



Three of the hundreds of antique roses we now enjoy thanks to the Texas Rose Rustlers: l to r, San Felipe Noisette, Natchitoches Noisette and Maggie

COMMEMORATING FORTY YEARS OF ROSE RUSTLING

By Elisabeth Castro

[Texas Rose Rustlers](#)

“Roses are difficult to grow.” This was a common sentiment shared by many who thought keeping roses healthy and free of disease meant a strict regimen of spraying with toxic chemicals.

A sentiment not lost on Pamela (Pam) Puryear (1943-2005), one of the founders of the Texas Rose Rustlers. In the May 1980 Heritage Rose Letter, Pam described her efforts growing hybrid tea roses, comparing them to roses growing on street corners of her home town, Navasota. She remembered efforts spent on pampering her HT roses in well-tilled beds with manure and sprayed with benomyl. They still languished in the heat.


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L to r, Margaret Sharpe, Pam Puryear and 'Pam's Pink,' named in her honor

Pam soon met a kindred spirit at a Houston Rose Society meeting. Margaret Sharpe (1918-1998), Houston's Grand Dame of Roses and American Rose Society Judge, had been growing hybrid. Before long, others who heard about Pam's excursions to cemeteries jumped on the rustling bandwagon. Trips were organized to find more old-fashioned roses.



The first official rustle was organized in Nov. 1979 at the Anderson Cemetery where cuttings from 'Old Blush,' 'Silver Moon' and 'Excelsa' were obtained

L to r, 'Old Blush,' 'Silver Moon' & 'Excelsa'

Serendipity kicked in. Michael Shoup heard about "rose enthusiasts" scouring cemeteries and abandoned homesteads looking for old roses. Michael's nursery in Independence specialized in native and other plants that survive Texas summers. He could not help but notice roses blooming on abandoned plots and fences. At the same time the "Rose Rustlers" were gaining popularity, Dr. William (Bill) C. Welch approached Michael to grow roses from his cuttings and later those from Pam and her group of rose rustlers.

In 1982 the Texas Rose Rustlers were officially formed with Dr. Bill Welch as President, Pam Puryear, Secretary and Margaret Sharpe as Vice-President.

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Although The Texas Rose Rustlers no longer go on rose rustling excursions they have followed the tradition of exchanging cuttings and helping out in preserving old roses when needed.



At every Fall Exchange, The Texas Rose Rustlers freely share rose cuttings from their gardens, some of which date back to earlier rustles, such as the Schulenberg Rose, left, found at the Catholic Cemetery in Schulenberg. Some of these roses cannot be obtained in commerce and are therefore very special to the group.

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