

City girl became farmer's wife

Bowey's family has been on farm more than 100 years

By **BRIAN HUBER**
Freeman Staff

When Louella Bowey married her husband, Austin, in 1948 and moved from Milwaukee to the town of Eagle, she was known as "the city girl."

But having raised chickens at her Sherman Boulevard home in Milwaukee in the pre-Depression days, Bowey fit right in in her new home.

"They didn't know that here in town," she said. "When I got out here, I was 'the city girl.' They didn't know what to call me. I was supposed to be different, I think."

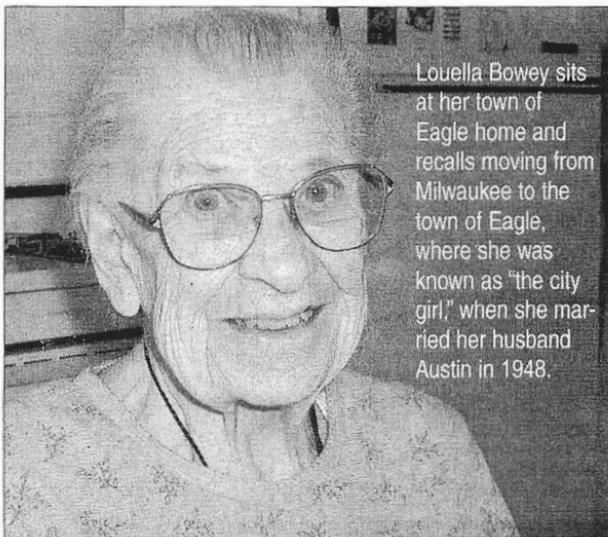
She and Austin lived with his parents, Fred and Delcine, with the house divided so each couple had their space. Austin's grandfather Samuel Bowey bought the home from John Wilton, grandfather of former Town Chairman Don Wilton, in 1906, and a Wisconsin Century Farm sign adorns the front yard.

Prior to moving to the town of Eagle, Bowey graduated from the old Custer High School in 1933. As a child, she played in a youth orchestra with Liberace and his brother, George. She also spent a lot of time at old Borchert Field, where she once saw Babe Ruth attend a game. The park, home to Milwaukee's minor league Brewers for decades, was built by her grandfather Tro Pierce, who got her into many games there for free, she said. That set her on a life of being a sports fan, and she shares her passion for football with her grandchildren.

But in the Depression, she couldn't find work so she babysat for two of her high school teachers. She took classes at what is now Milwaukee Area Technical College and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee "in the hopes of finding something," before settling in as a supervisor of secretaries at Cutler-Hammer. One of her co-workers there was Austin's sister, Dorothy.

On the farm, the Boweys raised about 60 head of dairy cattle, selling their milk to area dairies and raising son Randall and daughter Gail on unpasteurized milk straight from the cow. There was no indoor plumbing at first; water was fetched outside and then warmed up on a stove for bathing or cooking. The outhouse, Bowey said, took some getting used to.

But also on the farm, out in the Back 40, the family would rest and take picnics alongside a pond and Bowey said they



Louella Bowey sits at her town of Eagle home and recalls moving from Milwaukee to the town of Eagle, where she was known as "the city girl," when she married her husband Austin in 1948.

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— Louella Bowey
town of Eagle resident

often found old Indian artifacts. That tract of land was sold off years ago and went through a few owners before being sold to the state as part of the Kettle Moraine State Forest.

The village of Eagle was a bustling place — "not like it is now," Bowey said — and she still recalls stores like Behling's Butcher Shop, Crestan's and Sherman's grocers, a barber by the name of Smith, a hardware store run by a man all knew as Rhodie, two feed mills, a pharmacist and more. Although many of the farms around the area have since been developed, Bowey said grocery shopping is done mostly in Mukwonago or Palmyra nowadays.

Of course, the Boweys were friends with many prominent families in the area: the Sassos who ran a tavern in town, the Wiltons, Ras and Donna Kalnes and the Mealys of funeral home fame, to name a few. Bowey also

remembers her friend from 4-H, Welthy Miller, who was a leader when her children were in the organization.

Bowey also has been a member of Siloam United Methodist Church since 1954, and taught Sunday school there for more than 40 years. She also compiled a history of the church for its 150th anniversary in 2000.

"We used to have chicken-plucking bees and give the chickens to the church and have a pot pie supper for the church to raise money," she said. "We'd do my chickens for the winter and the church's chickens in one day. It was fun."

One day, while returning from the milk house, Bowey saw smoke coming from the roof of the family's home, with the family still inside. Everyone made it out safe, though, and the family, with the help of a carpenter, rebuilt their house, living with a tarp for protection in the process. Bowey estimated she put about 1,000 hours into repairing the home, and recalled having a hard time holding the sheetrock in place for a ceiling because of all the fun they were having. "When you start to laugh you have no strength so we had a time with that," she said.

Bowey exercises and reads her Bible daily, she said, and also enjoys crocheting.

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