



*'Starberry' - Shrub;
Photo by Stephen Hoy*

Singularly Beautiful Roses

*A Publication Dedicated to Single,
Nearly Single, and Semi-Double Flowered Roses
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Sam McGredy's Hand-Painted Legacy

Another giant in the world of roses has passed – Sam McGredy IV (1932-2019). His great grandfather, Samuel McGredy I (1828-1903), left his position as head gardener of a large estate in 1880, rented ten acres of land, and started a market-garden business in Portadown, Northern Ireland. His son, Sam McGredy II, began breeding roses circa 1895 and would propel the family's name into international fame as both a breeder and exhibitor. Sam III assumed the reins upon his father's death in 1926 and insured that the McGredy name remained in the fore-front of the rose industry. An unanticipated disaster struck when he succumbed to a sudden heart attack in 1934 - Sam McGredy IV was then only two years old. Sam would eventually inherit the business in 1952, one that had in the interim been carefully and faithfully managed by his mother Ruth and her brother-in-law Walter Johnson.

A discussion of the roses he bred and introduced could veer off on any number of directions. It might begin with his first introduction in 1958 of 'Salute,' a semi-double red and yellow Floribunda. Another might be 'Orangeade,' a bright orange variety he called his first big success. Perhaps one might recall 'Anytime,' an unusually colored Miniature that Ralph Moore later used to create his "Halo" series. 'Sexy REXY' remains a popular exhibition Floribunda with its long-lasting, exuberant sprays. Hybrid Tea enthusiasts would surely bring up the vibrant red 'Olympiad' or the very fragrant 'New Zealand/Aotearoa,' named to commemorate the 150th anniversary of New Zealand's nationhood.

This narrative will, however, focus on a series of roses inadvertently derived from a general interest in adding winter hardiness and disease resistance to his breeding lines using a *R. roxburghii* seedling named 'Coryana' and the Kordes Hybrid Spinossisma 'Frühlingmorgen.' From the former, one red-flowered upright growing reblooming seedling ('Tantau's Triumph/Cinnabar' x 'Coryana,' 1956) was retained and eventually codenamed MACcortan. An 'Orange Triumph' x 'Frühlingmorgen' cross yielded a seedling whose flowers

were described as "dull pink with a marked white edge to each petal ("A Hand-Painted Family Tree," *Canadian Rose Annual*, 1978, p. 51)." It in turn was crossed with the scarlet, semi-double Floribunda, 'Evelyn Fison,' producing a unique red colored seedling that occasionally had a distinct white band at the edge of each petal. It was codenamed MACjose (1963). MACcortan and MACjose would become the foundation of a series of cultivars he dubbed his "hand-painted" roses.

'Frühlingmorgen' - HSpin;
Photo by Stephen Hoy



Sam McGredy IV





'Picasso' - FI; Photo by Himeno Rose Nursery

The first hand-painted seedling selected for commercial introduction ('Marlena' x MACjose) was entered into the Royal National Rose Society trial grounds at St. Albans and won a Certificate of Merit in 1970. The variety's chief attribute is the amazing color of its blooms. Each of its twenty or so irregularly blending to darker cherry red with a white base. The reverse is silvery white, enhancing the hand-painted look. The uniquely colored new rose required a special name. Sam contacted the internationally famous artist Pablo Picasso about naming the rose in his honor. Picasso's manager wrote back giving the OK, but the patent office refused to allow it because the artist had not personally signed the correspondence. Eventually the patent office accepted the manager's letter, and only later did Sam discover that Picasso never signed anything he wasn't legally required to autograph sold

