



Volume II 2017

**How the
Event Business
Has Changed**

**Holland's Floral...
Still Going
Strong After
Eighty-eight Years**

**Bobbi Ecker
Blatchford:
the Passing
of a Floral
Industry Icon**

**Prom...
Necessary
Nuisance or
Profitable
Opportunity?**



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Publisher: Rodney P. Crittenden

Advertising Director & Sales: Rodney P. Crittenden

Editor: Barbara Gilbert

Graphic Design: Joe McGurn

Printing: Village Press Publications

MFA is not responsible for the statements or opinions published in the *The Professional Florist*. These represent the views of each author and are not necessarily the views of the association or its staff.

LEADERSHIPREPORT

Everyday Insurance Concerns for Florists and Special Events Specialists

BY ROD CRITTENDEN, MFA/WUMFA EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



It was recently brought to my attention that many event specialists/planners may, in fact, be operating without the proper insurance coverage, if any at all. This concerned me on many levels so I asked our insurance specialist to help me clarify a few important questions surrounding basic insurance coverage.

Whether a “brick and mortar” florist with a storefront, or a “special event florist” only doing events such as weddings, businesses providing floral services at any venue have certain liability and workers’ compensation concerns they must take into consideration.

Workers’ Compensation Coverage

The first, and most obvious, is workers’ compensation coverage. State law indicates that any company, regardless of whether or not they have an actual physical place of business, employing one full-time or three part-time employees is required to carry a workers’ compensation policy.

The penalties for operating without said coverage are hefty, with a \$1,000 fine per day that an employer operates without the coverage. Even those employers who only hire one part-time person on an occasional basis would still be responsible for the benefits a policy would normally provide.

As an example, a “special event florist” without a storefront doesn’t carry a workers’ compensation policy as they only hire a helper on Saturdays for a couple of hours to help them set up for a wedding reception. As they only have one part time employee, state law does not require them to carry a policy.

However, if that part-time employee is injured while working, the employer is still responsible for medical bills and lost wages incurred by the employee. Medical bills can accrue to some pretty substantial sums, and without a workers’ compensation policy in place, this is all out of pocket for the employer.

Generally speaking, if an employee suffers a work related injury, workers’ compensation is a “sole remedy”, meaning they can collect on the workers’ compensation only and cannot seek a personal injury suit. However, if an employer does not carry workers’ compensation coverage and there is a liable third party (for example, a venue), the injured employee may seek a “third party crossover” suit, meaning they can bring suit against that third party, i.e.: the venue. Therefore, it is vital to both the florist and any venue they may work for to carry a workers’ compensation policy.

General Liability: Fire Legal, Errors and Omissions, and Auto

General liability also offers valuable coverage to both brick and mortar florists and special event florists to cover exposure that exists for both. The biggest one is Fire Legal Liability. If, for example, a florist is doing a wedding and they have centerpieces with candles that cause a fire.

The florist has an exposure not only for the property (which can be substantial depending on the size of the venue) but also for the injuries guests may sustain. In the absence of coverage provided by the florist, that liability will fall on the shoulders of the venue. The bigger concern, both from a humanitarian point of view and a financial point of view, is the injury.

Another concern that can and should be addressed by a general liability policy is Florists’ Errors and Omissions. Absence of this coverage opens the florist (and potentially their venue) to the possibility of a pretty substantial lawsuit. An example of how this coverage would come into play would be mistakenly writing down the wrong date for a wedding. If a customer reserves a florist for their wedding date of June 7, and the florist writes the date down as June 14, there will be no flowers for that special day.

The customer could conceivably feel that their very special event has been ruined and may well bring suit against the florist. If the venue had arranged for the services, as many venues do, they can be brought into the suit as well. The most cost effective to guard against what could be a very costly mistake is Florists’ Errors and Omissions coverage.

The last concern is Auto Liability. All florists, whether they have a store front or not, need to get their products to the final destination, be it a venue or a flower delivery to a home or business. Personal auto policies are not designed to cover commercial exposures and carriers may deny a claim if they become aware that a personal vehicle was being used for business purposes. In any event, a personal auto policy will not cover the business in the event of an accident.

Replacing that personal policy with a commercial auto policy, would provide coverage for both the individual and the business.

In summary, it is always better to be safe than sorry. It is always recommended that any business currently operating, carry at a minimum, workers’ compensation, general liability and auto liability coverage. Anyone hiring a business to come in to their location or do any work for them at all should request a current Certificate of Insurance to be sure that the coverage is in place.

Feel free to call me at the MFA office (517) 575-0110 and I’d be happy to set up a meeting with our licensed insurance agent who will be happy to assist you in determining the most cost effective way to cover your exposures. ✿

Welcome New MFA Members!

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Phone: (989) 695-9100 • www.austinsflorist.com

Hagstrom’s Flowers –Rod and Amy Gibbs

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Photo by Hannah Forsberg

EVENTSFEATURE



Two outdoor event decorations.



How the Event Business Has Changed

BY DALE MORGAN, BLOSSOMS, BIRMINGHAM, MI

Starting out in the special events world 40 years ago, it was all about “The Wedding”. Rental companies provided tents, tables and chairs. There were no prop companies or linen manufacturers and fewer event coordinators except for those who specialized in guiding a client through the pitfalls of etiquette, steering them to the best bands, florists and caterers. The florist created the “look” that was current and fashionable.

How life has changed! Social refinement has been replaced by instant gratification, celebrity and shock. Price driven competition, multiple options of access to flowers, Pinterest, the ‘do it yourself’ craze and constant social media has replaced experience and reputation.

The traditional florist who put heavy emphasis on the special events category, chasing the large single sale while neglecting

their day to day business, faced severe challenges during the economic downturn. Many went out of business.

But, fear not, there is still a place for a quality, service driven, traditional brick and mortar retail florist to be successful and PROFITABLE.

A special event is the client’s definition, be it a funeral, shower, graduation or business meeting. Flowers are an extension of the giver, to satisfy the desire for recognition. Flowers represent the giver’s image or personal branding.

As baby boomers age and redefine life, they are redefining death as well. The three day event has been reduced to one, cremation becoming main stream. Although funerals are shrinking in some ways, in others they are becoming a special event.

“In lieu of flowers” presents an opportunity for charities that went unsupported by the deceased while alive; family asking others contribute for them in their name, in death. Flowers are always appropriate at both the funeral home and the wake; it is the final dignified tribute to a loved one. The professional florist should be giving guidance for both events to the bereaved, presenting the survivors in their best light.

Showers, baby or wedding, are celebrations. Coworkers assemble to give showers, men are invited to couple’s showers. Showers range from small to large guest counts, Novelty locations and local celebrations of upcoming weddings can make this a lucrative area to develop.

Often it is a themed event, requiring unique items. Give the client the opportunity to procure these items, even place them on the tables, while you provide a small accent arrangement. Prioritize your time, energy and creativity. Free has no value. “I’m all out of free and I’m not making any more” could be your new mantra and profitability will follow.

The wedding industry is a continually changing animal. The tradition of the parents of the bride giving the wedding reception

EVENTSFEATURE

is rare today. Weddings, straight or gay, the couples are close to 30 years old, traveled, living together, some with small children. The days of the “blushing bride” are past. It is a combined effort, both sets of parents and the couple, or just the couple, who have started their own lives with their own guest list and immediate family; the parents facing retirement age without the ability to recoup the expense.

The average guest count is about 140 with a flower budget of \$2,300, each contributor wanting their “style” and “values” to be acknowledged. The couple’s emphasis is on food and drink, novelties like photo booths and favors; destination weddings in far off lands, knowing/hoping few will be in attendance. Flowers and invitations are taking a back seat. Knowing this, the full service florist who is meeting and planning weddings is in a position of control and able to capture sales that may go elsewhere, keeping in mind the importance of limiting time spent chasing these sales.

