



by [Gregory Pings](#)

Joanne Galvin, a materials coordinator for Xerox's Supplies Delivery Unit, and her husband Steve named their creation the 9-11 National Remembrance Flag. They chose the words carefully:

Remembrance: The Galvins believe it is important to remember the tragedy of 9/11 and the lives that were lost.

National: Citizens of countries other than the United States died as a result of terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. They believe their flag is an appropriate remembrance that can be displayed in any country.

The idea for the flag came to Steve shortly after the attacks as he was listening to some reporters discuss the tragedy and relate it to Pearl Harbor.

"One of the reporters was unable to recall that the date of the Pearl Harbor attack was December 7, 1941," Steve said, "That's when it occurred to me to design a remembrance flag – so that people would never forget."

The Galvins filed for a copyright on September 25, 2001. Their search for a flag manufacturer took several months because everyone they contacted had a huge backlog of orders for U.S. flags. They found an ally in Patrice Corletta at the Veteran's Outreach Center in Rochester, NY, which sells flags. She connected the Galvins with a manufacturer who was able to take their order.

The first shipment of 9/11 National Remembrance Flags arrived in August, 2002.

What They Got Themselves Into

"We had no idea what we were getting ourselves into," said Joanne.

They were nearly overwhelmed with orders for flags as a result of help from the local newspaper and television stations. Their evenings were spent returning messages on their answering machine, replying to email, fulfilling orders for flags, packing and shipping.

You might call it a mom and pop operation and, in many ways, you might be right. But it has become much more than selling and shipping flags. They donate all proceeds from the sales to relief efforts – the American Legion 9/11 Memorial Scholarship is the primary recipient.

Their work has both broken and healed their hearts. The Galvins did not know any of the 9/11 victims. Nor did they personally know anyone who had lost a family member or a friend to the attacks.

But they do now.

They have sold flags to a number of people who lost someone to the attacks, and the telephone conversations are not so simple as taking the order and hanging up.

“They tell me things and they cry,” Joanne said. “I listen and I cry.”

One of these calls has turned into a warm friendship with an Arizona woman and her son, who lost their husband/father in the attack on the Pentagon. They exchange email and telephone calls nearly every day and have even met a couple of times.

Steve, a heavy equipment operator for highway sign manufacturer Elderlee, Inc., recalls a conversation with another woman. She told him the flag helps her son remember his dad and to realize that other people remember him as well.

The Galvins have a standing policy for customers who lost an immediate family member to the attacks: The flags are free.

Joanne does not know how she could have gotten through the telephone conversations but for the fact that all of the comments about the flag and their efforts have been positive. When they first offered the flag for sale, they waited for that phone call from a family member asking them to stop. Such a call never came.

The Point of No Return

“We’ve received hundreds and hundreds of telephone calls,” Joanne says. “There is no way we can stop now.”

A number of flags and banners that commemorate the tragedy are on the market. Few integrate all four attacks -- each of the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers, the Pentagon and Flight 93’s crash near Shanksville, Pa.

The Galvin’s next goal is to have their flag designated the official remembrance flag of the 9/11 tragedy. They have support from Michael Nozzolio, a senator in the New York legislature, who has drafted a bill that will allow the Galvin’s 9/11 Remembrance Flag to fly at all state and municipal buildings in New York.

Other pockets of success include:

- Their flag was flown at the New York State Fair’s memorial site in 2003 and will be flown there every year.
- It is also displayed year-round at the temporary memorial site in Shanksville, Pa. (It was pictured in the September 15, 2003 issue of Newsweek.)
- The majority of towns in the surrounding area fly the Galvins’ flag. Some have made it their official 9/11 Remembrance Flag. But don’t ask how many -- they’ve lost count.
- The TRAC Team -- FDNY (Trauma Response Assistance for Children) uses the flag as part of a traveling display that crosses the United States. The display helps children understand what happened on 9/11 and teaches them overall safety.

‘We Can’t Bring Anyone Back . . .’

The Galvins are working to get the word out about the flag and to make it more widely available. Right now, you can buy it only at one of two places: A store at the Veteran’s Outreach Center in Rochester and the Galvin’s web site.



The blue stripes in Steve Galvin's design represent the color of the flags for each state where an airplane was downed -- New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The black in the center of the flag represents the sorrow we feel for the innocent lives lost from this tragedy: those on the planes, those working in the twin towers and the Pentagon, as well as those who lost their lives during the rescue. (Image courtesy of Steve and Joanne Galvin.)

Even still, their distribution is fairly broad. They have shipped flags to people in 20 U.S. states as well as five other countries. This includes some that are traveling with U.S. soldiers serving in Afghanistan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

For all the challenges and heartbreaks, Steve and Joanne Galvin have no regrets.

“So many things have happened that make us feel we are doing some good,” Joanne said. “We can’t bring anyone back, but we can show the families that we sincerely try to understand their loss.

“And we are trying in our own way to make sure that they are not forgotten.”

More Information

More information about the National Remembrance Flag -- including its symbolism, history and photos -- is available on the Galvin’s web site at www.911remembranceflag.com