

Kerry McCoy

Founder and Owner, FlagandBanner.com



Kerry McCoy did not plan to sell flags. In 1975, fresh out of Miss Wade's Fashion Merchandising School in Dallas and unable to find work during the economic recession, she took a job with a small Dallas flag retailer called Betsy Ross Flag Girls. Six months later, homesick and ready for a change, she returned to Little Rock on her mother's advice to make a few phone calls.

What she discovered was her future. Nobody in Arkansas was buying flags from an in-state supplier.

With \$400, self-designed business cards and a \$50 city permit, McCoy founded Arkansas Flag and Banner and began selling flags door to door. For the next nine years she worked part-time jobs alongside the business to keep it afloat, including waitressing at a local restaurant where she met her future husband, Grady.

The business grew steadily, adapting with every decade. Rising gas prices prompted a pivot to telemarketing and catalog sales. Becoming a mother in 1980 meant hiring her first staff. When the Gulf War broke out in 1990, patriotic demand surged overnight and McCoy launched a screen printing department to meet it.

That same year she made what many considered a reckless decision. She purchased Taborian Hall, a crumbling three-story red brick building on Little Rock's West 9th Street, for \$20,000. Built in 1916, it had once been the heart of Little Rock's historic Black business district and home to the legendary Dreamland Ballroom, a Chitlin' Circuit venue where Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, BB King and Louis Armstrong had performed.

"I often say this building picked me," McCoy said. "When I finally reached the third floor and looked across at the stage I had a chill. The roof was off, the sun was shining in, and birds were flying around. It was an ethereal experience meant for me. I will never forget it. I knew then I had to have this building."

In 1995 McCoy embraced e-commerce early, transitioning the business online and beginning the evolution to FlagandBanner.com. Over the following decades she expanded her platform to include Brave Magazine, the Up in Your Business podcast, the Friends of Dreamland nonprofit and Kerry McCoy Enterprises. Under her stewardship and through nearly \$1.5 million in grant funding, Taborian Hall has been fully restored and the Dreamland Ballroom, now ADA accessible, is once again open to the community.

Today FlagandBanner.com generates \$6 million annually, employs 37 people across Little Rock and Miami, and counts Disney, The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, Netflix, Chanel, FedEx, Walmart and all branches of the U.S. military among its clients. Kerry's husband Grady and three of their four children work actively in the business. Son Matthew serves in sales and as Executive Director of Friends of Dreamland. Son Gray works in sales, hosts the popular Flag Facts video series and is a recognized vexillology expert on WikiHow. Daughter Megan McCoy Pittman manages accounting, purchasing, payroll and marketing.

As America prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday, FlagandBanner.com is an official retail partner with Annin Flagmakers for the officially licensed America 250 Anniversary Flag.

"There is something deeply meaningful about selling the official flag of America's 250th birthday in the same year we are celebrating over 50 years in this business," McCoy said. "If you think about it, we kind of grew up together. My 50 years in business is 20% of our country's life. Now that is a weird thought."

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