

Norton County farm wife does

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

Everyone is given the same 24 hours every day, but some people are able to cram more than 24 hours worth of work into it. A self-described workaholic, New Almelo farm wife Vickie Gassmann is one busy working woman.

When she married George Gassmann in 1972, he wasn't 21 years old yet. His dad bought some land for the young couple, and as soon as George was of legal age they went through the Farm and Home Administration and the Federal Land Bank to buy the place. They rented machinery for a few years, but have been independent farmers since 1980.

As a young wife, she worked outside the home at the Highway Commission office until her first child was born in 1974. About a year later, she worked part-time at the Bank of Lenora because it offered her flexible hours. But after the birth of her third child, Mrs. Gassmann decided to stay home and help her husband on the farm.

He taught her to run the haybuck and the stacker wagon. She said, "The kids were always with us wherever we went."

She jumped into homemaking like she did everything else. "I made my kids' clothes. I made the girls jeans and the boys shirts. I even

made their underwear."

Of life on the farm, she said, "I enjoy working on the farm. It's peaceful, and you can be your own boss." She added, "But, I do miss people."

The couple wanted a nice home for their family, and worked hard to get it. For almost 15 years, they tore down old houses and buildings to get enough lumber to build their dream home. Mr. Gassman told about how one day during the building project it was especially cold and his wife was trying to warm up by a space heater. He laughed when she got too close and set her coveralls on fire.

Before they began construction on the house he wanted to test his carpentry skills. So, he built a chicken house for practice. That provided her with the opportunity to raise 300 baby chickens every year. She would keep about 100 hens for layers and dress the rest for fryers. They did this for 20 years but now only get baby chicks about every two to three years for layers to have fresh eggs.

Working together, they built their country home 10 miles west of Lenora. He did most of the construction while she helped finish trim. The brick, ranch-style home has five bedrooms, three bathrooms and a spacious front room. Of course, the heart of the home

is the country kitchen with a movable work island that Mr. Gassmann designed and built. It rolls out of the way for family dinners where sometimes 30 gather for a meal. It's also a good work space when she gets in a pie making mood. "I usually make about 20 at a time," she said.

The Gassmanns hosted two exchange students. Alfonso Vazquez Guerro came from Atizapan, Mexico. He lived with the family for two school years, 1991-92 and 1992-93. She said, "He was a very polite kid, but didn't speak real good English. George never did understand him."

The other student was Suzanna Pilz from Prague, Czech Republic. She was with the family from 1999 to 2000. Mrs. Gassmann said having exchange students was a good experience and she still communicates with both of them.

For a time Mrs. Gassmann raised hogs. She

raised them to market weight, then with her husband's help, would load them for the trip to the sale barn in Phillipsburg. She got out of the hog business in 1998.

That was about the time she was diagnosed with cancer. A biopsy revealed a malignant tumor which she had removed in a procedure called a lumpectomy. That was followed by chemotherapy and radiation. She is now cancer-free and goes in for check-ups every three to six months.

Not even cancer slows down this hard-working girl. When asked if she gardens, Mr. Gassmann chuckled and said, "Oh, yes. She gardens." She usually plants about 72 tomato plants each year. She said, "We eat a lot, can a lot and give away a lot." When all her children were at home she used to can 200 quarts of green beans and put 200 bags of sweet corn in the freezer every summer.



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