Here's What's Going On Behind the Scenes of Iowa State's Home Economics Film

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**Home Economics Film**

by Barbara Parsons

FOUR HOME economics students at Iowa State are cast in starring film roles. Since last fall, Elizabeth Brookhart, sophomore; Margaret Schaeffer, freshman; Patricia Close, junior, and Lyndall Olmsted, sophomore, have been in front of movie cameras while shooting of a home economics film goes forward.

Work on the sound and color film, which is designed to help high school girls understand what a home economics college education is all about, began last summer. At that time, Steve Knudsen, in cooperation with the Division of Home Economics, and Candace Hurley, of the Iowa State College Information Service, wrote the first draft of the script. Mr. Knudsen acts as director of the film while Miss Hurley and the home economics staff give technical assistance on the home economics scenes. As the next step, the script was recorded so that members of the home economics staff could hear it and make suggestions.

**Film Story**

The film story begins in a high school study hall, with all the usual activities — and antics — going on. The girls file into the auditorium where they are told they are to hear a special talk. A speaker tells the girls about the many careers that are open for them in home economics. (In the film these careers are pictured in fast scenes, one after the other, as the speaker talks.) Kay, a typical high school girl, is enthused. She consults her parents and they decide that she may go to college.

From that point the film centers around four college students — Kay, her roommate Jean, and two other students in the same dorm — Helen and Louise. They have the usual fun of college life — football games and formal dances. And each has the same major problems that any college woman has — passing chemistry, picking a major and studying. Most of the scenes show Kay, Jean, Helen and Louise in classrooms.

When the time comes to select their majors, Kay chooses education, Jean decides on textiles and clothing. Louise picks household equipment and Helen chooses foods and nutrition. (It was decided not to present the film by departments but rather to emphasize the over-all home economics field itself. Four large areas of home economics into which most students go — education, business, public service and homemaking — are shown. Although the locale of the movie is largely at Iowa State, the film is not keyed to Iowa State alone, but is planned to be typical of any home economics school in the country.)

With the script approved, the producers got the go-ahead signal to start filming. A full-fledged search to find home economics students who could portray the roles exactly as the writers of the script had visualized them got into swing. The stars needed to be college women with distinct personalities so that a high school girl would be able to identify herself with at least one of the girls in the film. It was planned, too, that each of the starring players should have contrasting hair color — red, blond, brown and black.

Word passed around the campus that any woman student in home economics could try out for a part. After several days of auditioning, Elizabeth Brookhart was selected to play the role of Kay, Margaret Schaeffer was given the role of Jean, Pat Close was chosen as Louise, and Lyndall Olmsted as Helen. Laurayne Houlihan, sophomore, was selected for the role of Beth, a student in the new general home economics curriculum, who surprises her dorm friends with a character role as Alice, a studious high school girl, in the first scenes. Prof. William Murray, head of the Department of Economics and Sociology, and Mrs. Murray were chosen as Kay's parents.

**Year-Long Process**

Although the film will run only about 25 minutes, it will take a year to produce because of seasonal shots. In November, the man behind the camera, John Radaatz, of the College Information Service, was busy taking pictures of the football crowd featuring cheerleaders JoAnne and Jack Smith. Mr. Radaatz will have to wait until spring to get graduation pictures and outdoor shots of physical education classes. It will take many hours, too, to film scenes in the Iowa Falls High School and shots of graduates on the job in Des Moines and other large cities.

Planning wardrobes for all the cast is another of the time-consuming jobs that makes the film a year-long process. Raiding closets for suits, coats, jackets, sweaters, blouses, shoes and hats took nearly the entire first month after the cast was selected. Several things had to be considered. The picture is planned to show college life during 4 years, so naturally, the

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cast couldn’t wear the same clothes for all 4 years in the picture. That meant finding a lot of different kinds of outfits for a good many different occasions and weather changes. Color had to be considered, too. A wine suit on Margaret would clash with a red one worn by Lyndall, and the colors couldn’t be too outstanding or they’d detract from the action in the picture.

Errors Avoided

An error on some small technicality often becomes quite evident on the screen. So in planning the wardrobes, lists upon lists are made to keep track of what each student wears in each scene. That way, if a scene is shot on two different days, their hair will be combed the same way, they’ll have the same jewelry on and the same barrettes in their hair. Typical of what can happen, Pat borrowed a yellow sweater for the first shots of a scene taken early last fall, then couldn’t remember who loaned it to her when the final shots were ready to be taken in February.

Miss Marjorie Garfield, head of the Department of Applied Art, and color and properties adviser for the film, assisted with the selection of the wardrobes. She also helped out in a redecorating job. A large room for shooting the dormitory scenes was necessary in order to accommodate all of the camera equipment. Luckily, the largest dormitory room on campus is in Elm Hall which was scheduled for redecorating last fall. Miss Garfield selected the new colors, curtains and draperies. The two students who really live in the room were evacuated for 6 weeks while the decorating and shooting went on.

Faculty Helps

Nearly every faculty member in the home economics division will have had a hand in the film before it’s finished. Prof. Edna O’Bryan and Prof. Marion Lepley, of the Department of Applied Art and Prof. Norma Hollem and Prof. Fannie Potgieter, of the Department of Textiles and Clothing, have made arrangements for shots. Several other faculty members are shown in the film. These include Prof. Alice Waugh, of the Applied Art Department; Prof. Beatrice Donaldson, of the Foods and Nutrition Department; Prof. Carolyn Cason, of the Department of Institution Management; Prof. Jane Sadler, of the Textiles and Clothing Department; Miss Irene Nettleton, of the Home Economics Placement Office, and Miss Marquita Irland, of the Department of Home Management. Others will be included as the filming goes on. In one particular textiles and clothing classroom scene, Prof. Olive Settles’, Guatemalan costumes were used to make this one of the most colorful and interesting scenes in the film.

The entire film is proving to be especially colorful. It might seem that classroom shots in the applied art and textiles and clothing departments would steal the scenes from the color standpoint, but the production staff has discovered that, surprisingly, there’s a lot of natural color in every one of the departments. One of the most fascinating scenes filmed so far is an institution management class with the cast emptying cans of yellow peaches on a tray for comparison.
There's plenty of action, too, in the classroom scenes. Mr. Knudsen was watching students make butter-horn rolls in an institution management class one day and became thoroughly fascinated. So, that scene had to be in the film.

Filming a color movie presents one particular problem. It's necessary to work in small areas. Otherwise a tremendous amount of light is needed to take color pictures. Another problem, that wasn't predicted, arose in a textiles and clothing scene. It took an hour and a half to figure out how to catch reflections in a mirror as the student actresses tried on different colored fabrics. Another hour and a half was spent finding a way to keep the shadow of one of the stars from being in the film as she modeled before a plain wall background. They didn't have access to an overhead light. The problem was solved by adjusting the fight first one way and then another until the shadow didn't show up.

Another Problem

Still another problem was how to eliminate the reflection of the water in the swimming pool while Laurayne did a surface dive in front of the cameras. It was solved by taking the pictures at noon when the water was completely quiet and by getting the camera close to the edge of the pool.

Starring in screen roles means a lot of extra hours of work, but Lyndall, Margaret, Pat and Elizabeth have had fun. So far, they've had no trouble with grades—they bring their books with them and study in between shots.