Graduations are a constant: kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high school, college, they have become rituals to come together and have a party, the child a prop for the event. Graduations are similar to wedding or baby showers, clever themes with props that could be left to the hosts to create and install.

Event props, candleholders, risers, candelabras and linens, require storage and investment of capital. Factor packing, hauling, cleaning, breakage, theft and storage, it will take three to five times the cost before it is profitable. Most props last 7-10 uses before they are worn out and 3-5 years before they are no longer fashionable.

Some clients have access to props from previous events and want to use them, thinking they will save money but they could be making you money. Have them deliver and place them on the tables so you arrive with just the flower arrangements and place them...no time or labor spent setting up or removing.

When setting up a planning session, I’ve found the phone works best, even if the client prefers text or email. Direct questions: date, locations, number of guests, color schemes, budgets, what are they looking for you to provide; personal flowers, centerpieces, linens?

Meetings/planning sessions can be kept short with direct requests, “show me your inspirational pictures” and let them talk. It is their event, not yours. Give them what they want. If beyond your scope; send them away with your best wishes. If it is an event that you can handle and be profitable give them a general verbal quote; you already asked their budget in the initial phone conversation.

The meeting should take between 20 and 30 minutes. Clients know if they are going to hire you in the first five minutes. Ask at the end of the meeting if they would like a written proposal, some are “just shopping” and will return wanting a written proposal, wanting to leave a deposit. Chasing after pieces of business that do not come naturally is a problem waiting for you. Often the wealthiest people are the least free spending. No deposit means, you are not hired.

My accountant told me “keep it small and keep it all!”

Don’t work for free, time is finite, enjoy your free time! ✿



Many events are set up in large tents.



EVENTSFEATURE

Special Events – the Backstory

BY PETE SAMEK, AIFD

One of the benefits of working in the floral industry is that we are presented with opportunities to create beautiful events for our clients. Many companies specialize in this type of work but if you own a regular retail florist operation a large special event may not be a regular activity for your staff and could be an overwhelming challenge.



Hard at work on the 1936 silver Packard.

Special events come to us in many forms and variations from elaborate large scale weddings to corporate national meetings to notable award ceremonies. Read on if you have never produced or had the desire to create large events but you are curious on how to plan and organize large projects.

I recently have been a part of two large scale special events that I would like to share with you: the USO National Gala and 75th Anniversary Celebration, Washington, DC, and the 2017 Tournament of Roses Parade, Pasadena, CA. These two events have planning requirements in common but many details that are very different. The main objective is to satisfy the client's wants and needs and stay within their budget. Each of these jobs presented their own set of challenges.

The process starts with initial consultation with the client, gathering all details for the event. Basic items you should record are the date of the event, times including delivery, set up and strike, contact information of everyone involved with the project including the client, catering, production company, rental company, venue contacts, entertainment representatives and most important, the budget.

Inquire about a schedule of events for the day, access to rooms or ballroom spaces, any of the spaces requiring multi-use, the availability of loading docks and paths (hallways) for delivery and strike in the 'back of the house'. Some cities have organized unions, for example electricians, teamsters, carpenters, etc. which need to be accounted for with scheduling and additional costs.

You may require a site inspection to answer many of these questions. Sources for water, electricity, the inspection of the physical space of the venue, local fire codes and trash removal are just a few things you need to review for a smooth, seamless production.

USO National Gala, Washington, DC

When planning for the USO Gala, we were provided a budget, selected colors for the event, the table count (dinner for 1,000) as well as the location which was the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum and Constitution Hall. The USO also provided the details mentioned in the above paragraph. Several sample centerpieces were created using various recipes within the color range and budget, then

photographed and added to a proposal which was created in a power point presentation.

This proposal was emailed to the USO Committee for review and approval. We had one conference call with the committee for finalization and then a spreadsheet was created to keep track of the amount of flowers, supplies and budget needed to complete the job. This event required working on site to create the centerpieces at the W Hotel and then transport them on the day of the event. We had to work with a local East Coast wholesale florist and coordinate fresh flower and floral supply deliveries.

Once on location, the preparation began four days ahead of the event date. Containers had to be unpacked and prepared for centerpiece production, flowers received for processing and hydration, battery operated votives prepared and organized for delivery and placement. Two days prior to the gala, the USO marketing team arrive to conduct interviews, take pictures and do voice over statements to be used for the video portion during the ceremony. As centerpieces were completed in a production style process, they were packed into boxes for transportation and checked for water requirements.

The morning of the event, all the flowers were moved to the hotel dock and then loaded into a refrigerated box truck and sent off into the Washington, DC traffic to meet a 1:00 p.m. dock time. We had a crew of 14 to 'load in' to the venue, dodging rental chair delivery guys, pallets containing hundreds of bags of ice, lighting personnel from the production company and catering waitstaff setting the tables.

Working from one end of the room to the other, we meticulously completed table by table alternating red floral arrangements and white floral arrangements placed on alternating linens. Standing back and observing the venue, you can't help having the feeling of satisfaction

Table decorations at USO gala.





The finished product.

and pride when all of the vendors' hard work and services come together with yours to accomplish one unified look. The end result was spectacular!

2017 Tournament of Roses Parade

Now, you may think I may be referring to float decoration process but my parade experience was a long term goal of mine in my floral career. I had the privilege of creating the beautiful flower decorations on the VIP antique cars featured in the parade. This assignment has

Cars lined up, ready to go.



been the responsibility of only two outstanding floral designers in the last 45 years. The esteemed Els Hazenberg, AIFD, and her husband George created the flowers for the prestigious autos for 30 years until retirement and very talented J. Keith White, AIFD, has been the designer in residence for the last 13 years. The project is sponsored by FTD.

Each year presents its own set of challenges. Timing and weather conditions are a critical part of the planning. Tents similar to the type of structures used for outdoor weddings are erected on a parking lot of the Rose Bowl Stadium and removed prior to the game. Artificial turf carpet is laid on the ground, secured and overhead lighting is installed to create a 'showroom' environment since the cars and the floral decorations are available for public viewing.

The planning process for the parade is an extended process between Keith White and the tournament committee. Decisions on the amount and type of cars and type are made by the Tournament President, the Tournament CEO and the Grand Marshal committee.

This year we decorated 11 units which is a very large task. The Tournament President chose the recreated Borax 20 Mule team, two four ton wagons, as his mode of transportation and the committee chose three Olympic gold medal athletes as Grand Marshals.

Concluded on page 10

Recreated Borax 20 Mule team.



EVENTSFEATURE

Additional vehicles were used by the Tournament CEO, the Pasadena Mayor, and the Hall of Fame honorees along with main sponsor Honda's pace car and sound car. The amount of cars varies from year to year so you can imagine that the flower requirements change accordingly. This year we utilized 10,000 stems of flowers to get the job done. Over 80 percent of the flowers were sourced from California growers. Keith White did an amazing job of ordering flowers; we literally had nothing left over.

Every car is unique and requires different amounts of flowers. For example, the silver 1956 Packard used this year is a very large vehicle and 200 hydrangeas can be absorbed into the fenders so quickly that it looks like you hardly added any flowers at all. Compare that to the 1937 Bentley, which is a much smaller car and required slightly less flowers to achieve the desired appearance.

Once the antique cars are decided upon, then flower harmonies, quantities and varieties are chosen and ordered. Delivery time and date is decided and coordinated with the VIP committee members and security staffing. After receiving the flowers, they are processed for hydration and sorted by each auto. A schedule is set for each car and coordinated with the social schedule involving the cars, their owners, the parade VIP's and the formal dinner. Preview appointments are scheduled three to four days ahead so that the honorees and VIP's can practice getting into the cars and discuss seating assignments so they are comfortable on parade day.

