

# The Old Texas Rose



Number 3

[www.texasroserustlers.org](http://www.texasroserustlers.org)

Summer 2008

## Summer Rookie Meeting Devoted to New Members Mercer Arboretum July 19, 2008

*By Doana Fite,  
Program Chairman*

Welcome to Texas Rose Rustlers. This organization of gardeners who love and promote antique and old garden roses is happy that new members are joining in our pursuit of the oldest, prettiest, hardiest roses.

Many times people who are not members will ask: What exactly is a Rose Rustler? Have you ever been asked that? What do Rustlers do?

On Saturday, July 19, at Mercer Arboretum in Houston, some projects, activities and growing techniques of Texas Rose Rustlers will be discussed, examined and demonstrated.

**10:00 a.m....Sign in;** coffee, conversation and Shirt Sale.

**10:30....A Journey of Roses** by Sandra and Michael Smith.

This film presentation documents the Rustlers' mission to help restore old roses to Louisiana gardens damaged by Hurricane Katrina. If you aren't already in love with antique roses, you will be by the end of this story.

**12:00....Bring a picnic lunch and soft drink** to share in the cool air-conditioned comfort of Mercer meeting room and be a part of an open forum with Rustlers who implemented the **Vintage Rosery Rose Rescue Program.**

Join Faith Bickley, Phyllis DeGelleke, Audrey McMurray, Becky Smith and a Mystery Rustler who participated in "**The Front Lines**" and "**In the Trenches**" who will tell touching, inspiring and hilarious stories of saving the roses of Marcia Roenigk's dream garden.

**1:30....After lunch, John Ferguson of Nature's Way Resources** will share more information about the benefits of composted soil, mulching, and keeping our soil "alive." John actually has a degree in what I call "dirt works" and it shows in his methodical and well documented examples of how soil



differences affect plants. John and his staff are good friends to the Rustlers, and love to help us keep our roses beautiful and blooming even in drought, clay, sand, chemicals and other adverse conditions.

So, call your friends, and spread the word. Bring a sack lunch and a friend or two, stay out of the heat, but in the know, with the Texas Rose Rustlers.

Of course, we will also conduct our lotto drawing for plants and products donated by the Rustlers. Don't miss this wonderful program. Come fall in love all over again with an old rose, or two, or more. **Call Doana Fite if you have any questions: 281 468 3677.**

**Mercer Arboretum is located at:  
22306 Aldine-Westfield, Houston, 77373.**



## Roses of San Antone

*By Doana Fite*

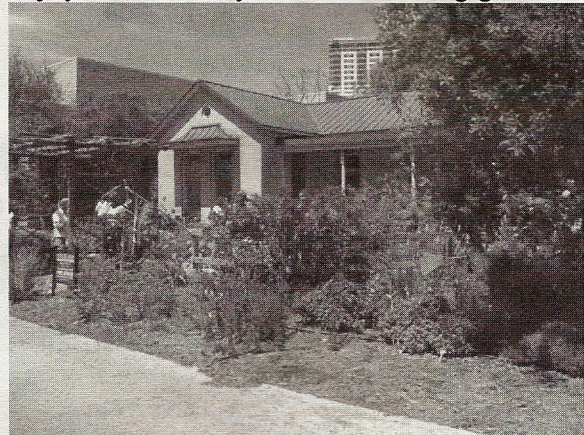
It was a perfect weekend in April for the Spring Symposium. This year the Rustlers met in the beautiful city of San Antonio.

The event got underway as everyone gathered early Saturday morning not far from downtown San Antonio. There is a little secret garden, almost hidden, behind the Federal Building at the edge of Hemisphere Park.

The sun was bright. The day was warm. The tea was sweet. The gardens were beautiful and the mockingbird was loud! The Texas Rose Rustlers were charmed by this colorful cottage garden surrounding the Schultze House, a Texas pioneer home which now serves as the gift shop.

