1957

Equipment Trends of 1958

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Sneak Previewing

Equipment Trends

WHAT'S NEW in equipment for the home is carefully guarded by companies until a product is released to the public. In December, household equipment juniors, seniors and graduate students, accompanied by three faculty members got a peek into equipment news of '58 while on a three day tour of Chicago. As visitor and reporter, however, I was not even allowed to take pictures in some of the companies. I had to check my camera at the door.

Nevertheless, we did investigate the magazine, research, homemaking and utility company aspects of the household equipment field.

The first day we toured the Hotpoint factory, testing laboratory and Home Economics Institute. Here miles of conveyor belt is used to transport unfinished ranges around the factory and to store the finished ranges high above the factory floor. The molding, stamping and assembling of the range are fascinating processes.

Hotpoint showed us how its ranges are tested. Researchers calculate such things as how many times the oven door will be opened in the lifetime of a range or how many times a certain switch or surface unit will be turned on. Then, by means of a mechanical or an electrical setup, the oven door is opened and closed that many times or the switch or surface unit turned on and off that many times. Every part of the range is tested in such manner and must pass the test which is comparable to normal use.

The second morning we visited the House Planning and Home Service Divisions of the People's Gas, Light and Coke Company. There we saw the latest trends in kitchen design, such as surface gas and electric units and built-in-the-wall ovens instead of the combined range. A ventilating fan built in to remove kitchen odors is practically a must in modern kitchens.

The Home Service personnel explained the type of service performed by their division. Conducting cooking schools in the evening, sending out recipe sheets to distributors at the rate of 50,000 a month, answering homemakers' written and telephoned questions, distributing special holiday booklets and giving demonstrations are all part of the home service employee's job.

At Sears and Roebuck Equipment Testing Laboratory, we noticed how products are continually tested. For instance, laundry equipment is tested by laundering clothes which have actually been worn and used and running them through the washing equipment. A completely echo-proof and sound-proof room, used for testing such things as earphones, was another interesting feature at the Sears Laboratory. In contrast to the lately-popular colored kitchen equipment, Sears showed an all-white kitchen as a coming trend.

A stop at the Chicago Lighting Institute concluded our second day tour. The 26-year-old Institute, sponsored by 40 different companies, is a dealer of services; courses are given in wiring and lighting techniques. Many different types and intensities of lighting were demonstrated in the Institute's auditorium which was wired with 200,000 feet of electrical wiring for this purpose. "Color is how you light it" was the statement dramatically proven by a demonstration in which a single color was lighted by eight different sources. These light sources included one incandescent light and seven different types of fluorescent lights: daylight, soft white, plain white, deluxe cool white, standard cool white, standard warm white and deluxe warm white.

The third and final day of the (Continued page 12)
trip began with a tour of Merchandise Mart areas which are of interest to women. The Mart was alive with activity in preparation for the big January show. Miss Olga Plishonig, an Iowa State graduate and Home Economics Director at Philco, showed us around the half acre showroom of Philco appliances. She stressed the importance of interpreting the woman's point of view to the salesmen of the products for the home.

Next we visited Harvey and Howe Publishers, who publish the magazine, "What's New in Home Economics." Miss Eleanor Howe, Editor-in-Chief, and Mrs. Amber C. Ludwig, Equipment Editor, spoke on the steps of magazine publication from the initial gathering of material to the final phase of distribution.

**Underwriter's Laboratories**

Underwriter's Laboratories was our last stop. Underwriter's is a nonprofit organization concerned only with user safety of all kinds of equipment. Testing of products is done in Northbrook, Illinois; New York City, New York; and Santa Clara, California, as well as in the Chicago laboratory.

At the Laboratories we saw them test iron cords. These cords must be able to stand a certain number of twists without breaking or cracking in order to gain the UL seal of approval. Researchers set fireproof doors aflame to see if they really are fireproof and then use fire extinguishers to put out the fires, determining whether the fire extinguishers are efficient. One man jumped and rolled and fell on an electric blanket to see if it would stand up under such treatment. All types of equipment and products are tested in ways like this. The manufacturer pays for the investigation of his product and may or may not receive the coveted UL seal of approval depending upon the performance of his product.

Our group of 21 students scattered at the end of the tour to all sections of the United States, Canada and Mexico for vacation but each of us took home a new insight into the field of the professional home economist in the field of household equipment.

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**Research (Continued from page 6)**

In studying improvements for home laundering, such factors as the relationships of the amount of soap used, the hardness of water and the temperature of the water to the removal of soil are recorded. A new method of testing the removal of soil was developed here at Iowa State. Swatches of fabric used for testing laundering effectiveness were treated with radioactive material. By measuring the radioactivity with a Geiger counter before and after laundering, the amount of soil actually removed was studied. Previous studies only showed the amount of soil that appeared to be removed.

The household equipment department is in charge of a project studying the electronic range to gain more knowledge on its use as an aid to homemakers who may buy the range in the future.

Cooking in aluminum is a relatively recent development, and the food and nutrition department has studied how best to use foil in cooking meats and fowl.

**Education of Family Members for Homemaking**

In the home economics education field, researchers seek to improve over-all educational programs and methods of teaching. They also work in developing ways of reaching more people.

Studies on a statewide basis to determine the educational needs of low socio-economic rural homemakers are now in process. Research shows that this group has special educational requirements and home economics programs for them need careful planning. In cooperation with the State Board for Vocational Education, the home economics department is developing tests, inventories and scoring devices which a teacher can use to measure the effectiveness of her home economics program.

**Guidance Into Profession Basic To Family Living**

Many women come to college not knowing to which field in home economics they are best suited. Studies at Iowa State have developed tests to measure the vocational interests of women in the field of home economics. These tests are taken by Iowa State freshmen. Results are used by advisors to help guide the coeds into the right profession. Perhaps some of you have already taken this test. At present, a study is being made concerning the relation of the vocation women choose after college to the results of the tests taken in the freshman and senior years. That is, the predictive value of these tests is being determined.

**Management of Resources**

The wise use of family resources is very important. Problems on ways to conserve human energy, use of time and management of money call for research in home management and family economics. What are the family problems today's homemaker is likely to face? How can she handle these problems so that both she and her family will have a sense of satisfaction and security? Research in this area aims to answer these questions.