

Nathan Kimmel, Nathan Kimmel Company



A lifetime in the construction industry.

Nathan Kimmel Company, LLC, has grown from a go-to resource for drywall and plastering contractors in Los Angeles to become a provider of construction equipment, NKC Injection Systems, industrial supplies, and tarps to the wall and ceiling industry, locally, nationally, and internationally.

The company was founded in 1956 by my parents Nathan and Bella Kimmel, lending a helping hand. The business grew quickly, and my parents purchased a small distribution facility in downtown Los Angeles that was occupied until 2019 when we moved to a new facility.

As a little girl, my three siblings and I were part of the Nathan Kimmel Company business as it began. My father had been in the business of transporting furniture made in Los Angeles factories that were shipped to stores in the San Francisco area. He had a partner whose business ethics did not meet my father's high values, so he left to start his own business.

With rolls of dimes in his pocket to use public payphones to call the home-office, my Dad set off to see what was out in this big world. My parents trained us older children to answer the phone and take orders. If the phone rang, one of us had to pick up my baby brother so he would not cry, and the others were instructed to freeze....and keep quiet. This was so customers would think it was a real business.



My Dad began selling furniture pads, webbing, and other products to furniture companies out of the back of his station wagon. Yet, he knew he had to do something else!



He visited a military surplus facility that sold the government surplus at public auction that the government did not need. He purchased some camouflaged parachutes that had webbing on them. After school, our job was to pull the thread from the parachute's webbing to make rolls for my Dad to sell to the furniture stores. At night my parents would take the webbing to the laundromat to wash it and put them in clean, nicely packaged rolls. Looking back, I also think it was a way for them to get away from their noisy children and be alone for a while.



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One of the surplus purchases had army insignia patches. My Dad's innate entrepreneurial nature let him come up with a plan. " Let's sell 10 insignias for \$1.00." He put an ad in Popular Mechanic's Magazine, and the orders started coming in the mail. We kids would fight as to who would open the mail! My mother loudly instructed, "Do not open anything until we get the name and return address, and I can log in the payment." Our next job was to package the insignias neatly, insert them in the return envelopes, and put a stamp on them in a perfect, straight manner. Thus, began the NKC Shipping and Receiving Department.

When purchasing from the surplus facility, items were sold in" lots." For example, Lot #102 had parachutes, hoses, buckets, and other things. One day, my Dad purchased a "lot" that included a 2-inch rubber hose.

When driving to his daily sales calls, he saw a sign on a building with the name George Raymond Plastering Company." I wonder if they could use this hose," he thought." He went in and talked to a man named Ted Hobbs. My Dad showed him the hose and suggested that Mr. Hobbs try the hose and let him know what he thought.



When he came back a week later, Mr. Hobbs had a big smile on his face. "How much more of this hose can you get?" It was bulletproof hose! The next time he brought Mr. Hobbs more hose, Mr. Hobbs asked my Dad if he could get fittings, nozzles, Kamlocks, brooms etc. Thus, this was the beginning of the Nathan Kimmel construction supply business. The company's motto was, and continues to be, "If we don't have it, we will get it for you fast!" And fast we did!

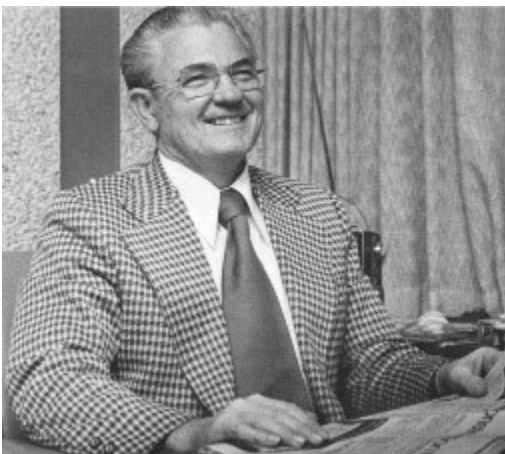
In 1960, construction began of the Barrington Plaza in West Los Angeles, the largest privately-owned high-rise apartment building in the western United States. " Nate, what can you get us to protect the fireproofing overspray from getting on the cars and people below? " He replied, " I have just what you are you need! Let me bring you a sample."

