

UA Home Economics Grad Is Nutritionist In Greece

Ethel M. Thompson

School of Home Economics

Miss Nina Kostopoulou received the appointment as nutrition specialist in the Greek Ministry of Agriculture two years ago, the only such position in Greece. As a member of the Ministry's staff in Home Economics Extension located in Athens, her work takes her on trips into the many Inspectorates of Agriculture throughout her country.

In 1954, after four years of study at the University of Arizona, she had returned to her native country with the B.S. degree in Home Economics.

Because of an almost completely destroyed agricultural economy in Greece following World War II, there was urgent need to rescue farm families through better health, home and farm management, and increased income.

Woman's Place Important

In Greece the woman of the household has tremendous influence socially and economically through her dual role of homemaker and farmer. Even as she rears her family, she works all day in the fields. Late afternoon and evening she cares for the garden, the poultry and the house. Because it is a privilege and a challenge to take part in a rehabilitation program as important as this, Nina accepted an appointment as an agent in the Home Economics Extension Service.

Her first assignment took her into one of the most remote and backward areas of northern Greece. Working in the Kozani area she worked with the women to raise healthier infants and children. Teaching ways to make life easier, she sought to prevent early aging, so characteristic of the Kozani area women.

She taught such aspects of homemaking as gardening, food preparation and preservation, sewing, care of clothing, home sanitation and improvement, and care of poultry and other domestic animals. Where she recognized special abilities she developed them through individual attention.

Travel Was Difficult

Some of the villages were only five and ten miles apart, but it often took two and three days to go from one to the other. Because of poor roads, often deep with mud, the buses frequently made only one trip a day. (The present Greek government now has a major road building program.)

Miss Nina Kostopoulou was the first student to study at the University of Arizona under the sponsorship of the Tucson-Trikala affiliation program with Greece. She arrived here in 1950 and four years later received the degree of B.S. with a major in food and nutrition.

She held meetings after the women's work in the tobacco and cotton fields was done and on Sundays after church. At first, social custom made contacts difficult, but often help came from the unexpected, sometimes even from the man of the family who urged his wife to learn the new ways.

When hogs were killed as a part of the Christmas social custom she showed how to preserve the meat. She taught that the custom of swaddling the infants, known as "Fascioma," was unwise; how to feed them properly; how to cook vegetables properly, and to save the water in which they were cooked; how to cook by methods other than frying and without strong spices. She arranged health talks by physicians and midwives.

New Methods Like Magic

The women thought she used magic when they first saw a glass jar of tomatoes which she had canned in liquid. The custom had been to make a thick tomato puree and then dry it in the sun and use for flavoring purposes only.

NUTRITION EXHIBIT demonstrates a low cost menu for a farm family. Miss Kostopoulou is shown here at the extreme left.



Upon occasion she was known as the poultry woman, the soap maker and the cook. Using bricks for support, she taught how to raise the stove and cement sink to suitable working levels and how to obtain good drainage. She taught that simple well-fitting dresses were better than full overly embroidered skirts or heavy dresses which often were too hot and tight for comfort.

After seven months of this work she became a member of the staff at the Agricultural School of Home Economics at University Farm in Salonika in northern Greece. There she worked with American and Greek personnel for two years. She taught classes in food and nutrition and then went with her students out into the villages to help them put their new knowledge into practice. She was made the director of this school during the second year.

Back to the UA Again

Following that experience Nina was sent to Athens to her present position as nutrition specialist. Knowing that to fill this position properly she needed further study, she was granted a year's leave of absence to return to Arizona to her alma mater. Here she is working toward the M.S. degree in Human Nutrition. She is also taking a special course in sociology, studying rural-urban populations, their trends, modes and standards of living, and problems growing out of changing community patterns and organization.

Upon completion of her studies at the University of Arizona she will work this summer with home economics personnel in the UA Agricultural Extension Service. There she will observe the training and use of lay leaders and their work with boys and girls in 4-H. She will visit the county extension offices and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Before returning to Greece she will visit the Foreign Training Service in the United States Department of Agriculture.