Similar to creating centerpieces for a party, each car has a recipe and a color harmony. The floral foam foundations are secured to each car



Olympians Greg Louganis, Janet Evans, and Allyson Felix served as grand marshals of the 2017 parade.

a few days prior, taking great care to protect each vehicle and the paint finish. Working one variety at a time, flowers are placed on the car, front, both sides and rear complementing the lines and style of the car.

From a designer's perspective, paying attention to scale, line, dimension and color is important as you are working on the vehicle. Once completed, each car receives special attention, inspecting flowers daily and keeping everything hydrated until parade day. The antique autos make their way up the hill to the tournament house, located on Orange Grove Blvd, and staged according to their position in the parade. There they wait for the VIP's to enter into each car and join the parade as it goes by the house.

To wrap it up, I hope that I have shown two great examples of special events and the similarities and differences of each. I hope that I made you aware of potential issues or setbacks that can cause frustration, confusion and delays in completing the installation of an event.

No matter if the job is large or small, organization, planning, resourcefulness, execution, great staffing, creativity and communication are vital qualities necessary to be a successful event florist. It was an honor for me to be part of the success of both of these events and to work with amazing people. ✿



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EVENTSFEATURE

Making That Event Memorable

BY KIERSTEN SCHULTE, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RELATIONS AND MAJOR ACCOUNTS EASTERN FLORAL, GRAND RAPIDS, MI

We have all taken the call..."Hi! I have an event in three weeks and need centerpieces." You know what I'm talking about, and you'll handle it like you have all the others, but how do you make the most of it?

How do you set yourself apart from the rest and get that client to come back for future events and other floral needs? To sum it up in three words, make it memorable!



Make a Wish Foundation Wish Ball.

Planning an event can be a big, stressful task for your client. As their florist, it's your responsibility to make the process as easy as possible. Under the direction of Antoinette Kiewiet, vice president of design and creativity, and Brenda Hankis, designer of floral concepts, Eastern Floral oversees and coordinates numerous events every year.

From cocktail parties, to fundraisers, to galas for 1,200 guests, they all start with the call. From the very first interaction, I want our clients to feel like I am engaged, interested, knowledgeable, and ready to make their event memorable.

If time allows, I really like to have a one-on-one consultation. The consultation gives me the opportunity to be face-to-face with the client and personalize the experience. When it comes to location for the consultation, I like to keep the client's schedule and travel time in mind. If it's easier for them, I will come to their office.

If they prefer to meet at our office, I am always sure to have our consultation room clean, stocked with water, and have comfortable seating available. Your consultation room is a representation of your work, and it serves as a first impression. If it's a mess, what do you think that says to the client?

The consultation itself is a chance for me to learn as much about the event as I can, but most importantly it's the client's opportunity to share their vision; how they see floral being part of that vision.

My questions are nothing out of the ordinary, but they are necessary to get to the big picture. How many guests are you anticipating? Will there be a reception area? What will be happening on the stage? What

American Heart Association Western Michigan Heart Ball.



EVENTSFEATURE

is your ideal budget? That's right, I said it, the "B" word. The budget is always the elephant in the room, but getting it on the table will save time and prevent sticker shock when you present your proposal.

Now that I have all the necessary information, it's time for the creativity to begin. I am going to be honest, I am not a designer. My talents are on the business end, but I sure do have an incredibly talented and dynamic team to help me pull the client's ideas together. Working hand-in-hand, we review, brainstorm, and research until we have developed a show stopping sample that is ready to be presented to the client.

The sample review is one of the most important elements of the planning process. This is our moment to show the client that we can take their vision and make it a reality. If they are coming to the office for the preview, set the scene. Don't just bring them to the design table, wow them. Have your table covered in a linen, set out charger plates, have votive candles lit, dim the lighting, make it a memorable meeting.

What if time doesn't allow for another face-to-face meeting? That's okay. A picture is just as good an option, but just like a face-to-face sample review set the scene. Find a good, neutral spot to take your photo. Take multiple shots at different angles, and don't hesitate to send the client more than one photo. Your goal is to give them the full effect without them being present.

Now that the client has viewed the designs and they are in love, it's time to start writing. Your event proposal is the embodiment of your style applied to your client's vision. I love to send a professional looking proposal as much as I like receiving one. You are the expert and your proposal should prove it. So, toss out the doodled lined paper and create a template (if you don't already have one) and use it for all proposals going forward.

I like to think my event proposals are like a story. They have a beginning, middle and end. I start with a cover letter, work into what we will be providing, and end with a cost summary. It's easy to read and shows the client that I understand the importance of event planning, I am organized, and I am making recommendations for a successful event.

Congratulations! You got the job. Now what? At this point in the process, I send a contract for the client to review and sign. It simply outlines what they can expect from me and my team, and what we expect from them.

The most important element of the contract is the 14-day deadline. I ask that all final numbers be submitted 14 days prior to the event date. This gives my team ample time for ordering their product. Sometimes guest counts can decrease in the space between the 14-day mark and the day of the event, but we always find a way to utilize the extra product.

The big day has finally arrived. After all the planning, research and development, it's time to bring the client's vision to reality. When our team arrives at the venue, the first thing I like to do is check in with the client and see how everything is coming along, and if there are any changes. Then it's time to get to work and make the room fabulous!

The vases have been wiped down, the last candles have been placed in votive holders, we've taken pictures for our Facebook page. Then I turn to see the smile on the client's face and I know our work is done.

It all started with a call. That small interaction turned into something beautiful, unique and made a lasting impression on the client and their guests. We did exactly what we set out to do, we made a memorable event. ✿

Plan to Attend the Spring Regional Meetings

Region 1:

Tuesday, March 28

Blumz by JRDesigns, Ferndale, MI

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. – Hands-On

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. – Business Marketing

Region 2:

Thursday, May 18

Norton's Flowers & Gifts, Ypsilanti, MI

6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Region 3:

Wednesday, June 7

Jac's Cekola's Pizza, 7638 S. Westnedge, Portage, MI

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Region 4:

Wednesday, May 24

Kennicott's, Grand Rapids, MI

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Region 5:

Wednesday, June 14

UNO's Pizza, 4960 Towne Centre Rd., Saginaw, MI

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Region 6:

Tuesday, May 16

The Franklin, 160 E. Front St., Traverse City, MI

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

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www.michiganfloral.org (events tab).



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MEMBERPROFILE

Holland's Floral...Still Going Strong After Eighty-eight Years

BY BARBARA GILBERT, EDITOR

Family owned firms have been the foundation of our industry for many years. Passing from generation to generation they are the basis for many a successful business. Holland's Floral in Rochester is one of Michigan's oldest established florists.

The firm's history began when grandfather William Holland Sr. founded Holland's Greenhouse and Fruit Farm in Avon Township in the spring of 1929. All of his children, three girls and a son, were involved in the 30s and 40s.

When asked why his grandfather went into the growing business while working part-time as a foreman at Hudson Motor Car Company, current owner Jim Holland commented. "I think he just had a green thumb. He bought lots of land and began the business. They grew more than 100 varieties of fruit trees, some vegetables, and had a greenhouse where they specialized in cyclamen. They made good money, selling at markets in Pontiac and Royal Oak, enough



Jim Holland

to afford a car during the Great Depression. In the 30s they sold door to door in Avon Township."

After William Senior's son and Jim's father William Jr. got out of the Navy after serving in the submarine service on the USS Dolphin, he worked at several floral shops in California before returning to the Midwest. He also attended the UCLA commercial floriculture program followed by a course at the Tommy Bright Floral School in Chicago.

