



Fashion Weaves Its Way Through Prinzing's Work



Debra Prinzing started out in the fashion industry with a B.A. from Seattle Pacific University in textiles and clothing. She changed her focus to magazine journalism in her senior year and studied at the Fashion Institute of

Technology in New York City, where she landed an internship at *Seventeen* magazine. After graduation she took a job with the magazine's marketing department and eventually was named editor of one of *Seventeen's* niche publications.

"I was only 22 and I thought I had hit the lottery," Debra recalls. "That began my crash course in reporting, writing, editing, editorial planning and production. I'm so grateful for that experience."

It was back home on the West Coast that she took a job she feels was a stepping-stone to the career she has now. From 1988 to 1998, Debra worked for the *Puget Sound Business Journal*, a Seattle weekly where she held reporting and editing positions. "I worked for some amazing editors who trained me on the job and gave me a chance to hone my interviewing skills and the ability to write fast and on deadline. I have never suffered writer's block because of that," she said.

IMMERSED IN GARDENING

Debra discovered her second passion when she and her husband became new homeowners, and her interests drifted toward landscaping. By the time they moved to their second home, she was immersed in nursery shopping and plant books. By then she had moved from newspapers to non-profit public relations. It wasn't a good fit, and she remembers sitting in her office thinking, "I want to be a garden writer."

She approached the movement toward a new subject matter by becoming a King County, Washington, Master Gardener in 1998



Former GWA President Debra Prinzing has parlayed interest in textiles and fashion into writing about gardening, interior and exterior design and American-grown flowers. She founded Slow Flowers to promote and support American-grown cut flowers for the floral and consumer trade.

and enrolling in the landscape horticulture program at South Seattle Community College. "The design series, plant ID and propagation coursework really gave me the language and confidence to write more knowledgeably about the topics I loved, or at least to know what questions to ask," Debra recalled.

She met **Marianne Binetti**—author, columnist and Master Gardener teacher—while working at a nursery that had hired Binetti to teach. "She became my mentor-cheerleader and she introduced me to Garden Writers," said Debra.

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

For a while, Debra's floral writing was a subset of her home and garden writing. She became a regular contributor to the *Los Angeles Times* and magazines like *Cottage Living*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Fine Gardening* and *Sunset*. Her first four books (published between 2002 and 2005) focused on gardening in the Pacific

Hall of Fame

In 2016, Debra Prinzing was named to GWA's Hall of Fame, the highest honor bestowed upon a member whose life and career have reflected and advanced the objectives of the organization. Hall of Fame candidates are nominated by the membership, recommended by the Honors Committee and elected by the Board of Directors. Members of the Hall of Fame are excused from dues.

Northwest. She branched out in 2008 with *Stylish Sheds and Elegant Hideaways*, which featured more than 30 sheds from both sides of the country. Debra's breakthrough work, *The 50 Mile Bouquet*, was published in 2012; *Slow Flowers* came out the following year.

The floral theme began to evolve in 2006 when she met some local cut flower farmers while on a garden scouting trip to Washington's Skagit Valley. Debra credits best-selling author Amy Stewart's 2007 book, *Flower Confidential*, as a major eye opener and the catalyst for changing attitudes about the flower industry.

TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE

Debra feels her professional success is based on possessing crossover subject expertise that allowed her to diversify. She took a solid foundation in textiles and design and built a career writing about interior design and architecture

topics to floral design and flower farming. It was a natural segue.

"Diversifying is the secret sauce that helps anyone succeed. We see it with food growing/preserving, with tourism/travel, with family/parenting topics and other themes with an affinity to gardening," Debra said. "If you can layer related topic expertise over garden writing and connect with like-minded peers, it greatly enhances the garden writing journey."

Debra served as GWA president from 2011 to 2013, and emphasized the importance of professional communications skills. "I wanted to support our members' growth and development skills in communications," she said. "If you follow the logic that good writing skills equip one to write about anything, as long as one knows how to research and report, then you may agree with my point of view."

