

Professor retires after forty years service at YSU

Oct. 18 marks the end of 40 years as a home economist for Dr. Ilajeon Feldmiller, home economics.

Feldmiller graduated October 18, 1945, from Penn State University, and the next week started to teach vocational home economics at Sugargrove Seminary High School, a small school with all seven of the faculty under 27 years of age.

After two years, she worked in Bedford County as a home economics extension agent, philosophically differing with the established program (the agent was to be the authority rather than training local leaders).

Feldmiller was offered a position in her home town, Cochranon, Pa., with her high school chemistry teacher as principal. Making home visits for students in the vocational home economics program was a lark. Parents and grandparents knew her ancestors and usually were committed to the well-stated goals. Rural and small town families, at that time, lived with more community pressure and support than she sees today in the same places.

Getting an assistanship in household equipment at Ohio State University gave her the opportunity to assist in research and teaching and get a master of science degree.

Work in the business world, Detergents, Inc., the makers of *All*, as a home laundry consultant to home economics departments in northeastern Ohio, allowed for observation and motivation to contribute to teacher education. Rather than move to St. Louis with the company, purchased by Monsanto, she traveled in Europe for a month with a Thai friend from graduate school. Their different cultures certainly made sightseeing interesting, she said.

The position was in Perry County, Ohio, as a home economics extension agent where she could stay in the background and give local leaders the recognition and expertise contributing to families and communities. One of those leaders became mayor of her town, one 4-H member heads research in household equipment at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and a number are home economists now. Then in April 1957, at the Home Economics Association annual meeting, Wilma A. Brown, chairman of Home Economics at Youngstown College, said she was leaving and suggested applying for the position.

Meeting with Dr. Claire Worley, head of the biology department, and who started home economics, and with President Jones, she was con-

vinced there was work to do. At the time, there was a similar position at Akron, but they paid \$300 less.

After a summer in a workshop at the University of Pennsylvania, the new head of home economics came to Youngstown College, soon to be a university. Two transfer students had graduated from the two-year old program and there were 35 majors and three limited service faculty. For fifteen years, Feldmiller served as head, later, chairman, and saw the program grow in numbers of students, faculty, and facilities. When she resigned as chairman, most of the planning was done for the new department in Cushwa Hall.

Feldmiller said that teaching in a university where most of the students commute and many are first generation college students held some surprises: education is a privilege, but to some it is hurdles to a degree; departments that offer remedial courses or make up high school deficiencies (chemistry, English, math) get more resources especially faculty, and grow more rapidly than those who do not; communication channels have improved, but decisions are sometimes surprises when reported.

YSU is a great place to work, said Feldmiller. "There is a

variety of students; the faculty members are interesting, and the administrators dedicated."

She had alternate summers to study for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Ohio State, then having a year and later two quarters to finish the degree. Learning strategies for home management in the form of simulation games were developed and studied for the dissertation.

Through most rewards at the University, Feldmiller admits that there have been disappointments: a day care center has not been recognized as an

academic and social need, rehabilitation for homemakers (men and women) to give independent living has not caught on, in this traditional community, and that support for the nuclear family has come from the extended family rather than agencies with other, possibly helpful ideas.

"Home Economics stands for the ideal home life for today, unhampered by the traditions of the past stated by Ellen H. Richards in 1904 has guided the work of this home economist for the past forty years," ended Miller.



DR. ILAJEAN FELDMILLER

JOHN GATTA/THE JAMBAR