In March 1948, he opened his 1,000 square foot flower shop in a building that began life as a steam laundry in 1901. He named the shop Sunset Floral to distinguish it from the family growing business. The name was changed to Holland's Floral and Gifts in 1951. While William Jr. was starting his business, his wife worked as executive secretary at General Motors.

Jim Holland began collecting a paycheck from the shop in 1968 at the age of 15.

"I knew in high school this was what I wanted to do. In elementary school my brother, Billy, and I were assembling grave blankets in our backyard. Then we went to put them out in four or five cemeteries in the snow. It was hard work.

"Billy did not want to go into the business but I love it. I feel what my Dad felt placing flowers in an arrangement, seeing the people's reaction to the finished product."

(Just an interesting aside...brother Billy did not want to go into the family business and became, among other things, a detective,

an electrical contractor and is now a federal investigator.)

To further his education Jim Holland went to Michigan State's commercial floriculture program, and attended the American Floral Art School in Chicago where his father studied when it was Tommy Bright's school in the 40s.

He bought the building on Main Street in downtown Rochester in December of 1986. The first renovation in 1988 connected the building next store and added 2,000 square ft. In 1998 more space was added. The current building is 9,000 square feet with a 27 ft. cooler, and two 18 ft. coolers with a special section for tropicals.

"Before it was like the "Get Smart" building when my dad was there. You went through a door in the back into the telephone room, designing was done in the basement. He came upstairs when he heard a customer in the shop" remembers Jim.

Holland's does a nice size wedding business and strong every day business. They also participate in many of the promotions in the city of Rochester including "Lagniappe" (Creole for a little something extra) when downtown Rochester businesses show appreciation to their customers. Holland's gives away a carnation to each person which amounted to 600 flowers last year.

In October they participate in "Pose". Each merchant takes his front windows and live people "pose" as mannequins in different tableaux. For example, Holland's was part of



MEMBERPROFILE



mail but will place newspaper ads at holidays. Many in-store promotions and specials are run throughout the year. Thanksgiving and Christmas open houses are held in the fall with drawings for \$50 arrangements, refreshments and in-house arrangements for sale.

Jim has definite thoughts on how to be a good and successful florist. "To become an established florist, you have to have a feel of your community and really service the people. Get out and participate in community activities like Jaycees, Kiwanis and Rotary. Let the people see you. They need to trust that you are giving them fair value for their money. When they walk in give them quality product and service. I am blessed with a good community of people."

As to the future, he suggests trying to better your facility and business by keeping up with the times; bring down costs and keep up quality. "I find it helpful to go to the market in Atlanta to find wonderful companies and products. Add value to your flowers with mementos customers can keep. It is important to implement change with added value whether it be with lights or collectibles. Give your work added spin and emotion."

His favorite part of working in the floral industry for over 46 years...

"I love working together as a group with my staff, helping customers and making them happy. Happy Customers, Happy Life." ✨

"Star Wars" where girls from a local ballet school posed as characters from the movie. Another year downtown windows featured Norman Rockwell paintings. "These promotions attract people downtown and they come in and shop after looking at the windows," Jim commented.

The shop is home to 13 employees including five designers. Total experience of the staff is over 230 years. Jim was very proud when one of the designers was asked to work in the White House at Christmas last year. "I am so blessed to have a very dedicated and experienced staff, he said.

"Customer service is the heart of our business. We care deeply that our customers get what they want with the best service. We want to see that their needs are met and they enjoy shopping here. We want to make sure that when people come in they have a nice selection, about 50 premade arrangements are on hand at any given time." Additionally the store delivers to 100 cities in the Metro Detroit area and has 1,000 corporate accounts.

Roses are still their best selling flower along with mixed bouquets. They get a good amount of product from Canada including snaps, gerberas, iris, delphinium, lilies and tulips. "I am very impressed with the quality of the Canadian product especially the snapdragons. They smell good enough to eat," he explained. In addition, of course, he uses product from California, South America and Holland.

While cut flowers are the shop's meat and potatoes, they carry a variety of gifts, plants, and collectibles. Silk stems, wreaths and arrangements are big sellers. Gift items include tabletop fountains, oil paintings, clocks, wind chimes and mirrors. Animals in all forms, plush, metal, and ceramic are featured along with six racks of greeting cards.

Jim pointed out, " We also have a lot of religious objects such as crosses and statues. In the late 80s we did a great business in costume jewelry."

Social media is used via Facebook and their own website. He does not use direct

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INMEMORIAM

Bobbi Ecker Blatchford: the Passing of a Floral Industry Icon



BY ALICE WATEROUS, AIFD, CF, PFCI

Bobbi passed away suddenly and unexpectedly at Windermere Cottage, her home on Paw Paw Lake near Watervliet, Michigan, on Friday, February 3, 2017. Her death was a shock to all who knew her, and painful to the vast floral community who adored her.

Her life as a florist began with her marriage to Ted Ecker, a pilot, who literally flew into her life when he landed his yellow single engine aircraft in a field near her grandparents' home for a date with a local girl. Bobbi charmed Ted and he returned the next day with a bouquet of white orchids for her.

The orchids were harvested from his family's Ecker's Flowers & Greenhouses in Waverly, Iowa. Romance ensued, marriage followed, and she soon became adept at design, working in the family business. Before long, Bobbi was presenting programs promoting flowers far and wide, often with Ted flying her to far off destinations.

The mother of Lynn, Cyndi and Bruce, she passed on the love of all things floral. Her surviving children, Cyndi and Bruce are both involved in the floral industry.



Bobbi in one of her signature hat creations with Jerome Raska, AAF, AIFD, CAFA, CF, PFCI, MFA president.

Cyndi runs Ecker's Flowers in Waverly and Bruce is an account manager for Smithers Oasis/Floralife. Bobbi related the story of making corsages in her hospital bed after giving birth (The kids of a florist soon learn to be resourceful, as the orders need to get out the door).

Bobbi was always the most interesting and fun person in the room with a way of making everyone she met feel special. She achieved a reputation for stylish attire, especially her hats and turbans. It wasn't unusual for people to think she was a movie star behind those big dark glasses; perhaps wearing a flowing black cloak, hot pink scarf, fur hat and zebra print shoes. Some of the

Bobbi Ecker Blatchford, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, with James Nordlie, Harrison Kennicott, AAF, and Tom Butler, AAF, PFCI, on the occasion of Kennicott's induction into the Michigan Floral Foundation Hall of Fame.





Bobbi and Toni Piccolo, AIFD, winner of the 2016 Bobbi Cup.



Bobbi doing her thing on stage.



A selfie with MFA's Rod Crittenden.

most repeated remarks describing Bobbi were: classy, stylish, exciting, mentor, idol, etc. She never met a stranger and everyone she met found her fascinating.

Her achievements in the floral industry included being a member of AAF, AIFD and PFCI. Bobbi was the recipient of the AIFD "Fellow of AIFD" designation, and the AIFD Award of Distinguished Service to the Floral Industry. Given the PFCI "Tommy Bright" award for excellence in floral communication, she also received Hall of Fame status from the AIFD North Central Regional Chapter, was a Michigan Floral Foundation Hall of Fame recipient and honored in 2009 with the Michigan Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2012, the AIFD North Central Chapter created the "Bobbi Cup" design competition held annually at the Chicago Flower & Garden Show to honor its most prestigious and loved member.

Following her many years in retail floristry, and upon moving to Chicago, Bobbi formed FloraPros, a marketing and promotions company focusing on the floral industry. In Chicago, she met and married her second husband Josiah Blatchford, a formerly "confirmed bachelor" who at the age of 50 decided he had found a woman worth marrying. They made an elegant pair, tooling about the "Gold Coast" of Chicago in their vintage Rolls Royce. Joe was as quiet and reserved as Bobbi was bubbly and

vivacious, so opposites do attract. He was supportive and proud of her professional achievements and she appreciated him holding down the fort without complaint as she whisked in and out. Joe died in the fall of 2015.