The all volunteer staff, caretakers and gardeners are Bexar County Master

Gardeners. Smitty, Pat and Barbara greeted us like family and graciously served us fresh fruits, cookies, pastries, juices and tea as we enjoyed the beauty of their amazing garden.



*Schultze House and cottage gardens  
San Antonio, TX*

Even the Federal Building security guards, who carefully oversee the comings and goings in the adjacent parking lots, fell under the charm of the Texas Rose Rustlers, and agreed to watch out for our cars and phone us if any problems arose. Janet Riley's husband, Frank, not quite confident of their care, checked on our cars from time to time and always came back satisfied they were ok.

Faith Bickley learned some tips on fighting leaf cutter ants from the Bexar County Agricultural Extension Agent's Entomologist, Molly Kleck. She gave us all great information about the pyramid of insect life in our lives, and tips on how to manage the good, the bad, and the others.

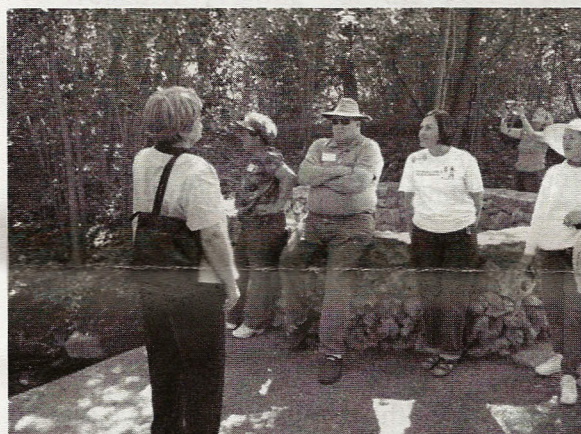
Mr. John Houston told us touching and inspiring stories of his roses; how many years ago, he and his young bride bought their first roses outside the entrance of the Texas State Fair in Dallas. Mr. Houston said his wife warned him not to buy more roses than he thought he could care for. We all laughed, because we have all said that, heard that or at least, thought it ourselves.

After a brief "meeting" in the parking lot to conduct our plant lotto, Faith told us of



plans to help Bob Roenigk save the thousands of roses remaining at the Vintage Rosery. Sandra and Michael Smith demonstrated Sandra's newest favorite garden tool. The best news was that it fits all sized hands and is similar to a hoe.

Next, the Rustlers caravanned to the campus of Incarnate Word University where Professor Patricia Lonchar walked us to the headwaters of the San Antonio River. Yes, the river which is famous for its Riverwalk has its origin in a tiny spring on the University property. The Blue Hole was peaceful, cooling and lovely, and even had a little specimen of Mermaid growing at the edge of the wooded grove.



*Professor Lonchar speaking to the Rustlers at The Blue Hole.*

Professor Lonchar told us how the Native American tribes from the area still come to this spring for annual celebrations. She told us how the spunky little twenty-one year old French nun negotiated with Mr. Breckenridge to buy the land for the school over 175 years ago to teach and house orphans. Then she led us to the original home of Mr. Breckenridge and we walked around it and peered through the stained glass windows in awe, and admired the hedges recently created of Belinda's Dream and Old Blush and other antique and old garden roses.

On Sunday morning (after our traditional Saturday evening dinner at the best Mexican

restaurant in town!), we ventured to the Antique Rose Emporium of San Antonio. The enchanting beauty of the stucco, Spanish mission décor was impressive to all the Rustlers. Many admitted they had never visited the San Antonio version of our beloved Antique Rose Emporium of Brenham. Most vowed they definitely will be going back and taking friends. Like the old song says, "Oh, rose, my rose of San Antone!"



### ***Upcoming Rustler Events: 2008 Mark Your Calendars!!***

Oct. 25 - 26, 2008 Fall Cutting Exchange  
Weston Gardens, Kennedale, Texas  
Botanic Gardens, Fort Worth, Texas,  
and much more.

