In a Teacher's World

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As a student teacher I left campus life for a real job, says Betty Roth, Education Senior

A WAY from college life and transplanted into a teacher's world last quarter, I became a full-fledged homemaking instructor as part of my work in home economics education. Helping to make costumes for the school operetta, observing a variety of classes and finally teaching groups of active, peppy, high school girls became fun because I had been prepared by quarters of home economics education instruction.

Before a student teacher is ready to teach for six weeks she must take regular home economics courses, vocational education, home economics education and educational psychology. Student teachers must know how to deal with all kinds of problems, dull pupils and bright ones on paper before they attempt the actual handling of these cases. They are advised to equalize and balance curricular with extra-curricular activities, to start files of materials with an eye to the future, to be observing of people, of activities and of methods of teaching in various classes.

Eventually, when student teachers are fully prepared with enough "book learning," they go out to assist with teaching duties in high school home economics classes.

There are five student teaching centers: Ogden, Panora, Story City, Sac City and the Ames Public Schools. From three to five senior women go to each out-of-town center every six weeks. Each student has the privilege of choosing the center and arrangements are usually made for her to meet the supervising teacher before she goes out. When I was student teaching, our supervisor took us to several homes in Sac City where we might stay. After selecting rooms, we settled down to live like real teachers, even to eating at boarding houses and restaurants and paying our landlord for the room.

But we didn't stay settled long, for teaching homemaking is definitely not a settling-down type of job.

Our days were as long as they are at college, but our work was with people instead of books.

The problems that we have studied turned up as we expected, but our ready solutions that we had on paper weren't so ready when time came to deal with the real situation. We were all a little scared the first time something new came up, but the second time is always easier and our confidence in ourselves returned as we could feel the response the classes gave us.

There were four student teachers in my group. We all had different classes with different teaching problems. Our "hash sessions" consisted of discussions of our methods of teaching and dealing with our discipline problems, how we should present the new units and how to teach nutrition to a ninth grade class without getting too technical and still keeping to facts.

From the day we took over our classes we were teachers, not students. If at any time any of us needed help in coping with a difficulty, we talked it over with our supervisor, who helped us work out solutions.

Those of us who wanted to became a real part of the community during the weekends attended football and basketball games, school dances, the junior class play and the school operetta and pep meetings. On Sundays we went to church and afterwards the regular teachers introduced us to townspeople and to parents of our students.

One of the jobs of the student teacher is to learn about the town, its interests and attitudes. This was done through talking to clerks and visiting stores, washing dishes with mothers at a Future Farmers' Banquet in the community hall, a church, in restaurants and by reading the local paper. In this way we learned whose son sang so beautifully in the operetta and whose parents operate which store.

A typical day with us in our center should include teaching our classes, making plans for the following day, discussing past activities and future plans with our supervisor, observing a class, discussing teaching methods, interviewing the superintendent or principal and setting up equipment or the bulletin board for the next day. Another time is set aside for individual conferences with students in our classes.

An enjoyable part of this teaching experience was the visits we made to the homes of students in our classes. They gave us a better opportunity to know the students and to meet their parents in their homes and they made us more a part of the community.

The adult education classes in the evenings once a week afforded us an excellent opportunity to see entirely different techniques of teaching. We helped to plan the whole 10 weeks' course for the homemakers group and after attending one or two classes we each had the responsibility of leading the two-hour class. We discussed with seasoned homemakers new situations arising from the war in relation to textiles, home equipment, clothing for the family and foods to ensure an adequate diet. We contributed our knowledge from college courses and they contributed from actual working experiences.

Thus after six weeks of supervised teaching, we came back on the campus with a fuller appreciation of the possibilities in education and a broader outlook on our future experiences as teachers.