

Iris Alster

Written by Pam Tricamo

Today over a bowl of baked oatmeal I had the opportunity to speak to a delightful woman who has traveled the world over but now calls the Lebanon Valley her home.

Iris Alster can talk to you about her hike to the Tak Tsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery in the Himalayan mountains or traversing the waters of the Pagnirtung Fiord. She can tell you stories about the glaciers in the Arctic or her penguin visit in Antarctica. If cold weather doesn't interest you, your discussion could go to her ride on a Bactrian (two-humped) camel in the heat of the Gobi Desert, the time she lived in a ger (yurt) among the Nomads in northern Mongolia, or participated in the archaeological excavations at Tel Maresha in Israel. Just don't offer her any yak's milk tea.

Iris has spent much of her life helping others. After graduating from college with a business degree, she took a job in Washington, D.C. While there a roommate told her of an opportunity the government was offering to join the Nurse Cadet Corporation. This was WWII, there was a need to train new nurses so the experienced ones could go overseas. Feeling a need to do her part, Iris moved to New York to attend Binghamton University to become a Registered Nurse. Although it wasn't her plan to become a nurse, it turned out to be a profession she loved and retired from nearly forty years later.

In addition to helping others through her career choice, Iris was a long-time member of Common Cause. When she moved to Hershey she became active with the Hershey Public Library and is a past secretary of the League of Women Voters. When Iris decided to move to Cornwall Manor in Lebanon County, she also decided to continue her volunteer activities. She volunteered for the Good Samaritan Hospital Hospice and became a board member of the Mental Health Association of Lebanon County. After extensive training she became a mediator for a group working to resolve neighborhood disputes and joined the InterGen Program which offered senior citizen/student-mentoring through the Lebanon County Career & Technology center. In 1999 Iris received the Ageless Hero Award from the Pennsylvania Senate for her dedicated community involvement and her lifelong love of learning.

Today Iris is involved in the Activity, Food, Shop, and Wellness committees at Cornwall Manor as well as becoming a member of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Lebanon County. She believes growing older is a big adventure to be enjoyed no matter where you find yourself, and she never plans to stop learning.

Pam Tricamo