



Smith Crossing Resident
JIM GERDY

A Renaissance Man with a Big Heart

By Ashley Martens | Photos by Megan Amy Creative

Welcome to the resident feature of *Orland Park Living*. This is a place for you to get to know your fellow neighbors and community members one resident and family at a time. This month, we want to introduce you to Jim Gerdy, a Renaissance man with a big heart.

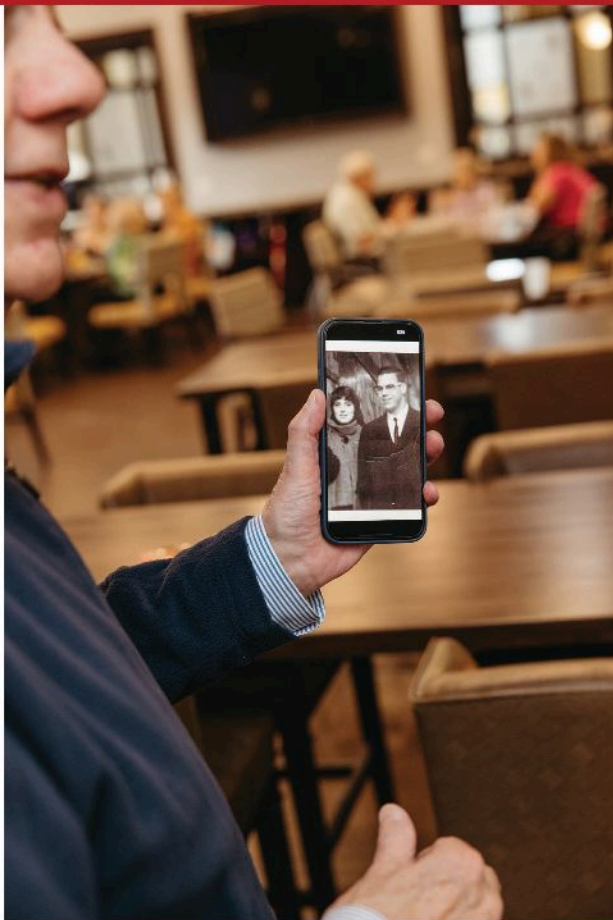
In 2019, Jim Gerdy and Sandy, his wife who passed away in 2021, moved to Smith Crossing from Frankfort where they had lived for 40 years. Jim and Sandy Gerdy's story is one that spans a lifetime, beginning in a most charming way.

The pair met in fifth grade when they were just 10 years old,

growing up only a street apart. Although life took them in different directions through high school and college, fate brought them back together in a serendipitous moment in 1964. One evening, Sandy found herself locked out of her family's home and decided to head to Gerdy's parents' house to make a call.

As luck would have it, Gerdy was home and that unexpected encounter rekindled their connection, and they soon realized their bond was meant to be. Three years later in 1967, they exchanged vows at an intimate wedding, surrounded by close friends and family.

Their love flourished, and on July 19, 1969, they welcomed their son, James J. Gerdy fondly remembers his late wife, Sandy, and shares how proud they both are of their son, James J. Remarkably bright, their son attended the University of Chicago at just 15, before pursuing a doctorate in quantum mechanics



at the California Institute of Technology. James J. is married with two children and now resides in Phoenix. Jim and Sandy's love story is a beautiful reminder of the enduring power of connection and the serendipity of true love.

Besides a love for his late wife and family, Jim's journey through academia and the pharmaceutical industry is a testament to his passion for science and his remarkable expertise. Gerdy began his academic career at Lake Forest College, earning a degree in biology, followed by a master's degree in genetics at Northern Illinois University. He dedicated five years at Southern Illinois University to earn his doctorate studying molecular biology, evolutionary biology, and genetics. There, he also honed his research skills. His postdoctoral career led him to professorships at Valparaiso University and Denison University. Gerdy's first teaching

