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Local woman releases autobiography, reflects on work as missionary nurse in India

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

When you get to a point in your life and look back there's always the hope that it's a story worth telling.

Shelburne residents had the opportunity to learn about the life of local resident Alice Porter during a book signing on Jan. 16 at the Mel Lloyd Centre. The book signing celebrated the release of Porter's autobiography, A Remarkable Life, written by author Joseph D. Driskill.

All proceeds raised from the sale of books at the signing were donated to the Shelburne Food Bank.

A Remarkable Life follows Porter's life from growing up on a farm just outside of Shelburne, studying to become and nurse, and serving 36 years as a missionary nurse in India.

Born Mable Alice Porter on Aug. 1, 1926, she was the oldest of four daughters and spent her formative years growing up on a 250-acre farm near Corbetton, Ont. From an early age, Porter knew that she wanted to become a nurse.

?I'd always wanted to be a nurse, even when I was very young. I had a little nurse's outfit with the little cap and apron,? recalled Porter. ?It's just what I wanted to do.?

After finishing high school, Porter was still too young to be accepted into a nursing education program so instead, she took a summer course at what was then known as the Normal School in Toronto to teach a year of elementary school.

She was officially accepted into the nursing program at Toronto General Hospital in the fall of 1945 and went on to graduate as a registered nurse and later received a Bachelor's degree and diploma in Nursing Administration.

In 1954, Porter stepped into her role as a missionary nurse in India, which she would hold onto for more than three decades until her retirement in 1990.

Speaking about why she chose to go to India as a missionary nurse, Porter simply states ?they needed a nurse there?.

In 2009, Porter was presented with an Order of Ontario Certificate for her life's work.

Driskill and Porter began the groundwork for the book in 2022 while writing an article on her life as a missionary nurse in India for the College of Churches of Christ in Canada's quarterly newsletter.

?We sifted through stories and came up with what we had for the one page, but there were so many other stories that she shared as we were trying to decided what to use that are now in the book,? explained Driskill.

Jumping off the newsletter article, Driskill acting as Porter's scribe began a series of phone and in-person interviews documenting her life.

?As I discovered her story, I learned she had such amazing experiences,? said Driskill. ?I feel like her experiences on the farm prepared her for what she encountered while on the mission field.?

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A Remarkable Life by Joseph D. Driskill is available to purchase at www.blurb.ca.