When a young Wisconsin minister, Allyn “Schup” Schuppenhauer, and his wife, Evelyn, moved to an Apache reservation in Arizona in the late 1940s, they never knew what crisis might come with a knock on the parsonage door. But Evelyn, who is 92 and now lives at Independence Hill Retirement Resort Community in San Antonio, always opened it ready to help.

Knock-knock: An Apache couple’s daughter had swallowed kerosene. Knock: Someone had swallowed a suppository. Knock: A woman giving birth was struggling in her Apache shelter, called a wickiup. Evelyn, a nurse, found solutions that helped each survive.

“I learned things I never learned in nurse training,” she says, recalling scorpion stings that brought Apache women to her door and how she’d soak the wounds in warm water to draw out the venom and sit with them until the pain went away. “I could hear them crying as they were coming up the road.”

She did all this while having three children within three years, always making herself available to what she calls the “very stoic” Apaches. “We gained their trust,” she says.

Then came a terrible knock three years into the couple’s marriage: Schup’s car had been hit by a train. He died, and her grief remains. “I miss him terribly. I loved him, and love him still,” she says, reaching for snapshots of the handsome, young Lutheran minister who once took her to live in the Southwest desert.

As a widow and single mom, Evelyn returned to Beaver Dam, Wisc., raised her children, and practiced nursing for the next 50 years. She never married again. “I just couldn’t. None ever compared to Schup,” she says.

She lost her two adult daughters to cancer a few years ago. She enjoys visiting with her son every Monday night and watching her grandchildren grow up. Through decades of living and loss and recent ailments that require her to use a walker, she says her faith has sustained her. “The Lord gives me many trials and tribulations,” she says. “People ask, ‘How can you stand it?’ And I say, ‘The Lord helps me.’”

Evelyn Schuppenhauer, 92, has lived for 12 years at Independence Hill Retirement Resort Community. “I’ve made some good friends. You get to be like family after a while,” she says.