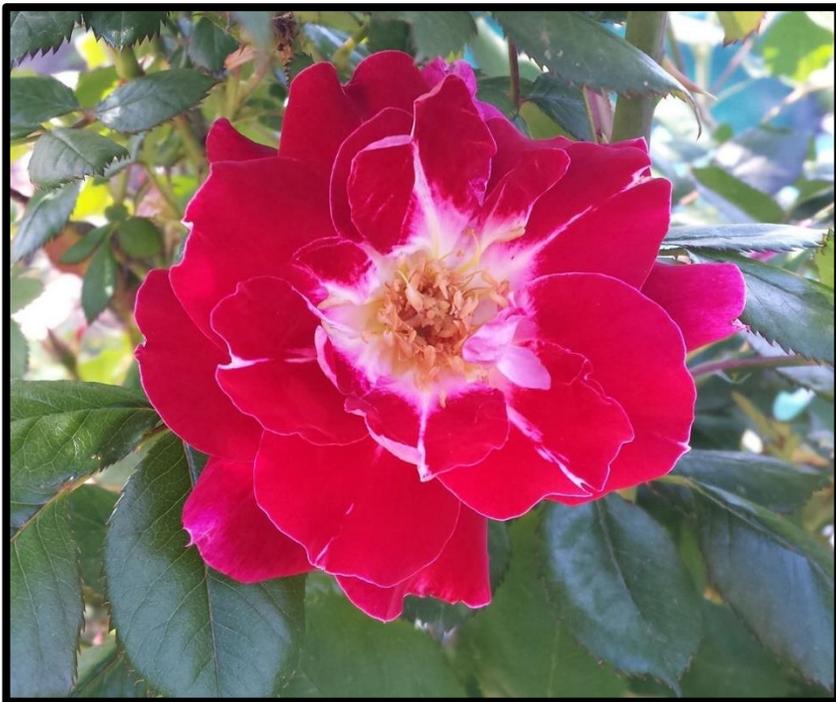
for \$10,000. The rose, 'Picasso,' introduced in 1971, would eventually win awards in Belgium's Kortrijk Rose Trials, in Belfast, and in New Zealand. With greater distribution it was discovered that the desirable hand-painted coloration was more dramatic in the cooler seasons of the year.

As 'Picasso' was making its way towards commercial introduction numerous seedlings with hand-painted "blood" were being evaluated in the McGredy greenhouses. However, the release of new varieties was delayed for several years. Ongoing conflicts in Northern Ireland resulting in the death of several friends and a number of trips to climate friendly New Zealand (including a 1971 visit for the very first World Rose Convention) prompted Sam to move the business to Auckland, New Zealand in 1972. [Ed. note; 70,000 people visited that first convention held in Hamilton, NZ. A very interesting video clip of the event, including a brief clip of Sam speaking, can be viewed at <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/roseworld-71-1972>.]

'M1974 saw the introduction of the next hand-painted cultivar, 'Matangi.' It resulted from a cross of a vigorous seedling featuring bright orange flowers with a prominent yellow eye, codenamed MACyeeye, and 'Picasso.' Its twenty or so petals are fiery vermilion or coral orange, depending on the weather, with narrow margins of white, a white center, and a startling white reverse. One early reviewer noted that it stood out like a neon sign in the garden. Its name came from a native folk song Sam heard performed by Maori operatic bass/baritone Inia Te Wiata. After moving to New Zealand, he discovered Matangi was also the name of a nearby village. From Maori to English the word is translated "gentle breeze." 'Matangi' was Sam's first important New Zealand introduction, winning not only a prestigious Certificate of Merit in New Zealand rose trials, but also the President's International Trophy in the U.K., gold medals in Rome and Bagatelle, and awards in Baden-Baden and Belfast.



'Matangi' - FI; Photo unattributed



'Old Master' - F; Photo by Damien

But then he received a letter from American grower Fred Edmunds relating that after offering it in limited quantities through his mail order nursery he was getting enthusiastic responses. The plant frequently produces large sprays of five-petaled flowers brilliantly colored orangish-red with a contrasting white eye highlighted by yellow stamens. It grows vigorously and blooms abundantly. 'Eyepaint' ('Eye Paint' here in the US) won awards in Copenhagen, Belfast, London, New Zealand, Japan, and Belgium and has an impressive list of progeny. Sam wrote, "There is no more arresting sight than a fully-grown plant absolutely covered in hundreds of blooms (*Look to the Rose*, p. 92)."

