Every Day, Someone Comes to the Door

When Patricia moved into her South Scottsdale home in 1957, much of the land around her was still desert. Nearly 70 years later, she is still there.

At 98 years old, Patricia has spent more of her life in that house than anywhere else. Her husband passed away 17 years ago, and while her nephew calls her every day from Georgia, Patricia now spends most of her time at home. Her days are quiet, filled largely with the things she has collected and saved throughout her life.

There are photographs everywhere, and Patricia loves looking through them. She remembers her childhood, her younger years, and the people who have been part of her life.

“I just love to look at my pictures,” she says.

Her home feels much the same way. Stuffed animals, keepsakes and decorations fill the rooms, each one carrying its own little piece of history that Patricia can recall perfectly. A Christmas tree sits decorated in her home year-round, and she enjoys sitting beside it, watching the lights twinkle and bounce off the ornaments on the branches.

She has watched a lot of life pass from her house. She remembers when her own mother reached the stage of life where she needed more help, more than 30 years ago. Now Patricia finds herself there, too, and she can't help but reflect on how quickly the years have gone by.

She can no longer cook for herself; her stove is covered to prevent her from trying. But until recently, the bigger concern was whether Patricia could safely continue living in the home she has known for so long.

A few months ago, Patricia fell in her backyard and couldn’t get up. She called out for help, but no one heard her. Four days and four nights passed before she was finally found and able to receive help.

The experience frightened her, but Patricia still wanted to go home. She has lived there for nearly seven decades, and she wasn't ready to leave the place where so much of her life had unfolded.

After her fall, the county connected Patricia with Meals on Wheels. Now, a driver comes to her home regularly with a nutritious meal she can eat without having to cook for herself. Often, it is the same driver who comes by, and Patricia has come to know the people who deliver her meals.

For Patricia, those visits have become an important part of her routine. She knows her

visitors by name, and the familiar faces give her something to look forward to in a home that can otherwise be very quiet.

The meal itself is important, but the person standing at her door matters, too. Each delivery gives someone an opportunity to see Patricia, make sure she is doing okay, and know that she is safe inside her home.

That kind of connection can be easy to overlook when talking about a program like Meals on Wheels. A meal is something tangible. You can count it, deliver it and put it on a plate. But for an older adult living alone, the person who brings that meal can become part of the safety net that helps make independent living possible.

Patricia still has plenty of memories to revisit. She has her photographs, her Christmas tree, and a home full of the things that have followed her through nearly a century of life. Because of Meals on Wheels, she's able to stay in her home with all of those memories. For Patricia, that daily visit has become part of what home looks like now.