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She Cooks Before the Camera

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COMBINING showmanship, cooking and demonstration is the challenging job Norida Frank handles as the first home economist for television station WOC in Davenport.

Norida, a 1951 Applied Art graduate, did her first show before the WOC cameras October 1, 1951. This was in the early days of September with no kitchen installations whatever in Studio "T." "About ten days before telecast date, October 1, I began planning and buying for the kitchen — then the cabinets, refrigerator, range, dishwasher, disposal," she says. The rest of the time was allotted to script writing, planning program formats and scheduling rehearsals.

On the air

Viewers in the Quad City area drool as Norida whips up such dishes as marshmallow ice cream, tantalizing meat dishes, cakes and pies. Her program comes five days a week at 1:30 p.m. on "Today's Cooking."

Those on the inside are the ones who reap the benefit of Norida's daily programs. Norida, who gets many inquiries as to what happens to food after a show, says about 20 of the station personnel gather quickly after the daily program . . . just in time for an afternoon snack. Due to the high cost of the station's grocery bills, however, as much food as possible is saved for use in other dishes.

Camera angles

Norida's chief job is glamorizing the simplest to the most elegant foods and displaying them in an attractive manner to the home viewer. To hurry up production she must produce all dishes in duplicate or triplicate. For example one would not expect to see a cake being made before the cameras, including the necessary explanation and "chatter" that accompanies the mixing procedure, ready to be taken from the oven in a short half hour. To solve the problem, Norida has a cake already baked and in the oven, which she brings forth at the proper time.

Unexpected incidents

Unexpected emergencies arise frequently, with which the young home economist must be ready to cope. She was advertising a gas range one day when the audio went dead. Unaware that the viewers could see but not hear her, Norida continued her "pantomine" until an engineer rushed frantically into the studio flashing a card behind the camera explaining what had happened. Though startled, she calmly repeated her commercial, thus clarifying the situation.

Another narrow escape came April Fool's day when she was sure the staff would pull a stunt. One other time the engineers had hard cooked eggs which were to be used in a cake she was baking before the cameras. Certain the same thing would happen again, she was surprised when nothing occurred as the program proceeded. She took a dish prepared with melted marshmallow from the range oven, not realizing the stove had gone out. The marshmallow was stringy and unmanageable. Remaining calm, she explained to her guest on the show that the engineers had put rubber cement into the marshmallows as an April Fool's day joke. The innocent engineers were powerless to refute the charge until the show was over.

Previous to her television experience, Norida had played major roles in a number of radio workshop productions for the "Children's Playhouse." During school days in her home city of Chicago, Norida studied dramas with a private tutor.

During September Norida added the title of Mrs. when she married Ned Mohr of Davenport. She will continue her "Today's Cooking" as she greets her audience "This is Norida Frank."