At home, he excitedly told my mother, "We have a new product to sell!" He retrieved the nylon parachute material left from the webbing product that he sold to furniture stores. With my mother or father sewing, one of the older children pulling the fabric, the first NKC tarps were produced — all this inside of our home garage. Thus, the NKC tarp factory had now begun!



It became apparent that working out of the house and garage was too cramped, so my Dad rented a warehouse on Nadeau and Slauson in Los Angeles. At that time, my brother Jerry age 18, decided to leave his job and join my Dad. Jerry had mechanical knowledge, so he became the technical manager and did purchasing, driving, and sales while developing new products. He was a welcome addition to the company.

Among NKC's first customers were George M Raymond, Martin Bros, Berger Bros., C.F. Bolster Company, Versatile Coatings, Clint Caston, Rutherford Company, Zellner Company, Brady Companies, Church and Larson, Mowery Thomason, Perlite, Standard Drywall, Sharpe Interiors, W.F. Hayward, and the list goes on.....



At times, owners of smaller companies would come in to ask for credit. If my Dad felt that they were trustworthy, he gave them credit on a handshake. Many of them grew into the large companies of today.

Bus Ratliff of the C.F. Bolster Company encouraged my Dad to join the California Lathing and Plastering Contractors Association and exhibit in a booth at their tradeshow. Bus gave my Dad the confidence to join other organizations and display at their tradeshow.



NKC's booth tables were filled with all kinds of nozzles, fittings, stator tubes, hose samples, and our quality NKC tarps, etc. The contractors would come to his booth and pickup these products to examine the fine quality and design.

My Dad would say, "How many can I write you up for?" My mother would write up the orders and was at his side, selling and networking.

As the business grew, my parents purchased a store on Santa Fe Ave. in Los Angeles. We now had a fully operating construction supply store and tarp manufacturing business.



My Dad was the best salesperson, marketing and product development specialist, and head of the company. My mother was the best operations manager, purchasing agent, and customer service representative. Jerry took care of the technical ends, developed products requested by the industry, and was so good in sales.



During those years, my husband was studying for his Doctorate in Engineering at UC Berkeley. He was also fighting cancer. With this challenge as part of our everyday existence and our family's support and love, we lived the best we could. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa with honors. He was offered a job to work at the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, where he designed and oversaw production of the Mars Mariner Spaceship's solar panels. The prototype proudly hangs in the entrance of the Smithsonian Space Museum in Washington, DC. He accomplished so much in his 31 years of life.

I was a graduate of USC with a Degree in Education with a minor in psychology. While living up north, I taught elementary school, which I loved. The principal praised my teaching ability and informed me that I

had chosen to train student teachers from UC Berkeley, which I did proudly. My parents taught me always to do 110% of what was asked of me, so with that spirit, I wrote several programs to enhance the school district's curriculum, such as an independent reading program, a Spanish learning program, and developed and taught a gifted art program.

Sadly, my husband of ten years passed away from cancer after a valiant fight.

Since I could not work during my husband's illness, the family business became my new learning experience. My Dad taught me about business, profit and loss, inventory control, and cash flow, but the most important was the art of sales, networking, negotiating, and marketing. My mother taught me about quality control, operations, and customer service. This on-the-job training gave me a foundation for what was to come.

My Dad died suddenly when his aorta burst in 1993. My mother and I knew nothing else to do but continue running the business. With a small and loyal staff, we kept things going.

I had new ideas on how to grow the company. My mother would give me reasons why they would not work. I found if I said to her, "Mom, let's try this for a while, and if it does not work, we will go back to the old way," she would relent.

For instance, I asked her why Dad did not sell machines when we sold so many machine parts. We started doing that slowly, and then it ramped up to today's market when we are premier distributors of the many brands of equipment. I knew we had to move up to the next level and grow. Yet, I always asked her for her opinion on new things out of respect. One day she came to me and said, "Don't ask me anymore; you are doing a great job; keep it up."

