

Getting to Know: Martha Alm

Friend of the Cloquet Public Library,
Community Volunteer, Bluebird Reader

By Sarah Simon

In first grade, Martha's class was divided into two different reading levels. She found herself in the Redbird group but longed to be in the, more advanced, Bluebird group. Her mother offered to help her practice reading after school but Martha explained the Readers were not allowed out of the classroom. The next day, mom came home with three Readers. Martha was able to progress to the Bluebird group quickly. When a boy told her she didn't belong with the Bluebirds, her teacher replied "Yes, she does and she's here from now on."

Martha Alm credits this experience for her eternal love of reading. As a child, growing up in and around Brainerd, MN, she devoured adventure stories like those written by Jack London. Today she is rarely without a book (or two) on her person. From appointments to traveling south to Phoenix to visit family, she ensures she has enough reading material. "I always have a friend with me, no matter what," she says with a smile.

Martha settled in Cloquet in the early 60s with her husband. During their 59 years (!) together, they raised two daughters and now have four grandkids and one great-grandchild. Martha's husband worked in forestry and Martha returned to the workforce when the kids began to go to school. Among her career as an LPN she worked for a dentist for ten years before moving over to Raiter Clinic, a position she loved.

Though she jokes she doesn't have a pet because she "was sick of being left at home with the dog," it's easy to tell Martha is a dog lover. Her family adopted black labs from the animal shelter, each with their own quirks. Molly, a favorite, was a bit of a Houdini. Molly could escape from her collar and liked to take herself for a run often. Martha's husband got some good exercise chasing Molly around the neighborhood. Today, Martha is content to have a grand-puppy (a spirited Papillion).

After retirement, Martha spent her time volunteering in the community. She volunteered at the local animal shelter and gave tours of the historical Glensheen mansion. She also volunteers at the local hospital. About ten years ago she asked Friend Pat Ebel how she could get involved with volunteering at the library. Pat said "Just come."

It's that easy to become a Friend at the Cloquet Public Library. Martha encourages volunteers to join. "There are different things to do, different talents to bring." She states "I feel I'm doing something good. And I like mixing and mingling."