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Transcription of Oral History of Mary and Jim Randolph

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It was a warm sunny morning in May when I met Jim and Mary Randolph. We sat on wooden benches, made by an Eagle Scout, overlooking the elevated beds at the Chelsea Intergenerational Garden. When I asked Jim and Mary if they were enjoying **their retirement, Mary answered, "I am busier now than ever."**

Mary Clemens Randolph was raised at the west end of I-94 in the Benton Harbor/St. Joseph area. Jim Randolph was raised at the other end of I-94 in the Mount Clemens area. As fate should have it, they met at the University of Michigan where both studied economics. They married shortly after graduating and stayed in the Ann Arbor area after both found jobs at the University. They built a home in **Washtenaw County's Superior Township and started their family.**

After 10 years, they decided they wanted to live where there was a little more **land and space within commute distance of Jim's job. "When we were driving around Chelsea, our sons commented, 'that the bicycles downtown were not locked.'"** We joked about it and then began thinking it was as good a comment one could make about a community as anything. We began looking more seriously at Chelsea as a home. We found 16 acres with a barn and a stream. We had the house designed and built in the **middle of the corn field and have lived here ever since."**

Jim and Mary are involved in local activities. Currently they are part of a small committee that oversees the Intergenerational Garden. The garden, where we are seated, is a joint venture between the Chelsea Senior Center and the Chelsea School District. **"The goal is to bring together gardeners of all ages, from the three-year-olds at the Early Childhood Center that you see playing over there, up through our oldest member at the Senior Center. The gardens were the focus of a recent planting session, where we taught the kids a little about gardening. We gave them their seeds, planting pots and soil. They took their seed trays back to school where we set up grow lights for them. They are growing a traditional Three Sisters Garden: corn, beans and squash. Next week, we will have a ceremony where a Native American woman will bless our gardens before we plant them. The gardens are an opportunity for the kids and seniors to work outside together."**

The Chelsea School District has supported this project by donating the land, installing the fence and irrigation system. The Chelsea community has provided tools, a storage shed, grow lights, benches, elevated beds and programs throughout the

Jim and Mary Randolph, continued

summer. **"The garden itself has been a great attraction of community support. In the future we are looking into a hoop house to expand our growing season and provide more food for our school and senior community."**

If the Intergenerational Garden was not enough, Mary is active with the Chelsea Area Garden Club. A founding member of the Club and a Master Gardener, she is currently co-chair of the plant sale fundraiser and assists with the garden walk held every other year. She is also an avid quilter with the CAADY (Chelsea-Ann Arbor-Dexter-Ypsilanti) Corner Quilters. The group found a home at the Chelsea Senior Center where they create their beautiful, quality quilts from donated fabric. The majority of these quilts are donated to the University of Michigan Bone Marrow **Transplant Unit. "We get some amazing thank you notes from patients that would bring tears to your eyes."**

Mary is also involved with the Alva Gordon Sink Alumnae group of the University **of Michigan and the University's Alumnae Council, both of which raise funds for** scholarships for women students.

Jim is the President of the Board of Directors for the Senior Center. In addition, two times a week Jim works on a pen-making project with residents of the Chelsea Retirement Community. They make unique hand-crafted wooden ballpoint pens. He also serves on the Board of the Kiwanis Club of Chelsea and is an active member of the University of Michigan Retirees Association.

Both Mary and Jim are involved, engaged and enjoy this new career that started **after retiring from work. "Retirement is a time to start to do all the things you never** had time to do before. Essentially, a second career around an activity that keeps one **involved in the community."**

We can all appreciate the beauty, camaraderie and involvement Jim and Mary Randolph have created to enrich the Chelsea community in their retirement.