Rose Rustlers, we are in for an incredible treat this fall for our cutting exchange. We have been contacted by no fewer than four of our Rose Rustler members who live in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Janet and Frank Riley even drove down to Needville to participate in the Vintage Rosery Rescue. Terri Cotter has sent a detailed letter to the board members inviting us to her garden on Sunday and volunteering to help us with other arrangements. Lori Penning and Peter Schaar are two other members who have also been in touch about Rose Rustlers visiting Dallas/Fort Worth area gardens. All these North Texas Rustlers are so very happy and excited that we are planning our Fall Cutting Exchange in their part of Texas.

Each one is encouraging and welcoming and they have mentioned more and more delightful places they want us to see and visit. It sounds like we could spend three or four days there and still have more rose beds to see.



The Exchange will be scheduled for Saturday afternoon so that Rustlers may drive up on Saturday morning and be home by dark if they choose. Of course we will arrange for overnight accommodations and Sunday morning garden visits for those who wish to stay over.

Please mark your calendars, tell your friends, and make your plans to be a part of the **2008 Fall Cutting Exchange**. Gourmet tea at the Stone Ship of Weston Gardens is just the beginning. More information will follow on the website in September and details in the Fall Newsletter.



*Editor's Note: Most of this issue of The Old Texas Rose is being dedicated to Marcia and Bob Roenigk and the 'Vintage Rosery Experience.'*

*If you were able to be a part of this adventure then you'll understand what the Vintage Rosery Experience means. If not, read on—by the time you've read through the following accounts you'll know why those of us who had the privilege of participating will never forget Memorial Day Weekend 2008.*

*Many thanks go out to Becky, Faith and Bob and all the other volunteers who organized this event and who spent many back-breaking hours preparing for it. No one in their wildest dreams could have imagined the amount of hard work that it would take OR the amount of satisfaction we all experienced after the enthusiastic hordes of rose lovers swooped down on Needville, TX bright and early on that Saturday morning, ready to load up their cars and trucks with dozens of beautiful roses...*

## **From the Chairman** ~Faith Bickley

Wow! What a ride! I think most of you have been following our adventure helping Bob Roenigk liquidate a large percentage of the roses at his now closed Vintage Rosery in Needville. Our organization has been honored to celebrate Marcia Roenigk's love of our old garden roses and in particular her dream that produced the Vintage Rosery and the fantastic gardens she designed and implemented there. Bob, Becky Smith and I want to thank all of you who worked so diligently at the workdays and then at the sale Saturday and Sunday. It was an experience that I personally will never forget. We helped save over 2,000 roses!!!!

As I have already told you, Saturday's sale was beyond belief. Sunday was pretty amazing but much more relaxed. We sold more than 400 roses and ended up with only 32 to be transported back to the trenches.

I know many of you were unable to get involved due to work and also previous obligations as this came about very quickly. However, we still have what I refer to as the 'wild side' of the rose field which we plan to work on when the weather cools. The roses have put their roots through the weedcloth and cannot be disturbed during the heat. We plan another sale probably in March. Becky and I will keep you posted and will try to have workdays on various days including weekends so everyone has the opportunity to experience all of this.

All this publicity has brought a lot of interest in the Texas Rose Rustlers and I foresee quite a few new members joining us.





## **In the Beginning...**

*By Becky Smith*

Wow! Where do I begin? I am still in absolute amazement how the Vintage Rosery project began, progressed, and ended in such an astounding way. There were obstacles at every turn, but each brought the project a step closer to fruition and better than we had ever envisioned.

In February, 2008, John Ferguson informed me that Bob Roenigk had closed the Vintage Rosery with thousands of roses still in the "trenches." To anyone interested, Bob would sell the roses for \$5 a piece if 100 or more were purchased. While doing some "rejuvenating pruning" at the Fort Bend Master Gardeners Rose Garden, Barbara Buckley and I thought we might need some replacement roses in case some of the old roses did not survive the major whacking. We decided to visit Vintage Rosery to buy the replacements.