Her clients included the City of Chicago, Macy's and Flowerama, where she promoted the greater use of flowers to the public. As an industry resource, she worked closely with FernTrust, a cooperative of Florida foliage growers, wholesale companies all over the US and Canada and numerous manufacturers.

Her creation and marketing of "Fabulous Foliage Bouquets" has made retailers around the world more aware and appreciative of foliage grown on American farms. Her instructional videos using American grown flowers and foliage have stood the test of time and remain relevant. She embraced all aspects of the floral industry and became knowledgeable about products grown all over the globe.

In 2010, at the International Floriculture Show in Miami, the breeding company Preesman honored her with a rose named: "High & Icon - Bobbi Ecker". The rose's grower is United Flowers, a division of Preesman, with farms in Bogota, Colombia. "This was the first time a cut flower was named for a floral industry person rather than a celebrity. "I was completely floored", commented Bobbi

(Though we all know she was a total celebrity).

As a program presenter, she wowed audiences with her enthusiasm, marketing knowledge and design expertise. One of her most memorable actions on stage was to gussy herself up in front of the crowd with glitter spray, cautioning: "Be careful not to get it in your eyes". Always appearing with a flower perched atop her turban, behind her ear, on her shoulder or at her waist, she was the centerpiece of every gathering. Ready with encouragement, the folks who remember a kind word or phrase number in the thousands. Her wit, smile, laugh and sense of fun was infectious.

One of her greatest gifts was to make everyone in the room feel included and special. Her memory was legendary, as she would remember not only your name, but how many kids you had, where you lived, where you last saw each other, and on it went. To be around her, a person would think she never had a trouble in the world: she was an unbeatable spirit who faced hardships that would have broken a lesser soul. Orphaned as an early teen, mother of a murder victim, cancer survivor and more, she kept picking up the pieces and turned her energy towards others buoying them up.

We have lost a national treasure, Bobbi Ecker Blatchford, "The Flower Lady". Her joie de vivre, and influence will continue on for generations. ❀

Neville Mackay Honored

Well-known floral designer, international speaker, and *Professional Florist* columnist Neville Mackay, CAFA, PFCI, WFC, was honored in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with the Courage to Give Back Indomitable Spirit Award. The awards recognize extraordinary individuals in a community who have overcome adversity in their personal lives and inspire others by giving back to their communities.

He opened My Mother's Bloomers in 1992, after moving back to Nova Scotia from Alberta where he was an apprentice under a German master florist. He is known for his stunning flower

arrangements on Canadian television and appearances on the radio.

According to his award, "He is very active and dedicated in helping many local non-profits and charities. From "King Neville" at a Princess Tea Party for the Children's Wish Foundation, to dropping his pants for prostate cancer, or full drag emceeding for AIDS Coalition Nova Scotia, he motivates those around him and offers support to make our community a better place. Mostly, Neville sees the love and joy in so many simple acts of kindness and celebrates that at every opportunity!" ❀

CFREPORT



BY CINDY CHING, AIFD, CF

Design Style Something Special for That Special Event

These centerpiece trees featuring baby's breath will be the talk of any event. The premade mechanics include a birch pole permanently attached to the round birch container and a flat plate attached to the top of the pole. The base is weighed down with Oasis® foam and floral material so that the tree will not become top heavy. On the top of the tree is a small green Oasis

dish with a block of deluxe foam placed the tall way which provides more space to build the tree. The dish is secured on the plate with u-glue dashes and 1/4" clear tape. Large

variety, fluffy baby's breath is needed to achieve this unique look. Fill in until full, rotate to make sure it is evened out and you have the perfect illusion of a baby's breath tree. ✿



Arrangement by Angela Christie, CF, Boyne Avenue Florist and Greenhouse, Boyne City, Michigan.

Michigan Floral Association Announces 2017 Officers and Holds Annual Board of Directors Elections



(L to R) Jerome Raska, AAF, AIFD, CAFA, CF, PFCI; Janice Curran; Jeanette Ballien and Bob Patterson, CF

The Michigan Floral Association has announced the results of its recent election of Officers and Board of Directors.

Serving as President is **Jerome Raska, AAF, AIFD, CAFA, CF, PFCI**, Blumz...by JR Designs, Ferndale/Detroit. **Janice Curran**, Michigan Teleflora representative was

elected Vice President. **Jeanette Ballien**, Gaudreau the Florist Ltd., Saginaw, Michigan, was appointed Treasurer, and **Bob Patterson, CF**, Patterson's Flowers, Big Rapids, Michigan, will continue as Immediate Past President. All will serve a one-year term.

The results of the Board of Directors elections are as follows. **Tim Galea**, Norton's Flower & Gifts, Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor, Michigan, director-at-large. Regional directors are: **Terry Oswalt**, Mayesh Wholesale, Romulus, Michigan, region one; **Jeanette Ballien**, region five; **Tim Timinski**, FloraCraft Corporation, Ludington, Michigan, region six.

All will serve three-year terms ending in December 2019.

DESIGNERSPOTLIGHT

Making That Event Special

BY JASON RUDICIL, EASTERN FLORAL, HOLLAND, MI
2016 MFA DESIGNER OF THE YEAR

Depending on the event and the budget, clients are looking for versatile designs that can be used in more than one way. Here, I have used an Oasis® racquette with a mix of bold and vibrant flowers that really pop. Featuring orange gerbera daisies, Pink Floyd roses, and bells of Ireland, this piece serves many purposes. It is airy enough to sit on a table, where one can still see through it and has enough height to be placed at the base of a podium as well. After an event such as a wedding, this design can be transferred to a lobby table, fireplace mantle, or window sill. Having multiple purposes really opens up possibilities. Try linking more than one design like this together and make an even bolder statement! ✿

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WUMFA



Looking Toward the Future

BY PATTY MALLOY, AIFD, WUMFA PRESIDENT



Spring is in the air...what's your plan for the upcoming months? One thing for certain is "change" will be part of everyone's future.

It's good to have goals and something to look forward to especially in times of uncertainty.

I want to encourage you all to set goals for your business and keep a positive outlook. Be sure to also include time for fun and leisure as much as possible. You never know what opportunities may arise or what you will learn wherever you go.

We work in an industry that sells emotions and fragrances of beautiful botanicals. What great opportunities we have to sell and deliver smiles for special occasions of all kinds. New colors, products, and trends pop up every year to stretch your imagination with floral design. This is something WUMFA will continue to focus on by providing educational programs to help your business grow and be successful.

The Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Florists Association is growing strong with a perpetual membership and a focus on learning. We look forward to some great all day workshops that will be offered throughout the state with a very talented design instructor: John Hosek, AIFD, CAFA,

CFD, MFC, PFCI, from Verona, Wisconsin. Be sure to check the website at www.wumfa.org for times, places, and registration forms for these classes.

WUMFA offers scholarships for anyone working in the floral industry who would like to apply. Only one letter of recommendation is now needed along with the application form. This information is also available on the WUMFA website. Be sure to check it out.

One of the best ways to learn new things is to network, volunteer, and get involved with WUMFA directly. We'd love to hear from you and find out what you need from us. The trends in the industry are always changing so let us know what we can offer for educational opportunities if there's something special you are interested in learning about.

We have some very talented floral designers across our state. And many new young people are getting interested in floral design through FFA organizations in area high schools. Let's all join together and share our tips and tricks of the trade.

Even better yet, let's mentor the younger generation and see what new design concepts they will invent. Time honored traditions can be handed down from seasoned designers, but it's also important to be open to fresh new ideas in the process.

