

# Kevin Wright

Adrian, Michigan

**Shop name:** Wright Signs **Shop size:** 2700 sq. ft. **Age:** 00  
**Graphics equipment:** HP9000 64-in. digital printer, 64-in. Graphtec plotter, FlexiSIGN software **Web site:** [www.wrightsigns.com](http://www.wrightsigns.com)

**W**e're keeping busy here at the shop, but it could be better. Michigan's been hit pretty hard in terms of the economy—especially here in the southeastern part of the state. We're about sixty miles west of Detroit.

Our shop is relatively diversified and we've been making signs around here for a long time, so we've got a good reputation and a steady clientele.

I'm in Adrian, which is the county seat of Lenawee County. The county has a population of about 100,000. A lot of my work is done here

in town, but I travel to a few counties within a 60-mile radius.

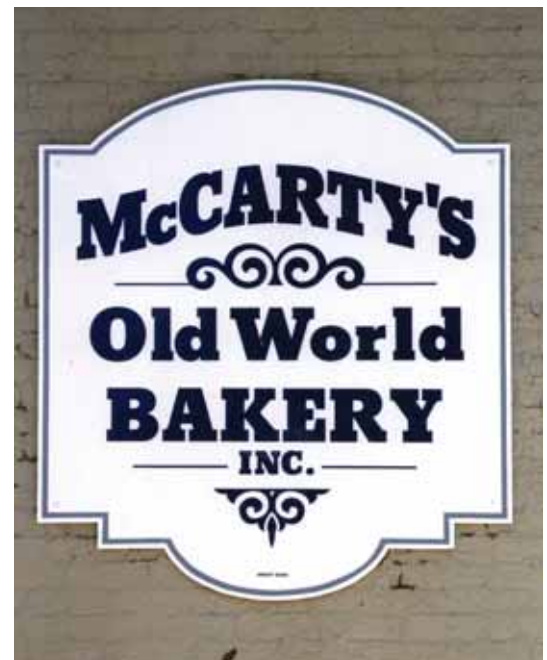
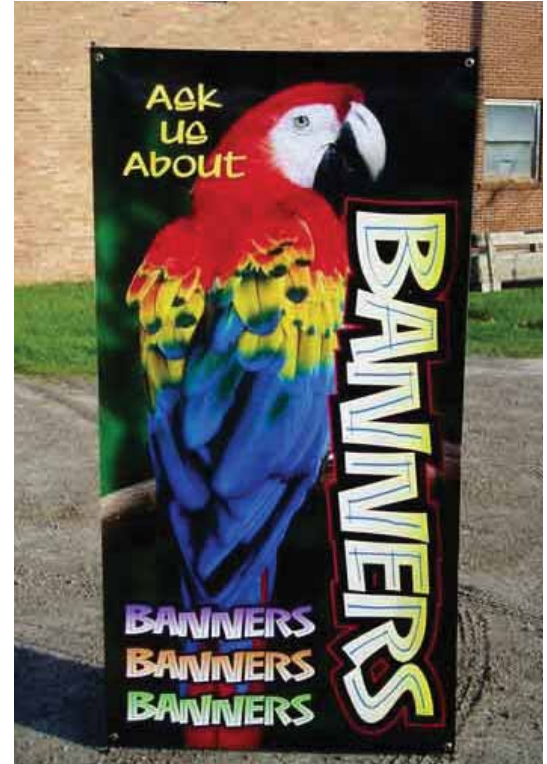
Wright Signs got started back in '72 when my dad bought out Garrison Sign, which is the shop he had worked at for \_\_\_\_ years. My dad was in the sign business for 50 years. I graduated from high school in '78 and started working at the shop in '80, then bought my dad out in '88. So I guess you could say that I learned the old-fashioned way, hand lettering, doing my layouts with a yardstick.

I began working at the shop at about the time the computerized sign-making machines started coming on. At the time some of the bigger shops in the area had them, but my dad never thought too much about them.





“The digital printer has been a lot of fun and I think it’s helped me become a better designer.”



We continued making signs by hand until '95 when I got my first graphic computer and plotter.