When we arrived, there was Bob. He told me I could purchase any and all roses for \$5 each. What a bargain! We bought some for the Extension and then I started buying truckloads at a time for my gardens. Bob would continually ask how he could save these thousands of roses. It was very difficult to see these beautiful plants go unappreciated and unloved. Bob was even willing to split the proceeds with anyone that would help him find homes for the roses. I told him that we would find a way.

Then, in late March, early April, I found the answer! Faith Bickley and the Texas Rose Rustlers were willing to help me save the roses! What a great project for the Texas Rose Rustlers!

In April, several of us went to Arbor Gate to hear the awesome Felder Rushing! We decided that ALL the Texas Rose Rustlers would enjoy hearing Felder's presentation and we would inquire about booking him for

our group. We thought his speaking fee was about \$1,200. So, Bob's offer to split the proceeds of the roses came to mind. The Vintage Rosery project was underway!

### **The Sale from the Frontline**

Words are not adequate to describe the experience of the Vintage Rosery sale on May 24 and 25, 2008. Faith and I arrived in the back trenches at 7 a.m. The morning was very peaceful after all the preparation, moving, and selling of roses prior to the official sale. We checked the inventory in the trenches to see what might still be available to sell. Since there was a wedding scheduled at the old Vintage Rosery site that afternoon, we had the roses set up for sale at the front of the Water Garden. We were delighted to use the Water Garden area since we now had shade, which was unknown while working in the back trenches.

About 8 a.m., our customers started to arrive. Should we begin the sale early? Our cashier was not there yet, but Bob decided to let the shopping begin, two hours before the sale was advertised to start. At 10:15 a.m., our carefully pruned, weeded, alphabetized and placed according to shrubs, climbers, "Earthkind" and "Mystery Roses" were ALL GONE! Faith, Bob and some other workers headed to the back trenches. They were going to pull some of the remaining roses to the front and clean them as they put them on the trailer to sell. Shoppers were very informed and came with their "wish list" of roses to purchase. They had really done their research and many knew exactly which roses they wanted.

We also had a mother killdeer and four eggs sitting in the middle of the drive. We placed a large black pot and a big yellow sign to aid in their protection. No one wanted to miss this sale!!!





*Killdeer eggs in the middle of the driveway!*

The mad house began!! I was the person (on the phone) with connections to Faith in the trenches. Thank goodness I had put Faith's cell number on speed dial the night before the sale. I was mobbed by people looking for certain roses and requesting the Rose Rustlers bring them from the back. There were also our workers up front that were trying to find out what roses were available in the back. It was chaotic!!!!

The first trailer full of roses from the fields arrived and the crowds ran to grab what they could. It did not seem to matter what type of rose they secured. They were just happy to get a plant. Very quickly the trailer was unloaded and headed back to the trenches for more.

Most of this time Faith and I were on the phones trying to satisfy the herds of customers. After the second trailer load of roses arrived in the front, we decided there was no need to continue to call to see what was available, as it was impossible to remember all the varieties. I told Faith to forget about cleaning up the roses, just get them ALL to the front and the customers would clean their own roses. The customers had no concern about weeds or lack of pruning! The trailers kept coming until the trenches in the back were empty!

In the midst of all the confusion, we were trying to describe roses and help folks decide on the right rose or roses for their gardens. I remember one woman, who had

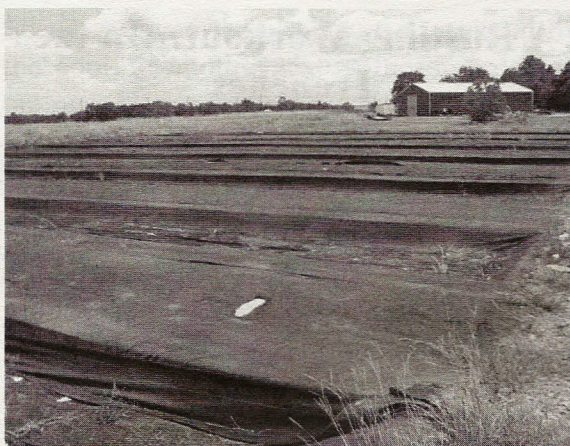
been a Vintage Rosery customer, was devastated when I told her Marcia had passed away in October. She had originally planned to buy just one rose. But, after she heard of Marcia's death, she wanted me to help her select eight roses. She was going to plant a memory garden for Marcia.