Let's all look for new and exciting opportunities to explore. In this fast paced "techie" world it's important to take time to "smell the flowers" and enjoy the view as you go. Stay positive and let your cup

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be half full rather than half empty so it can eventually overflow with abundant joy in all you do.

I'm sending you all my best wishes for your successful future wherever it may bring you. Let's stay connected and encourage others to join our industry organization. Be helpful and kind and share your love of floral design with others. Make this year of change the best it can be! ✿

FTD ANNOUNCES 2017 EDUCATION SCHEDULE

FTD University has announced the 2017 education calendar. It includes a variety of programs, taught by AIFD designers and industry-recognized experts, to help FTD florists strengthen their business and design skills.

FTD University is awarding \$20,000 in scholarships in 2017 to owners and/or their employees to attend events such as the AIFD National Symposium, SAF Convention and FTD Boot Camp. Apply at FTDi.com/FTDUniversity by the April 1 deadline.

Courses are available online and at FTD headquarters. To learn more about the each of the education programs or to register, visit FTDi.com/FTDUniversity.

FTD® Boot Camp, June 5-7, August 7-9 and October 2-4

This three-day intensive workshop focuses on strengthening shop owners and managers design and business techniques and is held at FTD Headquarters.

FTD® Webinar Series

Eight free one-hour webinars provide tips and tactics to help FTD florists grow their local business. This year's sessions will be presented by experts such

as sales guru Tim Huckabee, business consultant Rick Brewer and independent retail authority Susan Negen. Members can learn by logging in on their own or with their team from their shop computers. For the full schedule, visit FTDi.com/FTDUniversity/webinars.

FTD® How-To Video Series

The FTD How-To Video series provides floral business and design tips to help grow local business. These free two-to-three-minute videos featuring FTD education consultants and AIFD designers provide an opportunity to expand skills or train employees in just minutes.

FTD® Mercury Training, April 4-6 and November 7-9

Hosted two times a year, the three-day Mercury point of sale training held at FTD headquarters is free. It is a hands-on class to help shop owners learn how to maximize the capability of their POS. FTD Mercury also offers personalized one-on-one training opportunities and webinars hosted throughout the year.

Events: From the Wizard of Oz to Weddings

Parties, weddings, funerals... major events in the life of a floral shop that literally come in all sizes, colors and themes.

BY KATIE GROGAN-POULOS, ALFA FLOWER & WEDDING SHOP
WAUWATOSA, WI

We have done events using interesting props such as picnic baskets, outdoor umbrellas, fruits and vegetables, giant palm trees, and giant kites.

One party had a gypsy theme while a Wizard of Oz event featured a stuffed Toto, and glittered red slippers.

A huge rainbow themed event showcased over 90 centerpieces, each designed with one of the colors in the rainbow, then placed in a curved arch setting. When you walked into the room it looked like a rainbow...really awesome!

For a country club outdoor garden party large arrangements floated in their pool. An annual event at the zoo incorporated foam core pictures of animals and beautiful, colorful tropical arrangements.

As to weddings, we attend between three and six wedding shows a year and have two bridal open houses each year at the shop with

20 local vendors. Our large wedding department is complete with invitations, accessories, a huge selection of rental items and other needs for the bride and groom.

We get a lot of our weddings from "word of mouth" and receive leads from the Knot and Wedding Wire, and advertise with Premier Bride as well. We do about 200 weddings a year and quite honestly they are for the most part just really pretty and not necessarily so different, but one of the memorable ones incorporated a go-pro camera in the bridal bouquet while another had a bridal bouquet literally five feet long.



A five foot long bridal bouquet.

Wedding arch.



Funeral arrangement for a fisherman.



At my wedding last October we put over 200 hydrangeas onto an arch along with many, many roses. They were all in cages and attached to the arch. Because of the weight, it was stabilized with dowels, weights, wire structures and hours of labor to avoid a catastrophe so it would not tip over. It turned out to be perfect and was a hit.

Some people like to personalize funeral arrangements to honor the deceased. We have been requested to make very specific floral shapes such as: a 3D cow, American flag, Green Bay Packer helmet, horse blanket, peppermint candy, motorcycle, semi truck, airplane and every type of vehicle, icon, etc. ✿

Alfa Flower & Wedding Shop is a 76 year old business, family run, and locally owned for over 76 years. The shop specializes in weddings, events and funerals.

WUMFA

Bring On the Weddings

BY MELISSA MAAS, BANK OF FLOWERS, MENOMONEE FALLS/PEWAUKEE, WI



The loose “plucked from the garden” look with interesting textures is popular with today’s brides.

Many flower shops either embrace wedding work or avoid it. What shop are you? If you hear the word weddings and cringe...run for the hills. If you want to increase your wedding business, keep reading and bring on the weddings!

There is no secret potion that will bring a multitude of brides into your shop overnight willing to throw down their deposits. There has to be some planning, testing, measuring, and putting yourself out there.

Looking back on how my wedding business grew: When I first bought an exciting flower shop back in 2004, we had about eight weddings pre-booked for the upcoming wedding season. Over time we slowly increased our annual weddings, but with the recession that started in 2008 we needed to think outside of the box.

Many people were eliminating “frivolous” items like flowers from their personal budgets, so in order to hang on we looked to increase sales in areas of the shop that people couldn’t do without, like weddings. I knew brides still wanted to have their dream wedding and after implementing a few changes, we now average over 100 weddings a year.

Make yourself available

In order to have weddings, you have to meet with your couples for consultations. Just like you, I have a busy home life, with a husband and two children, but I make sure to set aside time for consultations. I stay late every Thursday night well past the time we close. I also open up for consultations on Saturdays during the slower months between January to April when we don’t have as many weddings and events. You have to find times that are convenient for your couples. Many couples are working normal business hours and they are looking to meet with vendors that are accommodating.

Charge for your Consultation

There came a point when the light bulb went on. I remember it like it was yesterday. My shop team and I were listening to a floral presentation at *Rojahn & Malaney Company* in Milwaukee. The speaker, Jerome Raska, AAF, AIFD, CAFA, CF, PFCI, asked the audience who charged for wedding consultations and if we weren’t, why the heck not.

We now charge \$25 at the time the consultation is booked. My team does a wonderful job of selling it to the couples. “Our wedding coordinator will spend about an hour to an hour and a half discussing all your floral needs for your big day and you will even have an idea of how much everything will cost at the end of the consultation. If you book with us, your \$25 will go toward your wedding cost and if not, you will walk away with a lot of great ideas!”

My couples are coming to consultations on time, prepared and ready to put down their money. Out of all my consultations, 98 percent book right on the spot. No more “no shows”,



The matching boutonniere carries out the color theme.



The "unfrosted cake" is a current trend.

no more brides who just got engaged two seconds ago, and no more brides shopping around for my ideas.

Be Professional

Take your professionalism to the next level. The Wedding Planner with Jennifer Lopez is my favorite for a reason. Being professional is everything from having a beautiful space to meet, Pandora softly playing in the background, being prepared and on time, offering something to drink during the appointments, and being well dressed.

As a florist, we need to put our best foot forward. Take a moment to scrub off some of that dirt from your fingernails, brush out your hair to free some of the Oasis® dust and

throw on some lipstick. All those details can add up to having your couple completely trust you to create their one of a kind wedding flowers.

After they book with you, have their invoice and contracts typed up and in the mail within a week. Yes, typed up with your logo at the top. Have a contract to make sure you are protected and have an agreement on when payments are due.

Invest in your Brand

Spending money is always difficult when the thermostat just went out in your floral cooler and your delivery van needs new brakes but you have to invest money and time to make money. Just last night I sat up late to make a new wedding hard covered book on Shutterfly highlighting five new weddings from this past year. Getting the pictures took a little time and patience. A few weeks after every wedding, we send out an email to the photographer asking for a few photos. Not every photographer responds but I was amazed how many did and are willing to cross market with us.

