenge with his own particular knowledge, skills, and style of leadership. Following Rex Conyers as director was William M. Partington who brought knowledge of statewide environmental issues to the image of Pine Jog and who is currently director of the Florida Conservation Foundation. Leadership then transferred to Richard Tillis with a strong background in biology and teaching skills. Richard Tillis is now director for Environmental Education for the State of Florida Department of Education.

In 1970, the authority for Pine Jog transferred from the Florida Audubon Society to Florida Atlantic University. Pine Jog's director, once the affiliation with Florida Atlantic University was established, was Dr. Manley L. Boss, Professor of Botany and, during his administration, Pine Jog received its first contract with the Palm Beach County School Board.

The current director of Pine Jog, since 1973, is Dr. Ray M. Iverson. With his direction, Pine Jog continues to increase student awareness, appreciation and concern for the environment in the hope that they will maintain and restore that environment and thereby preserve the quality of life for themselves, their children and grandchildren.

Pine Jog's educational programs are primarily directed toward instructional programs for Palm Beach County elementary and secondary school students. In addition to the programs offered, Pine Jog also conducts a summer science program; prepares instructional materials, slide programs and activities for classroom use; provides guides and special programs for such groups as Sable Palm School, North Area Alternative Center, Parent Child Study Center, special education classes, mental health centers and non-English speaking adults; offers consulting services to teachers and schools; and assists in judging science fairs throughout the county.

In recognition of Pine Jog's outstanding accomplishments, Pine Jog Environmental Sciences Center, as well as Mrs. Alfred Kay, have been the recipients of prestigious recognitions. In June of 1976, Florida Atlantic University honored Mrs. Kay with the presentation of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters for "her lifetime of selfless devotion in the public interest, for her leadership in making environmental awareness and integral part of the Palm Beach County School program and for her generosity."

The Florida Wildlife Federation recognized Mrs. Kay as the “Conservation Educator of the Year” during the annual Governor’s Conservation Awards Program in September of 1978.

In 1973, Pine Jog received the Founders Fund Award through the sponsorship of the Palm Beach Chapter of The Garden Club of America. The award enabled us to enlarge the pond at Pine Jog.

The Audubon Society of the Everglades presented to Pine Jog Environmental Sciences Center the 1982 Conservation Award in recognition of “outstanding service to the community by providing exceptional programs for the children and adults of Palm Beach County and in appreciation to the dedicated staff for sharing their knowledge of the natural world in which we live.”

From the beginning, the philosophy of Pine Jog has been to nurture the ability of students to observe and to evaluate their relationship with the natural environment. Pine Jog is steeped with the inspiration, dedication and guidance of its founders and supporters. The financial support of the Kays, The Garden Club of Palm Beach and the many individual donors who believe in the importance of environmental education is sincerely appreciated as are the many hours of work donated by volunteers who have assisted in secretarial duties, organizing and maintaining the library and acting as hostesses at open houses and seminars. They are an inspiration to us who are privileged to instruct the children and adults who visit Pine Jog. The contributions of organizations and individual donors comprise approximately 85% of the funding for Pine Jog’s instructional programs with the remaining 15% being derived from Pine Jog’s contract with the Palm Beach County School Board.

Pine Jog is an outstanding success story, not only because of its educational contributions to the community but primarily due to the efforts of many people who care and contributed time and money to the continued existence of a place, and the enduring philosophy of preservation, protection and promoting awareness of our natural environment. Let us all help to “...open windows...” for ourselves and succeeding generations.