1942

Engineering Enlists Women

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Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol22/iss4/6

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ACTIVE on the production front are nine Iowa State women who are enrolled in General Electric's testing course. As a group, we make up the largest representation of any college—almost one-third of all the women now learning about circuit breakers, waterwheel generators and radio high frequencies.

The testing course is a combination of classwork and factory or laboratory work. Like other working people, eight of us report for work during the daytime, some from 7 to 3:30 in the afternoon, and others from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Marticia Davis, '40, is on the "graveyard" shift, from midnight until 8 in the morning, working on aeronautical and marine motor production test.

Ada Packer, '42, handles the preliminary testing of radio transmitters. Also connected with radio testing is Billie Brooker, Ex. '43, who checks sidetone and modulation of transmitters. Dorothy Vaughan, '42, takes care of switchgear calculation test. On the other hand, Margaret Mauss, '42, tests rectifiers, rectifiers and motors in the consulting engineering laboratory.

Mrs. Miriam Stoddard Eby, '41, is testing frequencies on radio receivers. Norma Jean Rownd, also '41, is on control test with Jean Fey Dustin, '38. Jean's husband, by the way, is with the A.E.F. in England.

I am affiliated with aeronautical and marine motor experimental test.

Perhaps you are wondering why General Electric is hiring women for its famous testing course. Now, under the stress of war conditions and the consequent shortage of manpower, the G.E. training course for college graduates is opening its doors to women. We will replace test men on some of the work, and in other cases give skilled assistance to the engineers in factories and laboratories.

Requirements for the testing course vary. Although preference is given to women who have had basic science training with mathematics or physics backgrounds, the Iowa State alumnae are the only ones who have majored in household equipment.

Our after-work classes are held two nights a week. Add two more nights for studying, and you will see that our lives are very much taken up with work and study, for we work 6 days a week.

The classrooms are in a large building near the G.E. plant. For 2 hours on class night the subjects we study are part of a general engineering course to acquaint us with the electrical apparatus the company manufactures. Incidentally, we are now all adept with the slide rule, necessary equipment for our engineering math class.

After our present theory classes in the fundamentals of engineering are over, we will all do laboratory work at the college in the city.

The domestic life of the Iowa State women here has changed materially. Billie Brooker and I share a 6-room apartment with two other G.E. women, both graduates of the University of Colorado. We have just moved into the apartment, so we have not been able to establish an every-day routine. However, in the near future we hope to put to good use all we learned at Iowa State, such as the arrangement of the furniture, making draperies and doing the cooking.

Margaret Mauss and Dorothy Vaughan room together in a private home, as do Ada Packer and Miriam Eby. Marticia Davis, Norma Jean Rownd and Jean Dustin have single rooms in different homes.

At the present time we take our lunches to work or eat in the company cafeterias.

The matter of working clothes is one subject that has not caused us any trouble. While some women prefer to wear slacks to work, we like tailored suits or dresses. The men wear business suits, so why shouldn't we wear normal clothes?

The message we want to carry to Iowa Staters is that there is a place in the business world for every woman who wants one.

General Electric "Test" is aiming to train 150 women "engineers," this year. It already has approximately a third of that number.

"The year 1943 will produce 12,000 college graduate engineers," says M. M. Boring, who employs General Electric's technical help, "but only 4,000 of these will be available for private industry. In fact, the armed services will draw 250,000 engineers from other sources, so the need for replacements can be readily seen.

"While we do not expect these girls to become full-fledged engineers, no one can predict how important a part their work will play in wartime."

Bette Simpson, '42, describes the work of nine Iowa State women who are apprentice engineers.