'Eye Paint' - F;
Photo by
Belle Epoque

'Eye Paint' was also
known as 'Tapis
Persan'
in Europe.
Translated -
"Persian Carpet."

Also introduced in 1974 was 'Old Master.' Sam created it using the pollen of one of MACjose's sister seedlings on 'Maxi,' a healthy red Floribunda with *R. kordesii* genes. 'Old Master' is a darker wine-red hand-painted rose with brushed markings of silvery white on the edges of its ten to fifteen petals, a white halo, and a white reverse. It is armed with thorns/prickles in abundance and has dark glossy foliage. Sam and many others have used it prolifically as both a pollen and seed parent. It won a Trial Ground Certificate in Great Britain in 1973, a Certificate of Merit in Rome in 1974, and a Certificate of Merit in New Zealand in 1976.

One year later Sam released a sister seedling of 'Matangi,' named 'Eyepaint.' He initially had little faith in its commercial viability due to the nursery trade's maxim "single roses don't sell."





Early in Sam's career he had named a rose for the wife of the chairman of Fisons of Great Britain – 'Evelyn Fison.' He repeated the honor for the next chairman and 'Priscilla Burton' was introduced in 1978. Its color may be the most chameleon-like of any of his hand-painted roses. Its two rows of petals can vary from pale pink to cream overlaid with brush-marks of plum red to solid ruby red with a white eye. In addition, there is striking circlet of maroon-red surrounding the base of the filaments. Sam listed 'Old Master' as the seed parent and a never-introduced-rose nicknamed "Brown Eye" as the pollen parent. In the latter's heritage is the very fragrant 'Elizabeth of Glamis,' which gives 'Priscilla Burton' a slightly higher fragrance profile than his other hand-painted roses. It is reportedly difficult to propagate, susceptible to black spot in humid climates, and might be considered a variety more suited for the collector. However, the rose won the President's International Trophy in Great Britain, a gold medal in Madrid, and a Certificate of Merit in New Zealand

A uniquely colored hand-painted introduction followed in 1979. Six years earlier he had put the pollen of 'Old Master' on 'Geoff Boycott,' a white Floribunda. Lipstick pink petals edged and streaked with white surround a white center highlighted with soft yellow stamens. Its low-growing habit is contrasted by clusters of rather large, lightly fragrant, four-inch flowers. At the request of a great friend and successful watercolor artist, Lotte Günthart, Sam named it after the Swiss village where she lived, 'Regensberg.' Sam considered it "extra free-flowering" and his best seedling out of 'Old Master.'

'Priscilla Burton' - Fl;
Photo by Sue Brown

'Priscilla Burton' - Fl;
Photo by Stephen Hoy

'Regensberg' - Fl;
Photo by Stephen Hoy

If one actually looks at the pages and pages of Sam's introductions some of his rose's nicknames reveal a measure of his sense of humor. For instance, "Donald Duck" appears as the pollen parent of 'Pandemonium,' and "Goofy" was 'Papageno's' greenhouse pseudonym [Ed. note; Papageno was a character from Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute/Die Zauberflöte* – Disney, McGredy, and Mozart forever linked!]. So, it might not be too surprising that Sam named a rose for that ruthless fighter of crime and mayhem – Mighty Mouse! A cross of 'Anytime' x 'Eye Paint' produced the 1980 introduction named 'Mighty Mouse.' Its ten to fifteen petals are orange-red with a white eye, and although somewhat smaller than those of its pollen parent, produced in profusion on a large plant. Its failure to win awards in either Great Britain or New Zealand may account for a general unfamiliarity with the variety.



