

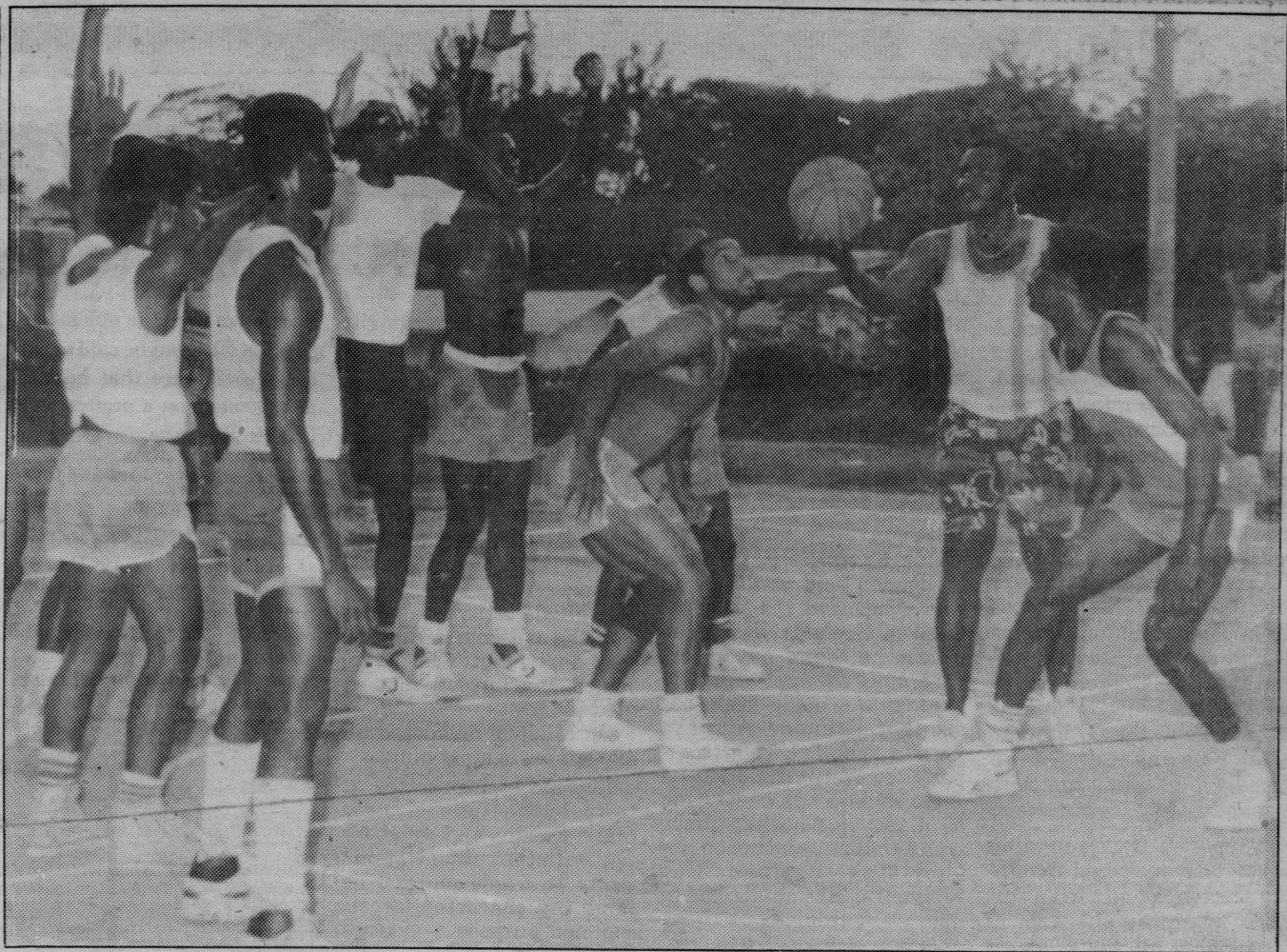
Sunday Sun

SECTION B

October 29, 1989



DANCERS from the *Pinelands Creative Workshop* performing in Boston.



ITS jump-ball time for Pepsi Pinelands during a practice session at Princess Royal Hardcourt.

Pineland's positive posture

Community making moves to improve image

by Dale Forde
SUNDAY SUN

P FOR PINE. P for People. P for Progress.

This is the philosophy of residents of the oldest housing area in the island — Pinelands.

