

AWARD OF MERIT WINNER

LOVE, HONOR, AND CHERISH

By SUE SILVA

NCNH District Consulting Rosarian

When I was a little girl growing up on a dairy ranch in Oregon, one of my earliest memories were the pretty flowers in our yard. We also had fruit trees and my mom always raised a big garden and did a lot of canning because she always had extra mouths to feed with a hired man and hay crew. I guess I just thought everyone had the knowledge of growing plants and I just thought that it was part of life and as I grew older helping with the planting and weeding of the garden became one of my chores. Most of the time, we had a row of flowers and then a row of vegetables alternating throughout the garden every summer. There was discussion between my mother and father about the value of the flowers because he felt if you couldn't eat them they didn't need to be there taking up space and wasting the water and fertilizer but she felt that as long as she was doing the work, she deserved the right to enjoy the beauty of the flowers. She always had flowers in the yard too and there were always roses growing amongst them. I remember the sweet fragrance even now. One of her favorites was Chrysler Imperial and since she was very patriotic and it was shortly after World War II, Peace was there as well as Audie Murphy, named for a war hero who had received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

As I grew older, my interest in flowers and gardening was almost nonexistent because socializing with friends took top priority but my brother was always out there with my mom planting the flowers every spring and even though we now lived in the big city of Eureka, we still had flowers even when they were in pots because we lived in an apartment and no yard to put them in. I did think they were pretty but I had no time for such nonsense and so I really missed out on learning about how to grow them. My brother however learned a great deal and I know the two of them thought I was a lost cause.

When I was first married, I lived in Texas for a few years and every time my mom came to visit, she asked me where the flowers were and I always gave her the answer that I didn't think I could make them grow. I still had no real interest. We finally moved to California and after a visit to my house in the bay area and still no flowers, the car was filled with gallon cans of geraniums on the second visit. She told me that they were very easy to grow and she knew I could do it. Lo and behold, the poor things died of thirst sitting out on the deck. When I moved back to this area, I lived practically next door to my mom and she would actually come over and plant flowers by my house and take care of them for me. I still didn't show any interest in learning the art of growing them. Looking back on that time, I know I must have really challenged my mother's patience

and only occasionally would she tease me a little.

When I met and married my new husband and I moved into his home with lots of room in the yard but only shrubs and lawn growing, my mother told me it would be a shame if I didn't grow some pretty flowers to go along with them. I was now in my early thirties and I finally decided that maybe she was right so I asked her to teach me how and promised to learn this time. Meanwhile, my brother and his wife had been growing flowers and a garden for years. He really liked rhododendrons and had quite a few growing in his yard but not many roses because he thought they were really hard to grow. With all his knowledge about gardening I really knew then that I couldn't possibly grow them if he couldn't. Since roses were her favorite flower she really encouraged us to try and she said they would grow and bloom most of the year and that annuals and rhododendrons only have a short bloom time. That year, we both received Love, Honor, and Cherish as a Christmas gift. The year was 1980 and these three roses were the AARS winners that year. That was the beginning of our obsession or passion or whatever you would call it. We both now have hundreds of roses, we are both very active members of the Rose Society and we both are Consulting Rosarians.

Our mother had finally reached her goal of cultivating the green thumbs of both her children and taught us that gardening is one of life's pleasures and that her favorite flower--the rose-- is really not that hard to grow. She was always such a wonderful part of our life and we miss her very much. She did leave us with a wonderful gift of gardening and spring was always her favorite season when everything began to grow again after the long winter. She always said it gave her hope for the future and six years ago on the first day of spring in this new century she left us with that message in our hearts. Our way to Honor her is to plant a new rose every year, to remember the Love she gave us and always Cherish the fact we had such a wonderful mother. Our mother was Betty Peterson and my brother is Ed Kreutzer and you all know now that I am Sue Silva.

For those who didn't know my mother, she was a member of the Humboldt Rose Society for years. She graciously opened her home many times to the society hosting a cocktail party before the annual Christmas dinner when it was at The Bella Vista Inn, a restaurant that she and her husband owned in McKinleyville and her garden was often included on the garden tours. She decorated the tables in the restaurant with roses from her garden every summer and always had them named so people knew what they were. She grew very nice roses and won the Queen of the Show Trophy three times even though she wasn't very competitive. But she felt a rose show should have roses so she always entered. She never wanted to hold office or be in the spotlight but was always available to help in any capacity if needed. She was a great asset to the society and had many friends. I have often said she was The Wind Beneath My Wings. My brother Ed and his wife, Mary Anne are very active members of the South Western Oregon Rose Society and many of you may have met them this last summer when our two societies

joined together for garden tours. They are also members of our society and I am a member of theirs. Our mother also was a member of both societies. We are truly a family of rosarians.