

Eileen Bowser's

When Eileen Bowser accepted a temporary position at the Bell Memorial Public Library in Mentone she never thought it would last this long. On May 1, 1997, Bowser will have been at her job for 35 years.

She was born and raised in the Mentone area and is a frequent patron of the library. After graduating from high school, where she took bookkeeping only because it was a choice of that or physics, she worked five years as a bookkeeper/clerk for the Mentone Lumber Co., then left to raise a family.

In May 1962, Pearl Lackey asked Bowser to help out at the

been in the new building for about a year before. Bowser began working there and she has seen many changes throughout the years.

"The reference room and Madeline's office area have been added," said Bowser. "And insulation. Before the building was insulated it got so hot in here in the summer books on the bottom shelves mildewed. And it was so cold in the winter."

Video tapes, CDs and books on tape are other changes, but the most recent change is the use of computers. About a year and a half ago Bowser began using a

Your neighbor

library. She was paid \$1 per hour, a rate she maintained for the first 10 years of service. After a couple of weeks, Lackey asked her to take over the accounting and the job of treasurer became hers.

"I stayed because I love this job," said Bowser. "I didn't get paid much because the library couldn't afford much back then."

The library operated on a budget of \$11,000 per year compared to today's \$150,000-\$160,000. Bowser said books then cost \$5 for hardbacks and 50 cents for paperbacks. The library had

computer for her bookkeeping and this past summer the card catalog went electronic as well.

"It was like teaching an old dog new tricks," said Bowser. "The computer and I have become friends but we are not intimate yet."

Bowser has been at the library long enough that she is seeing the grandchildren of patrons who were children when she started. She jokes about retiring but admits she isn't ready to step down yet.

"Not many people get to work at doing what they love," said Bowser. "I can't bring myself to

that one, he's the money.) I was a and, after dis- problem, he sug- for supper. That computer woes His next sugges- after. One of his recently opened up and my hus- one could figure e system and fix s guy could. e the move that I my computer or whether I will bye to the poor ver, but talking ner's wife sure it turned out we mon. We both oe Lake during children were actually neigh- we are in dif- this kind lady use my com- ivered a type- for me to use mputer again. to submit my e face of such ow could I remain a

High School win- ce of Democracy tsten Saner. Pic- driver. (Photo by

temporary job still going

give that up yet."

When she is not working, Bowser keeps busy with her genealogy research. She and her husband, David, became involved in genealogy when their daughter, Amy, had to trace her family tree in sixth grade. Since then, they have traveled in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Ohio researching their ancestors. They have each traced some ancestors back to the 1700s. They have spent a lot of time in the Fort Wayne library and done cemetery research, a habit that prompted their children to label them "ghost hunters."

Bowser collects Christmas trees and has 50-60 ranging in size from 1-inch to about 18 inches. Her husband collects Santas and she said his collection is about to crowd her's out. The closets are filled with boxes of their treasures during the year until they are taken out for display at Christmas.

Bowser also has a large collection of cookbooks. She said she used to cook a lot but now David is in charge of supper. She claims he is a pretty good cook, and she enjoys getting to eat something she hasn't prepared herself.

Bowser also enjoys David's gardening. She doesn't plant or tend the flowers and vegetables herself, but likes to enjoy the fruits of his efforts.

With all these activities, the ones Bowser enjoys most in her



EILEEN BOWSER

free time are reading and her grandchildren.

The Bowers have three children and six grandchildren. Their son, Rex, lives in

LaGrange where he is a teacher and football coach. Another son, Reid, is a physical education teacher in Ann Arbor, Mich., and daughter, Amy Williams, lives in Wasilla, Alaska.

"We have always had to be long distance grandparents," said Bowser, "but our three granddaughters and three grandsons are the light of our lives."

They see two of their grandchildren regularly and the other four at least once a year. They have made three trips to Alaska and had return visits in Mentone.

"I am glad I raised my children in a small town," said Bowser. "Mentone is a nice town. It has become 'my' town. People come to me all the time asking about things that happened in the past."

Although Bowser will turn 70 in August 1997, she said she doesn't feel any older than she did when she started her job.

"Well, maybe physically, but in my mind I'm still the same."

