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Mary I. Barber

## *A Business Home Economist Gives Her Success Formula*

*Maryann Jones describes Mary I. Barber, who pioneered the first home economics department with a food manufacturer*

**W**HAT makes a home economist succeed? When Mary I. Barber was the first woman to receive a "dollar a year" appointment from the government and again when she was presented the army's highest civilian Meritorious Service Award, people asked what formula she had followed in her flight up the ladder.

In a nutshell, her recipe started with home economics training at Drexel Institute, Philadelphia, and Columbia University, New York. Then came service as a dietitian in Pennsylvania and teaching foods at Columbia University. Next she took a pioneering step by establishing the first home economics department with a food manufacturer, the Kellogg Company, Battle Creek, Mich., a position she still holds.

Miss Barber, when asked to describe her professional course, starts with her childhood days. "A career woman, to achieve success, should be very careful to pick out the right type of parents," she emphasizes. "Probably the most important factor is to choose parents who will cultivate a sense of responsibility which carries you farther in what you do than you realize your capabilities will permit. *Success usually comes from doing more than is expected of you.*"

As a child Miss Barber was surrounded by books. She read often, a habit that has lasted through the years. Her comment is, "If you do not read when you are young and form your literary tastes in your early years, you will not find time to do it later. My father was a great lover of Shakespeare, Dickens, Thackeray and Scott. We read many books before we were 12 years old. My mother, who had majored in music and social service before she married, gave us a rather broad idea of the needs of people in lower income levels."

With this background Miss Barber quickly learned how to work with people and to adapt to new situations. It is no wonder that Major General Carl A. Hardigg when presenting her the Meritorious Service Award said, "This is for work over and above the usual routine duties."

**P**ERSONALITY traits enter into success. Home economists visiting Battle Creek or meeting her in her wide travels testify to Miss Barber's friendliness and gracious hospitality. Her neighbors report on her parties: the fun they have at them and the new ideas on food preparation they carry home. She is a splendid bridge player. A gay sense of humor is another asset. As a public speaker, whether extemporaneous or prepared, Miss Barber delights her audiences.

A white clapboard cottage in Battle Creek, is Miss Barber's home. The underside of the eaves is painted rose color to reflect a soft glow through the windows.

For a recreation room she is furnishing her basement like the Dutch kitchens in Pennsylvania, her native state. Flowers blossom in the spacious dining room windows in the winter, in an outdoor garden in the summer.

Miss Barber's work with the Kellogg Company is making information available on ready-to-eat cereals; the process of manufacture, their place in the American food pattern and their use in cookery. A well equipped test kitchen offers facilities for supplying the latter information. As head of a service department, she works in close contact with sales and advertising divisions and with grocers and consumers.

In regard to her work, Miss Barber says, "My life has been one food problem after another—cooking, chemistry of food and nutrition, teaching, writing and selling food have earned my living. Eating always has been a pleasure and I believe people might well consider the preparation and consumption of three meals a day of major importance in maintaining health and happiness."

At the beginning of the recent war the army needed a woman who knew about procedures of army cooking and diet. Miss Barber, who had been back-stage adviser to the army's subsistence division for many years, was the immediate choice. She had visited posts throughout the United States and Puerto Rico and had conducted schools for mess officers.

**H**ER first problem as food consultant to the Secretary of War was the improvement of army meals in this country. She instituted written menus with procurement of food to fit the meals as planned. Soon she found that half her job was building morale. Apprehensive letters began to pour into the quartermaster department from mothers who had heard of the beans and salmon of the first World War.

So Miss Barber toured the country talking before civic groups, women's clubs and conventions. She reassured her audiences that in the 20 years since World War I nutrition had developed into a full-fledged science. "Your sons in the army are better fed than 60 percent of the civilians of the country," she told them. "When they come home on furlough you will be amazed at what the food and training have done for them physically."

Maintaining interest in professional and business groups has placed Mary I. Barber in responsible positions. She is past president of the American Dietetic Association and past vice president of the American Home Economics Association. She has headed both the Michigan Home Economics Association and the Michigan Dietetic Association.