

# **WATCH THIS LINE**

**M.S. Viraraghavan**

## **Rose Society of India Souvenir**

You may wonder why a heading from the world of advertising has got into a Rose Souvenir. This is merely to attract your attention – not to any product but the importance of breeding lines to rosarians. Good parent roses are like racehorses, and just as famous racehorses have sired many equally distinguished progeny, so also there are some great roses which have consistently produced winners.

Again, continuing the comparison with the world of racing, we should look for rose breeders who are in form, with that inspiration necessary to produce letter roses, if we are to decide which roses to buy.

If you ask me then, which are the rose breeders to watch, and what the breeding lines are they are concentrating upon, I would name two without any hesitation. They are Reimer Kordes of Germany, and his line starting with the Hybrid Tea (H.T.) 'COLOUR WONDER', and William Warriner of the firm of Jackson & Perkins, of USA, with his line starting from 'FIRST PRIZE'.

Many of you may have grown 'Colour Wonder', a rather globular and short growing H.T. with the parentage of 'Super Star' x 'Perfecta', though there is some doubt about this. When released in 1954 this rose hardly took the rose world by storm, though the color salmon orange with pale yellow reverse- was novel enough for that period. As I said earlier, the form was too globular and the growth too short for popularity. The only distinguishing feature of this variety was its beautiful shining, disease resistant foliage. But the breeder's eye in Kordes saw the hidden promise and persisted with creates in spite of many initial failures. In fact he has himself admitted that the first seedlings came in dull and muddy colors. But with persistence an entirely new line of disease resistant brightly colored roses were produced, which can be separated into basically two types – the yellows, and the oranges and bicolours.

Among the yellows, one of the earliest successes won 'Peer Gynt' ('Colour Wonder' x 'Golden Giant'), very full and disease resistant, which in turn produced many other yellows for e.g. 'Dutch Gold' ('Peer Gynt' x 'Whisky Mac')

Among the oranges we have varieties like the well known Grandiflora, 'Prominent' ('Colour Wonder' x 'Zerina'), the closely related reverse cross, Annabelle ('Kokina' x 'Colour Wonder'), and the bright vermillion, 'Anne Cocker'. Among the

H.T's can be mentioned the red and yellow bicolor, 'Freude' ('Fragrant Cloud' x 'Peer Gynt'), a variety of wonderful vigor and beautiful foliage, but making ungainly growth in our tropical warmth; and the much more recent 'Gallivarda' ('Colour Wonder' x 'Vienna Charm'), a rose of breathtaking brilliance- vivid orange red with bright yellow reverse. Two more in the line are the H.T. - salmon orange 'Harmonie', ('Fragrant Cloud' x 'Queen Elizabeth' x 'Colour Wonder'), and the All American Rose Selection (AARS) Grendiflora, 'Shreveport', ('Zorina' x 'Queen Elizabeth' x 'Colour Wonder').

Without cataloging note of the 'Colour Wonder' derivatives, what should be stressed is that this breeding line is one to watch as so many good roses have appeared even the peerless 'Folklore', considered the rose of the 70's may well be derived from this line, though the parentage is not given in full ('Fragrant Cloud' x unknown).

The other breeding line to watch is the line derived from 'First Prize', 'First Prize', which I am sure most of you are familiar with, is probably one of the most successful exhibition H.T's ever produced, with a complicated parentage involving seedlings of 'Golden Masterpiece', a well known yellow H.T., and 'Enchantment', a shell pink H.T.

'First Prize' was virtually one of the lat roses hybridized by the great American hybridist, E.S. Boerner. In fact, the variety was released after his death. Curiously enough, a somewhat taunting reference to Boerner's hybridizing work and his lack of success with H.T.'s was made by another equally prominent hybridizer just before Boerner' death He can only produce Floribundas, not Hybrid Teas".

The opportunity afforded by Boerner and his First Prize' was seized upon by his successor in Jackson & Perkins, William Marriner. A cross with the white H.T. White Masterpiece produced the peerless Pristine' its translucent shell pink beauty has fascinated rose growers throughout the world. In fact, today it is the USA's No. 1 Exhibition H.T., having displaced 'First Prize' from that position. One of the most beautiful white H.T.'s ever produced, the AARS winner, Honor' is presumably also derived from 'First Prize; though the parentage has not been given.

Another AARS winner, 'Apricot Brandy' ('First Prize' x 'Dr. Verhage') is also derived from this line though the raiser is not Warriner, but H.C. Swim. But clearly the 'First Prize' line, especially in the hands of an in form" rose breeder like Warriner is something to be watched.

So, to conclude, if you were to buy a new rest without an idea of its performance in your area, varieties derived from 'Colour Wonder' or 'First Prize' should be automatic choices.

Incidentally, we should also keep our eyes open for varieties raised by one of the youngest of USA's rose hybridizers, Christiansen, whose yellow line, starting with

the incredibly successful Grandiflora, 'Gold Medal', as well as the lilac line with a heavy emphasis on the AARS winner Floribunda, 'Angel Face', are well worth watching.

Humor has it that the great Sam MacGredy, having produced mainly Floribundas for a long time, is making a determined comeback into the world of H.T.'s with a new line of yellow H.T.'s much in advance of what we have now.

So watch the lines and buy your roses.