

A life lived is a life loved



A life of love, learning and travelling. Ann Keating met with Patricia Marteinsson who shared her story

PATRICIA Marteinson works as a child health and lactation consultant in the Midlands. She loves her job and believes nursing is a wonderful career. She took a very exciting path to where she is today.

She left school in 1979 and worked as a nurse's aide in the local hospital in Tullamore before she did her nurse training in St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin. She had three fantastic years there and made friends for life. She then moved back to the Midland Regional Hospital in Tullamore where she worked in the ICU and CCU. She later got a permanent job in the Royal Hospital, Donnybrook and subsequently worked in the Coombe Women's Hospital for two years. Following her stint in the Coombe she did agency work as there were lots of opportunities in Dublin at the time and she wanted to see what she liked best. She worked in St John of God, the Irish Cancer Society, the Mater Private ICU and Beaumont ICU.

She then decided to go abroad and did her US exams. However, she met her husband-to-be Martein, a fisherman from Iceland, on a Spanish holiday and everything changed. According to Patricia their eyes met across a crowded room and that was it! He proposed and she moved to Iceland and found it an amazing experience. Martein organised a job for her. She had to learn the language and it was difficult in the beginning, but she soon settled in. Iceland has a population of 360,000 people in total. She worked on a surgical and medical ward combined, eventually becoming the night sister.

Patricia did several courses, including suturing, before moving to maternity. She did a Masters in Science through long distance learning and became an ANP.

In addition, she worked in a nursing home at the weekends as she missed the banter with older people. While each elderly person had their own apartment, they also had the benefit of nursing care.

When their health deteriorated they would move to a higher level of care. The same people looked after them for years so they became like family.

In heavy snow it was impossible to get to work. One day Patricia woke up to find a tank outside the window to bring her to work where she would stay the whole weekend. The Red Cross could bring her home. When she worked on the maternity ward she could expect police to come and pick her up for work. She would bring her kids with her and they rocked the babies in the cots.

She was in the hospital one day and a woman came and threw her baby, Thomas, at her – apparently lifeless. She resuscitated him for an hour and a half. He was six weeks old with a heart condition and was flown by air ambulance to England where he had heart surgery. She gets a letter every Christmas from Thomas and his mother. She calls him 'one of her angels on earth'.

Patricia had two children while in Iceland – both premature. She felt it was a really lovely community to live in and a great safe place to rear children with plenty of fresh air, fresh fish and costs for play school were paid in addition to salary, which itself was good. Taxes amounted to €120 a year which covered A&E attendance. It cost €3 to see a GP.

She imported aloe vera into Iceland and that business paid for her holidays home to Ireland every year. She also did home births and water births.

Patricia lived in Iceland for over 13 years, returning to Ireland in 2002 and to work in the community. She helped to set up MIDOC in the Midlands. She had her third child and did the PHN course during her maternity leave. She won the Smith &



Patricia Marteinson

Nephew Award jointly with another colleague in the class. She then got a job as designated PHN for Travellers in Laois and Offaly. She found this job exceptionally interesting.

She loves her current job where she works with a huge population group. She is delighted to be in a position to work near home as she can look after her 87-year-old mother and her youngest son. She works with children from birth to school-going age, and children with disabilities from six to 18. She is happy that the breastfeeding rate is increasing and she derives great satisfaction from her work.

She is involved in local groups such as 'Parents First' – a group that supports parents and first time mothers and also the St Vincent de Paul. She likes to go to the gym and swim, is an avid reader and loves to cook and travel. She has travelled extensively including camping with the Bedouins in the desert in Wadi Rum in Jordan where pillows were placed in front of the tent to keep out the snakes! She has travelled to the Red Sea, the Far East, America and has even tried sky diving.

Patricia has been an active member of the INMO for years. She is currently chair of the Offaly Branch and also chair of the PHN Section.

According to Patricia "the day you stop learning is the day you should hang up your boots". Last year she did a diploma in Child Psychology and a QQI Level 5 course in computer skills.