

Blooming Talent

Delivering a flower arrangement during his first month on the job at only 18-years-old, Kelly Marble opened the door to a home and was blown away by what he saw. Beautiful architecture, lavish interiors and crystal chandeliers rivaling those of the European palaces that wowed him the summer before during an international tour.

"I didn't know anyone in West Texas could live that lifestyle," Marble said.

Little did he know, this was one of many doors that would open to hundreds of opportunities over the next 30 years, and this very home and the business he was delivering flowers for would both someday be his.

Marble, who grew up in a cotton producing family in the rural community of South Plains, Texas, said his interest in horticulture and floriculture began at a young age.

"I've always been interested in growing plants, vegetable gardens and flowers since I was old enough to carry a cotton hoe around and go dig up plants from my neighbors," Marble said.

Marble went to Floydada High School where he learned more about horticulture in his FFA classes, even though there wasn't even a program for it.

"I was the only one in my class interested in it," Marble said, "and I won the state Proficiency Award in FFA my junior and senior years in high school."

Marble went on to study at Texas Tech and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in ornamental horticulture in the plant and soil science department in 1984. But his story doesn't start there. He began working for Louis Pattillo, the owner and founder of College Flowers, on the first day of class his freshman year.

"I started from the ground up just doing everything from processing flowers, cleaning, delivery, setting up parties and weddings and started designing," Marble said. "Louis was my mentor in floral design."

"I'm involved with every part of their life, from when they get married, to have a baby to when their grandmother dies."

In 1986, just two years after graduating college, Marble bought the business from Pattillo. Over the past 28 years, the business and Marble have seen a lot of changes both in Lubbock as well as the industry.

Despite the changes, College Flowers has stayed true to its name and has always been in close proximity to

the Texas Tech campus. The business was once located on Brownfield Highway but was forced to move due to construction of the East-West Freeway, which is now known as the Marsha Sharp Freeway. In 1998, Marble bought the building at 2002 Broadway that formerly housed Margaret's, a high-end retail-clothing store owned by fashion icon and local philanthropist, Margaret Talkington.

Ironically, Talkington and her husband, J.T., were also the owners of the beautiful home where Marble had delivered an arrangement years before, and had grown to become great friends of his.

College Flowers is much more than just a flower shop.

"My business has grown tremendously since I purchased it," Marble said, "into not just a retail flower shop but special events, weddings, and also landscaping."

Marble has built an outstanding business, as well as a great reputation. He is a certified member of the American Institute of Floral Designers, a certified Texas Master Florist, and was inducted into the American Academy of Floriculture.

Kelly West, director of special events at College Flowers, began working for Marble in 2001 answering phones, and within three weeks was promoted to assistant. She said one of the things she admires most about Marble is that despite his renowned aptitude, he has stayed true to his roots.

"He is so talented and well-known all over the country that he could do this anywhere," West said, "but he chooses to stay in Lubbock because that is important to him and he believes Lubbock deserves to have a place like College Flowers and wants to keep it here on the South Plains."

Marble's love for West Texas shows not only in his dedication to the region, but also in his community-service endeavors.

"Through my business, I have been able to do a lot of charitable fundraising and be involved with almost every civic organization in town," Marble said.

Marble serves on the board of the Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts (LHUCA), the Museum Association of Texas Tech University, and is one of the founding members of "Margaret's, The Art of Fashion," a tribute to his late friend, Margaret Talkington's vintage clothing store that

was exhibited at LHUCA in 2007.

Marble is also the former chairman of Keep Lubbock Beautiful and was on the aesthetics committee for the Marsha Sharp Freeway. He was influential in persuading the Texas Department of Transportation to include patterned concrete, landscaping and irrigation during construction of new bridges on Loop 289.

Marble has also been involved with Texas Tech's Vision and Tradition Campaign. From the kick-off event to the final celebration and every press conference and event in between, College Flowers

has provided planning and decorative services for the campaign. West said Texas Tech choosing College Flowers to be involved with this special project was an honor.

Special events, such as the Vision and Tradition Campaign Celebration Gala, are what set College Flowers apart from ordinary flower shops. Due to competition in mass markets, Marble said flower shops must find a niche, such as special events and weddings, in order to be successful.



Marble enjoying a beautiful day at The Gates at College Flowers, which opened in April of 2011.

West said with a leader like Marble, these events are possible and she couldn't have learned from a better person.

"I love the team aspect of College Flowers," West said. "It isn't just one person, it's a team. Kelly is the visionary but everyone's ideas are brought to the table, and we all throw in different ideas, and Kelly ties it all together in the end."


Marble said he loves his job because of the clients he works with, some he has been working with for three generations.

"That's one of the most rewarding things about my job," Marble said. "I'm involved with every part of their life, from when they get married, to have a baby to when their grandmother dies."

Last year, after the deaths of J.T. and Margaret Talkington, Marble was able to purchase their home he delivered flowers to 30 years ago, which has been a dream of his ever since.

Thirty years later, Kelly Marble is proud to go home to a beautiful design, lavish interiors and crystal chandeliers after a long day at College Flowers, still in awe that the home where he made one of his first deliveries, and the company for which he worked, are both his.

Through the years, one thing remains the same – his passion.

"My favorite thing is that I get to work with nature's product," Marble said, "but at the end of the day, what makes me happiest is that I get to please my customers and give them what they need." 

Hallie Bertrand
Floydada, Texas



Photo courtesy of College Flowers



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