Another gentleman asked me for help in his rose selections. I suggested some of my favorites to him and especially recommended, Belinda's Dream. We searched the inventory in front, but were unable to find Belinda's Dream. He then decided to wait for the trailers to deliver more roses from the trenches in hopes of finding Belinda's Dream. He brought a rose to me and asked if it was the one I had recommended. When I told him that it was, he had the biggest smile on his face and thanked me over and over. He was truly delighted.

Later that afternoon when the sale was scheduled to end, Faith went to the road and took the advertising sign down so people would know we were closed. A few minutes later, we looked out and someone had put the sign back up! We had about 400 roses left to sell and the customers kept coming! There were no more roses left in the trenches, a very devastating site to see. We finally had a break of customers and everyone met to decide what to do Sunday.

We continued the sale Sunday and by noon, most of the 400 roses were sold and the sale was over. We all headed to the Brazos Bar and Grill to hash over the experiences we had during the sale. When we went back to put the 32 roses we had left from the sale into the trenches, we all toured Marcia's interpretation of Gertrude Jekyll's Formal Garden.





*The day before, these trenches were filled with roses!*

What began as a means to save roses, help Bob, and raise funds to invite a guest speaker to a Rose Rustlers meeting turned into an experience of a life time. Thanks to the dedication, love, and hard work of Bob, the Texas Rose Rustlers, and the Fort Bend Master Gardeners, Marcia's passion will continue to bloom in gardens all across Texas and in the hearts of all who worked so hard to save the roses.

Becky Smith  
Texas Rose Rustler  
Fort Bend Master Gardener

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## **GREEN, GREEN, GREEN...**

That's all we hear and read about nowadays.

Sitting next to the cashier, Brenda, the first day of the sale, I discovered that many people were requesting a green rose!!!

I have always felt that a rose should be a beautiful color. And I wouldn't entertain having a green rose in my yard. Even my daughter, Faith, has a green rose...But I have come to the conclusion that I am in the minority.

One gentleman and I were bantering about this choice and now I have to admit that it's

okay to include a green rose; but not in my garden. He also was wearing a green tee shirt. So, he definitely is a greenie.

What a day we had with wonderful workers, clear skies and so many buyers!

Thanks to all,  
Phyllis DeGelleke  
A Texas Rose Rustler  
and proud mother of the Chairman

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## **On The Front Line**

I am not a Texas Rose Rustler, however, I am a Fort Bend County Master Gardener and a co-chairman of our Cottage Garden with Becky Smith. When Becky told me about the upcoming sale at The Vintage Rosery, I knew I had to help, even if it was in a small way.

I had followed Marcia's story in our local newspaper and knew of her dream of a special rose garden and of her long wait and recovery from her transplant. My mother, Dorothy Myska and Marcia's mother, Evelyn Hardin, went to Richmond High School together and I have known the family for years.

I asked Becky if she needed a cashier. She did, and I gladly took on that job. So, I arrived at 8:30 a.m. Saturday morning to a partially filled parking lot and a dozen or more people 'checking out the stock.' I found my station and was ready for the day. Needless to say, "the day" was more than I expected. I have to say, I have never seen so many people excited about roses, so hungry for information or so glad to share information. As the only cashier, I was busy, but, had great help from Texas Rose Rustler, Carolyn Stracik, Master Gardeners James and Barbara Buckley, and others.



Phyllis, Faith Bickley's mother, kept me company at the check out table. She was always eager to ask the customers about their rose purchases and give them an encouraging word about rose care. Phyllis is delightful and a fountain of 'Rose Knowledge.'

It was great for me to see so many familiar faces among the shoppers. Since I grew up in Rosenberg, I got to chat with old friends and even a few former students.

