

Fifty Years of Home Economics

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This is the fiftieth anniversary of home economics teaching and research, marking a half century of significant accomplishment.

Largely through the efforts of home economists, America's understanding of nutrition and applications of its principles have become everyday affairs. Nutrition information constantly reaches almost every citizen throughout the nation. Through classroom, school lunch, extension service, mass media, packaging, publications and word of mouth, such teaching reaches everyone.

Home economics has contributed research which has spurred many programs of education and social action.

New Knowledge in Many Areas

Research in home economics has pushed forward frontiers of knowledge and provided a basis for beneficial action in such areas as:

1. *Studies of food composition and nutrition, among the earliest of the studies, which has led home economics out of the chaos of cults and fads and opened a whole new field of research and teaching.*
2. *Studies of food consumption and appraisals of the nutritive value of diets, revealing common inadequacies of diets and providing a basis for education in nutrition and such government action as enrichment of cereals and bread.*
3. *Studies of family expenditures, consumption, and saving. Such studies have provided public agencies with data essential for setting budget standards for programs of income maintenance through social insurance, minimum wage, and public assistance.*
4. *Research in household sanitation, in contributing to hygienic standards for households and institutions, and importantly to the nation's health.*

Dr. Hall is Director of the School of Home Economics.

1909 - 1959

It was quite a fifty years, the most dramatic era in human history--and the new heroine, Home Economics, played a leading role. We doubled our population and fed them better than ever before. We fought two world wars, feeding our own armies, many of our allies, and afterward the impoverished of half a world.

The lesson of nutrition, of balanced diets, of vitamins and minerals, went out of classroom and laboratory into the common store of everyone's knowledge. We had a decade of depression, yet nutritional standards were upheld. We saw, in this half century, the American kitchen changed from a dark, unsanitary workhouse to a surgically clean and amazingly equipped food preparation unit.

America learned to make, sew and wear new cloth of man-made fibers, as well as improved uses for existing fibers. Child management turned from instinct to a social science, while the training in home management also evolved.

In all of that, the drama of an unfolding technical civilization, this new heroine, Home Economics, had the star's role. The story of that drama is told here by Dr. Hall.

Making Smarter Shoppers

5. *Research in textiles and clothing. Consumer purchasing is done more intelligently, less wastefully, because of such standards as those for pattern sizes, informative labeling, and proper laundering and dry cleaning.*
6. *Studies of housing needs of families, and of household tasks, have led to more functional house planning, more efficiently arranged kitchens and other activity centers, and improvements in appliances.*
7. *Research studies in family relationships and in child development have contributed to more satisfying life within the home and to better group care of children outside the home.*

Home economics has devoted its major energies to the application of scientific knowledge to educational and service programs on behalf of individuals and families. During the depression years, advice and guidance in food preparation and preservation, as well as education in ways to maintain or achieve desirable nutritional levels despite cuts in food expenditures, were of inestimable value to family health.

We Live Better Today

The consumer education movement — to which home economics contributed so much — resulted in an understanding of principles of buying and consumption. Home economics may claim credit for much progress toward healthful, comfortable, satisfying living.

The family food supply is safer and more wholesome because the homemaker has been taught the principles of food preparation, preservation and storage, and also because home economists have led consumer movements that have brought about enactment of more adequate measures for food and beverage control.

Household tasks are simplified through technological developments, through better cookbooks, more informative labeling of products, clearer instructions in the use of household appliances and supplies. Houses in general are more attractive, convenient, and comfortable.

New Professional Openings

Home economics has helped to give status to homemaking and at the same time has opened professional opportunities for women and created a variety of services to society through its many types of gainful employment.