



from the ground up

"Roses Are for Remembrance"

by:
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From my kitchen window, I gazed out at the potted roses on the deck. They were drooping, bloomless and sad, and I felt the same way. The roses had belonged to my Mother who had recently died, quite unexpectedly, after a fall.

A few days after the funeral, my family gathered at her beautiful house in the woods, and I walked around the yard, observing the stark emptiness of her garden. After Daddy died, Mother had continued to live on the farm with no intentions of moving, driven by her indomitable independence and determination. Her sudden passing left everyone, even her plants, yearning for her presence...Mother's beloved roses were still waiting patiently for her watering can. I felt sorry for them: they were like babies, totally dependent on Mother for sustenance, and I could relate. I felt overwhelmed by the enormity of our family's loss, as I sadly hoisted the heavy rose containers into my truck and carried them home. They became a constant reminder that Mother was really gone.

Several years ago, I had given her a *Foolish Pleasure* rose, and it quickly became her favorite. She would rave about its beautiful pink flowers. After a couple of weeks, the plants began to perk up and a single bloom opened on her favorite rose, and my spirits lifted. How I wanted to be able to call and tell her about its sweet bloom, and all the new buds.

Mother was a gifted natural gardener. During my childhood, she grew yellow roses that scrambled along the fences and she taught me how to water, prune and mulch. I could've watered roses all day, staring at the rivulets swirling slowly, like whirling dervishes. Watering was the perfect chore for a daydreamy child like me, and looking back, I realize how well she

knew me even then.

After college I moved to the city, far away from Mother and Daddy, the farm and the garden of my childhood. I forgot about roses. But much later, life gave me a surprise of its own when I re-discovered my love of plants.

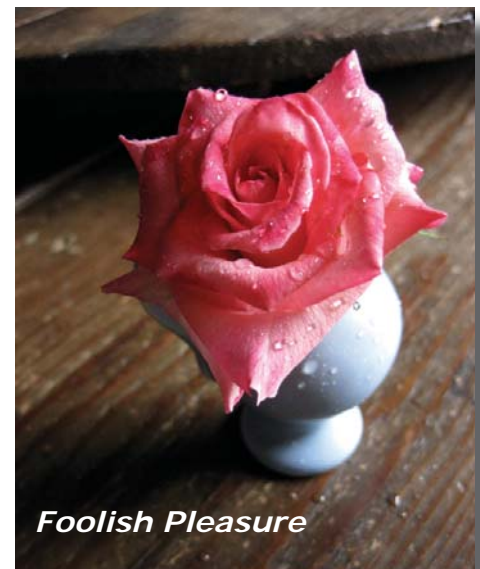
I never dreamed that my renewed interest in gardening would strengthen my connection with Mother. Our relationship literally bloomed as we yakked on the phone about plants. She would call me to describe a sickly leaf or a particularly annoying bug, and I lamented the death of yet another African violet. If I was having a bad day, Mother would say, "Get out and get your hands dirty and you'll feel better." I always did. I loved buying plants for her, and she loved receiving them, and I marveled at Mother's intuitive knowledge of even the most challenging plants. She was fearless.

In her later years, Mother became an "armchair" member of the Nashville Rose Society.

She would phone up all abuzz over the latest newsletter item about a new fertilizer, so I bought her some. Then she would hoard it, only using half the recommended amount, though I promised to buy her more if she ran out. I bought her a pair of ergonomic gloves, "they helped her arthritis," but she wouldn't wear them because they were "too nice," and continued wearing her old ones. The unspoken rule of our amusing little game was this: if Mother mentioned a new rose or gardening product, it really meant she hoped I would buy it for her. Then she would squeal with delight and, "Oh, you shouldn't have" when I delivered her latest garden obsession. Gardening was our mutual passion, and we cherished this new-found aspect of our

relationship. We shared six years together as dedicated gardeners.

The other day I went back to her garden, with the sad realization that those precious moments had come to their natural end. But this time, the garden wasn't empty. An owl's feather fell from the tall tree overhead and landed at my feet. Startled, I looked up, and though I didn't see the bird, my spirit felt peaceful, vibrant and alive again, and I sensed something Mother must've known for years: that faith is the one absolute of gardeners: faith in the future, faith in "things hoped for," faith in resurrection and grace. The garden is man's futile attempt to imitate and improve upon nature, and that, alone requires tremendous faith. It is a metaphor for life in communion with all its seasons: birth and death, illness and health, youth and old age. Mother often went to the garden to "piddle around." I believe her faith increased as she pattered around that yard, yearning for God and praying for her children. Her blooming rose calls us to remembrance, and for her life I give thanks.



The family of Joyce Grubbs would like to thank the wonderful members of the Nashville Rose Society who wrote cards and letters, visited, called, brought food and sent flowers and donations in her honor. Your outpouring of love and support during this difficult time has meant more to us than you will ever know. Many of you had the chance to meet her and though she was unable to attend the night meetings, she kept up with the NRS through her treasured newsletters. Again, thank you and we ask for your continued thoughts and prayers as we continue our life journeys without her.

— With warmest regards, Donna Nelson, Murry Grubbs, Leann Barron and family