

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: ALICE RUTENBAR

Alice was one of eight children born to James Keith and his wife Mary Selene Seay Keith. Though James was by profession an attorney in the U.S., he and his wife founded a thriving business in the dense mahogany jungles of the small, English-speaking Central American country of Belize.



Alice recalls a happy childhood surrounded by loving parents and siblings. The family returned to a small town near Albuquerque, NM, where she finished high school and immediately joined the Navy, working her way up to the rank of Chief Petty Officer. As secretary to the commanding Admiral of the Naval Air Station at Glenview, Illinois, she also had a good working rapport with a then young Lt. Commander who would later become President of the United States, Gerald R Ford.

One day a handsome, athletic cadet named George Rutenbar and his flight instructor were called into the Admiral's office for a dressing down. They had had an encounter with another plane that barely missed becoming a disaster. Seeking to lighten the tension as

they waited in the outer office, Alice made a humorous remark to which he replied in kind. Later she learned that when asked by another cadet how the meeting with the Admiral went he had said, "It was great! I saw the girl I want to marry!" He managed to see her often as he completed his flight training and then went on to Pensacola for final combat training.

They were married at war's end and both took advantage of the GI bill to take degrees at Michigan State University.

There George was an All-American baseball player (1948-49) and signed with the Chicago White Sox. After several years he quit to manage an insurance agency, but he was yet to know his ultimate career.



By 1959 they were settled as substantial members of the community in Nashville, TN, where they owned an independent insurance agency. It was a good life, professionally gratifying and financially rewarding. Their family grew to four

children. One day at age 35 George said to Alice, "What would you say if I told you I believe God is calling me to the ministry?" They were both serious Christians when they met, and church had always been an important part of their relationship. This was out of the blue, but Alice answered, "I would say you'd better look into it."

George quickly booked a flight to Dallas, Texas, to meet with the president of Dallas Theological Seminary. The president encouraged him to consider what the prospect of life as a minister would look like for his family and especially for Alice. Leaving a comfortable lifestyle with a lucrative business, facing four years of academic labor in Greek and Hebrew studies, as well as theology, Biblical exegesis, church management and dealing with all kinds of people, all the while living on a shoestring budget? Most women with four children would find that hard to face, but not Alice. She had signed on to be George's wife with an attitude that wherever God took him, there she would go with an encouraging attitude. So, it was settled.

George enrolled in the Seminary and before the end of his first year was serving as Assistant to the President where he was able to use his gifts of business management and development to help see the school move from struggling survival to a major force on the theological landscape.

While still in school, George was the founding pastor of Trinity Bible Church in Richardson, Texas, and he and Alice enjoyed a full life of pastoral ministry through the years which took them from Texas to California and back again.

George died in 2012, and Alice moved to Treemont almost one year ago this month. She has an artistic bent, and is a master at beading necklaces. Her love for gardening is real: there isn't a plant that she doesn't appreciate for its own unique character. She loves all things British, especially the Queen, and of course, the very royal color purple. She is proud to a part of "The Greatest Generation," and is thankful for the full life that God has allowed her to live.

Her children are: Marsha, an attorney currently retired; Steve, missions director for Saddleback Church in California (Rick Warren's home base); David, with the IRS in Dallas, and Missy with Premier Designs Jewelry. Missy's husband, Sam Glass, is also a missions pastor here at Second Baptist of Houston. She has seven grandchildren.

Welcome to Treemont, Alice.