

C. S. Hobbs, 1909–1971 A Brief Biography

W. R. Backus

Department of Animal Science, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 37996



Charles Seright Hobbs was born in Inman, Kansas on February 2, 1909. He grew up on a ranch in Osage Country near Pawhuska, Oklahoma. He attended Oklahoma A&M College for one semester in 1927–28 but left school to operate ranches in Oklahoma from 1928 to 1935. At one time, he was managing over 4,800 head of cattle on 15,000 acres. In 1925 he returned to Oklahoma A&M and received his B.S. degree (with high distinction) in 1938 with a major in Animal Husbandry.

He distinguished himself with many honors as an undergraduate, even though he was married and had to work to partially support his wife and young son. He was vice president of the Block and Bridle Club, a member of the Ag Council and Blue Key, and was listed in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*. He was a member of Phi Kappa Phi and chancellor of Alpha Zeta, and he received the Alpha Zeta recognition as the outstanding student with the highest grades in the College of Agriculture, was recognized by the Block and Bridle Club as the most outstanding student in Animal Husbandry, and was presented the Letzeiser award as the second most outstanding student at Oklahoma A&M.

His graduate studies, begun at Cornell University in 1938, resulted in his receiving his M.S. degree in 1939 and his Ph.D. in 1941 with majors in Animal Husbandry and minors in Animal Nutrition and Veterinary Physiology. His major professor was F. B. Morrison and his advisors in his minor fields were L. A. Maynard and H. H. Dukes.

He returned to his undergraduate Alma Mater in 1941 as an assistant professor. In addition to his teaching responsibilities he planned and conducted digestion experiments and developed pasture experiments with beef cattle. In 1943 he returned to Cornell, where he was in charge of general livestock extension work in New York State. During his tenure, he organized and directed a very comprehensive extension livestock program for New York. South Dakota State University named him head of its Animal Husbandry Department in 1945. He reorganized and rebuilt that department from 2 to 10 staff members and revised and expanded the research programs for cattle and sheep. He served as one of the leaders that developed the NC-1 Regional Beef Cattle Breeding project. In 1947 "Doc" came to the University of Tennessee as head of the Animal Husbandry-Veterinary Science Department. He served in that capacity until his untimely death, the result of a freak hunting accident on December 25, 1971.

"Doc" Hobbs was blessed with much foresight and was quick to take advantage of opportunities to advance the department's research and teaching program. In 1947 the Tennessee beef industry was poised for exponential growth. Beginning with a population of 180,000 cows in 1947 this population expanded to one million by 1971. "Doc" supported the growth of this industry by helping to initiate the S-10 Regional Beef Cattle

Received October 31, 2001.
Accepted January 28, 2002.

Breeding Project, he expanded beef cattle research at the branch stations, and he developed cooperative programs with the Aluminum Company of America and the Ames Trust to provide cattle resources for beef cattle research. In addition, he was instrumental in founding the Tennessee Livestock Association to provide a united voice to promote development favorable to the Tennessee livestock industry. He actively helped organize several breed associations in the state as well as working closely with purebred breeders to develop the Tennessee Beef Cattle Performance Testing Program.

The opportunity presented by the cooperative work with the Aluminum Company of America to research the effects of fluoride emissions on grazing beef cattle resulted in a classic piece of research. The outstanding contributions of this project resulted in the NRC publication *Fluorosis in Cattle*. The cattle exposed to irradiation from radioactive particles from the first atomic bomb burst at Alamogordo, New Mexico provided an additional opportunity for "Doc" Hobbs to expand the department's research emphasis. A long-term study of those exposed animals initiated by an agreement between the University of Tennessee and the Atomic Energy Commission resulted in the establishment of the UT-AEC Agricultural Research Lab at Oak Ridge. Not only were the lifetime histories of these animals studied, but many basic studies on the short- and long-term effects of radiation on animals and plants were conducted and documented as the result of the establishment of this laboratory.

Charlie Hobbs was reared in the tradition of the Osage cattle country of Oklahoma and was influenced by his heritage for the rest of his life. "Doc" Hobbs, as he was affectionately called by all his acquaintances, was a people person. He knew all the students by name and was instrumental in helping them to find employment upon graduation. He made sure that qualified

students who wanted to study Animal Husbandry at the University of Tennessee, but lacked the funds to attend college, were given the opportunity to have a job at a University farm and a place to stay when they came to the campus. Many of these students whom "Doc" helped went on to positions of national prominence. He continued to teach the Beef Production course until his death, so that he could stay close to students and abreast of classroom challenges. He was well known across the state and was highly respected for his livestock expertise, especially in beef cattle production.

Dr. Hobb's contributions to his profession reached far beyond the borders of his state of Tennessee and were national and international in scope. In 1965, he was selected by the Rockefeller Foundation to serve as technical consultant in the Philippines, following which he represented the American Society of Animal Science in Caracas, Venezuela, where he was instrumental in development a constitution for what was to become the Latin American Society of Animal Production. He was director of the American Grasslands Council from 1966 to 1969. He was active in the leadership of the American Society of Animal Science at both sectional and national levels. He served as secretary (1956), vice-president (1957), and president (1958) of the Society's Southern Section and later as vice-president (1965) and president (1966) of the parent society, which named him an Honorary Fellow in 1969. The Southern Section recognized him with its Distinguished Service Award.

In summary, "Doc" Hobbs' contributions to the wealth of knowledge in animal production is well documented by more than 150 research publications which bear his name. Perhaps he will be most remembered by the great number of lives he influenced. Even today, almost 30 years after his death, when former students and staff get together they always reminisce about how "Doc" affected their lives.