



Senior profile

Gladys Craver and her husband Joe travel the world, but love to come home to Orland Park.

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senior profile

Life's melodies

Smith Crossing resident enjoys music and looking forward to a new place

Just about every day Gladys Craver stands at the piano, accompanied by her husband Joe, and sings some of her favorite songs from the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

Singing is something she has enjoyed since she was a young girl. "Back in the day" Gladys studied voice and opera, even singing with an opera company, and also was in a band singing the popular songs ranging from the 1930s through early '50s — songs by Doris Day and Dinah Shore.

"It keeps us fresh and the mind going," Gladys says.

She wants to keep her voice strong, along with the rest of her, and is hoping to take voice lessons in the near future. She would love to find voiceover work.

But those are not her only plans. Gladys and Joe have lived at Smith Crossing, a continuing care retirement community in Orland Park, for three years this June and are looking forward to moving into one of the new wings when the development of the Independent Living expansion is complete in the spring of 2012.

It will include a pub, spa, theater, fitness center and library as well as additional social life and activities.

"At our age you have to make sure you keep active," she says. "I'm 77 going on 35." Joe is 82.

While Gladys still drives and loves to get out and about she knows the more they go out, especially in Chicago winters, the more chance there is of falling. She welcomes the opportunities for fun right in her own backyard.

"This is a real great place to live. I would recommend it to anyone," she says. When the couple was on the waiting list to become Smith Crossing residents they received a weekly phone call offering reassurances that they would be living there soon. Gladys appreciated the kindness and praises the staff.

"They keep the place nice and clean. It looks like a beautiful hotel in Florida," Gladys says. "We took one look and said 'this is for us.' We're happy here."

So much to do

One of Gladys' favorite activities at Smith Crossing and one she looks forward to each month is the birthday dinner. The special dinners are held to celebrate all the residents with a birthday in that month and typically include music or entertainment.

Gladys isn't one for sitting still. The couple has a subscription to Drury Lane Theatre in Oakbrook Terrace and enjoys going to the dinner theater throughout the year.

Their favorite restaurant is 94 West Steak and Seafood in Orland Park, which they try to go to together or with friends.

Gladys has her eye on a subscription to the Lyric Opera, though she knows she may have to go on her

own or find some girlfriends who might be game because, although Joe plays several instruments and enjoys music, opera doesn't interest him.

Now and then Gladys says she enjoys a change of scenery and likes to go for drives to see the countryside, especially in the fall. They like to visit Wisconsin and the couple has also enjoyed trips to Branson, Mo. and Warsaw, Poland.

"We've done a lot of traveling and have a lot of great memories," Gladys says.

When home Gladys loves to play card and board games, but likes to venture out to gamble at area casinos from time to time as well.

"Joe's not that type so I do as much as I can with the other ladies," she says.

A new life's work

Gladys is used to busy days. She used to work as a lab technician testing plastics at Union Carbide. That is where she met Joe. He was a senior research scientist and she worked for him. Both of their first spouses had passed away and Joe waited a year after her first husband died before asking her out.

"He is straight-laced and likes to do things right socially," Gladys says. They began dating in October 1986 and were married in October 1987.

"I quit [work] after a couple of weeks," Gladys says. "He asked if I would like to stay home and I said yes. I'd been working all my life."

Gladys' background is eclectic. She has done some oil painting, taught dancing at the Arthur Murray School and volunteered at Palos Community Hospital for more than 20 years. Gladys, who once worked as a florist, has enjoyed helping others decorate their homes, and make floral arrangements and special holiday accents for her friends and doctors' offices. She recently used her talents to make the centerpieces as a gift to her friend for her 50th wedding anniversary. She doesn't take any of it too seriously, helping when she can, and coming up with clever ideas and sayings such as "come in for a spell" on a black wreath for Halloween.

"It's something I like to do. I'm just having fun," Gladys says. ■



Gladys Craver enjoys traveling with her husband, Joe. But, she's always happy to come home to Smith Crossing in Orland Park where there's plenty of fun to be had.

