

FORTUNE
CLASSIC
The Jones
Nobody Keeps
Up With (Fortune,
1966)
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PERSONAL INVESTING

Those fantastic, "hedge funds"
Capital gains in coins

The Jones Nobody Keeps Up With



Alfred Winslow Jones

There are reasons to believe that the best professional manager of investors' money these days is a quiet-spoken, seldom photographed man named Alfred Winslow Jones. (The picture above was taken while he was on vacation in Mexico City recently.) Few businessmen have heard of him, although some with long memories may remember his articles in FORTUNE; he was a staff writer in the early 1940's. In any case, his performance in the stock market in recent years has made him one of the wonders of Wall Street—and made millionaires of several of his investors. On investments left with him during the five years ended last May 31 (when he closed his 1965 fiscal year), Jones made 325 percent. Fidelity Trend Fund, which had the best record of any mutual fund during those years, made "only" 225 percent. For the ten-year period ended in May, Jones made 670 percent; Dreyfus Fund, the

leader among mutual funds that were in business all during that decade, had a 358 percent gain.

The vehicle through which Jones operates is not a mutual fund but a limited partnership. Jones runs two such partnerships, and they have slightly different investment objectives. In each case, however, the underlying investment strategy is the same: the fund's capital is both leveraged and "hedged." The leverage arises from the fact that the fund margins itself to the hilt; the hedge is provided by short positions—there are always some in the fund's portfolio. There are about sixty investors in each of the two funds, and their average investment now works out to about \$460,000.

Jones's accomplishments have spawned a number of other "hedge funds." In the last two years, two of Jones's principal associates have left his organization and

set up limited partnerships of their own. One is known as City Associates (it has capital of about \$17,500,000), the other as Fairfield Partners (\$14 million); both have had outstanding performance records. This month a new partnership, Fleschner Becker Associates, will go into business as a hedge fund; its principals are Wall Street brokers who have done business with Jones over the last few years. Besides these partnerships, a number of other hedge funds are operating on a small scale.

In addition, a small brokerage firm named L. Hubshman & Co., which has also done business with Jones, has bypassed the partnership pattern and is setting up an open-end investment company (i.e., a mutual fund), the Hubshman Fund, which will invest on hedge-fund principles. It remains to be seen whether a regulated investment company can use Jones's techniques as effectively as a private partnership does. Meanwhile Hubshman's move opens the way for a large number of investors to buy themselves a stake in the hedge-fund idea.

A sociologist on Wall Street

For most of his life Jones, who is now sixty-five, was more interested in sociology and in writing than he was in the stock market. In 1938 he set out to get his Ph.D. in sociology at Columbia University. While working toward the degree, he served as director of Columbia's Institute for Applied Social Analysis and undertook for it a major project on class distinctions in the U.S. The project became the basis for his doctoral thesis, which was published under the title *Life, Liberty, and Property* (two years ago it was reprinted by Octagon Books, Inc.). FORTUNE asked Jones to condense the book into an article (February, 1941) and hired him as a writer. Over the next five years (part of it spent with *Time*) he wrote articles on such non-financial subjects as Atlantic convoys, farm cooperatives, and boys' prep schools. He left *Time* Inc. in 1946, but in March, 1949,

he was back in the pages of FORTUNE with a free-lance article, "Fashions in Forecasting," which reported on various "technical" approaches to the stock market.

His research for this story convinced him that he could make a living in the stock market, and early in 1949 he and four friends formed A. W. Jones & Co. as a general partnership. Their initial capital was \$100,000, of which Jones himself put up \$40,000. In its first year the partnership's gain on its capital came to a satisfactory 17.3 percent, but this was only a suggestion of things to come. Not quite all the original capital has been left in the partnership, but if it had been it would today be worth \$4,920,789 (before any allowance for the partners' taxes).

In the early years Jones was experimenting with a number of investment approaches, including the "hedge" idea, which was essentially his own. Increasingly, he began to concentrate on refining and employing this new technique.

How the hedge works

In effect, the hedge concept puts Jones in a position to make money on both rising and falling stocks, and also partially shelters him if he misjudges the general trend of the market. He assumes that a prudent investor wants to protect part of his capital from such misjudgments. Most investors would build their defenses around cash reserves or bonds, but Jones protects himself by selling short.

To those investors who regard short selling with suspicion, Jones would simply say that he is using "speculative techniques for conservative ends." As illustration, he is given to contrasting his methods with those of an investor who has, say, \$100,000, and elects to invest \$80,000 of it in stocks and the rest in "safe" bonds. Jones would use the \$100,000 to borrow perhaps another \$50,000. (Under the current margin requirements of 70 percent, he could not borrow that much to buy listed stocks; however, he could borrow even more than \$50,000 for purchases of convertible bonds and unlisted stocks.) Of the \$150,000 total, he might put \$110,000 into stocks he likes and sell short \$40,000 worth of stocks he thinks are overvalued. Thus he ends up with \$40,000 of his long position hedged—i.e., offset by a short position—and the remaining \$70,000 fully exposed.

