Family-Consumer Resources Began As Domestic Science

The School of Family and Consumer Resources at the University of Arizona began in 1899 as a course in domestic science — and has gone through numerous changes since. The School became the department of home economics in 1913, after a seven-year hiatus when the sub-collegiate domestic science courses were apparently dropped. In 1933, the department became the School of Home Economics, which lasted until the final name change in 1984.

In 1899, domestic science, taught by Katherine K. Barker was described in the University Register: "It includes home hygiene, household science, chemistry of cooking, the study of foods and practice in all kinds of cooking, plain and fancy sewing, nursing, care of the house, management of servants, social studies, and customs of society."

Physically, the school has faced many changes, too. Until 1907, the "little" domestic science cottage was home; its history ended in 1916 when the cottage was razed for a swimming pool. In 1913, the fledgling department was located in the newly remodeled East Cottage, near the present-day Maricopa Hall. Only two years later, home economics moved into seven rooms on the third floor of the new Agriculture Building, which remained its home until the school moved into the just-finished home economics building in 1959.

In 1918 the facilities were expanded to include the Home Management House on Fourth Street. It was the "star" of the department as far as the media were concerned. In 1923, the *Tucson Citizen* reported that "according to figures complied for the past month, each student spent $15.52 for board," an average of 65 cents a day. The Citizen went on, Savings in the practice house were attributed to careful watching of the amount of gas used, the use of the fireless cooker, careful consideration of meat substitutes, watching of left-overs, and a general knowledge of food values."

A second, larger "practice house" was obtained in 1934 and the nursery school moved into newly-remodeled quarters in the old infirmary in 1935. This acquisition allowed teaching home management and child development both semesters instead of alternately, as had been the case previously.

Research began in 1925 when Dr. Margaret L. Cammack Smith joined the faculty as first home economics research specialist in the Agricultural Experiment Station. She was an energetic red-head, generally recognized by her colleagues as a first-rate scientist — innovative, meticulous, and not afraid of a good scrap when she thought she was right.

She and her husband, a professor of agricultural chemistry at the college, did pioneering research that showed that mottled teeth were caused by excess fluoride in domestic water. Together, they established threshold levels which could be tolerated without damage to developing teeth; their research brought national recognition to the College.

Research by school faculty expanded by the 1960s and '70s to include such topics as color change of durable press fabric; credit use; lifestyles and views of freshman women; views of Papago women toward menopause; use of alcohol by rural elderly; special clothing needs for rural handicapped; and teenage illegitimate pregnancies. And, research has continued to expand in the '80s.

School programs of education in the past emphasized "homemaker skills," but today they are professionally oriented and lead to employment in family or consumer fields. In the past, school programs were seen as being primarily for women. Today, courses and the various majors have appeal for both women and men.

John J. Thornber

Botanist Known Around The World

The name of John J. Thornber is familiar to botanists around the world because it has been given to a number of plant species he found. For years he was the acknowledged expert on flora of the southwestern United States.

Students and faculty at the University of Arizona today may not be aware that many of the ornamental plants that grace the campus were acquired through his efforts. He contributed almost 100,000 plant specimens to the University of Arizona Herbarium.

William Pistor once recalled that , "He could almost talk to plants. You would bring him a plant, and he would look at it and tell you what it was and almost the place where it grew." Thornber was even more accurate if he was given an association of three or four plants to identify and place.

Thornber was almost a stereotype of the absent-minded professor, one who good-naturedly accepted the teasing that often resulted from his preoccupation with ideas more important to him than his immediate surroundings.

One day he put on a new suit and went to class. When his wife found a pair of trousers hanging on a chair at home, she rushed to the classroom, fearful he had gone to campus pantless. Fortunately, it was a two-pants suit, but she had reason to be concerned. He had once almost left a university reception alone until a friend reminded him he arrived with her.

