1945

She Traded Slide Rule for Saucepan

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Recommended Citation

Cobb, Priscilla (1945) "She Traded Slide Rule for Saucepan," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 25 : No. 7 , Article 4. Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol25/iss7/4

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I

The fall of 1942 my knowledge of Curtiss-Wright could be summed up in three words—"They make airplanes." This was a far cry from all I learned in the ten months soon to follow.

I was then a sophomore home economics education major at Pennsylvania State College.

One evening I read an article presenting the Curtiss-Wright Cadet Training program: Then months of training in mathematics, aerodynamics, drafting and supporting subjects at some college or university with board, room and fees paid by the company, and 10 dollars a week for living expenses. After the training the cadet was to work at one of the plants to replace the men who were leaving for the service.

We knew there was to be a program at Penn State and could secure reliable information about the course. Several of us made appointments the next day and asked all the questions we could think of. We were told it was to be a "stiff" course and the engineers seemed skeptical about girls being of value with only 10 months training. The subjects to be taught intrigued us—foundry, machine shop, metal shop, along with the math, mechanics, aerodynamics and drafting.

College credit would be given for all the courses passed.

What about requirements? Here we held our breath because we were afraid we could not qualify. Equivalent of two years of college, math through trigonometry, a good average, and personal recommendations were the main requirements along with an interview by a personnel director from Curtiss-Wright.

We left very much interested, but a justification still had to be made for leaving home economics education. We had two more years of college before we could teach. In that time we could be helping win the war. There would be time then to finish home economics. The fall of 1944 found the contracts on the C46 cargo ship being cut and there was less work for us to do. I began to wonder what to do next. Back to school, of course, but did I want home economics or engineering? Rather than lose two years of college credit I went back to home economics and investigated the changes for using my Curtiss-Wright training along with my home economics. Penn State accepted my Cornell credits for electives and with two more semesters work gave me my degree of Bachelor of Science.

Planning a career which would combine home economics and engineering led me to choose Iowa State for graduate work in household equipment. I found household equipment a field where a woman's knowledge of machines is welcomed. It gives a home economics person a chance at industry. And I know when I again get out into industry my Curtiss-Wright experience will be of great value.