This figure represents 70 percent of his original capital, and Jones therefore describes his "risk" as 70. (In practice, there is an added complication: Jones adjusts the dollar figures in a calculation that assumes some individual stocks to be more volatile, and therefore more risky, than others. Every stock in Jones's portfolio is assigned a "velocity" rating—e.g., Syntex's is 6.61, Kerr-McGee's 1.72—and the dollars invested are multiplied by these factors. The "adjusted" dollars are then used to figure the risk.) By Jones's method of measuring, the more conventional in-

vestor who put \$20,000 into bonds, neither borrowing nor selling short, had a risk of 80. If the stock market goes down by 10 percent and all stocks in these two portfolios do likewise, Jones will break even on the hedged part of his portfolio and will lose less on his unhedged position—\$7,000 instead of \$8,000—than the other investor. If the stocks all rise by 10 percent, Jones will make less than the other investor.

His problem, therefore, is to buy stocks that will rise more than the general market, and sell stocks short that will rise less than the averages (or will actually fall). If he succeeds in this effort, his rewards are multiplied because he is employing, not just a portion of his capital, but 150 percent of it. The main advantage of the hedge concept, then, is that the investor's short position enables him to operate on the long side with maximum aggressiveness.

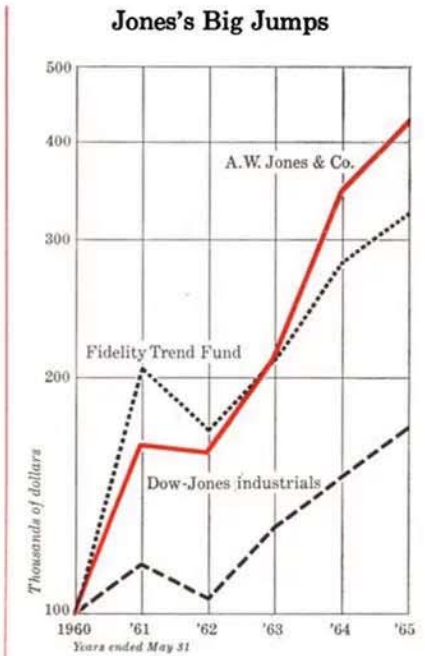
Jones's record in forecasting the direction of the market seems to have been only fair. In the early part of 1962 he had his investors in a high risk position of 140. As the market declined, he gradually increased his short position, but not as quickly as he should have. His losses that spring were heavy, and his investors ended up with a small loss for the fiscal year (this is the only losing year in Jones's history). After the break, furthermore, he turned bearish and so did not at first benefit from the market's recovery. Last year, as it happened, Jones remained quite bullish through the May-June decline, and then got bearish just about the time the big rally began. As prices rose in August, Jones actually moved to a minus 18 risk—i.e., his short positions exceeded his longs, with the unhedged short position amounting to 18 percent of the partnership capital.

In the "right" stocks

Despite these miscalculations about the direction of the market, Jones's selections of individual stocks have generally been brilliant. When he finally did turn bullish in the fall, he was long on a lot of the "right" stocks—e.g., Syntex, National Video, Fairchild Camera, the airlines. By the end of February he had racked up gains for the fiscal year of 38 percent in one fund, 31 percent in the other, compared to an increase (including dividends) of 6 percent for the Dow-Jones industrials.

Any hedge-fund operator will explain that although the hedge concept is essential—"I need it to sleep nights," says one of them—the real secret of his success is his ability to get good information about stocks and to be able to act on it quickly. The partnership form of organization is helpful in both respects, and it is worth examining Jones's arrangements closely.

Jones changed his firm from a general to a limited partnership in 1952 in order to accommodate several friends who were by then eager to have him handle their money. The new partners were let in on the understanding that they could withdraw their money from the partnership, or put



The remarkable record of A. W. Jones & Co. is compared here with the performance of, first, the Dow-Jones industrial average and, second, the Fidelity Trend Fund—which had the best record of any mutual fund in existence during the five years covered by the chart. The comparison assumes initial investments of \$100,000 (net of sales charges and commissions) in the Jones and Fidelity funds and also in an imaginary fund constructed along the lines of the Dow-Jones average. It also assumes reinvestment of all capital gains and dividends, including those that would have been received by a holder of the thirty Dow-Jones stocks. The figures charted for Jones reflect a limited partner's gains after the deduction annually of 20 percent of his profits—i.e., the amount that goes as payment to Jones and the other general partners.

This particular comparison puts Jones's record squarely up against that of Gerald Tsai, who until very recently ran Fidelity Trend Fund's portfolio and who, on the strength of his superior performance with it, this year sold an amazing \$270 million worth of shares when he began his own Manhattan Fund. Tsai's big year during the period covered by the chart was 1961, when Fidelity Trend's shares gained by 105 percent; he ran into trouble, however, in the next year. Jones, meanwhile, had only a small dip in 1962. (All the comparisons refer to years ending May 31—which is when Jones's fiscal year ends.) Although he misjudged the market and rode with a short position that was much smaller than it could have been, the hedge concept helped him to cut his losses somewhat during the 1962 market slide. Jones's best years were 1961 and 1964, in each of which his investors made 65 percent.