

In memoriam

Marie Ferree Brant

Marie Ferree Brant died Dec. 2, 2005, at Sutter Davis Hospital, following complications from surgery. She was 82 years old, born Dec. 12, 1922, near Gays, IL, and a very small historic town in central Illinois.

Marie Ferree Brant received a bachelor's degree from Eastern Illinois State University in 1944. Eastern Illinois was established as a two-year teaching school Charleston, Illinois. She worked as a teacher from 1944 to 1948 in Illinois public schools. From 1948 to 1964, she was a food production manager with Stouffer Corp., and a food service director for the University of North Dakota. She enrolled at Michigan State University, East Lansing. After completing a Master's of Science degree, she served as a food-marketing specialist in Cooperative extension at Michigan State University during the early 1960s.

While at MSU, she participated in a nationally recognized Cooperative Extension program on marketing. Her extension faculty job was to provide information on agricultural products to wholesalers, retailers and consumers. She extensively wrote news columns, published hundreds of newsletters, made dozens of radio broadcasts and made extensive use of the new educational medium of television. Her objective was to have better-informed consumers who could get the most for their food dollar. This pioneering effort was recognized as an important link in communicating "agricultural information" to consumers.

In October 1964, Brant joined the University of California Agricultural Cooperative Extension as the Consumer Food Marketing Specialist in the Department of Food Science and Technology, UC Davis. She held the position for 20 years until her retirement on June 30, 1984. In 2001, she married A. Wade Brant, Ph.D., a retired meat and poultry specialist with the UC Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service, UC Davis.

During her career in California, she took part in or led the development of organized regional training programs for the California consumer and other Cooperative extension personnel. Her programs focused on a wide range of food-related topics, emphasizing consumer-marketing economics. She was very productive in communicating with the California public. She regularly wrote food marketing information for newspaper columns, presented talks on radio and television; and regularly wrote food marketing information bulletins for distribution nationwide.

She was an active member of the national Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) and the Northern California Section of IFT. She served on many key commodity and government marketing policy committees, including the U S Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) National Expert Panel on Food Safety and Nutrition. This committee's recommendations were used to direct the food marketing and food safety programs of federal and state government agencies in the years ahead. Recognition of her achievements are included in the eighth edition (1973) of "Who's Who of American Women."

She was known as a trailblazer in her time. As a great communicator, she used all forms of media to carry the message in her work. She launched a popular newsletter called "Marketing Memos" that contained information of interest to food educators, editors, home economists, consumers, and nutritionists on food processing and food trends.

While Marie's primary objective was communications, she also cooperated extensively with UC County advisers, Specialist of CE, and research faculty on defining what consumers are really seeking in the marketplace. For example, she established when growers should pick oranges that would meet minimum consumer expectations when purchased. This work was done with Ernestine Ivans, Home Economist, University of California Cooperative Extension, Tulare County and illustrated how Marie cooperated extensively in her research and educational programs.

She was the co-editor of the Northern California Institute of Food Technologists' "Hornblower". Her quick wit and sense of humor made her a successful presenter in her popular "road show" on educational training for UC Cooperative extension advisers, consumers and consumer educators. This program brought food science and nutrition specialists from UC Davis to counties throughout the state to deliver science based information on contemporary issues. Further, Marie Ferree developed a marketing board game that illustrated the complex decisions farmers and food marketers faced when meeting consumer demand for agriculture products. She was one of the original IFT communicators and served as a public representative on the California Iceberg Lettuce Commission.

She enjoyed traveling, reading, sewing, quilting, scrapbooking and spending time with family and friends.

At the time of her death, she was survived by her husband, A.Wade Brant and his family; her brother, Robert of Tehachapi, CA; a niece, Kristie, and nephews Kent and Kelly from Southern California; several grandnieces and nephews; and numerous cousins.

(Some information came from Obituary from the "The Davis Enterprise," Thursday, December 8, 2005.)