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## A Past Editor Goes to Town

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# A Past Editor Goes to Town

FUN DOESN'T STOP IN COLLEGE, SAYS  
HOME ECONOMIST PEGGY SCHENK

AT AN early age I was fascinated by a typewriter, and I have been writing ever since. But this is the first time in my life, on the first big job, when a letter—starting “Dear Mrs. Jones” and ending “Sincerely yours”—is my only means of telling a story, completely and clearly.

You see, there is a gracious and friendly woman, a voice, who talks to hundreds of homemakers twice every week. She tells them how to roll pastry, why flour must be sifted, and when to take the cake out of the oven. She demonstrates recipes for her listeners and helps them plan delicious, attractive, wholesome, inexpensive family meals the “Pet Milky Way.”

Mary Lee Taylor would be a busy, busy person if she tried to test all the Pet Milk recipes, compile all the cookbooks, take all the foods photographs, prepare all the radio scripts—and answer all her mail. Consequently—just among us in the profession—the major part of my job is to help Mary Lee Taylor reply to the “pull” of her broadcasts.

These are not dull “yrs of the 6th inst recd” letters, but interesting over-the-back-fence letters. I must remember that every letter which comes to Mary Lee Taylor has a person behind it, perhaps someone who had just finished the ironing and could take only a minute to write in pencil on a slip of paper a question that she was sure Mary Lee could answer.

This cross-section of American homemakers wants to know how to prevent meringues from weeping, why cakes have holes, what to do with left-over meat or a fresh cocoanut and how to use evaporated milk mixed with vinegar in place of the sour cream or sour milk in a recipe. More frequently than not, they want to know how to improve the flavor, creaminess or texture, or to cut the cost of a dish by making it with our product.

Naturally, home economics courses at Iowa State College have helped me answer these queries. But, in addition to that, I spent several months of apprenticeship in the experimental kitchens where thousands of recipes have been tested and developed until they have met the final approval of the tasting testing staff.

In white uniform I cooked all kinds of food, with and without evaporated milk, and critically examined the finished products. I watched the painstaking pho-



*Peggy Schenk, '38, former editor of the HOMEMAKER who has made good in St. Louis, tell about her work with eggbeaters and dictaphones.*

tographers take color photographs of prepared dishes. I sat in on the Pet Milky Way broadcasts while Mary Lee Taylor told a nationwide audience about the recipes for the food that was actually being prepared during the program.

Now I'm in an office with a dictaphone rather than an eggbeater. But, when a homemaker asks how to make her favorite cookies with evaporated milk rather than three eggs, back I go to the experimental

kitchens to solve the problem. There can be no guesswork when a consumer has taken the trouble to ask the question.

But homemakers with cooking problems are not the only authors of the letters which we receive. Professors, teachers and students request reference material about the processing of our product and its use in infant feeding and cooking. Grateful mothers send pictures of their sturdy Pet Milk babies and proudly quote weight gains. (These letters remind me of those days in home management house when I sterilized the bottles for Dickie's formula.)

There are, however, other fascinating angles to a new job. St. Louis to me was once merely the origin of a popular song, but it's a city rich in history and tradition now that I've hunted out the old court house steps where slaves were once sold, Spech's, where the same menus have been used for ninety-one years, and the place on the levee where the Lewis and Clark Expedition landed. Then there's the experience of living in a boarding house, which is another chapter in itself.

Swinging in the aisle of a street car on the way home from work at night, I'm proud to be a member of that fast-growing clan—home economics women in business. St. Louis is the stamping ground of many prominent home economists and, in addition, is a stopping-off place for others who are traveling between New York and San Francisco—and they are all grand people, and generously friendly to a neophyte in “the field.”

It's not so cold out here in the cool world, and there's a new challenge, a new adventure every day. Fun doesn't stop when college ends.

