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## Meet Miss Engineer

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# Meet Miss Engineer

by Beverly Gould

Technical Journalism Senior

Does the idea of being "typical homemaker" to a brand new automatic washer bristling with a design engineer's inspirations appeal to you?

Or can you better visualize yourself testing hundreds of samples of steel and producing charts and graphs?

Or how would you like to see what goes on in the grease pits of a gas turbine as part of your job?

Two Iowa State women graduates have had these experiences as members of General Electric's Engineering Aide program. Pat Traylor '51, who majored in household equipment is now at the company's new Appliance Park in Louisville, Ky. Arlene Swiedom, a '51 science graduate is at the Schenectady, N. Y. plant.

## Engineering aides

When the shortage of engineers threatened G.E. and all engineering companies during World War II, G.E. began the Engineering Aide program to train college graduate women, who had a technical background, to perform some of the engineers' work so that fewer engineers could produce the same quantity of work. When engineers returned to industry after the war, the Engineering Aides were retained, but no new ones were hired. As a result, when the Korean conflict arose, marriage or returning to school for higher degrees had carried all but a handful of Aides out of the company.

In 1951 about 80 Aides came onto the program. Training consists of a series of 3- or occasionally 6-month assignments in various departments of the company. This is to give the girls a variety of experience, a better view of the company and a better chance to find out what phase of engineering they prefer to work in.

When it's time for a girl to change assignments, she talks with the head of the Engineering Aide program in the Technical Personnel Department, discussing what type of assignment her training and interests indicate would be most useful. Several interviews are arranged in different departments which could use an Engineering Aide. From those departments that feel the girl would fill their needs, she can choose her next assignment.

"One week last year I had 10 interviews because I refused to spend 3 months doing routine calculations, and that seemed to be the only type of assignment available," said Arlene. But this had a happy ending.

Pat Traylor, '51, Engineering Assistant in the Home Laundry Equipment Engineering Program



She reports, "Eventually we turned up an opening in a lab, which was just what I was looking for."

Pat had two very interesting assignments, which she said she enjoyed, even though they weren't related directly to her college training. The first was a 3-month production test for Aeronautics and Ordnance Systems where she tested components of an automatic pilot system for the Navy!

"Rather confidential work," she commented. "I was considered a curiosity there because of my home economics background and training."

Pat had this to say about her second and most unusual assignment—in the grease pits of the gas turbine test! "I made those test engineers swallow their guffaws about Home Ec. majors! I was certainly glad I had physics and household equipment mechanics courses and could use testing instruments.

"Here we worked in the immense, greasy, thunderously noisy factory where the gas turbines were made and assembled. Those turbins were for use in city power plants or railroad engine-locomotives.

## Equipment testing

Now, under the title of an Engineering Assistant for General Electric's Home Laundry Equipment Development Engineering, Pat's main job is to see if the new ideas thought up by design engineers are really practical from the homemakers standpoint.

In testing to see if one washer gets clothes cleaner than another, clothes have to be uniformly dirty. Usually the cloth is purchased already soiled with lampblack and oil. As a revision in test procedure Pat has recently been using radioactive bacteria. "I feel I can qualify as a zoo keeper, from the experience!" she commented.

General Electric plans to train the girls they hire, but Arlene suggests plenty of physics and technical courses are helpful. She adds that the girls accustomed to thinking in technical terms and dealing with technical information in any field are accepted for the training courses.