



Mid-Columbia

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Ernie G to bring laughs to Tri-Cities

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Maybe it was Ernie G's given name that destined him to become a comedian.

Ernesto Tomas Gritzewsky gets a laugh even from himself.

"I'm a Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Russian and French-Catholic Jew: I am this country," the Los Angeles-based comedian said last week during a phone interview from a Wenatchee hotel.

He eventually shed the clunky moniker for a more streamlined stage one, following the comedic tradition forged by the likes of Leslie Townes Hope and Herschel Krustofski.

The name Ernie G may not be as recognizable as Bob Hope or Krusty the Clown yet, but it's gaining on George Lopez and Carlos Mencia in Latino entertainment circles.

And that's fine with him. Latinos are his target audience -- a large reason why he's swinging through the Mid-Columbia for about two weeks of performances.

"What I love is that the Latino community here is so rich," he said. "Washington state has become my home away from home."

On Thursday, he'll perform for migrant workers at the Snake River Housing at Broetje Orchards, and he'll do a night show Friday at Columbia Basin College.

After hopping over to Gonzaga University on April 29, he'll come back to Pasco for a show at CBC on May 3 and an appearance at Stevens Middle School on May 4.

He's in talks with the Tri-City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce about doing a fundraiser for the organization and possibly performing as part of Pasco's Cinco de Mayo festivities.

And he may fit in more as his schedule permits.

Ernie G was working the mainstream comedy angle before switching to more family-based material, meant to encourage young Hispanics.

"My job is just to inspire kids that they can go to college and fulfill their dreams. If I can do it, they can do it," said the Loyola Marymount University graduate.

He'll bring that message to the Hawk Union Building for his two appearances at CBC. College spokeswoman Dawn Alford said administrators of the College Assistance Migrant Program were impressed with him and thought students in the program and the school would benefit from his message.

Before he found his current trajectory, he at least left a few of his fingerprints on Hollywood.

He performed on George Lopez's *Que Locos* program, which aired on Galavisión from 2001-04. And he played a football player in the film *Jerry Maguire*.

"You probably have to press pause to catch me, but you actually can distinguish that it's me," he said.

His mark was enough that some remember.

"The first time I ever was in Pasco was about a month ago," he said. "I walked into a Bank of America, and the teller behind the counter recognized me. ... I couldn't believe she recognized me, but she did."

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