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Letter to the Homemaker Staff

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December, 1945

Dear Homemaker Staff:

I'm glad you're interested in learning more about the newspaper phase of home economics. Although my experience is limited, I can give you the view of the field as seen by an apprentice from her desk in the Marian Manners Department of the Los Angeles Times.

Our department is a division of the National Advertising Department, and we serve two large groups of people--the Times readers and the national food advertisers. We are primarily a merchandising service department.

When a Times advertising space salesman calls on a client, he tells him that the Marian Manners Department will promote his product in many ways. He explains that it will be mentioned in the daily food column written by Marian Manners, through our reader advisory service bureau and at the weekly Times College of Cookery.

The College of Cookery, the hub of our activity from October to June, is a lecture and food preparation demonstration given each Wednesday by Miss Manners. She conducts her demonstrations in the beautiful model kitchen on the auditorium stage. The foods are prepared before 600 women who are enrolled in the college. This cooking school, a modern version of adult education, retains none of the remnants of the old-fashioned circus type demonstration. The classes are integrated so that the series of lessons comprise a course of study. The more elaborate skills and techniques of food preparation are emphasized and the basic skills are taught incidentally. Miss Manners wants her students to appreciate the fun of food preparation rather than consider it a drudgery.

Since I am Miss Manners' assistant for the school, the College is my special interest. I help plan the programs; rewrite recipes to conform to our Times style, local market conditions and our advertisers' products; plan the program recipe leaflets; prepare the market order; organize the work preceding and during the cooking school; assist on the stage and help write publicity for the school.

The five home economists in our department comprise the reader service bureau. Times readers keep us busy answering questions by letter and by telephone. They call us continuously from 8:30 to 5:30 averaging about 125 calls a day.

Their questions are so varied that sometimes we think we are a combination of Emily Post, Dorothy Dix and home economist. Many questions are routine: "How



*Employed by the Los Angeles Times,
Joyce Curley, '45, past Homemaker editor,
applies her training in home economics*

long should I bake my apple pie?" Others are more complicated: "I'm having 12 people for dinner tomorrow. What could I serve that's different, easy and inexpensive?" Then there are a few questions that make us smile: "I just bought some brains and I don't know what to do with them."

This telephone service is one of the most important phases of our newspaper public relations because when we speak to a reader, we are the Times. Her most elementary question must be taken seriously because it is of importance to her. The appreciation we receive from those we help is gratifying.

We keep a complete file for each advertiser. It contains his advertisements as they appeared in the newspaper, editorial material supplied by the advertiser or his agency, our correspondence with him, tear pages of our columns which referred to his product and copies of reports we have sent him. At stated periods a complete resume of the service rendered by the Marian Manners Department is prepared and sent to each advertiser. This includes the tear pages, the number of times his product was recommended by a brand name, the promotion his product received in the column, over the phone, in letters and on the cooking school program.

The primary prerequisites for a position in the Marian Manners Department includes a thorough home economics background, typing and good telephone personality --a smile in your voice is essential. More than a smattering of patience plus a sense of humor are a great help. A position in newspaper home economics never becomes boring for there is always something new happening.

One suggestion: never be backward about asking "Why" in your home economics classes. Some day you may be answering a homemaker who has the same problem and expects you to know the answer.

Very sincerely,

Joyce Curley