

Proposal may please 'Crystal,' but not Island County judge

by [JESSIE STENSLAND](#), Whidbey News-Times Assistant Editor
Dec 18, 2013 at 8:00AM [updated at 12:53PM](#)

An Oak Harbor man attempted to prove during a sentencing hearing on a meth conviction that he was not too late for love, whatever Def Leppard might have to say on the subject.

Jacob Jungwirth, 27, proposed to his girlfriend Monday just before being led away to prison for 18 months.

"Crystal," who was in the audience, immediately accepted the proposal.

The stunt didn't sit well with Island County Superior Court Judge Vickie Churchill. Jungwirth nearly earned himself additional time in the slammer.

"I was not pleased that the defendant wanted to make a mockery of the criminal hearing and that he directly defied an order from the judge," she said in a statement to the *Whidbey News-Times*.

"I seriously considered taking the plea offer off the table. In the end, I did not, but there is a certain decorum that I expect in the courtroom."

Jail staff caution defendants not to even look around the courtroom during the hearing, let alone communicate with anyone in the gallery.

Deputy Prosecutor David Carman handled the case against Jungwirth and was in court during the unusual moment.

He explained that Jungwirth pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of methamphetamine. Under the plea bargain, the prosecution and defense recommended a sentence of 18 months in prison.

The sentence for Jungwirth was longer than usual because of his criminal history, which includes a prison sentence for assaulting a different girlfriend three years ago, Carman explained.

As is the practice, Churchill asked Jungwirth if he had anything to say before she handed down his sentence.

He apologized for his actions and said he had found the love of his life. He then asked his girlfriend to marry him, according to the deputy prosecutor.

Carman said he didn't realize that the woman was sitting directly behind him until she spoke, accepting the marriage proposal. She was sitting in the row that's reserved for lawyers and court personnel for security reasons.

As Carman said, the judge was not amused.

"The courtroom has a certain purpose, and marriage proposals during criminal hearings are not part of it," Churchill wrote. "The defendant in question was entering a guilty plea to two serious felonies."

Churchill warned Jungwirth that the hearing wasn't the proper place for a marriage proposal, but was willing to let the matter go.

"However, in full defiance of that warning and without any sense of how generous the plea offer was, he again turned to the audience and spoke again to whom I suppose was his fiance," she added.

Carman said no rings were exchanged during the memorable proposal, mainly because the groom-to-be was shackled.

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