

Pat Lyons – Lyons Twin Mansions

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Hey, Pat. I’m going to a bed and breakfast meeting in Topeka. Want to come along?” It was a simple request, but it led to the creation of a remarkable bed and breakfast in an amazing, historic home. That bed and breakfast is now one of the longest running b and b’s in the state of Kansas. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Pat Lyons, or Miss Pat as she is sometimes called, is the Innkeeper of the Lyons Twin Mansions bed, breakfast, hotel and spa in Fort Scott, Kansas.

Pat was a military child. “I grew up in an Oldsmobile on Route 66,” Pat said with a smile. While her father was stationed in Mississippi, she met and married Larry Lyons, a young Air Force officer from Kansas.

Larry grew up near the rural community of Fulton, population 162 people. Now, that's rural.

Larry went on to an Air Force career. While preparing for a one-year overseas deployment, he and Pat came to Fort Scott to see his family. She spotted a home where she could stay with the kids while he was overseas. Soon after, Pat visited a gorgeous mansion for sale in Fort Scott. It was a four-story Victorian Italianate home built in 1872-76 by wealthy bankers who had come to Fort Scott from New York.

“It was a dream house, a treasure,” Pat said. They purchased the home, had repairs done and moved in after Larry retired in 1979.

In the late 1980s, as the kids were growing up, Pat had a request from a friend who had opened her home as a bed and breakfast. The friend was going to a meeting in Topeka and wanted Pat to come along, so she agreed.

Bed and breakfasts were a growing trend in the 1980s, encouraged by the work of K-State business professor Fred Rice. When Pat's friend had more guests than she could hold in her b and b, she asked if Pat could open up a room or two to hold the overflow. Pat did so and the business began to take off. Ultimately Pat's friend closed her b and b. Pat's business continued to develop.

Next door to the Lyons home was a virtually identical mansion which was also built by those New York bankers in the 1870s. In 2007, Pat and Larry's son Nate purchased the mansion next door and went into the business with his parents.

Today, Lyons Twin Mansions is one of the leading bed and breakfast enterprises in Kansas. Both historic mansions have guest rooms with plasma tvs and all the amenities, plus there is a day spa. The homes are exquisitely furnished, including items Larry purchased on Air Force tours – Persian rugs from Persia, for example.

Nate has opened Nate's Place, a restaurant and lounge, in the mansion he purchased. In addition, the Lyons family has a cottage across the street and upstairs apartments downtown for extended stays, while managing yet another nearby mansion for an owner in Texas. Altogether, there are ten guest rooms.

Through the years, Pat has hosted guests from coast to coast and beyond. The average life span of a bed and breakfast business is five to six years, while Pat has been going for 22 years. "We have reinvented ourselves many times," Pat said.

Why is this transplanted Kansan so passionate about her community and her state? "When we first moved here, I took my daughter in for her school shots," Pat said. "The next morning, the doctor's wife was at my door with a plate of cookies. My neighbor brought a loaf of bread," Pat said. "I cherish the people of Kansas."

“We are modernizing the rooms and embracing new technology,” Pat said. “I appreciate this wonderful business and wonderful community.” For more information, go to www.lyonstwinmansions.com.

“Hey, Pat, want to go to a bed and breakfast meeting in Topeka?” That chance contact has led to a remarkable innkeeping career for Miss Pat and the Lyons family. We salute Pat and Larry Lyons, Nate and all those involved with the Lyons Twin Mansions for making a difference with their entrepreneurship. They offer historic hospitality.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.