

Dr Iris Krass

Dr Iris Krass was born in 1925 in Shangri China, educated in Hong Kong, becoming fluent in Mandarin. At the beginning of WW11 her father sent the family by ship to Australia. On reaching Manila Bay, the area was bombed and her ship could go no further. Whilst on board Iris contracted Typhoid.

The International Red Cross took the women and children from the ship, housing them in Manila. Iris was taken to hospital. Some 5 weeks after their arrival in Manila, the Japanese arrived and they became prisoners of war. Iris's mother and sister were taken to one Prisoner of War Camp, her brother was sent to another. Initially Iris had to remain in hospital as she was too ill. It was 2 years before she saw her mother again. In total she was interned for 3¼ years.



Once well enough, aged 15, Iris was moved to a Prisoner of War camp, given a bed space in a room housing 30 women. In the camp one of the tasks allocated to Iris was picking the weevils out of the rice to be cooked for the prisoners. In her own words Iris "got mentally involved in everything around me, but remained emotionally uninvolved with anyone". In the Camps she studied mathematics, engineering, and anything offered by the women interned with her.

Liberation came when Iris was 17 years old. She was reunited with her family, but found it a terrifying time. The camp began emptying and the family managed to find a small hut where they lived. The American soldiers were generally kind and provided them with food. They eventually rejoined her father and returned to England

In 1947 Iris was one of a few females to read medicine at London University, completing her clinical training at Westminster Hospital. She began her career at St Thomas' Hospital, and later was proud to be appointed the first female clinician to Head the Casualty Department. Later Iris worked as a Medical Officer in Occupational Health, and finally as a popular general practitioner in Edmonton, North London.



Dr Iris Krass was a member of Soroptimist International's Enfield Club for 39 years, joining in 1975 leaving in 2014 due to ill health. Iris said "I liked meeting other professionals and getting away from doctor talk" and "the International aim of helping women". She was an enthusiastic

and committed member, always focused on the core of Soroptimism, Programme Action. Iris actively supported a range of projects at International, Regional and Local levels. She was President in 1982, and for several years Chair of the Programme Action Committee. Iris also supported the club as the Press & Publicity Officer liaising with local newspapers. In addition, as a retired GP she was often called on by members for advice regarding health issues which she dealt with sympathetically and patiently. Finally, last but not least Iris always participated in and enjoyed the many social activities organised by the club and will be remembered for her sense of fun and laughter.

Sources:

The club's archives

The BBC Midweek Interview 15/06/2011

BMJ Obituary 2016

Stolen Childhoods' by Nicola Tyrer, published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.