

1961

1950s

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1940s

by Ruth Hackett Webber, 1949

The Forties saw the beginning and the end of the War. In the first part a man was either 4-F or in the service, and the campus ratio wasn't as favorable to women as usual. The shift brought more women to Iowa State College because families didn't have to pay to put their sons through school, and they sent their daughters. In 1941, home economics enrollment hit a peak of nearly 1,800 students.

Then the Navy landed, and the ratio was remedied — with seven men to every woman. The Bomb was dropped in Hiroshima August 8, 1945 — practically nobody grasped the significance of that — and the men returned, with wives. Pammel Court became a synonym for married-life-and-children. Suddenly it wasn't unusual to go to college and to be married, too. Some home economics students practiced their child development in their quonsets.

The Division of Home Economics had 70 full-time staff members in 1940, and grew to 87 by 1950. Dean Genevieve Fisher was in charge from 1927 to 1944, and was then succeeded by Dr. P. Mabel Nelson.

The College celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1947. In 1944, home economics research was incorporated in the Agricultural and Home Economics Experiment Station.

Home economics students shared a common freshman year then and selected their major as a sophomore. Around 1949, students helped with the planning of the "core curriculum." We had 6 weeks as seniors living in the home management houses, and we took turns being "mother" for the baby.

After the veterans returned, there was a formal ball somewhere each weekend; and everyone traded formals. No girl had a car; and we walked miles, acquiring the famous leg muscles caricatured in the humor magazine now long gone, "Green Gander." Men sometimes had cars, but they were generally for weekends only.

Skirts and sweaters were popular then, too; but hair styles were shoulder-length, in page boy or billowy "glamour." Shoulders in suits and coats were well padded.

Very few people stayed around for summer sessions. We took summer jobs as waitresses, camp counselors, or did a summer stint in other work.

1950s

by Ruth Abbott Remy, 1957

I graduated in 1957, so "home ec" as I knew it probably isn't too different from what you have today. Yet, I do know of several changes that seem strange to my "old-grad" ears.

A major part of every senior's year in '57 was home management house. We *all* lived there for six weeks — and we had a real live baby to care for. Having had no previous experience in baby care whatsoever, I think that baby was probably the most valuable single bit of learning experience I had. At least he gave me a bit of confidence in handling small babies — maybe too much. After our first child was born my parents visited us and went home reporting to friends that we treated him more like a fifth child than a first.

There are other curriculum changes — every home economics major in '57 was required to take art appreciation, basic food preparation (2 quarters of it), meal planning, and clothing construction — but the deletion of home management house looms greatest in my mind.

The new addition to the Home Economics Building (as it was called in 1957) was not there either. In fact, I believe they were just barely starting to dig ground when my class left school.

Two traditional activities that took place in the 50's were the sale of fruit cakes by the Phi U girls in December and the sale of cherry pies by the Institution Management girls at Veishea. I assume these two events still occur today.

Home economics during "my decade" was marked by the arrival of Dean Helen LeBaron in the early 1950's. To me she was a friend as well as a most excellent head for the Division (now College) of Home Economics. I did not have the privilege of knowing the former dean, P. Mabel Nelson, but my mother was in school under Miss Nelson and had only praises for her work. Home Economics at Iowa State has been extremely fortunate in having such able administrators during the last several decades.

For me personally, the *Iowa Homemaker* figured largely in what I thought of as "home ec." Doing a short stint as editor with Nancy Merchant Lysen brought into practice all the things I had learned in my major field of home economics journalism. The format of our magazine looked much the same as the *Homemaker* of today. Congratulations on your anniversary!