

Hill Country Character

A weekly tribute to folks making a difference in our community

On the case

Bobbitt spent nearly 30 years as FBI special agent

By **LARRY WILLIAMS**
Staff Writer

Kerrville resident Kris Bobbitt was a teacher in Arizona with a curious and adventurous streak when she was given a story from a newspaper recruiting female FBI agents. Her response to that story led to a career in the FBI that included being a newly-appointed supervisor in the Washington, D.C. field office on 9/11.

Her dad worked for an airline, so Bobbitt said she moved a lot as a child. She graduated high school in Las Vegas, Nev. and considers that her hometown, along with Phoenix.

She attended the University of Arizona where she started her education in archeology. Her parents told her they could only afford four years of college and she knew being

a successful archeologist required more than that, so she became a teacher.

Bobbitt was teaching high school English in Tucson, Ariz. when she decided she needed something different. Her mother had seen a newspaper story about the FBI needing female agents and had passed it on to her.

"She thought I needed to look into it. It sounded great," Bobbitt said. "Law enforcement hadn't been a thought at all for me."

Bobbitt resigned from teaching and moved back home while her application was being processed.

At this point, Bobbitt said the FBI was mainly recruiting young accountants and attorneys, and people with college and work backgrounds for their modified program. However, what they were lacking was female agents.

"The FBI was recruiting women at the time. When I came in with my class in 1979, I was only like number 150, so there weren't many in each office. In my first office in San

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Diego I was the only woman there for a while," Bobbitt said.

She actually sees this unbalanced ratio as an advantage as her career progressed.

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Photo by Larry Williams

KRIS BOBBITT serves on the board of the Riverside Nature Center and is the organization's treasurer. She is a master naturalist and a former FBI agent. She was stationed in Washington, D.C. on 9/11.

Bobbitt

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a girl. I got to go out and make arrests when they were arresting a woman. I got a wide experience beyond just the caseload I was assigned," Bobbitt said.

She said much of their work in that office at the time was investigating bank robberies. It was also during this assignment she met her husband, also an FBI agent. After they married they were both transferred to Washington, D.C. He went to headquarters and Bobbitt went to a field office there.

"There I worked applicant cases for people applying for federal jobs or going to work at the White House, or cabinet appointments and things like that. Then I started working foreign counter-intelligence," Bobbitt said.

This was exciting work where she said they were trying to counter the efforts of foreign spies in the U.S.

"That was sort of a big chess game," Bobbitt said.

She continued in counter-intelligence when she was moved to Dallas before being transferred back to Washington, D.C. where both she and her husband were as-

signed to FBI headquarters.

"My husband had always worked in the international drug trade area. When I got back there I was working in domestic terrorism, supervising terrorism cases in the field. This was the time of the Oklahoma City bombing," Bobbitt said, adding there were several militia-type cases being worked at the time.

Bobbitt applied for a supervisor's position back in the field office. She got the job, but never got to actually work the new assignment.

"It was right at the time 9/11 happened and things got a little chaotic so I never got assigned to the squad I was supposed to work with," Bobbitt said.

Bobbitt said when the plane struck the Pentagon on 9/11 she was at FBI headquarters and they could see the smoke from the fire. While the FBI set up a base at the location and led the investigation, she remained at headquarters helping on that end.

Not only did the world change that day, Bobbitt's assignment changed. She was put on a special project.

"We were receiving all the information from when the military first went in. They were sending back boxes and boxes of things

from the terrorist training camps. We were receiving these boxes, there were a lot of journals and instruction books, and our intelligence analysts were cataloguing everything and putting it into the computer so it could be searched later. I supervised setting that up and getting the computers and the analysts going," Bobbitt said.

By the way, Bobbitt said FBI work is nothing like it is portrayed in the movies.

"It is a lot of surveillance, not much cloak-and-dagger stuff. Nothing that exciting," Bobbitt said. "Surveillance can be boring, depending on what it is. It could be really short or you could be sitting out in a car for 12 hours. It was very boring up until it got really exciting. There was nothing in-between."

She also said that often an agent plays a small role in a much bigger and complex case. Because of this, solving a big case isn't what stands out in her memory.

"There are small little memories of things that happened. I have a lot of memories of making certain arrests or going and talking to the judges to get an arrest warrant," Bobbitt said.

Despite the tediousness, Bobbitt said she loved the work. She liked the independence of being able to

work cases her own way, but she also liked the teamwork that was used on large cases.

Bobbitt retired in 2002 from the FBI but became a government contractor until 2012. The couple didn't want to retire in Washington. Her husband is a Texan, born in Hillsboro, and he wanted to return to his home state.

"I found a book when we were in a small town in West Virginia. It was about two small cities in each state that were artsy kind of towns. In Texas, there was Kerrville and Marfa. We scratched Marfa off," Bobbitt said.

Bobbitt said she and her husband came and looked at Kerrville twice and thought it was the place they wanted to be. After packing and moving to Kerrville they lived in a hotel for a month before finding a house.

Bobbitt stays busy now with volunteer work. She has discovered a love for the outdoors and has become a master naturalist. This endeavor led her to the Riverside Nature Center where he is currently the treasurer on the board.

"I wish more people knew the center was here," Bobbitt said. "It's like a little hidden gem. It seems like a lot of the general population doesn't know we are here."