

Remembering a Little Rose History

May 2006 Rosette by Judy Mayo

History is important to all of us. Whether it is about our nation, our city, our church, or our rose club. And it is good to go back and recount history. It gives us roots and a sense of belonging. Over the last several months the Southwest Louisiana Rose Society has lost several long time and faithful members. **Lon Adkins** of Sulphur had been a member since the 1980's. Our annual Garden Tour always included his garden until the past several years. **Nell Roberts**, a member since about 2000, helped in several garage sales and clerked for several rose shows. And **Melba Watson**. Melba and Gilbert participated in a rose society before the present rose society was chartered in 1962. I wish all of our new members could have known Melba and Gilbert. They were a spark in our society. The following is an article that Melba & Gilbert wrote for the bulletin in 1995.

Both families grew roses so it was natural for us to become interested. There was always a bed of roses at the Watson home. A climbing Marechal Neil covered the east side of the garage. Roses were grown at the Machine Shop and their summer home at Big Lake. Rose cost 25 to 50 cents.

Melba's mother had the old Cabbage Rose (Paul Neyron) which she grew from a cutting. We have a healthy unknown rose which Melba's grandmother planted in the 1930's.

Keith Collins, a well-known rosarian from Beaumont and Member of the Men's Garden Club helped organize the local Men's Garden Club in May 1949. The first Rose Show was in May 1950 at Wilson Motor Company in downtown Lake Charles. Gilbert won Queen of Show with Peace and served as President the second term.

Gilbert joined the American Rose Society in 1948 and the following year we attended the National Convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma, also another in Tyler, Texas. The American Rose Magazine was black and white the size of the TV Guide.

Our first roses were bought from Mrs. Parrot's Seed Store; Etoile de Hollande, Dainty Bess and Souer Therese. It was thought patented roses would not do well here so Radiance was mainly grown.

In 1948 we ordered 10 Cheer floribundas from Jackson and Perkins. One is still living and very healthy. They were shipped with roots packed in damp sphagnum moss. We dusted for protection.

In February, 1949, we planted Peace, Tally-ho, 49er, Nocturne, Mirandy and Charlotte Armstrong from Armstrong Nurseries. New Dawn and Madame Gregoire Staechelin from Bobbink and Atkins; these two are still with us as is Encore, a floribunda, from Peterson and Dering, Scapose, Oregon. Hurricane Audrey destroyed our climbing Mrs. Sam McGreedy, a beautiful tawny, peach, orange pink that drew a lot of visitors.

This is 1995. We are still working with roses and are happy members of the Southwest Louisiana Rose Society.

Gilbert died in 2002 and our annual show was dedicated to him in 2003. The highest award, the Bronze Medal, that can be presented by the local club was inaugurated by the American Rose Society in 1993. Melba and Gilbert Watson were the Southwest Louisiana Rose Society's first recipients in that year.