'Mighty Mouse' - FI; Painting by Joyce Blake
From *Look to the Rose* by Sam McGredy



'Mighty Mouse' - FI; Photo Unattributed

'Sue Lawley' - FI; Photo by Gail Trimble

Another variety introduced in 1980 was 'Sue Lawley.' It was raised from a cross of the aforementioned "Brown Eye" x MACjose (one of 'Picasso's' parents). In color, it is scarlet to orange-red with the characteristic white margins, streaks, and eye. Frilly petal edges add to its allure. Sam reported that while being trialed at St. Albans the then Royal National Rose Society hosted a press day. Although on any given day a rose might not be at its best, the



rose, then known as MACspash (SPANish SHawl), was “just right.” A good deal of pressure was applied to hastily release it despite reservations on his part. It was given the name ‘Sue Lawley’ after a prominent British television personality and won the Gold Star of the Pacific award in New Zealand. Reportedly difficult to propagate and somewhat prone to black spot, this is probably another rose for the collector or the rose grower living in a relatively black spot free climate



‘Maestro’ - HT; Photo by U. Bordini

Inspiration for the next hand-painted introduction came from returning again to the cross from which ‘Picasso’ was raised (‘Marlena’ x MACjose). From that repeated cross he raised a seedling that gave him the most consistently white-edged rose so far and nicknamed “Spanish Town.” It crossed with “Brown Eye” gave him something he had been hoping for – a rose with passing Hybrid Tea form. It was named ‘Maestro’ as a nod to ‘Picasso,’ and released in 1981. Like ‘Priscilla Burton’ its color can vary widely. It might be described as barn red or paprika red with brush marks of pink, cream, or white. In hotter weather ‘Maestro’ may be deep scarlet without any white contrast except on the reverse of the petals. In Sam’s New Zealand garden, it grew vigorously and was highly resistant to powdery mildew and rust and was fairly black spot resistant as well. Comments in HMF’s profile indicate it had a vitality that allowed neglect. However, ‘Maestro’ had the misfortune of appearing at a time when what was acceptable as a Hybrid Tea was very narrowly defined and it succumbed to

CES – “catalog-elimination-syndrome.” If reintroduced today might it garner a greater following?

Sam had introduced a bright yellow Miniature named ‘Ko’s Yellow’ in 1979. He used pollen from ‘Eye Paint’ on it to produce ‘Little Artist,’ a red and white hand-painted mini introduced in 1982. Its ten or so petals deepen in color as the bloom ages. Additionally, the eye-catching blooms, foliage, and plant size appear in wonderful balance and proportion, a true mini. ‘Little Artist’ was used prolifically in Ralph Moore’s breeding program as well as by Sam. One of my favorite descendants is Sam’s ‘Marriotta,’ a striking, heavily petaled decorative mini that has recently experienced a revival of interest.

In 1984 Sam introduced another Miniature named ‘Ragtime.’ Its family tree has ‘Anytime,’ ‘Orangeade,’ ‘Picasso,’ and ‘Eye Paint’ in its heritage. In color, its twenty plus petals range from coral to red with white edges, similar to ‘Matangi.’ Australian and New Zealand rose growers praised it for its vivid color and considered it at its best as an



‘Little Artist’ - Min; Photo by Lyn Griffith



'Ragtime' - M; Photo by Georgina Campbell

prompting some to recommend treating it as a pillar rose. Further attributes include red-tinted new growth and a limited number of prickles. *Combined Rose List* co-author Peter Schneider pronounced it Sam's healthiest hand-painted variety. Backing that up are gold medals from the Royal National Rose Society and the Hague Rose Trials, a silver medal from the Glasgow Rose Trials, and a Certificate of Merit from the New Zealand Rose Trials.



'Redhot' - F; Photo by Stephen Hoy

open bloom. It was apparently not widely distributed outside New Zealand or Australia as it doesn't appear in any copies of *The Combined Rose List* that I have on hand. Please see a note about the individual that generously shared photos of the rose at the end of the article.

