

Aurelia Pacey

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Let's go to Haiti. A big smile comes across the face of a little native girl here, as she opens a package containing a new, handmade dress for her. This dress is one of many which was handmade by a woman from rural Kansas. Thanks to Sue Chavey who shared this story with us. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Aurelia Pacey is a retired farm wife who now lives in Manhattan. This is the story of her remarkable family and her continuing service to others.

Aurelia and her husband are originally from north central Kansas. Franklin Pacey and Aurelia Richard were high school sweethearts at Miltonvale Rural High School where they graduated in 1945. They were married in 1946 in the rural community of Miltonvale, population 539. That's rural – but there's more.

Franklin and Aurelia settled on the farm south of Miltonvale, northwest of the rural town of Oak Hill, population 24 people. Now, that's rural.

For 58 years the Paceys would farm on this place. Franklin farmed with his brother Laurence, whom we have previously profiled from his work as a one-room schoolteacher. The brothers started a full service custom baling business for area farmers. They would mow, rake, bale, and shed or stack the bales. They taught their children how to run farm equipment and stack bales at a young age.

“They were always very strict about safety,” said Franklin's daughter, Sue Chavey. In the beginning the Pacey brothers handled only small round bales, but later came small square bales and then large round bales. One year 20,000 straw bales were baled and put in the shed.

Franklin continued on with the custom baling business into his seventies. He was the regional expert for the Allis-Chalmers small round baler repairs. Vermeer Equipment even used Franklin as a consultant for their large round balers.

Franklin and Aurelia raised beef cattle, wheat, alfalfa, and prairie hay, but perhaps their greatest crop was their own children. In this rural setting they raised six children, all of whom are honor graduates of Miltonvale High School and all are Kansas State University graduates.

“Our parents taught us the value of hard work, education, and honesty,” said Sue Chavey. The six children all married and moved to cities including Olathe, Denver, Omaha, and Manhattan.

The two sons are engineers. Mike lives in Olathe and is a structural engineer for Butler Industries. David lives in Manhattan and is a professor of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering at K-State.

Among the daughters, Sue works as a medical technologist for the K-State College of Veterinary Medicine. Marie lives in Manhattan and teaches math at Susan B Anthony Middle School. Loretta lives in Denver and has her own child care business. Polly is a substitute teacher in Omaha.

Franklin and Aurelia Pacey enjoyed traveling and were able to visit all fifty states. In 2003, Franklin was diagnosed with cancer and they moved to Manhattan where three of the six children live. Franklin died in June of 2004, less than one week shy of his 77th birthday.

Aurelia, now 84 years old, maintains an active lifestyle. She sews and belongs to a church group, two book clubs, and a ThirdAge group.

Aurelia now has 16 grandchildren and 9 great-grand children. “She bakes the best angel food cakes in the world, and she always makes them from scratch,” said Sue Chavey. “She has taught several of her grandchildren the art of making a perfect angel food cake.”

In the fall of 2010, Aurelia began making dresses for little girls in Haiti and Africa using fabric given to her from various sources. Aurelia uses her 60 year old Kenmore sewing machine which has a lifetime warranty with Sears – who would have guessed the warranty would last this long! Aurelia has now made 370 dresses and continues to make more. Wow.

It’s time to leave Haiti, where a young native girl is thrilled with the handmade dress she received from a woman from rural Kansas. We commend Aurelia Pacey for making a difference with her service. How remarkable to realize that, even at the age of 84, we can still serve our fellow man.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.