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In our classrooms—

Writer, Teacher, Homemaker from Japan

by Dorothy Klingler  
H. Ec. Sr.

Very near and dear to the hearts of many of the instructors as well as the students in home economics is a visiting scholar by the name of Shizue Oda. Any student who has ever had her in class will probably never forget the magic-like skill she has in the art of food preparation. To see her chop fresh vegetables with a French knife or peel and section fresh fruit is truly a wonder and the envy of any foods major. Her Sukiyaki recipe and the art of making it was indeed a treat for the Institution Management Department.

Miss Oda is a staunch representative for education. Her education began in Japan when after much study she was able to take a government exam that certified her to teach home economics. Later she earned her dietitian’s diploma from a nutrition college and entered government institute for nutrition research where she worked for 10 years. In 1938 she came to Iowa State where she earned her M.S. under Dr. Pearl Swanson after doing a research project on ascorbic acid metabolism. She then went back to Japan and continued her study, this time in biochemistry at the Hokkido University, one of the four government universities of Japan at that time. After 3 years she earned a degree equivalent to our Ph.D. Miss Oda has written 10 books among which are textbooks on foods and nutrition for each of the different schools of learning in Japan.

After the war the Ministry of Education of Japan called her in as they were faced with the serious problem of the poor health of Japanese children. At this time America had sent over many dried and canned food items to be incorporated into a school lunch program for Japanese school children. The Japanese government needed someone to teach the people how to use these foodstuffs which were primarily non-fat milk and flour. For 3 years Miss Oda traveled over Japan teaching the school administrators, principals, and women how to use dehydrated and canned food items to the best advantage of the children. Many of these foods had never been eaten by the Japanese and it was a big job to show the people how to prepare them so that they would be accepted. She also had to show the Japanese people how important the school lunch program could be to the health of the children.

Miss Oda was then made one of the directors of an Institution of Social Education for Japanese Women. This institution offers many courses in home economics along with liberal arts. Along with teaching courses in foods, Miss Oda has chosen to do lots of lecturing and speaks to many PTA groups and women’s organizations. After the war the government set up a problem called “Studies of Life” and each state planned short courses in it for women’s organizations. Miss Oda taught the course entitled “The better way of thinking and doing for personal and public life.”

She is very interested in the common people of Japan and feels that it is very important that they must change their way of life and their way of thinking. She believes that the women and children of Japan must be taught to think for themselves, that the rural patriarchal family must make the change over to being more democratic, and especially that rural women must be taught new methods of child care.

Home economics education has undergone a change in Japan. Be-
fore the war every girl was made to take H.Ec. in high school as it was considered a fundamental subject. Most of the women attended for a good preparation for marriage. Since the war the education has been reorganized into a 6-year primary school, a 3-year middle school, and a 3-year high school. It is in the middle school where girls from 12 to 15 years of age take home economics as a required subject. The high schools have been set up on a more elective basis to allow the pupils to prepare for the college of their choice. Higher education consists of small colleges and large coeducational universities. Admission to universities is awarded on the basis of competitive examinations. Study in home economics is not continued by girls who wish to prepare for these exams in which they are competing with boys for entrance into a university.

Miss Oda is presently enrolled at Iowa State in foods and nutrition which is her main course of study. She also is taking courses in social sciences and related areas of home economics to broaden her education. Over the 2 years she has been here, she has written many articles about America and what she has learned through Iowa State. These she has sent back to her institution which publishes two magazines. She recently wrote an article on the American way of raising children to have good habits.

When asked what she liked about Iowa State, she replied, “I like the academic feeling of this campus, so quiet, and the very nice teaching with classes so small.”