

New Rigby legislator excited at job

By BEN J. PLASTINO
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The east Idaho legislative delegation lost one woman legislator in State Rep. Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho, but it gained another in Joan Wood, a Rigby farm homemaker who expresses keen enthusiasm at her coming new experience.

"I can't hardly wait for the coming session," said the energetic new lawmaker, who has been long prominent in Republican party circles in Jefferson County.

She waged two stiff campaigns to win her laurels, first in the Republican primary against the determined bid of Lloyd Hicks and then in the general election against Democrat Joe Bodell. She won both races comfortably, especially the general by 6,406 to 2,873.

It was her first quest for am



Joan Wood

elective political office and she canvassed intensively.

"I think I must have met nearly every person who lives in my district," said Mrs. Wood.

That's saying a lot because District 20 includes Jefferson, Clark, Lemhi and Custer counties which is about 300 miles long and one of the largest geographically in the state.

She said she canvassed virtually every house in Rigby, Ririe, Challis, Mackay, Salmon and Clayton and the vast majority of the farm homes which cover vast distances.

"I would say I contacted more than two-thirds of the homes in my district," she said.

Mrs. Wood has an advantage because she has lived in Ririe and Lewisville and now just outside of Rigby most of her life. The Wood family also has ranching interests in Clark County where she knows virtually every resident there. That isn't too difficult as there are less than 1,000 who reside in Clark, the smallest county in Idaho.

"Wherever I went I found a good reception," said Mrs. Wood, herself a warm personality who obviously likes people.

She said she is interested primarily in winning membership to the House Natural Resources and Conservation, and Revenue and Taxation committees. Next in line are Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare and Transportation committees.

Her top legislative target is to solve the indigent medical aid crisis which threatens to bankrupt counties.

"It's time we did something so as not to soak counties," she said. "We are getting more and

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more of this. It seems to me where the aliens are illegal they should pay their own bill."

She said she is working with other legislators to draft a bill intended to alleviate the situation.

She said she also is interested in legislation on truck licensing.

She explained the present system of requiring truckers to contact the state office at Boise for overlength and overweight trucks must be altered so that it can be handled at the district offices.

"This is a crazy legislation," said Mrs. Wood. "In other states, such as Utah, this sort of thing can be done locally."

She also noted because of such difficult regulations, many commercial trucks avoid traveling through Idaho if at all possible.

Mrs. Wood said she has been contacted for her support by the legislators seeking the speakership, Majority Leader Walter Little, New Plymouth; Rep. Steve Antone, Rupert; Rep. Tom W. Stivers, Twin Falls, and Rep. Robert Geddes, Preston.

She said that at this point she has not made up her mind.

She said she has been a longtime worker in community services and perhaps her widest acquaintances come from singing at funerals and other community events. In this, she likens herself to two Democrat state senators, Israel Merrill, Blackfoot, and Dick Egbert, Teton, who both also sing at many funerals and other community programs. Merrill was just re-elected to his seventh term but Egbert was defeated two years ago after serving 30 years and

was the dean of the Legislature.

Her family is originally from Ririe where she was born. Her parents are Harland and Margaret Chapple and the family consist of four sons and three daughters.

Mrs. Wood and her husband, Tom, a well known Jefferson farmer and rancher, have five daughters, all married and living in the area within 20 miles of each other except the youngest who graduated from Rigby High School last spring. She plans to attend the North Idaho Junior

College at Coeur d'Alene. There are also 10 grandchildren.

Mr. and Mr. Wood presently live on a farm two and one-half miles northwest of Rigby but they have a ranch at Dubois and a summer range at Humphrey, also in Clark County. They presently farm a 100-acre tract at their home but also rent other land for farming.

Before last year the family lived at Lewisville, west of Rigby, where they had built a new home and which one of the daughters and son-in-law are buying.