Now we have all new equipment, including an HP9000 64-in. digital printer [800-289-6947, [www.hp.com](http://www.hp.com)], a 64-in. Graphtec plotter [800-854-8385, [www.graphtecusa.com](http://www.graphtecusa.com)], a Seal 62 laminator [800 257-7325, [www.sealgraphics.com](http://www.sealgraphics.com)], and the latest version of FlexiSIGN [SA International, 800-229-9066, [www.SAIntl.biz](http://www.SAIntl.biz)].

It's been a fun transition, especially learning about all the stuff we can do with the digital printer. Back when everything was hand lettered, sometimes I'd want to add some extras to a sign—an offset outline around a shadow, for instance—but that sort of thing took a lot more time and often I just couldn't justify passing the expense on to the customer. But now, with the click of a mouse, you can do that and more. Using the new FlexiSIGN and the digital printer has been a lot of fun and I think it's helped me become a better designer.


For someone like me, whose background is in traditional sign making, getting the right help with computer-related issues is very important. Seven years ago, \_\_\_\_\_ joined our staff. He knows the in's-and-out's of computers and has been a huge help in making the transition to digital printing. He's basically the production department here at Wright Signs, too. We think alike when it comes to making the shop work and concentrate on being as efficient as possible.

Our shop has been at this same location in central Adrian for \_\_\_\_\_ years. We're in 2700 sq. ft., with enough height to accommodate most trucks and wreckers. The staff is made up of \_\_\_\_\_, my wife \_\_\_\_\_, who does all the bookkeeping, and me. We do a little of everything, including electrical sign fabrication and maintenance.

I have an old Radocy crane—in fact, it's on its fifth chassis, if that gives you an idea of how old it is. My dad bought it years ago and it was operated by a hand-crank mechanism at the time. It has since been converted over to run on an electric motor and it works fine for us. It has a 45-ft. boom with a bucket. We service neon signs and channel letters for a number of different franchises; we have a relationship neon shop down in Toledo.

Now that we have the digital printer, we're starting to see some interest in wraps and partial wraps. For me it's been a hard sell—this area is extremely price-oriented. But we're starting to do more of it and it's catching on. People are starting to see more wraps, especially if they travel up toward Ann Arbor. We're pushing it as best we can. Our shop truck is wrapped and people are amazed at