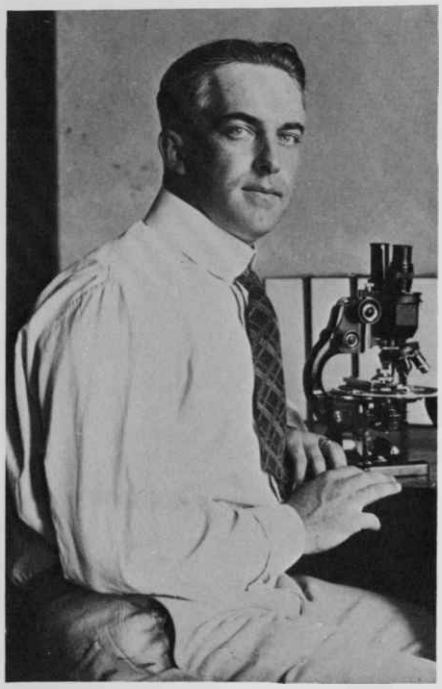
Like many faculty members who came to the university during its first 20 years, 1890-1910, he held no doctoral degree.

Nonetheless, Thornber was appointed director of the Agricultural Experiment Station September 1, 1921, and dean of the college the following July.

In 1928, he asked to step down after six years as dean and director because he wanted to write about southwestern plants.

In 1932 Thornber co-authored with Frances Bonker the popular book ***The Fantastic Clan; the Cactus Family***. Thornber also wrote or co-wrote many other popular and scientific articles on subjects in agronomy, horticulture, plant breeding and pathology, native vegetation and range management.

He died in 1962 at the age of 90.



R.B. Streets

Way to Arizona Unpaved for Plant Expert

"We drove through deep mud in Iowa and on dusty, unpaved roads the rest of the way, in a Model T Ford," recalled Rubert B. Streets about his trip to the University of Arizona in 1924. He had just received his doctorate in plant pathology at the University of Wisconsin. The environment, climate and plants of the Sonoran Desert, which at first seemed to him foreign, almost grotesque, soon became his lifelong passion, especially the plants, their growth and health.

"Doc" as Streets affectionately became known, had photography as a hobby. He documented numerous diseases in Arizona's crops and native plants that had not been described previously. Those descriptions of symptoms and treatments were generously illustrated with Streets' fine photographic plates.

A major contribution to the art and science of plant pathology was Streets' study of phymatotrichum, or Texas Root Rot—a study he continued for more than 30 years. After many years of field trials, he developed the widely used "Streets' Treatment" for Texas Root Rot. Streets combined ammonium sulfate, soil sulfur and processed steer manure, all effective, cheap and readily obtainable soil fertilizers. It remains the acceptable treatment in the southwest for Texas Root Rot in trees, shrubs and flowering plants.

Doc always had time for students' questions and encouraged their interest in plants of all kinds. A teacher for 40 years, Streets also served as head of the Department of Plant Pathology from 1953 to 1960. He retired from the university in 1978. He died three years later at age 86.

G.E.P. Smith

Ag Engineer Outlived Mortality Tables

When George Edson Philip Smith was 96 years old his life insurance company informed him he had outlived its mortality tables and paid him the amount of his policy, $2,085.

As he had been doing for years, he had once more demonstrated that he was not your average man.

Born, raised and educated in Vermont, he had a Yankee shrewdness about money, enormous curiosity and supreme self confidence.

An agricultural engineer, water was always Smith's primary interest. His "favorite research problem" was the correlation of movement of glaciers and of groundwater with valley fill formations. For years he studied groundwater in eight of the State's river valleys. Hopes of establishing a large irrigation project along the Rillito were abandoned when he demonstrated that there was insufficient underflow to support such development and that use of groundwater in the area depended entirely on wells that rose and fell in depth in the Tucson area.

William McGinnies, first director of the UA Office of Arid Lands Studies summed up Smith's career:

> "Smith stepped on people's toes. Largely because he could see what was coming in the future as far as the water supply was concerned. The general public, the pro-moters, didn't want anybody to know that Arizona had a water problem. That's where I think he got in trouble with the people in the state. I don't think it was his personality or because he was inefficient . . . .he was just honest."

After retiring, Smith published a list of his publications, more than 100. So was his age when he died in 1975. He lived 101 years.