



Left and above: For the Houstons' pirate-themed Halloween a couple of years ago, Shari's team built an enormous pirate ship at the entrance to the party. The planning for the next year's event begins the following day. Far left: Shari Kelley in her warehouse, just "making it up as I go along." Below left: a table setting at the Bob Hope Classic Road to Zanzibar event.



PARTY PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHARI KELLEY EVENTS

**I**f you haven't actually attended a party produced by Shari Kelley, you certainly have seen the photos of her local charity fundraisers in news coverage. She's the energy behind extravaganzas like the eye-popping Bob Hope Classic Ball, Steve Chase Awards and Palm Springs International Film Festival Gala, as well as memorable private dinner parties and celebrations at the most exclusive country clubs in the Coachella Valley and beyond.

It all began innocently enough in 1978 when her mother Mary, who had retired to Palm Springs with her husband George, started a business called the Hostess Helpers with some girlfriends just to stay busy. Pretty soon they were preparing hors d'oeuvres in advance for the hostesses. Next thing you know, a now-legendary lighting and interior designer named James Callahan talked Mary into catering the opening party for his new studio, this for 200 people.

### Clueless in Vegas to Party Pro

Shari, who was living in Las Vegas and was clueless about "proper" party protocol, was recruited to help. Not knowing a chafing dish (de rigueur in those days) from a corn cob, she set up eight tabletop hibachis and cooked chicken and beef satés on skewers in front of the guests. That was amazingly

innovative in those days, and the response was so positive that the next morning she declared, "let's do this." They changed Hostess Helpers to Mary Go Round Catering and became the talk of the town.

Designers Hal Broderick, Arthur Elrod, Steve Chase and other local luminaries hired them for large society parties with glamorous guests. Shari's dad George was an artist and inventor who would create special serving vessels, like an illuminated 6-foot-long tin drain pan shaped like a fish that Shari used for an impressive seafood display.

Every party was an original and Mary Go Round Catering was in demand. But it was hard work, and Mary called it quits after seven years. Shari kept it going for awhile, but then closed it and opened Shari Kelley Events in 1990. She recognized that she wasn't a caterer as defined back then, and instead called herself an "event coordinator." This was a title she made up, and it has since become an authentic job description. Shari quickly became known for her innovative approach to entertaining, a strategy she defines as "making it up as I go along."

### Orchestration

More than just food, music and valet service, the Shari Kelley event has carefully crafted visuals to ensure that guests are being entertained from the minute they get out of their cars.