

Retirement teases, but she's still going strong

By **CAROLYN PLOTTS**

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Thoughts of retirement have just barely begun to creep into Vesta Hobbs' thoughts. But after 30 years with the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Services, she is entitled.

Ms. Hobbs began working for ASCS in April of 1978, after spending six years as the head cook at an elementary school. She came in at a Grade 2 entry level. She was responsible for administering one of the agricultural programs. Part of her job included taking aerial pictures of the crops. "It was fun and interesting," she said.

Following a divorce after 20 years of marriage and the death of her daughter in an automobile accident, Ms. Hobbs really threw herself into her career. She soon was training other people and managed the western half of Kansas.

For three years she managed a program called County Operations Review. This was a new program and she traveled to all four corners of the state. "This was brand new — we were writing the rules as we went," she said.

Even though her life was mostly spent on the road, she had two constant companions: her two dogs, a Yorky and a miniature poodle, traveled everywhere with her. "I wasn't going to give them up," she said.

In 1989, she was made the County Executive Director at Hill City. One of her first jobs was to plan a new office building. "I drew up the plans — and they used them," she said.

In 1997, she was made Executive Director of Norton County where she supervises five program technicians and three field assistants. She drew up the plans for that new building, too.

Some of her duties include: insuring everything that leaves the Norton County office is correct; that payments are made on time; gathering information for reports on land values; and translating global positioning information to the fields. She said she used to have to climb grain bins but, she said, "no more" since becoming a great-grandmother.

Ms. Hobbs said, "There are new programs all the time. Nothing is ever the same. It's always busy."

Technology has changed the way her office operates. She remembered when the first computers were introduced. "They plugged 'em in and we were given some books," she said.

All checks, payroll and program payments, were all typed. "And, we still got them done faster than we do now," she said.

The biggest change she has seen is security. "There are so many more regulations. Everything has to be locked and there are plans for every contingency. Then there are the 20,000 passwords you have to learn. It's such a change from when I started," she said.

"I work with a great bunch of people. They care about the farmers they work with and are dedicated. They make special efforts to make sure farmers are aware of deadlines — even to the point of making phone calls and sending

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Vesta Hobbs has been a career woman with the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service for more than 30 years. But, in her spare time, she enjoys hunting. Here she is pictured with a deer she shot.



From left: Jane Sheley, Patty Newell, Toyah Braun

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Pictured front row, left to right: Vera Reusink, Sonya Montgomery; back row: Gloria Zwickle, Janice Hanson, and Cheri Renner