With new products and an awesome staff that could fulfill our needs, we forged ahead, attended many conventions, went on job sites, networked with many people, and were honored with awards.



My parents always had a booth next to W.R. Grace when they attended conventions. Grace manufactured the Fireproofing Injection Systems for Monokote. When I started to participate in the tradeshow, they asked if NKC would like to manufacture and be the exclusive distributor of the injection systems since we already sold machines and parts. We took that on, and this began our international business sales.

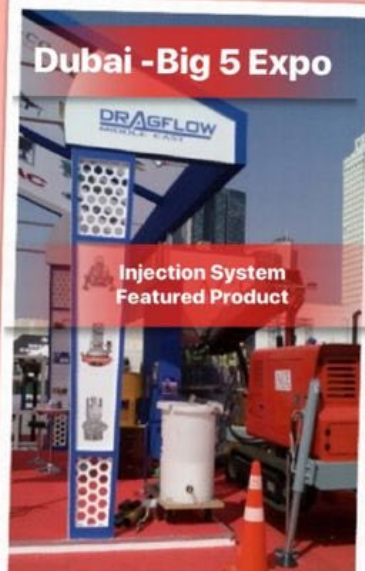
I will never forget when we sold a trailer load of equipment to a company in Lyon, France. We were invited to help set up this equipment. Over to France, I went! Upon arrival we traveled to the contractor's location and a big truck had followed us. It was a container of our equipment arriving. When the truck's back door rolled up, the load was in full view with big NKC labels everywhere! Can you see the smile on my face?

After the products were unloaded, we helped them set up to spray the next day. I proceeded to set up the fittings on the hoses and nozzle assemblies. They looked at me as to say, how does a girl know how to do these things? Those were the days that there were not many women in construction.

Another event that made me proud was that our products' distributor in Dubai/Abu Dhabi sent us a photo of our NKC Injection System in their booth at the Big 5 Construction Show. This International Building and Construction Show is the largest and most important event for the global construction industry in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia region. Over 75,000 people attend this construction show. Here was our NKC Injection System on display manufactured in our facility in Los Angeles.

With our fireproofing material dealers' help and with the reputation of our quality products and outstanding service, we now receive orders from all over the world. Our NKC Injections System has proprietary parts that are specified by the material companies. How proud it is to sell this product Made in the USA!

The little tarp factory that started in my parent's garage has now become the **Standard of the Industry** USA manufacturer of tarps. All the buildings at Ground Zero had our white nylon tarps as well as equipment during the reconstruction of this hallowed place. We are very proud to have so many landmark construction sites using our equipment and tarps.



National Fireproofing Contractors Assn.

I have owned and operated the company for 24 years. Our successful through the good years and bad - continuing to satisfy our old customers and attract new customers operating in an honest manner that I learned from my parents in our garage, remains our business model.

I have been honored with many awards, such as the **100 Woman-Owned Business** in Los Angeles, a **Most influential Family Business** in 1919, and the **Woman Making a Difference Award** by the Los Angeles Business Journal.

I was an **Enterprising Woman Awardee** from Enterprising Woman Magazine, and last year won a **Dedicated Service Award** from the National Fireproofing Contractors Association.



NKC is a **WBE** (Women-Owned Enterprise) and **WOSB** (Women-Owned Small Business) that helps contractors meet their diversity programs when bidding for jobs, which is a plus. Networking is the name of the game, in my opinion. NKC supports many organizations of the construction industry. I was honored to be President of the Foundation of Walls and Ceilings of AWCI, a Board Member, and helped found the **AWCI CARES**, which stands for Caring Action Relief in Emergency Situations. The program's funds are available to the employees and families of AWCI member companies who have experienced a major illness, accident, or hardship beyond their insurance and financial capabilities.

The best part of all of this is that I love what I do! I think the people in our industry are quality people and some have become dear friends. I look forward to seeing them at events and on a personal level.

I sometimes imagine my parents coming through the door and looking around. What would they think? Could they believe that I took this little mama/papa business that started in our garage, mixed it with business knowledge, marketing, and sales experience, then blended in their spirit and integrity to become the business it is today?

