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## Home Economist From Far Away China

Ruby Jackson  
*Iowa State College*

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# Home Economist From Far Away China

*Mrs. Florence Pen Ho is interviewed and biographically presented through Ruby Jackson's description*

**WORKING** quietly and seriously, her quick fingers equally adept at handling chemicals or white rats which she uses in her experiments, Mrs. Florence Pen Ho delves into research in the laboratories of Home Economics Building. However busy she may be, dynamic little Mrs. Ho, who received one of the National Home Economics Club fellowships to conduct her work this year, can always manage to flash a smile of welcome to any visitor who steps into her laboratory.

Each year the National Home Economics Association offers \$250 toward a \$500 fellowship for foreign students who are doing outstanding work or making worthy contributions to the field. This sum must be matched by some institution desiring to have a foreign fellow.

The Home Economics Club at Iowa State this year supplied the required fund to make the fellowship possible for Mrs. Ho to carry on her work another year. This not only affords an opportunity for Mrs. Ho to continue her study and research, but also gives her a broader vision of home economics philosophy through contact with the students.

In China, home economics is practically unknown and little practiced, but Mrs. Ho hopes to return to her homeland and inaugurate such a curriculum for Chinese college women. With this purpose in mind, she considers association with the Home Economics Club and its members a distinct aid in helping her understand and solve the problems she will have in organizing a home economics department in a Chinese university. Although she received last year an invitation to return and introduce such a curriculum in West China Union University in cooperation with the Gingling Women's College, she did not accept, for she wants to remain until she receives her doctor's degree.

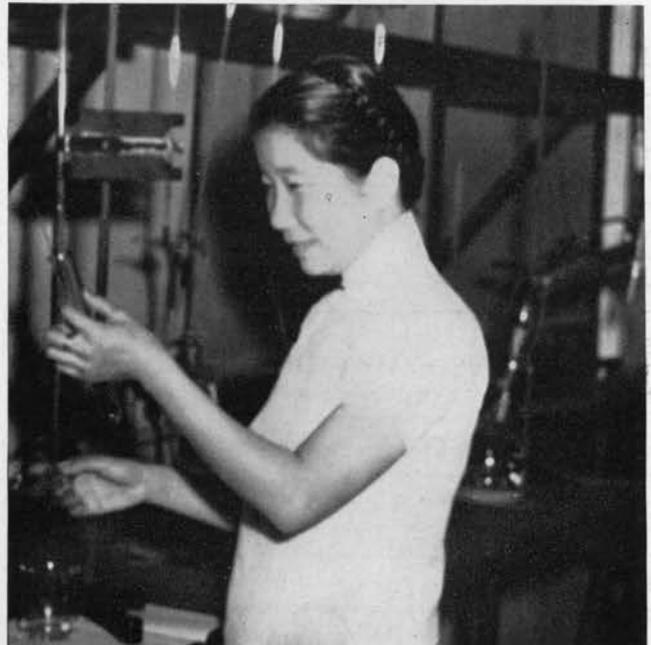
Mrs. Ho was born and reared in Tzechow, Szechwan, in western China. Her family is justly proud of their five living generations, who, according to custom, all live in the same house. The second floor of the house is solely a storeroom, therefore all living quarters, reception room, kitchen and servants' quarters are on the same floor.

People who can afford to hire servants never do any housework or cooking, but may be skilled in the arts or crafts. Consequently, when Mrs. Ho first came to America she was self-conscious and exceedingly cautious about doing her own marketing.

America began to play an important role early in Mrs. Ho's life, for she attended an American missionary school in Tzechow, Szechwan, for her first education. After both public school and primary high school, she went to a normal school and then taught kindergarten for two years.

Although this was already more education than the average Chinese receives, it was not adequate for Mrs. Ho, who says, "I was ambitious, and when I saw

others doing great things I thought if I would try my very best, then perhaps I could do them too." With this challenging determination, she returned to finish high school. She then took a year of pre-college, before entering the University of West China in Chengtu, Szechwan, where she majored in biology. In 1935 she came to America, going first to the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. She studied at Iowa State for a year, before going back to Toronto, where she received her master's degree in 1938. Again



*Mrs. Ho, shown in her home economics laboratory, confesses having been self-conscious doing her first American marketing*

she returned to Iowa State, where she has since been working toward her doctor's degree.

She is working on a problem concerning the effect or relationship of the protein in the diet to the death of pregnant rats and their litters due to pregnancy toxemia. This disease is highly fatal, and by her work she hopes to establish a relationship to the human situation in China, where much pork is eaten, and the mortality rate due to pregnancy toxemia is extremely high.

Cattle are considered "beasts of toil", according to old Chinese religious beliefs. The diet consists mostly of pork and rice, although they do have a variety of foods in addition to these, which are typically Chinese. For instance, a purplish, flower-like vegetable similar to mushrooms, which is highly nutritive, is eaten. They also eat a yellow pond-lily which is dried and cooked for food. One purplish vegetable might be called "ears", for it is shaped like the human ear.