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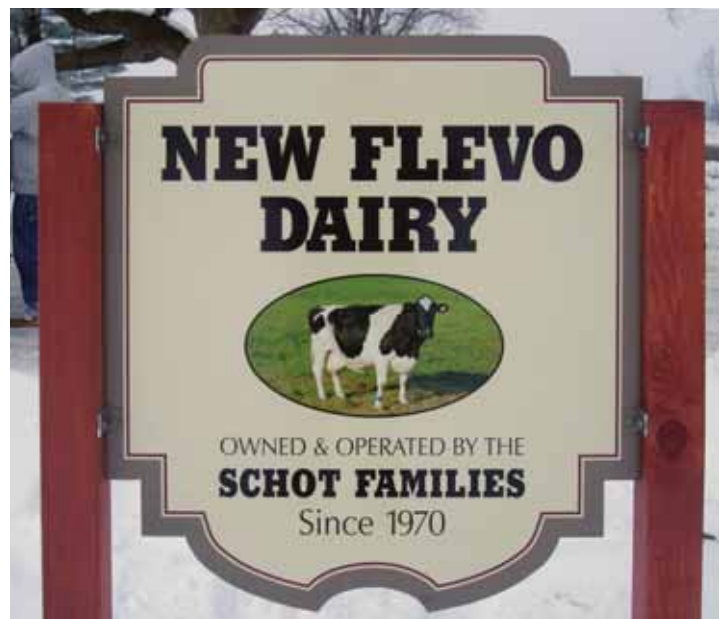
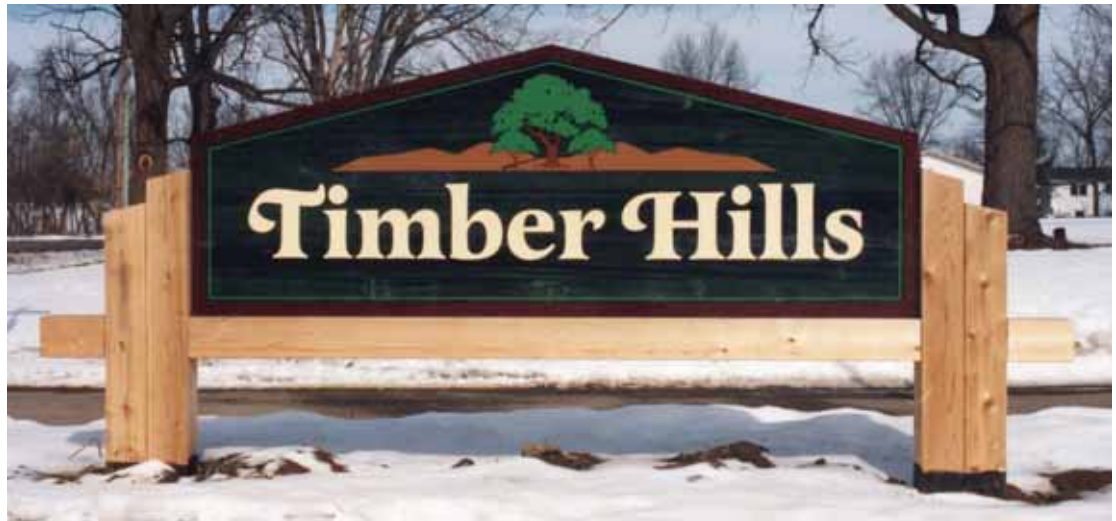
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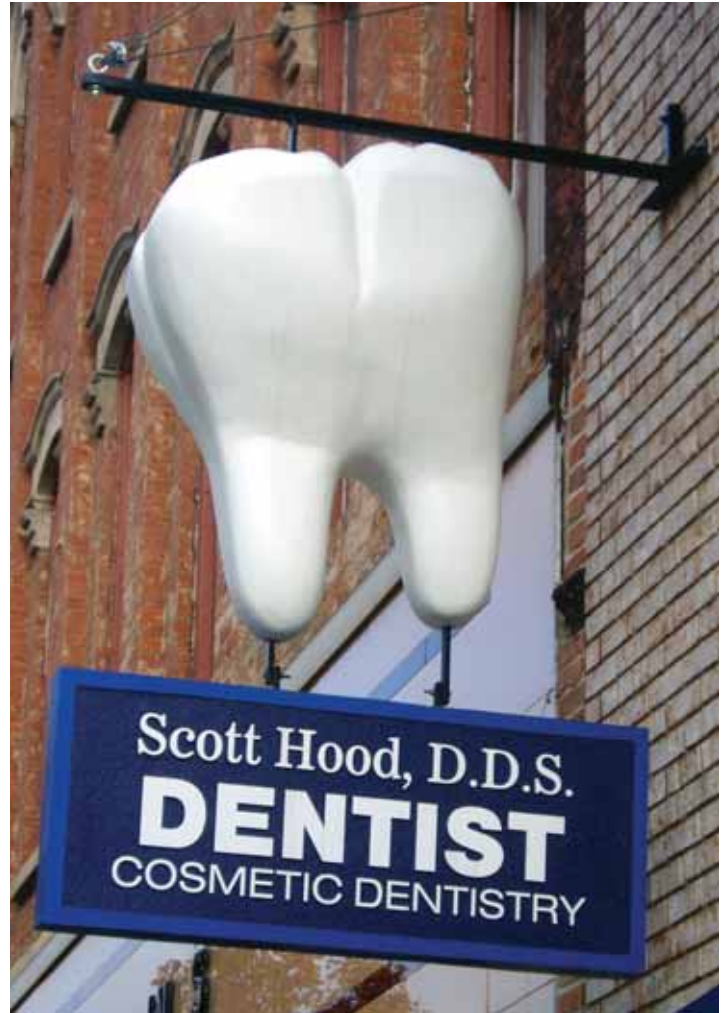
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continued...



what we can do when they give us the chance.

I still get to do a little lettering every now and then—the last lettering project was a basketball, just the other day, for a local team that won a national title. I get to work on a walls every once in a while, too, and I enjoy that.

When I'm not making signs, I enjoy spending time with my family. We live on a lake and we enjoy the outdoors—fishing, boating and hunting. I'm an avid duck and goose hunter, and a few years ago began carving decoys. The outdoors is really my passion. •§

—From an interview with John McIltrout



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