Continued on page 6

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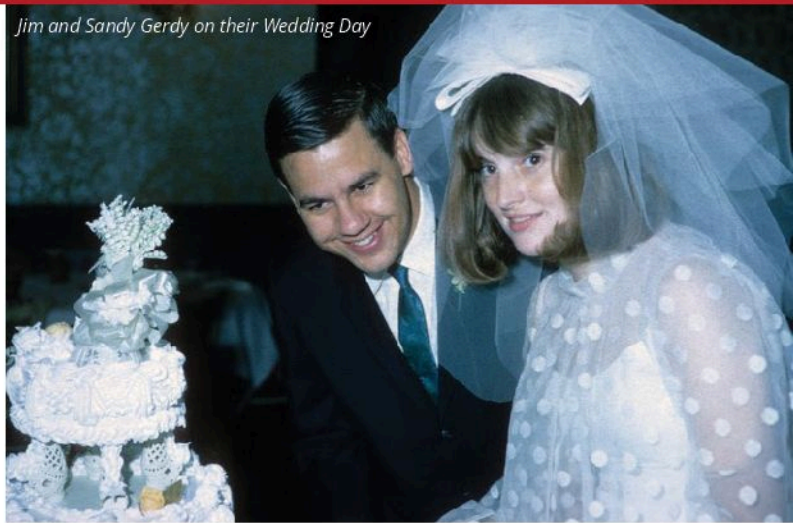
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Jim Gerdy and Son James



Jim and Sandy Gerdy on their Wedding Day

Continued from page 5

positions were at the University of St. Francis in Joliet and Lewis University in Romeoville where he shared his knowledge with students for three years.

Gerdy chose the pharmaceutical industry as his second career, spending 10 years at SmithKline as a scientific liaison in medical schools. His work there gave him the experience and insight to establish OPERON Consulting. Gerdy named his company drawing inspiration from a significant gene that captured his attention during graduate school. At the time, the discovery of the master gene was groundbreaking, and the concept of the operon was at the forefront of genetic research. The name reflects his passion for science and the lasting impact this discovery had on him.

OPERON specialized in bridging public and private sector partnerships, focusing on payor strategies, provider operations, and market regulations. With an ability to manage complex infrastructure, to plan and lead high-level meetings, and to guide decision-making processes, Gerdy, and his team built a reputation for helping companies navigate the pharmaceutical landscape. OPERON thrived for more than 20 years.

Throughout his career, Gerdy has traveled to more than 20 countries, assisting pharmaceutical companies as they determined market readiness for new products and drugs. His work ranged from consulting with senior executives to leading seminars for physicians, as well as guiding the development of strategies for healthcare organizations worldwide. Gerdy's blend of academic accomplishments and business acumen made him a trusted figure in both scientific and pharmaceutical circles.

Gerdy has a deep appreciation for both art and knowledge. He is an avid photographer with a passion for capturing stunning landscapes and striking architecture. His love for exploration

“People don’t spend enough time planning for their future. It is essential.”

extends beyond the lens he’s an enthusiastic reader, particularly drawn to books about science and archaeology, always eager to expand his understanding of the world.

When he is not behind the camera or immersed in a good book, Gerdy enjoys following his favorite sports teams. A dedicated fan of the Chicago White Sox, Bears, and Blackhawks, he takes pride in supporting his hometown teams through every season.

Gerdy has created a comfortable and fulfilling life for himself and others at Smith Crossing, where he enjoys the lifestyle

afforded by his independent living apartment since 2019. He and his wife moved there as they considered future health concerns, and he could not be more pleased with his decision because the community has enriched his life. “It’s a wonderful place to live; they take care of

everything, making life easy,” Gerdy says, reflecting on the peace of mind the community offers.

One of Gerdy’s favorite activities is hosting a twice-weekly dinner program, and he has proudly served as the treasurer of the Resident Council for five years. Gerdy also manages Emilie’s Store, the onsite gift shop, staying active and engaged with his neighbors.

After a career filled with extensive travel, Gerdy has embraced the quieter joys of retirement, now content to be a homebody. When asked for advice, he emphasizes the importance of preparation: “People don’t spend enough time planning for their future. It is essential.”

Thank you so much to Jim Gerdy for participating in this month’s issue. We cannot wait to introduce you to more of the families and residents of Orland Park! If you would like to be featured or have a recommendation, please email Ashley at amartens@bestversionmedia.com. We look forward to introducing next month’s residents or family!

DO YOU LIVE IN ORLAND PARK?

We’d love to feature your family (or a family you’d like to nominate) in an upcoming edition!

Just drop an email to amartens@bestversionmedia.com