About mid-morning, after the big rush had died down a little, I looked up and saw a very familiar face in the check out line. It was Evelyn Hardin, Marcia's mother. I reminded her that I was "Dorothy's daughter" and before long we were talking about their upcoming high school reunion. Evelyn had come that day and purchased six roses from her daughter's Vintage Rosery stock. After she handed me her check, she looked at all the people gathered for the sale, looking at the name tags, standing in the line, hauling their roses to their cars, answering questions. I could see a look of overwhelming pride and joy in her eyes. Her daughter's dream was still alive—alive in every rose that was sold, every heart that was touched by Marcia's dream.

Even though the weather was hot and humid, the line long, and the customers anxious to get their perfect rose from the trailers, I would not have traded an air conditioned room, a good book, and a tall cold glass of iced tea for the experience I had that Saturday with the Texas Rose Rustlers. I have made some wonderful new friends and discovered the true meaning of unselfish love. The love that comes in the understanding of someone's dream, giving that dream some 'tender loving care' and allowing that dream to be shared by hundreds of people.

Brenda Dresner  
Fort Bend Master Gardener

## A Rustling Workout...In the Trenches

"It's only a little gardening and it will be a nice break." At least that's what I thought to myself when Janet asked if I'd go along with her on a rose rescue. After all, I've seen the signs in the gym—gardening burns only about half the calories of a stair climber. How hard could it be?

A few days later, I was sucking wind underneath a mini-van rear lift-gate (the only shade within a half mile), soaked in sweat, watching these rustlers go at it non-stop—tagging, pruning, weeding—all the while wondering how I could have gotten so out of shape.

I couldn't keep up. I failed to take into account the bright sun, the 90+ heat and humidity, and the 8+ hour duration of these gardening workouts. These rustlers are tough. My gym routine was in nice, cozy air conditioning and rarely lasted longer than 20 minutes.

As I surveyed the rose field, I wondered what driving force kept these rustlers at it for hours on end. And throughout the weekend, I came to realize that this was something more than a gathering or a club outing—instead, these people have a downright passion for roses—and it's this passion that keeps them going.

I've always been told that the key to success is to work at something you are passionate about—and the weekend at the Vintage Rosery was another confirming example of this proverb. And while I may never really know the difference between a Noisette and a China, or a Tea and a Bourbon, I have come to know that a vacation can be so much more meaningful and fun when it has a mission and a goal.



So when given the choice of a weekend by the pool, or another one of these gardening outings, I'll gladly join a team of passionate people who are out to save the world; or at least beautify it one rose at a time.

Just a Rose Hand,  
Frank Riley  
(husband of Rose Rustler Janet)

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Hello! I had to add a HUGE thank you to Faith and Becky and all of the other volunteers who helped organize this event!

Forgive me if there is someone I am leaving out, Faith and Becky...you have done a superb job at organizing this!!! I met many terrific people on Saturday too!  
I was out there on Saturday, in the trenches (literally!), and was witness to this awesome effort to assist Bob and save thousands of roses. It was a sight to be seen.

Sitting on the black weed barrier, making labels for the roses to be sold, I felt like a slab of bacon frying in a pan! Regardless of how much sunscreen I slathered on my already tanned skin, I still burnt, as did many of the others.

Despite the gruesome heat, the sunburn, the thorns still stuck in my legs undiscovered until Sunday morning, and the complete exhaustion afterward, I was sure glad I went and helped.

This is what being a Rose Rustler is all about. This is the event that we have all been waiting to be a part of, at least for me it is—saving roses.

I look forward to our future efforts in order to save the roses on the “wild side.”

Bob, thank you for giving the Rustlers an opportunity to be the “rose angels” we have

dreamed of being. I hope our efforts make life just a bit easier for you as well...

Candy Fite

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Faith convinced me to bring three of the orphan roses home. One was Iceberg. I kept the roses in their pots and started watering them. Low and behold—Iceberg has already set two buds and given me gorgeous flowers.

Hopefully, they will all go in the ground soon.

