The Nutriture of People

From The Yearbook of Agriculture (USDA 1959), “The Nutriture of People”

1959 “...Although more Americans over 60 own their own homes than do younger people, institutions for older persons also are increasing more rapidly than for any other age group.

“Institutional food service generally is planned to provide approximately the amounts of nutrients recommended for the largest group in the institution. Several studies between 1948 and 1956 of older groups in institutions have indicated however, that the daily meals, as served, may provide recommended amounts of nutrients, but the actual nutrient intake levels of the older individuals often are below the recommended amounts.

“This situation is not unlike comparisons of intake levels of families as a whole and of the individual members of families. Among the groups in large institutions, however, there is less consideration of individual food habits and food preferences in planning menus than there would be for family groups.

“Studies by the California, Florida, and Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Stations between 1950 and 1956 indicated that the nutrient intake levels of older groups in institutions generally are substantially lower than the nutrient intake levels of older persons in individual homes. Most of the residents in public institutions consumed considerably less than recommended amounts of all nutrients. . . .

“When their intakes of iron and of protein were adequate, some relationship was evident between the intake of iron and protein and the hemoglobin. When intakes of iron and protein are generally high, hemoglobin levels may be rather consistent — an indication that hemoglobin beyond certain intake levels does not generally increase with higher intakes.”

Agnes Fay Morgan, co-author of the essay excerpted above, was a pioneer among women in American science. Morgan came to UC Berkeley’s faculty in 1915. The next year, she became a founding co-chair of the Department of Home Economics. Two years later she was sole chair of the new Department of Household Science, within UC Berkeley’s College of Agriculture. Her goal was to validate or debunk common household customs of cookery, clean living and good order by scientific means, and in that way promote sound practices in this tradition-bound arena. Those who studied under Morgan were well qualified to teach science and nutrition courses, along with the cooking and sewing classes one might expect of a home economics graduate.

Morgan’s service to the University has been recognized in many ways, including a special symposium held on the 50th anniversary of her joining the faculty and the naming of Agnes Fay Morgan Hall, UC Berkeley’s nutrition building, in her honor.

UC Professor Agnes Fay Morgan.