Lida Hoffpaur considers herself a lucky lady. She is glad to have her first air conditioner at age 89 and to have a friend like Mary Payne.

The Plain Dealing resident went through a large part of the heat wave with only a fan to keep her cool. But after a bank thermometer near her home topped the 100-degree mark for days in a row, she knew even additional fans wouldn’t do the job.

A couple of weeks ago Mrs. Hoffpaur said she finally decided she could no longer endure the heat. “I’ve been getting along every summer without an air conditioner. But Monday I thought I was going to perish from the heat. And Tuesday I thought I couldn’t stand it another night.”

Mrs. Hoffpaur sat up in a chair those Sunday and Monday nights, too hot to sleep. She used all the ice in the freezer on her face and neck while waiting for the house to cool down, but even at 3 a.m. she received no relief from the heat.

Finally she went to a neighbor’s home Tuesday morning, and in minutes Mrs. Payne was there. “When I came over Tuesday morning she was just so pale and hot,” Mrs. Payne said. “I was worried about her not sleeping.”

The pair decided there was nothing left to do but to get an air conditioner for Mrs. Hoffpaur. Mrs. Payne helped her get the unit and have it installed in her bedroom.

Mrs. Hoffpaur said she practically lives in the bedroom now — eating, reading and watching television there — but she does brave the heat in the kitchen long enough to prepare three meals a day.

For Mrs. Hoffpaur the new air conditioner has been “wonderful since Tuesday night.” She is happy with the unit even though it has caused her to sleep under some cover. “Being too cool is better than being too hot,” she said.

Mrs. Hoffpaur has no close relatives, but other members of her church drop in from time to time. She manages to survive on the Social Security check she draws each month. “With a little help from the good Lord and a little help from me she makes it,” Mrs. Payne said.

Mrs. Hoffpaur goes to church regularly, attends meetings of the Sweet 60 club and walks to the store when the weather is cool. She is looking forward to the fall when cooler temperatures will allow her to get outside more. “I like the fall of the year because it’s not too hot or too cold,” Mrs. Hoffpaur said.

The heat wave took its toll on this lady who lived through 89 summers with no more than a fan to keep her cool, but she is happy that her fans have been replaced by the new air conditioner.

—TOM MERRILL