

Introducing

THE IDEAL WOMAN

MEET HELEN PEONIDOU — Cyprus's Ideal Woman.

She can run a home and is skilled in the domestic table artistically and knows she's a good and economic cook, she sews, knits, irons arts. She is an excellent hostess, can arrange a dinner how to mix a good cocktail. She's a skilled driver.

She is, of course, attractive and well groomed. She is knowledgeable about current affairs, follows world news with genuine interest, reads a lot; she is sophisticated and she has charm and humour.

And she has proved it all — the hard way. At this week's Ideal Woman Contest, Mrs Peonidou convinced the judges that she was the perfect choice to represent Cyprus at an international Ideal Woman competition to be held in Italy next week.

Born in Limassol, Helen Peonidou is now 29. She is married to a journalist, has written a revue, has published two books of her own poetry, and is the mother of two children, aged five years and 16 months. She travels frequently with her husband, which helps to account for her poise and her wide knowledge of world affairs.

But winning this week's contest, which was sponsored by a number of leading firms in Cyprus, was hard work for even the most competent woman. Mrs Peonidou and eight other semi-finalists spent nearly five hours at the Ledra Palace hotel on Monday, and again on Tuesday evening, undergoing their tests before a team of judges. It was quite an ordeal, but the winner emerged with flying colours.

Just what did she have to do — and how did she do it? Perhaps the most difficult of all the tests was the «general knowledge» one — which Mrs Peonidou handled easily but which proved a formidable hurdle for other competitors.

«I was asked, for example, about what kind of books I read and who my favourite authors were — a difficult question. I could only tell the judges which of the books I have read recently impressed me most and they were the new novel by Alberto Moravia and «The Second Sex» by Simone de Beauvoire.

«They asked me if I read any overseas papers and if so, which. I always read the Sunday Times and Observer and told them so, and they then asked which page I looked at first!

(For the record, she turns first to Look in the Sunday Times, and to Katherine Whitehorn in the Observer.)

«They asked me questions about current affairs, such as whether the withdrawal of the UN Irish contingent from Cyprus, due to troubles in Ireland, would affect

by
Sally Shapiro

the island. And they asked me about Kenneth Tynan's latest play!»

In the cooking section, contestants were required to make a Cyprus dish, at the least possible expense, — enough for two very hungry people or four who were not so hungry. Mrs Peonidou made mousaka, with aubergines and potatoes and meat (the recipe is elsewhere on this page) at a total cost of 325 mils. Along with the other finalists, she also had to cook an omelette.

Flower arranging was not so difficult — the judges required an arrangement for a dinner table seating four people. The contestants could choose their own flowers, and Mrs Peonidou used tiny dhalias in a low vase, with a candle.

Sewing was simple up to a point — the women had to sew the hem of a dress; and instead of knitting, Mrs Peonidou opted for crochet and completed half of lacy collar for a cocktail gown.

She ironed a shirt («I do at home too, of course, but luckily my husband likes sports shirts in the summer, which aren't so difficult»), and reverse-parked a car, using her own Ford Corsair.

She has been driving for nine years and had no problems there, though she was not the outright winner in that section.

On Tuesday evening, Mrs Peonidou mixed a cocktail — one that went down very well with the judges. It was a Sidecar — two parts brandy, one part cointreau, and the juice of half a lemon, mixed in a cocktail shaker with crushed ice. Then she was shown an incorrectly laid dinner table and asked to spot the errors.

Finally the contest was over; and amid the applause she richly deserved, Helen Peonidou was declared the winner.

Now the elegant mahogany and silver plaque stands on her mantelpiece for 12 months, until it is passed on to Cyprus's Ideal Woman of 1970.

Helen Peonidou has been elected the Ideal Cypriot Woman for this year; but she is far from being an «average» woman. To start off with, she has an independence of spirit rarely found in any woman. The story of her marriage reads more like a novel — one with a happy ending — about a girl who scorned convention and defied her parents.

«They were absolutely against my marriage» she says with a smile «Not now, of course! They love my husband more than me, I think! But in 1963, they refused to consider it. They took away my passport, I managed to acquire another one, and I eloped to Bulgaria where we got married.» After that, you can un-

derstand why Helen Peonidou has no trouble in reverse-parking a car or ironing a shirt.

The three judges of the contest were Mme Milieux, wife of the French Cultural Attachee, Mr Harilaos Papadopoulos, director of CBC's Greek radio, and journalist Alecos Constantinides.

The contest was sponsored by: Phanos Pantelides, the furniture manufacturers; Criton Georghiades, importers of Bompani cookers; the Fiat motor company; Petrolina; Innox cosmetics; Kapodistrias who imports Sailor knitting wools, and the Groutas Tourist Agency.

Besides helping to meet the costs of the contest, the firms provided handsome prizes.

Mrs Peonidou, for instance, has in addition to her Fiat winners' plaque, a handsome silver cup from Petrolina. She won a suite of dining-room furniture from Pantelides Co., and a range of Innox cosmetics. Her most exciting prize is a first class sea trip to Italy and a week's stay there with all expenses paid.

In the cultural section, 18-year-old Doroulla Antoniou won a library of books and records from the Alliance Francaise and the American Centre, plus a set of Innox cosmetics.

Runner-up to Mrs Peonidou was Miss Soulla Sotiropoulou, a practising lawyer. She was awarded a silver cup, a Bompani cooker, a range of Innox cosmetics and a set of non-stick saucepans.

Attractive Miss Phaedra Hadjitheophanous won a cash prize presented by Fiat for being the best driver in the contest, and in the cookery section, Mrs Despina Michael won a Bompani



MRS HELEN PEONIDOU

cooker, a prize from Petrolina, some decorative Chinese plates and a beauty treatment from Innox.

The judges voted Miss Maria Charalambous to be the most elegant and well-groomed of all entrants, and she won a cup from Fiat and Innox cosmetics.

Next year the sponsors are hoping for an even bigger and better contest.

Mr Panikos, who runs an advertising company and whose brainchild the contest was (though it was subsequently amended to conform with the standards laid down by the Italian OMITA contest) says: «The

main problem is that Cypriot women are rather shy. Lots of them were interested, but not enough plucked up the courage to enter — I hope they do next year.»

Last word on the contest must come from the man who is lucky enough to be married to Cyprus's Ideal woman — journalist Panikos Peonides.

«I think he was more nervous than I was» says his wife affectionately «and he was very moved when they announced the winner.» But he stoutly denies being worried.

«I knew she'd win all along» he said proudly next day. «I know my wife!»



HARD AT WORK at the Ledra Palace hotel last Monday, where nine finalists cooked Cypriot dish under the eyes of Ideal Woman judges.

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