There's nothing to the eight-hour commute, says Pat Conry, who lives in Port Washington and the village of Selsey Bill in England.

With two passports — one from the United States and the other from England — Pat Conry of Port Washington travels back and forth between the two countries with ease.

She spends two to three months at a time in the small historic fishing village of Selsey Bill, England, where she has a flat near her mother and walks or bicycles every day to shops and the beach. Her sisters live in London and Chichester.

Conry then either returns to Port for a few months or hops on a plane to visit her daughter and two grandchildren in Kansas City or her son in California.

Until she retired this year, Conry, a registered nurse, also traveled extensively for Johnson Controls in Milwaukee as their health services administrator.

Navigating O'Hare International Airport in Chicago and Heathrow Airport in London is no longer daunting for Conry, who got her nursing degree in London and came to the United States in 1964 to work at a hospital in California.

"I was quite shocked when I came to America," Conry said. "I had no idea of the

vastness, and the wide highways. I was used to little villages."

She got married and stayed, raising her family in California and Kansas City. Four years ago, Conry moved to the Lighthouse Condominiums in Port Washington.

Her visits to England became longer and more frequent after her father died and her mother developed health problems. Her mother refuses to tell even her children her age.

"We'll know when the queen presents her with a letter on her 100th birthday," Conry said.

The British woman has the eight-hour commute down to a science.

She has two bags packed for England and one bag for Kansas City, ready to go to either place at a moment's notice. When she flies to England, she wears the same outfit — a jumper, raincoat or tweed coat, beret, white compression stockings to keep her legs from swelling on the long flight and comfortable shoes. In her carry-on backpack, she has her passports, a cardigan sweater, blouse, books and word puzzles.

In her checked suitcase, she has a change of clothing, shoes, night dress and toiletries.

"When I go back through customs, they ask if that's all I've got after being two months in the country and are a bit suspicious," Conry said.

Everything she needs is at her flat or she buys it in England. She leaves room in her bags to bring items back to Port.

After getting stuck a few times in New York when she flew out of Milwaukee, Conry now takes a direct flight from Chicago to London.

"I've been in a couple rough spots," she said of the turbulence encountered. "One time I was on a small plane and it was so bumpy everyone got sick. Being a nurse, I was more worried about taking care of everyone, and I was the only one who didn't get sick.

"The hardest thing is adjusting to (England) being six hours ahead. It takes me

about six days to get adjusted either way."

Conry was born in London during World War II.

"I remember the bombs and sirens and going to air raid shelters with mommy," Conry said. "A bomb hit across the street and people were killed."

Her family went to the country during the war and stayed.

Her village hasn't changed much since she was a little girl, Conry said.

The historic buildings are protected so the community looks the same, and the laid-back, slower-paced lifestyle remains.

"The postmaster still delivers mail on bicycle. I bought fresh fish from the same man for years until he died," Conry said.

"When Americans go to England, don't stay in London the whole time. Go to Brighton or Arundel or any other little village. Go to pubs and sit outside."
There is a difference between the American and English cultures, she said, and sometimes she feels as if she has a split personality.

"When I'm in Selsey, I'm completely immersed in the neighbors, going to shops every day, reading the tide tables, and I love it. I don't want to leave there," Conry said.

"But then when I'm here, I'm immersed in America completely and I forget about home. I have wonderful neighbors and friends here. I'm completely immersed in both cultures."

Conry lived in Kansas City until her children were grown, then moved to Milwaukee in 1991.

"I decided to go to Milwaukee because it's near a lake," Conry said. "I would come to Port Washington whenever I felt stressed. It made me feel relaxed and I loved it. I always dreamed of living here someday.

Architecturally, it (Port Washington) is very different (than Selsey), but sometimes I pretend I'm by the sea when the waves are high. I send pictures to my family

because they think a lake is flat. It's a lot like the sea except there are no tides."

Conry belongs to the British Club in Milwaukee, which meets about once a month.

"We play games and laugh. They have a marvelous sense of humor. It's so different. It's very dry," she said.

Conry searches for food made in England. Steve Bennett, owner of Bernie's Fine Meats in Port Washington, makes an English-style sausage for her.

She shares her favorite English things, such as Ruppert Bear and Naughty Amelia Jane books, with her children and grandchildren.

Conry doesn't drive in England, taking trains, buses and bicycles, but she relies on a car here.

Conry, who was a midwife in England, is registered with the Selsey Medical Practice and could work there. She is a volunteer for the American Red Cross and teaches first aid, CPR and baby-sitting classes.

She is also certified as a legal nurse consultant and volunteers for the free medical clinic in West Bend.

"My son can't afford health insurance in California. I can't help him, but I can help others who don't have insurance," said Conry, who receives free health care in England and has Medicare coverage in the United States.

Conry plans to spend the Christmas holiday with her daughter and return to England in January.

The winter flight may be rough, she said.

"Whenever we have turbulence, I think it could be my last day, but I don't worry about it. You have to be really calm at times like that," Conry said.

"We all have to pop off one of these days, don't we?"

Pat Conry, who has dual citizenship, held her U.S. and British passports. Photo by Sam Arendt