

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: KELLY PALMER

Kelly Palmer (nee Andrews) was born in New London, Iowa, population 1000, and when she was ten years old moved to Brooklyn, another Iowa town of about the same size. Like most of the girls in Brooklyn she was married immediately after high school—what



else was there to do? After a few years and two daughters the marriage failed and Kelly managed to get a fresh start by going to the University of Iowa for a Bachelor's degree in Art. After

graduation she discovered that finding a job for an Art major in Iowa was not easy, and besides that Kelly felt the need anyway to relocate and begin a new life.

A friend told her about Houston with its soaring population and the Space Center in its heyday, and Kelly came down to get the lay of the land. Using the city bus to get around she applied for a few jobs, found a place to live, and on a sunny June day in 1969 loaded her possessions in a U-Haul trailer, put a hitch on her 9-year-old Chevrolet and headed for adventure in the big city. Knowing her car's insatiable appetite for oil she put a case of oil and a funnel on the floor beside her. Periodically she would pull over to the shoulder, add oil, and set out again. It took her most of three

days to drive the 1100 or so miles in that car pulling the U-Haul with a top speed of 45 MPH, but this feisty and determined redhead made it!

Sears was just starting an interior design program with one designer to serve the whole city of Houston through the Main Street store, and Kelly got the job.

She made lots of new friends and gained some valuable experience, but the pay was not great and so she put on her business hat and took a supplementary job at a local bank. (Note: How often do you find a gifted artist and visionary who is also good at dealing with money? Kelly was.)

Soon she was offered a permanent job at the bank but it was part-time and she had decided she wanted something with a little more panache. She moved over to one of Houston's then top-line furniture stores, Stowers. There she was one of a design staff of several men and women, most of whom became lifelong friends. When she had built a substantial clientele and the business climate was right in Houston, she resigned and started her own company, Kelly Palmer and Associates.

Kelly was now absolutely in her element. She found a beautiful high-



rise apartment on Bellaire Boulevard, moved in and decorated it to her own eclectic taste, and began the lifestyle she had dreamed of. She entertained frequently with dinner parties and rooftop garden parties, took an active role in her church, and enrolled in classes at what is now the College of Biblical Studies. She was seeking answers for some of the complexities of life. She prospered and even founded an auxiliary company for remodeling existing properties, naming it "Rooms for Improvement."

One of the things that drew Kelly to the church she had chosen was a singles group called The Overcomers for those who chose to triumph even as they were going through difficult periods in their lives. That group and the principles she learned there became a way of life and a mainstay for her.

Houston Style was a slick, high-fashion magazine considered Houston's answer to the Architectural Digest. They featured Kelly in an article of several pages with pictures of fabulous homes she had done. The story brought her a deluge of new clients and business boomed.

In July 2008 health problems began to plague her and she became critically ill as a result of overexposure to radiation. While recovering from that she developed a blood clot in her lung. It was serious and she spent months in the hospital, after which she found it

necessary to move to a place where she could get immediate attention if necessary. Her choice was Treemont, and so she left her high-rise home of 27 years and joined the many contented residents of Treemont.

Last year her daughter Sherry gave her a 75<sup>th</sup> birthday party with eighty-five of Kelly's closest friends for dinner. They ranged from past clients, associates and contractors who had worked with her over the years and had become lifetime friends to former neighbors at her high-rise, to church friends and fellow Overcomers, to newer friends from Treemont. And a good time was had by all.

Kelly loves to entertain and manages to do it well even in limited space she has here. She also likes to visit with people, and has made friends worldwide in her extensive travels. She put her own personal stamp to the old saying, "When life hands you a lemon, you make lemonade and have a party."

This small-town Iowa girl has broken out of the mold, sought and found adventure, attained a professional niche of her own, and now has settled into a satisfying retirement, happy in her own skin. She has found that, as the apostle Paul wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Congratulations, Kelly--

