

# *Citizens* A visit with our neighbors

## From Fields To Statehouse and Back

When Jayne Aylward was sworn in as State Representative of District 73 last January, she had the distinction of being the youngest woman ever elected to that office in Kansas.

The attractive Saline County woman admittedly had her doubts about being accepted by older, veteran lawmakers because of her triple minority credentials: age (22), sex (female), and occupation (farmer). But Jayne was quickly accepted as an equal. She explains, "I went to Topeka with a real positive attitude and let people know I was there to work and do a good job, not have fun. They took me seriously. Everyone was more open-minded than I thought they'd be."

Her first days in office were not unlike those of anybody undertaking a new job. They were — to say the least — confusing. When she was to report for the first party caucus, held daily on the fifth floor of the Capitol Building, she confesses to feeling like a lost college freshman. "I wasn't sure where the meeting was supposed to be held. It helped having



seventeen other freshman representatives. We had a lot in common. I think being a farm girl also helped."

Jayne maintains her educational background (she holds a degree in Animal Science from K-State) was good preparation for life at the capitol. "There weren't many girls with my major, so I got used to a little ribbing."

Except for returning to Topeka for an occasional committee meeting, Jayne's time will be spent with her father on their farm/cattle operation.

"You really put in long hours at Topeka and I'm used to that, but it's a different kind of work. I really like farming." She returned from the final session in Topeka at midnight and was up at seven a.m. the next day moving cattle on horseback.

The switch from representative to rancher took a little adjustment. "Sitting on that chair in Topeka is a lot different than sitting on a horse. I couldn't walk for a few days," Jayne explained ruefully.

