

BY DIANA TUORTO

HOLD 'EM UP

Kelly Zamonski started working for her parents' Xenia, Ohio kitchen business in 1983 while attending college. As a graphic artist, she drew perspective renderings for clients. After working as an office manager and bookkeeper, Kelly entered sales and design in 1990 and has since inherited the business from her parents. A member of both the NKBA and SEN Design Group, Kelly is the number one player in her local Texas hold 'em poker club.

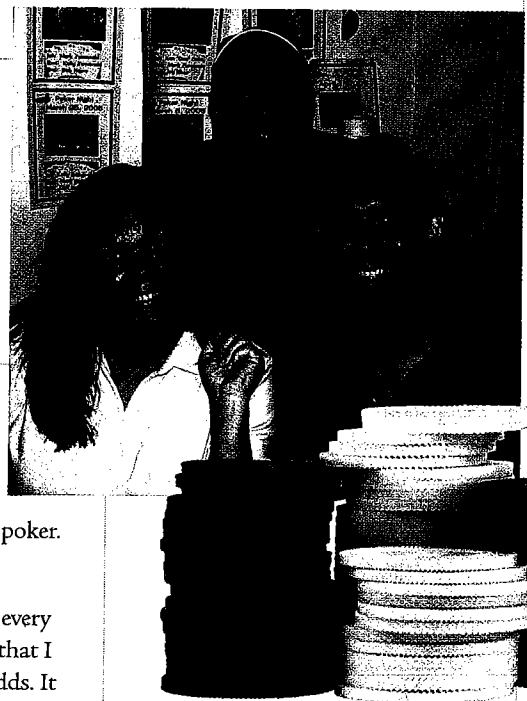
NKBA: What sparked your interest in Texas hold 'em? **KZ:** My parents taught me how to play cards when I was 4 years old. I learned games like Cribbage, Hearts and Spades and then learned Euchre in college. After my son was born, my husband and I realized that going out for an evening wasn't going to be easy. In 2004, we invited friends over to play cards. We started out with Euchre, which evolved into poker. One of the players suggested that we try tournament style Texas hold 'em.

NKBA: How did you learn to play? **KZ:** In the beginning, I wasn't very good. I played every hand that was dealt to me; it wasn't until I started watching television tournaments that I actually started to learn. A few guys that I play with are math wizards and play pot odds. It involves doing a lot of math in your head, while also adding up the chips in the pot. I'm mathematically challenged, so this wasn't an option for me. I play loosely based on pot odds, but I use my intuition and other factors to make decisions in a hand. Many of my girlfriends think playing poker is all luck, but it's really complex.

NKBA: Do you have a regular group of players? **KZ:** We have a consistent group of about 18 players that are all good friends. We play every Friday night.

NKBA: I've heard you often place in the top five. How many times have you been in first place? **KZ:** This year, I've always been in first or second place in the group's standings. For 2007, I ended up in first place among the group. From October 2006 to December 2007, I played in 70 tournaments, placing first 12 times and second 10 times.

NKBA: Do you have any long-term goals, such as winning a competition, related to your poker hobby? **KZ:** All poker players dream of winning the World Series of Poker, but that's not a realistic goal for me. I simply enjoy the social aspects. What surprises me most about playing poker is that I've never had a competitive bone in my body, but this game has sparked something in me. Playing poker has also helped me in business. I've always been one to wear my heart on my sleeve. Now, if I get a difficult customer, I'm much better at handling them than I was before I started playing this game.



JACKPOT!

Kelly Zamonski and her poker mates enjoy their latest victory.

If you would like to be considered for Last Word, contact Diana Tuorto at (800) THE-NKBA, ext. 2297 or e-mail dtuorto@nkba.org

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PHOTO BY MIKE GUSTAFSON

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