

## Father of the Bride

Tony Alvarez AIFD CCF Designs for Daughter's Big Day

Story begins on page 14



*Tony Alvarez AIFD CCF escorts daughter Amanda down the aisle on her wedding day*

Hot or not? Check out this year's Colors of the Season. See page 6

# Father of the Bride

Father of the Bride – that’s me! It seems like yesterday that my days were filled with diapers and training wheels and there was very little inkling of all the hoopla to follow in just 25 short years. You think you are working toward a comfortable retirement, maybe a vacation home in the Sierras. But no, you are really working toward an inevitable event that will drain your bank account and the color from your face.

It’s not just a *wedding* you should be preparing for. It’s a life-altering event that mimics the symptoms of a heart attack with every check you write to every vendor! Mind you, as an established floral designer, I was better prepared than most. I knew that my precious daughter, Amanda, would want armloads of Lily of the Valley, as well as every hard-to-find, out-of-season, delicate blossom she had ever seen her mother Debbie and me work with!

And I knew that wedding venues are costly. But nothing prepared

me for the reality that the hotel Amanda wanted for her special event would just not hold the mushrooming guest list. (I’m not exaggerating!). I could have emailed my closest friends and family members, but the wording on Amanda’s invitation alone would require half the bridal party and an Oxford English scholar to complete.

A heartfelt tip to parents with daughters: It’s not too early to consider auctioning one of your organs on eBay! (I hear kidneys are the organ of choice.) All kidding aside, my daughter Amanda’s wedding was incredible. My wife Debbie (Debbie Alvarez AIFD CCF) and I assembled the dream team of friends, family and floral designers that created a memorable day for those in attendance. It was a mammoth undertaking in a gorgeous setting.

The beautiful, historic and elegant Bixby Mansion in Long Beach, where we prepared for three months before the event and which was provided by our dear friend Duane Rose, made an awesome

## The Making of This Great Wedding

**Advance:** We started working on the Bixby gardens three months prior to the wedding. The team planted 350 white geraniums, ten white topiary rose bushes, 23 iceberg floribunda roses, five flats of white impatiens, several pieris Japonica and gardenia shrubs as well as eight 5-gallon white azaleas, 64 white agapanthus, eight strelitzia Nicolai, six white hybrid delphinium, twelve flats of dusty miller and 3,200 square feet of sod. We moved four trees, installed one pallet of flagstone pavers in a new patio area, transplanted 87 plants to a newly landscaped area, installed a new sprinkler system, constructed a full sized white wooden columned gazebo for the ceremony and refurbished the original Bixby fountain.

**Wedding Week:** Twelve designers, along with eighteen helpers and designer assistants started working two days before the wedding to put all the wedding designs together. Duane Rose, retired owner of Gerard’s Flowers in Long Beach, graciously allowed all this work and preparation to take place at his Bixby Mansion for the special occasion. Frank and Margaret Hofland, owners of Accent Décor, timely shipped the plate glass troughs, black Mitsumata branches and gorgeous black burnished aluminum containers for the table décor. Finally, Rene van Rems AIFD’s masterful designs made for a truly extraordinary event. Whew!



Nuptials in progress.

Tony and Debbie’s grandchild Tyla at the reflection pool. Floating arrangements were made of composite Siberia Oriental Lily petals waxed before assembling on a floating disc.

## Tony and Debbie Alvarez: 30 Years Designing Together

Holly Money Collins AIFD is the unintended matchmaker behind this husband-wife team that has wowed flower lovers for 30 years with their designs and creativity. Collins introduced them as they all stood in line waiting for tickets for a Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo) floral design program by the late Tom Powell AIFD. Collins told of a competition open to attending students, to design to a “bon voyage” theme that required wrapping a 6” plastic pot of daffodils.

Working as a team, Tony and Debbie scrambled for items to work with the theme, rounded up a road map, sunglasses, tanning lotion, a small sketch pad, postcards and a disposable camera from their cars and the student store. Their entry was spontaneous and fun and they won First Place.

Today the couple own and operate Floral Phenomenon, a Ventura-based event business specializing in weddings. Husband and wife serve on the California State Floral Association board of directors. Debbie teaches floral design in ROP at Camarillo and is an AIFD board member, South West Region. Tony is a presenter and frequent instructor for CSFA and in recent months has also worked for the destination wedding event firm in Maui owned by Lois Hiranaga AIFD.

backdrop for the ceremony and reception. The creative team of florists was led by the charming and talented René Van Rems AIFD. We were assisted by my sisters-in-law Marcia Kimura, procurement specialist for Mayesh Flowers, and Rochelle Dumlao, owner of Verdugo Florist in Glendale, and several other talented designers. With all this talent and creativity, what more could a dad want?!

The Big Day came and seemed to flash by and soon we were saying goodbye to the last guest. Debbie (co-chair for the day) and I collapsed in a heap in a patio chair. That’s when the real magic began.

Amanda and her new husband, our son-in-law Gene Farris, a Cox Cable Communications specialist, came to us to say goodbye and thank you. With a hug and a tear, she lovingly told us we had made her day more beautiful than she could ever have imagined!

With those few words, all the sweat and energy, along with the drained bank accounts, seemed a distant memory and I felt an overwhelming satisfaction for having done a job so well. I guess that when all is said and done, that’s one of the reasons we’re in the flower business: We make more than flower arrangements. We create great memories that last a lifetime!

Tony Alvarez AIFD CCF



Proud parents.



Centerpiece made of White Crown Flower Leis, Uluhe fern shoots, White Siberia Oriental Lilies, Schwartzwalder Mini Callas, White Dendrobium Orchids, Vendela Roses and White Hydrangeas



1,000 hanging silver paper origami cranes with one red crane for happiness, a Japanese tradition for good wishes.