Weddings are not for the faint of heart; it's hard work and a whole lot of "someone help me" moments. Unlike your funeral order that quickly popped in and out, weddings are all about endurance. In the end, you will feel the rush of accomplishment as you send your bride down the aisle and see the extra zeros in your bank account. ✿

Certified Florist Manual & Testing

Did you know? MFA's Certified Florist (CF) program is a comprehensive program that covers all aspects of professional floristry and is the most affordable program available to florists today. And the most convenient: You can self-study at your own pace with this great manual/reference resource.

The Certified Florist accreditation is nationally recognized and an approved pathway to AIFD accreditation. MFA offers an optional, educational "Steps to Certification" class to help prepare for certification.

Other Certification or Certified Floral Designer programs available today would cost you over \$1,000 and could take you years to accomplish! But not this program:

***Cost for manual and one round of CF testing is \$599.99**
(includes tax & S/H)

***Cost for manual only is \$399.99**
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PROMFEATURE

Prom...Necessary Nuisance or Profitable Opportunity?

BY SUZIE KOSTICK, AIFD, CF, PFCI, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, FITZ DESIGN, PORT CHARLOTTE, FL

Ready or not prom season is upon us. For some retail florists, prom is a frustrating, labor intensive day they'd rather forget. Yet, more and more are beginning to understand that prom is, in fact, full of opportunities and not the necessary nuisance it was once thought to be.

Thanks to companies like Fitz Design, prom sales are soaring for retail florists all over the country. These companies realized that prom had untapped potential. By helping florists see the opportunities and embrace what is now the 4th largest floral retail "holiday", they can generate new business, foster community involvement, engage a new generation of flowers buyers and possibly help recover some of the lost sales that once were attributed to Easter, a holiday that continues to see a decline in floral purchases.

Overall the prom market brings in over 6.6 billion dollars in annual sales which is a pretty astounding figure when compared to the NFL which brings in just over 99 billion annually. On average a prom couple will spend between \$1,200 to \$1,800 with only about \$60 to \$75 going to the retail florist.

Flower shops that have the most success are those willing to make the effort to adapt and reach a demographic whose life revolves around a hand held mobile device and who put a great deal of importance on

being social; having the latest and greatest in all things technical and fashion. Playing to those characteristics can go a long way in capturing their attention and becoming the go to place when they need flowers.

Prom Marketing Tips

Here are just a few of the top prom marketing tips developed at Fitz Design



that have proven successful in retail flower shops around the country.

Create an experience. Prom girls have a lot vying for their attention. Plan your marketing messages to speak directly to them at their favorite places such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest. This will get a better response than traditional advertising methods.

Create a lovely display area in your store just for prom. Pack it full of beautiful samples and include a selection of different bracelets, boutonniere items, ribbons, rhinestone accessories, feathers and whatever else you can add into your designs. The more they can see, touch and try on, the more they add to their designs, the more they will ultimately spend.

Encourage them to try on samples. Include a mirror in your display so they can see what they look like. Make sure the display is colorful and attractive to the 15-18 year old demographic. Be aware of color and pattern trends and build your display around those items.

Change the music in your store to fit a younger customer base.

Engage and direct questions and comments to the prom girls and guys while taking orders, even if they are with their parents. Building a relationship with these future flower buyers is critical in gaining their trust and making them feel they are an important part of the process.



Three Magical Ways to Increase Your Sales

Tip number one: The easiest way to up sell for prom is to increase what you charge for corsages and boutonnieres. Even if it's only a few dollars per item, it will add up and help the bottom line. If you have historically sold corsages for \$35 up your starting price to \$39.95.

Tip number two: Always suggest a third item. The corsage and boutonniere are a given. Prom girls and guys come in expecting to order those two items, but then you should ask what they would like to order for her hair or what flowers they would like added to the design ring. After all you are the design professional, the one who knows the latest trends. To not inform the prom buyer that a hair clip, crown, design ring or floral necklace is also needed, is not just a disservice to them but also to you. By selling a third item you automatically increase your sales.

Always try to include three additional items in the design itself. In addition to the bracelet, ribbon and flowers have them select three additional accessories for the design. They can be as simple as a few rhinestone sprays, decorative metal or fabric leaves, aluminum wire, feathers or small brooches and gems. These may seem minimal at first but these lovely little accents add up to big sales when all is said and done.

Tip number three: The Grand Finale. Don't be mistaken into thinking that once you have taken the order the deal is done. Continuing to provide a unique experience throughout the entire process goes a long way to leaving that all important lasting impression. The day of the prom pickup, make sure the store looks fun and festive. Add balloons or other decorations around the entrance and at the counter, turn up the music and have some refreshments available while the kids wait to get their flowers. Set up a "Selfie Station" where they can take their pictures while waiting and encourage them to post them Social Media pages using hashtag#promflowersbyyourshopnamehere.

Make sure your packaging is as attractive as the corsage. Something as simple as a pretty bow in your shop's colors printed with your shop name tied around the box or as elaborate as a decorative keepsake box can help create an "aha moment" that they will never forget. Bring boxes out on

a silver platter if possible. That really takes the experience up a notch.

Have a salesperson taking pictures as the kids pick up their flowers and make social media posts throughout the day to generate comments and shares that all point back to your flower shop.

Hopefully, while taking the order, you collected the prom kids' phone numbers. The following Monday send the prom girl

or guy a text saying something similar to "We loved being able to create your prom flowers! Your friends at Suzie's Flowers."

Preparing for prom as you would any other floral holiday will ensure that you have a productive, successful and profitable prom season. It's never too early or too late to start implementing some of these prom tips and change prom from a necessary nuisance to a profitable opportunity. ✿



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Learning More About Special Events

BY DEREK C. WOODRUFF, AIFD, CF, PFCI



The Special Event (TSE) conference, in its 31st year, was held in January. It included over 100 educational sessions, more than 200 presenters, and many over-the-top events, all together in Long Beach, California.

This was my first time attending the biggest special events conference in the country and I was fortunate to spend the

styling, room décor, and lighting at this massive event.

Inspired by specific musical artists and their respective genres, each section of the room had a different vibe reflected through seating arrangements, colored lighting, soft seating areas, focal cocktail areas, and of course, flowers. My personal favorite was the lavish styling in the Pavarotti/Baroque Chic section, but I also enjoyed the Stevie Nicks/Bohemian section as well. The other featured artists

Federal Bar. The following night ended with the opening night party at the Aquarium of the Pacific. Live music and delicious food, in addition to exotic marine life, made this event a unique and memorable evening.

The third evening event was "The Wedding Event". The fourth and final day of the conference featured a morning session with Michael Cerbelli's Hot List and was like attending America's Got Talent for the event industry. For 17 years, Michael has been showcasing the newest, hottest products and entertainment in this breathtaking show.

The Gala Awards and Closing Night Party closed the conference that evening.

The party started with the gala awards featuring the biggest and brightest in the event world, from designers of flowers to production companies. Afterward, a conference-wide celebration inspired by the urban playground of Long Beach featured drinks, dining, entertainment and dancing until the early hours of the morning.

It was great fun to attend a conference of a related, but somewhat different genre than the usual flower-focused events. I was able to find inspiration by visiting fabulous venues, connecting with new event professionals, seeing innovative displays at the trade expo, and learning what all of the

presenters had to share. The week was full of creative, new ideas and I encourage anyone wanting to enrich their future in event work to attend this excellent conference next year, in historic New Orleans. I'll see you there January 30-February 1! ✿

Derek Woodruff is the owner of the Floral Underground in Traverse City, Michigan and is noted for his cutting edge floral designs. He has been in the floral industry since he was 15 and continues to look for new ways to contribute to its success.

week taking inspiration from meeting many new people, attending the signature special events, and taking in several presentations all representing the special events genre.

