

Milestones That Mark Our 50th Year

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The following is the second of five installments of the history as compiled by Cleo Bryan. This mimeographed booklet was distributed to members attending the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting in New York City September 8-13, 1984.

RECALLING EARLY CONCERNS

The Association business in the early 30's concerned such things as policy for sending flowers in case of a death in the family; gifts in case of illness and gifts when an agent left service or married. Not until the middle 40's were the majority of agents allowed to remain on the job if they married. In time of war or depression, we saw a return to basics. A surplus of cotton resulted in the mattress program. Preservation of whole animals, rat control, getting rid of bedbugs, soap making, cleaning sewing machines, culling chickens, remodeling, making dress forms, uses of feed sacks, child feeding, simplification of housework, kitchen planning, and roach control were main concerns in our proud past — by me! (sic) the future looked promising.

In 1934, the Association was named the "Home Demonstration Agent's National Association." Members set objectives for the organization, which are still relevant today:

- To provide a permanent national organization for Home Demonstration Agents of the United States of America and its Territories.
- To raise professional standards.
- To promote fellowship among its members.
- To provide a centralized means for exchanging ideas and methods.
- To encourage the organization of new state associations of Home Demonstration Agents.

Handbooks, constitutions changes and program emphasis have been necessary throughout the 50-year span. The first constitution was adopted in 1934. Miss Clara R. Brian, Bloomington, IL was the first historian of the Association. Recognition of Home Demonstration Agents began in 1944.

REACHING INTO BROADER FIELDS

We have served as the out-of school educational arm of the state Land Grant Colleges, in cooperation with USDA, and county governments. By its successes, Extension home economics has emerged from a period of winning confidence of clientele to a program that deals with complex problems where judgment as well as knowledge are essential to success.

Our demonstration methods centered around simple production practices, preservation, family living concerns and home management methods to save time and energy. It was the touchstone that opened the door to rapid expansion into broader fields. Our work was mostly with rural farm home families until 1946 when the Research and Marketing Act provided help to city, suburban and some urban centers, when some home demonstration agents and consumer specialists were put on full time.

Our record of attainment has and is increasingly attracting the attention of other countries around the world. We must duly consider the experiences and rapid changes of the past while also recognize that change will accelerate in the future. We must "sift the past, discard the chaff and keep the gold."

The World War II period-1941 to 1947 — was "hectic." War food expansion, information and mobilization programs were held in schoolhouses throughout the nation. Extension staff helped with food rationing and worked actively on war boards. The significant events in our lives seem to be sudden, subtle and unheralded. An aftermath of World War II was a vast accumulation of new research knowledge, the development of new technology, and many problems requiring decision-making. These challenges resulted in employment of more agents and the use of paraprofessionals to assist agents.