Minnie Kay Platt was born on June 4, 1912, in Sycamore, Alabama, into a family of ten children. The family’s income was limited, so when Minnie learned that enrollment only cost one dollar, she trained at the Touro Infirmary, a nonprofit community hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana.

After three years of nursing instruction, Minnie worked as a private duty nurse for eight years before she joined the civil service. Minnie was sent to Italy and North Africa with the Army Nurse Corps during World War II.

After the war ended and Minnie returned to the states, she got married, had a daughter, and got divorced. Rather than take a pay cut due to the lapse in her civil service record, she took a job with the Indian Health Service. She was assigned to the Public Health Hospital in Winslow, so she and her daughter moved west permanently.

From her base office in town, Minnie traveled over the dusty, unpaved roads of the Navajo Nation on a daily basis. She and her driver slogged through all types of weather and encountered unpredictable road conditions including flash floods and quicksand.

Minnie treated many cases of tuberculosis, ear infections and ruptured eardrums, and trachoma, an eye infection that often led to blindness. She assisted surgeons that came to conduct ear and eye clinics. Despite the language difference, she educated both Navajo and Hopi children to wear the eyeglasses and hearing aids her office provided.

Minnie came to understand and appreciate her clients’ senses of humor, as well as their resourcefulness while living in extremely remote areas. She also enjoyed the slender plant that produced “Navajo tea,” the local sage that “cleared the head” when burned, and the rugged beauty of Navajo and Hopi lands.

Minnie was a member of the Winslow Business and Professional Women’s Club and was elected their Woman of the Year in 1973. She retired that same year and lived in Winslow for the rest of her life.

Minnie passed away on April 9, 2003, and was buried in Desert View Cemetery in Winslow.

“They gave me a nice retirement party. Seventy people were there, from all over the Reservation. Some of them told me they’d miss my southern drawl” – Minnie Platt

Minnie Kay Platt worked as a public health nurse on the Navajo Nation for almost thirty years.