Some might decide reaching their eighth decade of life would herald an end to international travel. Not so for the lively Barbara Namour, who continues her life-long practice of visiting destinations all over the globe well into her 80s.

Barbara has never followed the conventional path. At 20 she became the family breadwinner following her father’s premature death. She quickly realized she could triple her salary working abroad, so in 1957 she left her home in Corpus Christi for Saudi Arabia.

She became so interested in Middle Eastern culture that she enrolled in the American University of Beirut in 1960. It was while she was earning bachelor and master’s degrees in Modern History of the Middle East that she met a Lebanese man of French descent, Michel Alexandre. Even though she was a grown woman of 27 living and working on her own, when Barbara and Michel went out on a date, they were obliged to take along his 16-year-old sister to protect her reputation.

“We’re talking about the 1960s, not the 14th century!” she added. It took her three years to decide if she could truly acclimate herself to being a wife in the Middle East.

“You are marrying a family, not a person, and Mom is in charge at home,” she said. “Arranged marriages were still common.” Barbara taught at the International College until the birth of the couple’s son, Alexandre. Michel’s career took them to New York City in 1968, then back to Lebanon. When he passed in 2001, Barbara moved back to her native Texas, although her son remains in New York City.

Barbara maintains her lifelong passion for learning and stays involved with the American University. She speaks Arabic, Spanish and French and takes six international trips a year with a focus on education. She plans to visit Patagonia, Martinique and go on a 34-day excursion from South Africa to Malaga, Spain, this spring. Barbara is especially interested in interacting with people and learning how to preserve culture and customs from the impact of the 21st century.

“I have learned if you speak the language, people open up. It is evident that on this earth we are a family of man. We should love each other, care about each other, understand each other and work with each other,” she said.

She is an active member of the San Antonio Chapter of the World Affairs Council and volunteers at the Fort Sam Houston Museum once a week. Although she moved to her apartment in Independence Hill just before Christmas, Barbara has already enjoyed the planned excursions and appreciates the personal attention of the staff. She attends Holy Trinity Catholic Church, conveniently across the street.

“Every night I thank God for my friends and family throughout the world,” she said.