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Ken and Shirley Montgomery/krM win Madison County Chamber 2016 Entrepreneur Award



Start with Hoosier roots, add a little Southern experience and blend it all with Anderson/Madison County relationships and you have the success story that is Ken and Shirley Montgomery, founders of krM Architecture.

Both from Indianapolis, Ken saw a time of service in the Korean War, married Shirley in December 1954 and attended school at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University.)

After graduating in 1958 Ken worked in Montgomery Alabama for a year. The Montgomery's now of Montgomery found themselves living and working in the hotbed of the civil rights movement. Says Shirley, "we lived in Montgomery, Alabama right after Rosa Parks and during Dr. King. Our

office was right next to the church he preached at. We actually were there for history as it happened."

Returning to Indianapolis in 1959 and then to Anderson in 1960. the Montgomery clan was rapidly expanding. Ken refers to it as "a time somewhere between sanity and stupidity." Ken worked for Arthur Henning until 1978 when he and Shirley started K.R. Montgomery & Associates as an architecture and Interior Design Firm.

The new firm, now known as krM, opened with a design for Reardon Auditorium, the County Jail, and a remodel for the Madison County Courthouse. After working from their home for a short time, the company relocated to the Union Building finding themselves neighbors of John Pistole. Through an agreement with Jay Ricker, krM moved to its current location on the second floor of the Historic Post Office Building at 1020 Jackson Street in Anderson.

Shirley opted to stay at home for 24 years with a growing brood of nine children. Later she attended Anderson University receiving her Bachelor's Degree, and then received a Master of Education with an emphasis in the History of Art and Architecture through Ball State in 2001. She later added a Master of Architecture degree from Ball State in 2008, and authored a book on sustainability in 2012. Shirley and her grandson, Kevin actually graduated from Ball State at the same time.

The early years of krM found the company specializing in a combination of Anderson Projects and Public Libraries. After designing the retooling of the old Sears building into the new public library, Ken got an offer to work on the Greenwood library which son, Michael, actually took over. From that point, krM has designed a high percentage of the public libraries in Indiana.

At one time the firm had 26 people working overtime. The economic downturn of 2008 caused a reduction in workforce but the company survived with design work for Hospitals, Public School systems, and Anderson University. Current Madison County Projects include the new Flagship Purdue Polytechnic building, Community Hospital Pavilion and the Itopolina project. Outside of Madison County some current projects include, a restoration of the American Legion Building on The Indiana War Memorial Mall, A student Center Renovation at Earlham, Renovations at Hamilton Heights Schools, A new branch Library for Indianapolis and a restoration of the Eagles Theater in Wabash.

Today, krM Architecture continues its strong family tradition with sons Michael, David and grandson Kevin, deeply involved in the firm. But it extends further. Says Shirley, “we can come in to the office now and see the familiar faces of Winifrid, Stuart, Susan, Steve, Matt and Elaine and many others who have all been so important to our ongoing success. So, it is like a family.

The younger people in this firm have progressed to the point that they will tackle anything. We were blessed to have the projects we did, but they tackle things we wouldn’t have dreamed of trying at that age. They are forward looking and branching into other communities. They are so very good at the use of Technology to do amazing things.”

Among their peers, the professional recognition for krM is starting to pile up. This year krM was awarded the AIA Indiana “Distinguished Firm of The Year” and in 2014 krM was given more design awards than any other firm by the AIA Indianapolis Chapter.

When asked about their most satisfying moment in business, Shirley quickly responds, “When we drove by Anderson University and saw the Chandelier at Reardon Auditorium lit for the first time.”

For Ken and Shirley Montgomery, Anderson and Madison County suits them just fine. According to Shirley, “A lot of our business associates became friends and remain friends. We’re very grateful that AU is here. The culture in our community is special because of the close relationship with the University.”

Ken adds, “When GM was here they hired the best there was. A lot of capable people came to work here are still good friends.”