



Cottonwood resident can stay living in her community thanks to Verde Valley Caregivers

Paddy and LeRoy Baribeau were teenagers in the same Minnesota town. At 17, Paddy decided high school was not for her. Instead, she began work at a paper bindery. It was there that Paddy noticed a boy named LeRoy always sitting alone in the lunchroom. She said LeRoy was a "tad chunky at the time but a very nice boy." A few weeks passed, and Paddy finally asked LeRoy to join her and her friend for lunch. Soon after, they had their first date. Paddy and LeRoy were married six months later at the town courthouse.

Together they raised three children. Paddy ran her own drapery business, and Leroy was a thriving commercial painter. The couple enjoyed vacationing in their RVs. Paddy smiles, remembering the stares she got when people would see this tiny woman managing the big RV quite well. Paddy laughs, "If they only knew I was driving a stick shift at 13."

After visiting Arizona several times during their travels, the couple decided that it would be best to retire far away from the 16-foot snowbanks. A year before retirement, while in Cottonwood, Ariz., Paddy saw a house in a 55+ community perfect for them. Twenty-three years ago, in 1999, Paddy and LeRoy retired to their new home.

The community was welcoming and active. The couple thrived in the warm Arizona climate. As Paddy reflects, she states that LeRoy started to exhibit the early signs of Alzheimer's a decade after their relocation. She cared for him throughout the progression of the disease.

It was Christmas day 2020, and while answering the door for visitors, Paddy fell and broke her leg. Paddy needed to spend several weeks in rehabilitation. Unfortunately, during this time, she also suffered a heart attack. As a result, doctors told Paddy she was no longer physically capable of providing LeRoy with the necessary care.

The couple's son Gerald (Gerry) stayed with his parents often while still living in Minnesota. Following his mother's injury, Gerry assisted in finding a memory-care facility for LeRoy. Paddy and Gerry knew that she could no longer safely operate a vehicle following her rehabilitation. In April of 2021, Gerry contacted Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition for assistance. Stevie Rabben, a VVCC care coordinator visited Paddy on her 87th birthday for an in-home assessment. An energetic, witty, pleasurable woman greeted her.

Since then, our volunteers have assisted Paddy with sixty-six transportation requests, from shopping trips, primary medical provider appointments, eye doctor appointments, hair appointments, and general errands. In addition, Paddy visited LeRoy once a week until he passed on Friday, Dec. 24, 2021.

During a recent friendly visit (shortly after Paddy's 88th birthday), we asked Paddy for her thoughts regarding the services provided by VVCC. After a short pause, she issued one word, "Relief." Relief to know there is someone she can always contact for assistance. Paddy enjoys her community, beloved home, cooking, and old-time movies. As an offshoot to her sewing skills, Paddy recently purchased an embroidery machine. Her latest embroidered re-creation of Noah's Ark generates joy in those that see it.

VVCC volunteers provide transportation, pet care, handyperson services (small jobs), tech assistance, emergency alert units, care management, and more to over 1,900 aging members (neighbors) of our Verde Valley community. All, like Paddy, find themselves becoming limited due to health conditions, finances, distant family members, or other circumstances. Our services lessen the barriers for our neighbors to age in their homes and community and remain independent.