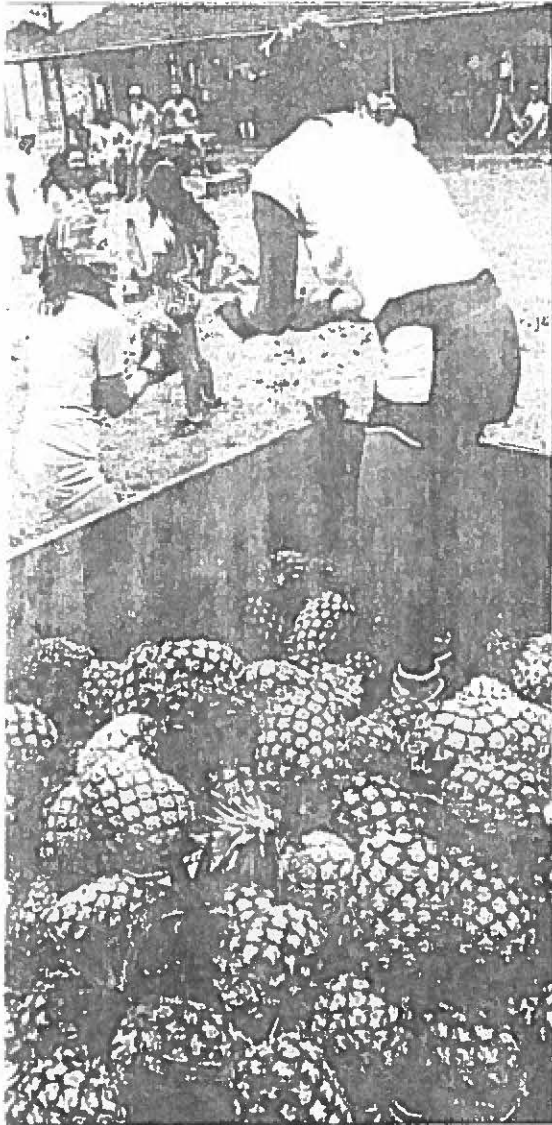


Dole ends off-island hires

Lanai pine firm drops teen summer program



1982 crop of pineapple pickers participates in a pine-loading competition during the traditional end-of-summer Pineapple Olympics.

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LANAI CITY — Dole Plantation announced yesterday it will not hire off-island students for any more summer harvests.

Manager Jim Parker said the plantation is now harvesting regularly on a year-around basis and no longer has an unusually large summer crop of pineapples.

For this summer, only teenagers from Lanai will be hired and the company won't need off-island students.

The company's decision ends an almost 20-year-long program of hiring up to 500 teenagers each summer to pick the season's bumper crop of pine. For coaches, scout leaders and high school counselors, the nine-week program was a rare opportunity for young people from Hawaii and the Mainland to earn money away from home, get in shape, learn some discipline and make new friends.

For the last six summers, for instance, about 45 teenagers from Kahuku High School, including the wrestling team, picked pineapple on the island. Wrestling coach Lester Souza said, "It really helped us a long way in getting the team close."

The company's decision also ends the "Pineapple Olympics," when visiting pine workers ended their summer with friendly competitions in Pineapple and Saimin Eating, Doing Laundry, and Getting Dressed for Work.

Last summer, the plantation hired 125 Lanai youngsters for the summer and another 230 students from the Big Island and Oahu. This summer, Parker expects between 125 and 150 Lanai students.

In the 1970s, the company depended mainly on Mainland boys for its labor after it had problems with local youths in the '60s. A Salt Lake City firm was even hired to help recruit the teenagers. But the emphasis changed six years ago, when Dole decided to recruit mostly Hawaii teenagers, and the results were considered excellent by company officials.

Parker said the plantation will miss the influx of youngsters from other islands. "The kids were somewhat carefully selected and they

were a nice bunch of young people."

He said the summer program was a "unique experience." When the teenagers first arrived, they were "just like any other bunch of kids — clannish." But after working, living and eating with others "they made some very fast friendships with kids from other areas."

The summer hiring of fruit pickers was needed because most of the pineapple used to ripen during the summer.

Parker said previously about 65 percent of the island's fruit ripened in the summer. This year, the summer harvest should be only about one-third of what it has been.

The reason is the plantation changed its planting schedule and adjusted cultivation practices to cut down the summer peak and have fruits ripening throughout the year. In adjusting the schedule, "the seasonal hiring just kind of fell through the cracks," Parker said.

The move will provide steadier employment for Dole's Lanai workers, with about 600 adult residents on the company's permanent payroll, Parker said.

The dormitories once occupied by summer pickers now will be used for construction workers who are expected on Lanai for major construction projects planned at Koele and Manele-Hulopoe Bay.

If teenagers who have been picking pineapple on Lanai can't find a job there, they should be able to find one on Maui.

Joseph Hartley, president of Maui Pineapple Co., said Maui Pine still has a summer peak season for which the company will hire students to work in the fields and in the cannery. For the past several years, the company hasn't found enough seasonal workers to fill all positions, he said.

Maui Pine already has its fruit-ripening spread out through the year, and less than 50 percent of its fruit is harvested during the summer. But there still is a peak that requires the Maui Pine cannery to run two shifts.

The company can't provide housing for summer seasonal workers, he said. "But we'll hire from other islands, if they can find an uncle or a grandparent or a friend to stay with," he said. He said the company could use about 900 workers during the summer harvest.