

Life Stories

Ivins Outreach Center Really Touches Real Lives Every Day

Where do you turn when you can no longer drive a car and you need to get to the hospital every day for three weeks of cancer radiation treatments?

Anna found her solution to this riddle at the Ivins Outreach Center.

Our many volunteers provide transportation to and from medical and other appointments to local residents in need of a little help. Ivins also provides a number of other day-to-day activities such as shopping, reading, bill paying, etc.

In this case, Ivins Outreach Center was able to provide the transportation that Anna so desperately needed.

At one of her visits, Anna told her handsome doctor that she wished he was single and she was about a hundred years younger!

Escorted by her Ivins volunteer after her treatments, Anna often loves to spend a few minutes in the garden courtyard at St Mary Medical Center, which is located in nearby Langhorne, Pennsylvania. While this seemingly little extra benefit provided by our Ivins volunteer was a simple gift costing only

a few extra minutes of time, it brought some unexpected happiness to Anna's day.

Since Anna has been a friend of Ivins House for several years, we thought that you might find this glimpse of her life interesting and perhaps even be inspiring. Her's is a short story of a long life that has seen its share of life's challenges and blessings.

This story reaches back to a time in history that many of us barely know about. It is a story about a hard working lady with a wonderful and a witty sense of humor that "keeps on running" and a spirit that simply will not give up! Anna often quips that she feels as though she grew up with her grandchildren. Her vivid recollections include many accounts of the fun she has had and continues to have with her family, especially her grandchildren. These days, she thinks young even though she moves slowly.

An American flag waves proudly from the front of Anna's house: a modest edifice with a front porch that has been temporarily insulated with plastic sheeting and graced with newly built front steps. The steps, a joint project undertaken by Morrisville Presbyterian Church and the Ivins Outreach Center, were built last summer by volunteer George Pingor, who worked strenuously on a very hot day to replace the old and dangerous

crumbling concrete stairs with brand new wooden steps complete with railings.

At nearly 100 years old, Anna shares her house, which she has owned for the past fifty-four years, with her two cats, Pebbles and Mr. Baxter. Since her sole source of income is her Social Security, her budget leaves little room for luxury items, but Anna brightly smiles as she says that she has no complaints in life. While her life has not always been an easy one, Anna is quick to say that she has never felt sorry for herself and that there have been many bright spots along the way.

Born in 1912, Anna was raised in Trenton, New Jersey. She speaks fondly of feeling safe and secure as a young lady as she gazed into the many store windows of Trenton, especially on her almost weekly Thursday evening "window shopping sprees." At only fourteen, she landed a job in a cigar factory on Chestnut Avenue in downtown Trenton where in those days, she remembers, there were few (if any) work related health rules. In fact, it was only after her boss at the cigar factory died that she learned that his almost constant coughing on and around everyone and everything had been caused by tuberculosis he had been suffering with for a long period of time. Even so, she and her friends "thought they were rich" with the \$14.00 per week that they each earned rolling cigars.

During World War II, when factories in the Trenton/Ewing converted their production lines to manufacture equipment critical to the war effort, General Motors became Eastern Aircraft and commenced production and assembly of Navy Avenger Torpedo Bombers. Eastern Aircraft distinguished itself by consistently meeting the Navy's delivery schedules due at

least in part to women like Anna, who found themselves on the factory floors doing the jobs of men who had become soldiers. Answering this call to patriotic duty, Anna served as a trouble shooter in the Quality Control Department at Eastern Aircraft, detecting any defects and, when appropriate, making repairs by welding, riveting or whatever else was necessary to get the job done right. These women would eventually come to be known as "Rosie the Riveters," after a character created to encourage such service, and they now hold a near mythic place in the history of American women.

After WWII ended, Anna continued working for Eastern on civilian aircraft until she retired, although her definition of retirement did not seem to have anything to do with stopping work. She then took on a new type of service, working at a local Burger King until just a few short years ago. Of her Burger King experience, Anna says that she still misses the wonderful people that she met while working there.

Although widowed while her four children were still young – her two girls were four and six and her two boys were eight and nine – Anna is proud and happy to report that they were always well behaved as children and all grew up to be responsible citizens. Both of her sons are now retired, each having served more than twenty years in the US military. Unfortunately, Anna lost one of her daughters to cancer about nine years ago.

Anna has been no stranger to the Ivins Outreach Center. A few years ago, she found herself confronted with a plumbing problem that was due to a drain blockage which had caused water to back-up into her house. While the plumber that she enlisted was there repairing the problem, a staff member from Ivins House happened to call. Anna was more than delighted when the Ivins Outreach representative asked to speak directly to the plumber and arrangements were made to have the bill paid through a local agency.

Anna truly appreciates the help that she has received from many "wonderful caring people" in recent years. She does not hesitate to describe the help as a "dream come true". Ivins Outreach Center has coordinated many of her needs with various senior citizen services that are available within our local communities. The Benefit Bank, she says, has been a tremendous help in preparing her PA property tax forms. The Food Center at Morrisville Presbyterian Church has occasionally provided a few supplementary groceries: she most enjoys asparagus and anything chocolate! Ivins Outreach Center is currently working in conjunction with the Bucks County Opportunity Council's Energy Conservation and Weatherization Assistance Program to assess and make repairs to her home to maximize energy efficiency. Perhaps the plastic sheeting that presently adorns her front porch will soon be replaced with a more permanent barrier against the winter.

The staff members of the Ivins House Outreach Center and its many volunteers take pride in giving back to people like Anna who have served their families, communities, and country so well for so many years.