Wanda & Wally Brown

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### **Cecile Bruner and the Rose Rescuer**

Working in the trenches at the Vintage Rosery Rescue Project, I came across a specimen of Cecile Bruner that was pathetic to see. She had one pitiful leaf on the left and three pitiful leaves on the right, each about the size of a dime. Some of the stems in the heart had bud eyes on them, but some of the stems on the outside were already dry and brittle. She was on her last root hair, so to speak.

I brought her home to nurse and care for. I started with water the first day. Then like a patient who had been in a car wreck, I began to administer a little medicine. I gave a cup of water with a few drops of well diluted SuperThrive the second day. Like someone who had crawled across the Painted Desert in an old John Wayne movie, I gave only sips at a time. I placed the 3 gallon pot in dappled sunlight on my back breezeway. I passed by her when I went in or out of the garden, or when I went to work and came home from work. That way I could keep a close eye on her recovery.



Days on end she just sat there. The bud eyes just sat there. The four little leaves stayed little, and just sat there. I concluded that no movement was not decline. She just sat there. After about three weeks, I began to increase the water. The summer was becoming dreadfully hot anyway and everything dried out from morning to evening. I sat a deeper pan under her to hold more water. Still she sat there. The bud eyes seemed slightly fatter, but the dry brittle stems were dryer, grayer, deader.

Just before Father's Day we went to Brenham to see the family. Candy has great rows of wonderful tender green beans growing in her vegetable garden. She sent fresh, home-grown young and tender green beans with me for Martin's Fathers Day meal. I snapped off the stem end as she taught me and saved them in a bag for burying in the flower garden.

Soon it was time for all the kids and grandkids to arrive with the fish-fry-feast they were preparing for their Dad. The dishes were done, the floor was swept, the tables were cleared, and there, sitting on the counter was the unsightly bag of green bean stems and pieces. I rushed outside into the blazing afternoon heat and on impulse, dumped them on top of the dirt around Cecile Bruner.

The next day I watered on top of them. In the following days they turned brown and I forgot them. Guess what? Apparently, Cecile liked her veggie mulch! She has a whole heart of new burgundy leaves. She is thriving. She is leafing out all over, almost ebulliently. Today, I went out to marvel and I thought I saw a bloom bud forming. I began to clean out some of the grass that came with her from Needville to Houston, and as the grass roots came out I saw the unmistakable curl of a little bean sprout.

When my daughter, Rebecca, called today we were comparing notes on our gardens and what's blooming. I told her the story of the Cecile Bruner Rose. She giggled and remarked, "It just goes to show you, everything has to eat its vegetables to grow up big and strong!"

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## Vintage Rosery Rescue T-Shirts

Join in our celebration of the remarkable rose rescue at the Vintage Rosery in May by buying one of the T-shirts commemorating this exciting accomplishment. Our Carolyn Stracik has designed this, and Becky Smith is our contact with the supplier. We will be selling these for cost: \$12. If you order right away, we should have them for the July meeting, otherwise we will do another order for the October meeting. You can pay when you pick yours up. Be sure to tell us what size you would like- S, M, L, XL. Send orders to me at fbickley@ykcwb.com. This is a fun way to remember this rescue.

~Faith



Here's a parting shot taken last spring at The Arbor Gate following Felder Rushing's presentation. Yes...that's a rose clenched in Felder's teeth!



## Is this your last issue??

Please check your address label. Your membership date is on the bottom right hand corner of the label. Dates in **bold red** are **past due**. Those dates which say F2008 with a yellow background are **due now**.

Please use this renewal form and mail it with your check to Don Gerard, 114 Buttercup Lane, Lake Jackson, TX 77566.

### *The Old Texas Rose* Newsletter of The Texas Rose Rustlers

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*We don't want to lose you and you won't want to miss any of the exciting issues of The Old Texas Rose, or Texas Rose Rustler Events so please renew today!*





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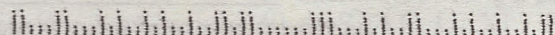
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*Mercer Arboretum*  
*Houston, TX*

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