An Editor Speaks

Marjorie Griffin Groll

Iowa State College

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**An Editor Speaks**

*by Marjorie Griffin Groll, '37*

**Being** women's editor of nationally circulated Capper's Farmer is an exciting job. It's not one that I do alone, for working with me is a staff of trained home economists, a specialist in household equipment, a nutrition and journalism major. All phases of homemaking are covered, not only foods and equipment, but also child care, interior decoration, youth, beauty and general subjects of interest to any homemaker.

The work entails everything from planning to writing and editing features. We test reader-recipes for the Country Cooking column, answer teen-age queries, letters from young mothers, and questions on all phases of homemaking. Then there are conventions to attend and advertisers and manufacturers to contact—for these folks are interested in having first-hand information from editors who are talking regularly with farm people in their homes and on their farms.

That is an interesting phase of the work on our particular magazine—driving from farm to farm in the various states. The purpose of such endeavor is to get background information and to visit with farm homemakers, learn what they are doing in their club meetings, see what shortcuts they are using to keep up with their work, these busy days, hear what they like to read in magazines, and to see how they enjoy seeing it presented—and oh, so many other things.

One may walk into a woman's kitchen and find her baking bread—just taking fragrant loaves from the oven. No, you don't have time to sit down and have a slice, but you invariably give in and enjoy it with fresh homemade butter, home canned peach preserves and a piping hot cup of coffee. Perhaps she's shelling peas or hulling strawberries; you sit down and work along with her while chatting about her problems and community interest.

No, you're not always looking for a story, but invariably when the woman follows you out to the car and leans on the door talking, you pick up an excellent short, or maybe what she says gives you an idea for a long feature.

Recently I did a series on farm kitchens, pointing up the time-saving features in a number of farm homes, things that when pictured or described in detail would give other farm families ideas for their new or remodeled post-war homes. We drove about 800 miles in spotting the pieces we wanted to picture, and in that time we covered paved roads, gravel roads and muddy roads in a blinding downpour. But the resulting features were worth every ounce of energy expended.

One of my most exciting experiences in the last few months was driving several hundred miles to see Oklahoma farmers and their wives fly in to attend a farm and home conference. Two of the wives were piloting the planes. You should have seen them step out spic and span, dust free and composed. It was intriguing to hear their tales of using airplanes in farming operations, to get repair parts, for dusting crops, spotting cattle, checking flood stages and taking the family on trips many miles from home.

As to actual composition, an editor's work does not entail as much writing as does a reporter's job. Yet there's many a time when you have to turn out a timely story on the spur of the moment. There is no end of editing of material and the basic formulation of the way in which it is to be presented. Shall it be illustrated with one picture, or many? Shall it be peppe up with detailed or humorous sketches, or shall it include both? Can a 2,000 word article better tell a story by being cut to 800 words, allowing space for illustrations and short cutlines? Of course the art director develops one's ideas, and in case an editor doesn't have an ounce of glamour idea, the artist always comes to the fore.

In these days of pictorial journalism it's a challenge to develop stories in pictures or illustrations. Those of you who have done it know it's not an easy job, but where practical, the added reader appeal is well worth the effort. No, I wouldn't exchange a position as women's editor of a national farm magazine for that of an aerial photographer. This work is sufficiently thrilling and far from routine.

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