



SAY IT WITH FLOWERS

Now that same-sex marriage is legal in Washington State one local florist looks forward to sharing his talent with gay couples.

When FTD florists hit the ground running (bridal bouquets in hand) with that famous “Say It with Flowers” ad campaign nearly a hundred years ago, there was no hope for same-sex marriage. Let’s face it; the polar ice cap was thawing faster than public acceptance of equal rights. That was yesterday. Today the Save-The-Date announcements and Wedding Invitation(s) are in the mail all over Washington State. Gay marriage is legal across the Columbia River and in eight other states. Now, Washington floral designers, such as 37-year-old Erik Witcraft (AIFD) of Flowers Washougal, are giddy with the prospect of sharing their love of flowers with all couples, regardless of sexual orientation. Witcraft has designed flowers for more weddings than he can remember, but never a same sex marriage (legal or otherwise). Witcraft’s generation of floral designers is the first in history to be allowed into a centuries old legal tradition; they too can now demonstrate love and acceptance at the altar by “Saying It with Flowers.”

Anne Jaeger: So you’ve designed flowers for a million weddings, but never a same-sex marriage. Speaking from your heart, as a gay man, how does it feel to know all couples can now enjoy your floral designs?

Erik Witcraft: I have always designed wedding flowers with the personality of my couples in mind. It’s very exciting for me to get to know each of my couples and glean attributes from them that translate into living floral art for their special day. I am very excited to share that talent with same-sex couples as well. By the way, who doesn’t love feathers, rhinestones, and sequins!

AJ: Have you ever considered that you’re pouring your heart and soul into making someone’s wedding perfect and that very couple you’re helping might be very against equal rights? I know professionalism takes over, but what does your heart say?

EW: I have never sold out of my own pocket, and likewise, I have never sold based on my personal value system. That’s just business smarts. However, I do feel that it’s about time! The GLBT community should be allowed the same recognition and rights as everyone else.

AJ: Personally and politically, did you think this statewide change would come now?

EW: I was rather surprised at this vote decision. Pleasantly, but still surprised.

AJ: Would you do the flowers for your own wedding, someday? If so, what would they be?

EW: When I meet Mr. Right, we will select one of my dear friends (in the industry) to entrust with my flowers. Professionals take the pressure off and allow you to enjoy your day. I know that from experience. So, what kind of flowers? I have lists, pending which season we would choose.

AJ: I saw a great quote on a chalkboard the other day: “If you don’t like Gay Marriage, blame straight people. They’re the ones who keep having gay babies.” This sign forces people to look at the issue in a different way. In your estimation, what do most people (against) marriage equality seem to misunderstand?

EW: I just want to say, there are extremists in every group of people. In our community, some gays are “pretty out there.” The homophobic parts of society often assume all gays are this way, and that marriage is going to somehow promote and encourage this way of life for the younger generations and children of gay parents. I believe that I was born as a gay man, not converted into one.

AJ: Let’s future think for a moment. Years from now, you’ll be busy arranging wedding flowers and the struggle for marriage equality will be decades behind us. What would you tell a young, “green” designer standing right next to you about the fight?

EW: It will be hard to explain to a young “green” designer about the struggles of marriage equality, just like it was difficult for my mentors to explain to me the 80s trends of peach and teal, or daisies and baby’s breath! I was like... “No... Really?” (Laughs) Actually I think it will be very exciting when we will say, “I remember when...” \$

Anne Jaeger, writes The Garden Gal for *Just Out*. Anne was a hard news reporter and anchor at KGW and KOIN before turning to gardening full time. After that her award-winning garden shows appeared on both stations. You can now look for Anne’s garden videos on the *Oregonian* newspaper web site: oregonlive.com/hg, catch her on Twitter @GardenGalTV, send her a suggestion via her web site: GardenGal.TV, or write Anne@JustOut.com.