

Peace Country memories;

Jack Dobb retires after 28 years with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture

By Brenda Birley
For PCF

On June 21, 1997 many friends and co-workers will gather at the Rolla Hall to help long-time resident, Jack Dobb, celebrate his retirement from the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Jack Dobb began working as the district agriculturist in the South Peace for the ministry in the fall of 1969. "My position involved providing agricultural extension support to the industry," says Dobb. In September 1973, he changed jobs within the ministry to fill

the newly-created position of regional field crop specialist. In his new job, Dobb provided more specialized support to the industry and district agriculturists throughout the B.C. Peace.

In 1984, his role changed once again, adding responsibilities for grains, oilseeds, and seed analysis for the entire province of B.C.

Throughout his career, Dobb has enjoyed offering technical support to the industry; assisting, where possible, in the transfer of new technology; assisting in industry development; facilitating research partnerships and representing the

ministry on a number of committees and industry organizations. The Canadian Seed Growers Association and the Canola Council are examples.

"I had the good fortune to move to new challenges over the course of my career and remain headquartered in the Peace until June 1996 when I transferred to Sidney, B.C.," Dobb said. "I was still making regular trips to the Peace until I decided to take early retirement effective March 31, 1997."

4-H START

Dobb's long-standing interest in agriculture was supported and encouraged by his membership in the 4-H clubs of Quesnel. After completing university, Dobb spent many years farming and working at Agriculture Canada's Beaverlodge research station before moving to Dawson Creek, B.C. in 1969.

Agriculture has changed significantly since Dobb first started with the ministry. "There are substantially fewer farmers working much larger acreages."

"However, there are still a large number of part-time farmers," Dobb also noted that there have been major improvements and increases in size of farm equipment. "The large investment in equipment has allowed producers to farm

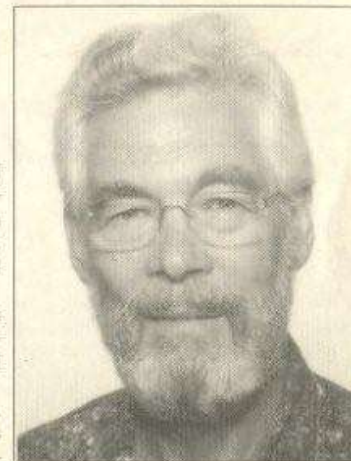
larger acreages and still get the seeding and harvesting done, usually in a more timely manner, enhanced by aeration and drying equipment."

In addition, "farmers now require greater management, financial and marketing skills".

According to Dobb, developments such as new crop varieties — including canola and more recently, field peas, have also had an impact on farmers. "In 1969, there was only a very small acreage of canola (then called rapeseed) grown in the B.C. Peace. Now it's a major crop." Dobb added that "following declines in the mid to late 60s, cattle and forage acreage has increased. And forage seed — while always important — has also increased, continuing to be a valuable cash crop for the region."

Dobb is thankful for his many memorable experiences in the Peace Country. Assisting with the establishment of the South Peace Feeders Association, working with the Cattlemen's Association and Forestry in community pasture development, and studying zero and conservation tillage have been highlights.

The work of these associations in putting new technology to work are among the high



Jack Dobb

points Dobb remembers over the years.

He appreciated partnerships with the Beaverlodge research station, U.B.C. and the ministry of forests under the Green Plan in research and selection of creeping red fescue and many farmer co-operatives.

While working in the Peace Country, Dobb also enjoyed area seed fairs and getting to know the seed growers in various capacities.

"The many friends I made in the industry and staff in B.C. and elsewhere are the most rewarding highlights (of my work in the Peace)" said Dobb.

He now lives in Victoria, and plans to build a cabin on Saltspring Island as a retirement project.

"I still appreciate the opportunity to undertake some part-time consulting, which takes me back to the Peace on a periodic basis," he said.