MEMBERSHIP CONNECTIONS

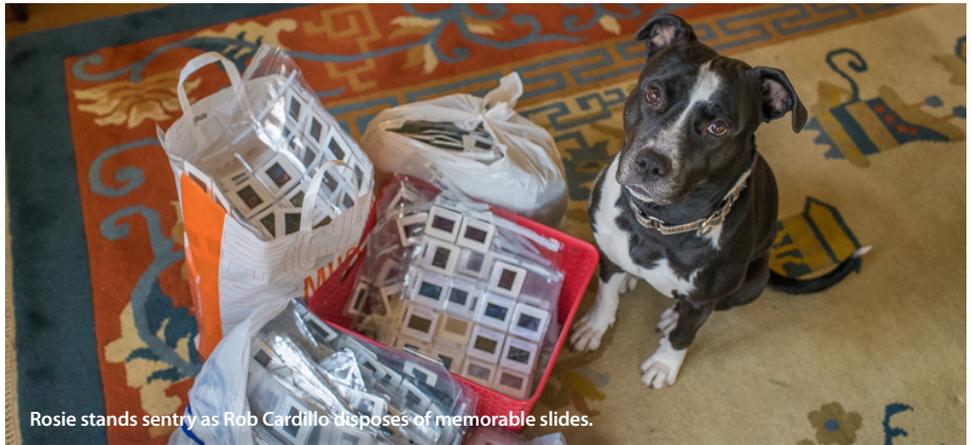
Her biggest takeaway from GWA is the idea that the writing profession is all about relationships. It was through GWA that she met **Paul Kelly** and Catherine Dees of St. Lynn's Press, who published *The 50 Mile Bouquet* and *Slow Flowers*. It was how she met **James Baggett**, editor of *Country Gardens*, and others who were open to her flower farm story pitches. She connected with people she wanted to interview, people who invited her to speak at their flower shows and botanic gardens, as well as those who interviewed... her as an expert. "It's all interrelated," she said. "Ideas are a dime a dozen. It's putting those ideas in motion that makes them truly valuable."

"Debra worked with selfless determination to bring GWA into a new age of mass media communications," said **Kirk R. Brown**, president of GWA. "Her leadership set the organization onto a course of accountability of our management and for our fiscal responsibility, leadership within the green industry and the highest return on investment to our membership. Without her foresight and strength, nothing of where we are today as a non-profit organization could have been possible. I count her as one of my oldest and truest friends in the world of ornamental horticulture."

Jean Starr has been growing plants for 30 years, writing about them for 26. Her work has appeared in magazines and newspapers, as online web content, and as gardening presenter and radio host. Jean's plant repertoire now includes hundreds of genera in both indoor and outdoor settings. She also blogs at petaltalk-jean.com.



Saying Goodbye to Memorable Images



Rosie stands sentry as Rob Cardillo disposes of memorable slides.

It's New Year's Day and while half-watching the Mummers Parade down Philadelphia's Broad Street, I'm tossing out 20-year-old slides. The time has come to downsize my rarely opened filing cabinets of film to make room for something else.

My slide collection served me well. When work was spotty the first few years of freelancing, I would spend days shooting the plant

world at nearby gardens and arboreta, building an archive along with my own botanical knowledge. I bought 20-roll "bricks" of Velvia and Ektachrome vs. the favored emulsions of garden photographer for their richly saturated and fine-grained beauty. They lived in the refrigerator until the night before a photo shoot; afterwards they were processed at a nearby professional lab where the owner's mother would deliver boxes of plastic-mounted slides the next day. Editing was done on a big bright lightbox with a powerful loupe. Was the image sharp? Did I nail the exposure? Did I balance the ever-changing color temperatures correctly?

TEDIOUS ORGANIZATION

I would edit each angle down to the best four or five frames and then enter the botanical name and other data into a funky PC program to build a catalog. Tiny peel and stick labels were generated on a dot matrix printer and attached carefully to the slide frames before they were filed by genus and location. It was

tedious, eye-straining work.

But to earn their keep, the images needed to be seen by publishers. So, for book and magazine want lists, I hand pulled and shipped my precious babies off to the harsh world of careless editors and ham-handed printers, hoping for a sale and their safe return. And then the endless hours of refileing.

Once the digital world came up to speed, my slide collection became unprofitable. I moved cautiously at first, like my clients. Some still wanted film, some wanted electronic files and a few wanted both. But the digital world won out for its ease, cost and speed.

ADIEU OLD TIMES

So it's time to say goodbye to these tiny magic frames. But the recollections are rich as my eyes scan each slide page. Here was the image where I finally finessed a new lighting technique or was in the warm company of a generous gardener who opened up their paradise for me. I recalled hot afternoons, impending rainstorms and first conversations with folks who later became dear friends.

And while others are watching the bowl games, I toss memories into trash bags, aching with guilt for not finding a creative way to recycle these polystyrene frames and acetate chips that were once a vibrant world to me. Should auld acquaintance be forgot?

Rob Cardillo is an award-winning photographer and a member of GWA's Hall of Fame.