Pleasing the Tastes of 800 Girls

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Pleasing the Tastes of 800 Girls
An Interview
By FRANCES JONES

Miss Florence Walls, dietitian and manager of the dormitory dining rooms of Iowa State College at Ames has a real job.

"I have always tried," says Miss Walls, "to serve good home-cooked food. People seem to expect poor food poorly cooked in large institutions, but I have tried to get away from the idea. We use the best of materials. It's really scandalous the amount of butter we use in cooking; we use all the student help that is available.

"We use all the student help that we can," says Miss Walls. "Of course the cooks and the kitchen helpers are not college students, but the waiters, desk-girls, table-setters, and some of the kitchen helpers are all in college. I always want to help students who are earning their way thru college as much as I can because I earned my way thru this same school and I can understand how much they need and appreciate the work."

Miss Walls came to Ames with only $75.00 to pay her way thru college. This was back in the days when room rent was $10.00 a quarter and meals were $3.50 a week. But in spite of her lack of funds, she determined to take a four-year course in home economics and be a teacher.

During her first year, Miss Walls acted as steward of the girls' boarding club of Margaret Hall. At this time, Margaret hall was the only girls' dormitory, and the dining facilities were poor. Miss Walls made what improvements were possible with money available, but the girls naturally wanted to keep the costs as low as possible and were willing to sacrifice nice dishes, silver, linen, and silence clothing for economy. Her attempts to add some of the nicer things to the girls' dining room were noticed by the faculty, and she was asked to act as steward of the faculty eating club, where with increased funds, she was able to accomplish a great deal more.

At about the same time, a cafe was opened in the Y. M. C. A. building which was also managed by Miss Walls, assisted by her sister. In the second year, Miss Walls was given complete charge of the girls' dormitories. At first, Margaret hall had the only dining room, but soon West hall was built, and Miss Walls and her sister gave all their time out of school to the managing of the dormitory dining rooms.

Then East hall was built and then South hall. "By this time," says Miss Walls, "I was just ragged. I had really hit the wall when I was in school, with the increasing demands on my strength since my sister had left her work to me, I knew I would have to have an assistant. At this time, Miss Ethel Carpenter was my very efficient desk-girl at East hall. I asked her if she would be interested in helping me, and since that time she has been my able assistant. When the Lodges were built, Miss Carpenter was given entire charge of them."

"So you see why I'm eager to give students any help that I can. They work under good conditions, and they are chosen because of their fine character. We give them a chance to help. Boys who forget to get up in the morning aren't waiters for very long. For the most part, student helpers are a success, but a few who purpose there are accidents: some amusing, and some that aren't so funny. Not very long ago, a waiter dropped a whole tray of dishes, but he was so fussed and then he burst out crying and sorry that I didn't even appear in the kitchen."

"Yes, we have to have rules, but they are common sense rules that have been worked out by experience. The dining room is organized with a desk-girl who keeps the books, and a head waiter, a sous waiter, and other waiters and who, with the desk-girl, has charge of the dining room.

"We try to make dining rooms as comfortable as possible. We want every girl to know every other girl, so we assign places for two weeks of the week. It is natural for good friends to want to sit together, but they are given this privilege at breakfast, Wednesday dinner, and at all meals during the week-end. During the other meals, they may meet new girls and know what dishes she makes best and what dishes she makes best and what.

"The girls have their favorite dishes, and I think the most popular is cherry pie with whipped cream."

"It is a big problem to not only give the girls good food that is good for their health, but also to keep the girls guessing. I think it would be terrible to know just what was coming on each day. Of course the girls have their favorite dishes, and I think the most popular is cherry pie with whipped cream."

"Of course things go wrong. It used to worry me a great deal," says Miss Walls. "The greatest part of my job seems to be straightening out the things that go wrong. Any one in this kind of work should be able to keep her temper, be tactful, and see things as other people see them. She must have a sense of humor, and be able to laugh at her own mistakes and then be firm as well as kind in doing the right thing. A pleasing personality is highly important. A smile will go much farther toward getting work done than a scowl."

"Pactical training is also necessary. Business training in accounting is very useful, and accuracy is essential to success. Institutional and dietetics courses are necessary for the work, and practical experience should supplement the theoretical training. Some mistakes are unavoidable, but one may profit by mistakes."

"To see things as other persons are seeing them," says Miss Walls, "and then do what is best when everything has been considered, is the surest way of pleasing the tast~ of 800 girls at the same time."

Mary Bartley Hoyt, H. Ec. '17, was employed last year as a teacher of domestic art at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines. She is also manager of the High School cafeteria where from 500 to 1000 students lunch daily. Her address is 4612 Blvd. Place, Des Moines, la.

Elsie Bentley Trumbower, H. Ec. '23, has been taking graduate work in food at the University of Wisconsin. Her address is 525 W. Dayton, Madison, Wis.

Jeanette Beyer, H. Ec. '24, is doing home service work with the Royal Milling Co., Great Falls, Mont. She conducts cooking schools, writes for a Home Economics column in a daily paper and gets out home economics literature.

Cassie Pearl Bigelow, H. Ec. '24, is city treasurer of Puyallup, Wash. Her home is at 626 Ninth Street, N. W. Her hobby is gardening and she has vegetables and flowers from her own gardens the year around.

Ruby Blackburn Lowlen, H. Ec. '21, whose home is at 5001 Hamilton St., Omaha, Nebraska, beside being a homemaker and the mother of one small son, is a part time teacher in the Household department of Central High School.

Collie May Bliss, H. Ec. '13, has been taking graduate work in Education at the University of Minnesota. Her address is 2323 Pierce Ave., St. Paul, Minn.

Emilie H. Boock, H. Ec. '25, is a dietitian at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Richmond, Va.