Nearly 17 000 of them have come together to counteract what they call "negative publicity" the neighbourhood has been receiving over the last half century.

In its early history the "P" in Pinelands had become synonymous with "P" for Perry (the Guyanese-born magistrate Lennox Perry, before whom many of area's youths appeared for petty crimes). Pine, punishment and prison.

According to resident Hamilton Lashley, Pinelands got its stained reputation in the early 1940's, when houses were constructed there for low income families who lost their homes to flood.

Dwellings

By the standards of later decades, those dwellings were poorly constructed and occup-

ants lived under unsanitary conditions, with limited facilities. Many of the units were tiny and cramped and a single small flat was sometimes known to house a family of 12. Downstairs another family half that number lived in even more miserable conditions, the occupants all shared an outside dry pit latrine.

Jobs were scarce, and the underprivileged Pine residents found it doubly difficult to gain employment — largely, some believed, because they were from the Pine. Crime was rampant and many a family had seen at least one relative in jail.

Today the buildings may not have changed much but the atmosphere certainly has. Don't let the drab housing fool you; the spirit of the people is changing the face of that community.

The transformation started in 1974 with establishment of the Pine Lands Development Council (PDC) — a committee to administer and mould the area's development. Through this organisation's efforts and the co-operation of the residents, the "P" in Pinelands now represents Positive Progress

with Programmes.

The committee is organised like a government. Specified areas of the community are given special attention and are monitored by trained people, all from the Pinelands community.

Currently, there's an agricultural project underway on 16 000 square feet of land. Funding for the project is provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The programme employs six persons and guarantees an ample supply of vegetables at reasonable prices for residents.

In the area of education the council has set up a number of adult courses, including cake icing. The courses, held at Parkinson Secondary School for two months during the year, are conducted by Carmeta Napoleon and Dennis Skeete.

Classes

There are also supplementary classes for children in the area who are preparing for the Common Entrance Examination. Also "O" Level classes to

give further opportunities to young people who did not complete their CXC.

One of Pinelands' most outstanding areas of activity is sports. Basketball fans should be familiar with the Pinelands team, one of the top basketball squads in Barbados. It boasts some of the best or potentially good players in Barbados.

Dale Weekes, Paul Clarke and the Thorpe brothers are just some of the notable names. This team, like other organisations in the Pine, fits under the umbrella of the council.

The Regents Youth Group is also based in the district. Lashley refers to it as "the nursery for the sports organisation in The Pine". Pinelands' soccer team has done a lot of touring, including trips to Washington and Waterloo, Canada. Anyone interested in getting on the football team has to go through Regents first.

There are also darts, cricket, netball, table tennis and dominoes teams. The president of Regents is Mark Forde now a qualified referee, officiating at national and international games.

Probably the most out-

standing and best known group under the council is the Pinelands Creative Workshop. There are now 225 members in this group ranging from age four to 40. The workshop has performed various plays, including *Bussa*, *Footsteps in the Sand* and *Price of Progress*. According to Lashley the presentation *Nigger Yard* was to go to the Cannes Film Festival in Germany.

The group has gone on tour to Trinidad and performed with the reputed *Malik Folk Performers* and taken part in their anniversary celebrations. The workshop also went to Trinidad to perform in one of that island's top dramas ... and two members of the drama group have been offered scholarships to the University of the West Indies St. Augustine, Trinidad.

This dynamic workshop has also toured Boston and St. Vincent and is currently preparing to go to Boston again. They plan to tour Guyana, St. Vincent and St. Lucia in the near future.

The council has become very concerned with what Lashley terms the "Bronx style of gang

violence" in Barbados. But what has him even more worried is that members of the public are attributing acts of lawlessness to Pine residents.

"I am not saying the community is perfect. There are still some bad eggs, but there are some goods one to."

Plan ahead

The most immediate plan on the drawing board for the Pinelands Council is a *Love Thy Neighbour Programme*. Lashley said this programme is intended to, "make the neighbours aware of living together harmoniously. We hope it would not be limited to Pinelands, Wildey and St. Barnabas but the whole island.

Large billboards will be placed at four strategic points in these three areas to remind Barbadians of the importance of love."

Lashley sees this as: "The new way forward. The equal amount of energy people are using to create gangs or popularise them we will be using to organise a positive neighbourhood activity and recapture old Bajan values."



DANCERS from the *Pinelands Creative Workshop* display their energy.