One of the highlights of the week was being reunited with two friends and co-competitors from LogoTV's reality show, "The Arrangement" at conference's wedding event. Eddie Zaratsian and Guillermo Del Pero, two amazingly talented designers, competitors, and presenters, were able to showcase their floral design skills with centerpiece

were Beyonce/Urban Chic and Keith Urban/Rural Chic. "The Wedding Event" entertainment was a high-end, wedding fashion show that was the ultimate climax to the evening.

Each day of the conference was filled with seminars, luncheons, and stage presentations, but the best part of the week was attending the over-the-top, signature special events. The week kicked off on the first day with a networking event entitled, "TSE Connects," that featured a 1920's theme in an old bank building now called The



National Alliance of Floral Associations Hosts Meeting, Announces Designer of the Year

Leaders of floral industry associations gathered at the Marriott Cool Springs in Franklin, Georgia, for the National Alliance of Floral Associations (NAFA) annual meeting.

The meeting kicked off with the National

Designer of the Year competition. Contestants from Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, Tennessee, and Wisconsin competed for the coveted title. The contest is open to one representative from each NAFA member in good standing.

The winner and 2016 Designer of the Year was Alan Masters, AIFD, from the Texas State Florists' Association who works at Compton's Florist, LaPorte, Texas. He won \$1,000 and a first place trophy cup.

Second runner up was Paul Latham, AIFD, owner of Fleur de Lis Events and Design, Louisville, Kentucky, representing the Tennessee State Florists' Association, who won \$100 cash and a plaque. First runner up was Thaddeus Servantez, AIFD, representing the Floral Association of the Rockies. Owner of Westminster Flowers, Westminster, Colorado, he won \$300 cash and a plaque. ✿



Posing with their awards are, from left, second runner up Paul Latham; AIFD; 2016 NAFA Designer of the Year, Alan Masters, AIFD, and first runner up Thaddeus Servantez, AIFD. (Above) Designs by contest winner Alan Masters.

Designers Blend Flowers and Art

The Howell Art Project, held in downtown Howell, Michigan, is an art competition featuring local and national artists. Originally created as the Howell Arts Initiative in 2010 through a

partnership with the Detroit Art Institute, the project offers participants a \$1,000 cash prize, and the opportunity to have their artwork exhibited throughout downtown Howell for a year.

Kevin Adamo, Country Lane Flower Shop, went to the Downtown Development Association and asked if floral design "artists" could become part of the project by creating

floral design interpretations of the art work.

Kevin explained, "They gladly accepted the offer so I got four other florists: Rose Cottage, Howell; Aleta's Flowers, Fowlerville; Carriage House, Marlette, and Art in Bloom, Brighton, along with Country Lane Flower Shop involved creating the designs.

"I gave each designer a picture of the art work they would be interpreting two weeks before the event. On the day of the event they delivered them and they were auctioned off with the art work." ✿

Arrangements one and two were done by Edward Smith. Arrangement three by Kathy Cunningham. Both designers are from Country Lane Flower Shop.



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Flores Hermosas en Cuba

BY NEVILLE MACKAY, CAFA, PFCI, WFC



Neville and his new florist friend in Cuba. In the background beautiful heliconia and ginger.

As a Canadian, Cuba has always been a tropical getaway option. David and I have been there several times. Let me tell you, the people are beautifully wonderful, the beaches are glorious, and although the selection may be less than what we may be accustomed to in North America, the food, for the most part, is pretty good.

This a wonderful place to explore. We have been to Havana before, and delighted in the beauty of a city that once was a great Spanish jewel. The locals enjoy a mix of the very old and quite modern, and the differences are intriguing. As you walk down the streets, there are all sorts of really old cars and contraptions shuttling folks around, amongst people on cell phones, riding horses or racing through town on rickety bicycles.

As we walked along, my good eye caught a glimpse of a beautiful catteleya orchid, a biggie, hanging from a tree in a private little courtyard. At the same time, a cute young fellow dressed in a smart suit asked if we would like to go to his restaurant for dinner. (They are a little aggressive but again not as bad as some places for sure) Although we declined, I had to ask if I could go in the neighboring courtyard and take a photo of that beautiful orchid.

Well, it was his Mother's place, and she was thrilled to show off this fabulous plant, especially after he translated where we were from and what I do for a living. She nearly fell over when I told her what each blossom would cost at home. Bless her, she insisted I cut and take one or two, but I said a photo would be sufficient. What a treat that was.

The young man, (did I say how cute he was?) also sent us on another adventure. There was a proper flower shop just around the corner. Hooray! Away we went to this local shop, and it was something to see.

There was an older lady in a turban, who looked a lot like Meryl Streep, sitting at a desk on the phone, with a stack of invoices and papers. She seemed pretty intense, and although I don't speak Spanish well (By "well" I mean, of course, not at all) I gathered she was not going to take any crap from whoever was on the other end of that phone.

We explained who we were and where we were from, etc., and after having a little think on it, she said, "Come!" To the back work

room we went. We were met by four wonderful ladies, only one of whom spoke any English, and I apologize now as I don't remember their names.

Well, with translations, we laughed, shared stems, and I helped with a piece for a hotel that was about six feet tall. There were big old industrial garbage cans filled with stems of pink and red ginger that were five to six feet tall, countless dozens of heliconia, torch ginger and smaller buckets of anthurium of all sizes.

We live in a beautiful time where we get to use and enjoy flowers from all over the world year-round. These beautiful stems we saw in Cuba were as common as blades of grass to the ladies working with them, whilst we coveted them as precious jewels. There were hundreds of dollars of broken ones laying about.

They did, however, seem to pay closer attention to the bells of Ireland and roses in bunches that they imported from Colombia, as they were more "exotic".

Really, isn't everything exotic when it isn't blooming in our own area? I remember this was the case when I went to a florist in Hawaii and the young lady was telling me, as she dropped anthurium and orchid stems in a vase, about the time she got to use tulips... "apparently they come up through the SNOW!" she said with excitement. Yup, they do, darling.

Oh, I forgot to tell you what these treasures cost. I don't know what you have to charge for a premium ginger or heliconia, but they were selling theirs, remember they were between five and six feet tall and were cut that morning, for the outlandish price of \$1 - \$5 U.S. dollars. The foliage was mostly gratis, because they could be hacked down across the road on the path to the beach.

Needless to say, this humble shop, with simple benches and old wooden tables was an experience for us both. It was filled with beauty and passion, and although we didn't speak Spanish, nor did they speak English, we got to share the love and language of flowers together as only florists do. That, my Floral Family, is a universal language we all enjoy. ✿



A fabulous orchid plant growing in a Cuban courtyard.

Neville MacKay, CAFA, PFCI, WFC, lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. He is on the Smithers Oasis (North America) design and education team, speaks and designs internationally, appears regularly on TV and radio, and hosts tours to the UK. Neville has designed for many heads of state and celebrities. He opened his floral shop, My Mother's

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The Professional Florist (ISSN 2150-8658, USPS 008593) is the official membership publication of the Michigan Floral Association, 1152 Haslett Road, Haslett, MI 48840. All membership dues include a \$50 subscription fee. Non-member subscriptions are available at the same rate for selected research, publication and related personnel. *The Professional Florist* is published bi-monthly for members of the Michigan Floral Association.

Periodicals postage paid at Haslett, Michigan and other additional offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Professional Florist*, P.O. Box 67, Haslett, MI 48840. Phone: (517) 575-0110. FAX: (517) 575-0115.

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