



Heather Ross | Remembering Yesterday

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Remembering yesterday

## City girl turns country

Posted: Aug. 13, 2009

Luella Bowey lives on a century-old farm. It has been in the same family for more than 100 years.

The following is from an interview with Luella Bowey in the Eagle Historical Society newsletter. She wasn't always a farm girl. In fact, for many years after she married Austin Bowey, Louella was known as that "city girl."

When going to Eagle to purchase some baking goods, the clerk was surprised and asked "Do you bake?"

"Certainly" Louella replied, to which the clerk exclaimed, "But you're a city girl!"

It wasn't long before Louella became a genuine "country girl." When she married Austin Bowey in 1948, they moved to the farm that she still occupies today. They shared the house with Austin's parents, but the house was divided so that each family had separate living quarters.

The farm had been purchased in 1906 by Samuel Bowey, grandfather of Austin, from John Wilton, grandfather of Don. The Wilton and the Bowey families have continued to be neighbors for the last 100 years, a fact of which Louella is proud.

When asked what she liked most about the country, she

replied without hesitation: "the peace." She had come from Milwaukee where she worked at Cutler-Hammer and supervised a force of 20 women in the office. She loved the peace the country afforded, free from the hustle-bustle of the city, free from schedules and having to be places on time. Of course, some people might not consider getting up at 4:30 a.m. daily or preparing a noon meal for 15 threshers and at least as many children to exactly be peaceful.

The thing she liked least was the "little house out back." You see, they didn't have indoor plumbing installed until 1964. Before that, Louella remembers carrying water from the milk house downhill to their home. Laundry was done in the kitchen with an old wringer-washer, but still water had to be brought down, heated on the stove and transferred to the washing machine.

The same process took place with Saturday night baths. In the wintertime, a rope was strung between the farm and milk house so they could pull themselves up the hill after a snowstorm.

One day while returning from the milk house, Louella noticed smoke coming from the roof area of the house. She rushed inside to find her husband and father-in-law relaxing in the living room. She told them they had better get up because the house was on fire. Quite a bit of damage was done to the roof and upper level of the home, but they were able to save the lower level of the farmhouse.

The rebuilding that needed to be done was done mostly by the family. Louella remembers that she and her brother-in-law held drywall slabs up so they wouldn't break. It was the only time she mentioned being tired. She also remembers living under a plastic tarp for six months while the work was being done.

The farm had about 40 cattle for milking and used a milking

machine, which was fortunate, because she said her stab at milking by hand just didn't seem to work. Her husband told her she had to coax the animals, but apparently she wasn't very good at it.

Louella said her favorite spot on the farm was the pond overlooking the back 40 where she would sit on Sunday afternoons. She visualized Native Americans having an encampment, there and with good reason, since they found many Native American artifacts in that field.

One leaves Louella's place with a sense of awe. Her stories come so fast you can scarcely get them all down. Her memory at 91 is astounding. She has crammed several lifetimes into those 91 years, from having a poultry farm in the Sherman Park area when she was a child to playing in the Milwaukee Youth Orchestra alongside Liberace and his brother, George; right up to the present with her schedule of exercising and doing crossword puzzles to keep her mind active. They seem to be working.

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