1988 saw the introduction of a rather tall growing hand-painted Shrub rose. Initially nicknamed "First Walk," Sam registered it as 'Rock & Roll (see NZ patent).' Its parentage includes Sam's great Floribunda, 'Sexy Remy,' x 'Maestro.' In Great Britain it was renamed 'Tango,' and upon being offered in the US it was once again renamed 'Stretch Johnson.' Whichever you are persuaded to call it, it is a sonic blast of color – its fifteen petals are scarlet to vermillion orange with creamy edges, a yellow eye, and a yellow reverse. It has an upright habit of growth, up to six feet,



'Stretch Johnson' - F; Photo by Henrique Vivian

That same year a smallish growing hand-painted rose was introduced named 'Redhot.' It is a sister seedling of 'Little Artist' ('Ko's Yellow' x 'Eye Paint') that has several more rows of petals and grows slightly larger. 'Redhot' (MACbigma/"Big Manly") is indeed "red-hot" with a white eye, white petal edges, and white reverse. Like other McGredy hand-painted roses the color is highly variable. It won a Certificate of Merit in New Zealand several years before its introduction.

The last rose on our list was not introduced until 1995. Named 'War Dance' it is a patio-type rose derived from a cross of 'Howard Morrison,' a dark red Hybrid Tea, x 'Sue Lawley.' Its single to semi-double blooms are rich ruby red with a pronounced white

center and emerge in clusters of three to five. It appears to primarily have been marketed in New Zealand and Great Britain. The name 'War Dance' hints at Sam's appreciation of and regard for Maori culture.

Do Sam's hand-painted roses have a place in the pantheon of roses that should be preserved? Certainly, the novelty factor meets the criteria. And despite possible short-comings in the crescendoing relevance of "disease resistance" there are climates where those factors are minimal. An effort to safeguard the heritage of McGredy roses is being made by a couple in New Zealand, Gary and Georgina Campbell (Georgina is the rose collector). A long-time heritage rose enthusiast, Georgina began organizing a collection of McGredy roses (among many others) at their farm, known as Cheops Garden. The McGredy Garden, just one of several on the farm, was officially opened by Sam McGredy himself in 2009. The collection continues to grow as hunted varieties turn up. Carry on!



'War Dance' - F; Photo by Alkonyat Rose Garden



*Cheops Garden, Hastings, New Zealand
Photo by Paul McGredie*

Descendants of Sam's Hand-Painted Roses



'Champagne Cocktail' - FI; Hyb. by Colin Horner
Photo by Jeri & Clay Jennings



'Laughter Lines' - FI; Hyb. by Pat Dickson
Photo by Stephen Hoy

'Modern Art' - HT; Hyb. by Niels Poulsen
Photo by Maurice Reybauld

'Pat Shanley' - HT; Hyb. by Viru Viraraghavan
Photo by Girija & Viru Viraraghavan





'Blastoff' - Fl; Hyb. by Ralph Moore
Photo by Sue Brown



'Wonderful News' - Min; Hyb. by Chris Jones
Photo by Kathy Strong

'The Lifeline Rose' - Fl; Hyb. & Photo by
Richard Walsh

'Jewel Box' - Min; Hyb. by Ralph Moore
Photo by Stephen Hoy





'Tootsie' - Fl; Hyb by Chris Greenwood
Photo by Justin Ekuan



'Picotee' - Patio; Hyb by Rob Somerfield
Photo by NZ Rose Society

'The Dahlia Rose' - Fl; Hyb by Ralph Moore
Photo Unattributed

'Peggy M' - Sh; Hyb by Paul Jerabek
Photo by Marina Parr



From the Editor

This issue is focused on many roses that have come and gone in our gardens. That brings to mind the issue of preservation and the growing difficulties associated with conservancy. Although this publication is dedicated to the heritage of the rose, I am also aware that there are individuals devoted to preserving heirloom vegetables, fruits, and ornamentals as well as regionally native perennials, shrubs, and trees. These pursuits require not only museum-like arboretums and botanical gardens but a commitment to maintaining heritage cultivars via the appropriate propagation strategies - seed collecting, division, rooting, and budding/grafting. To quote a famous lyric – “These are my people.” Three cheers to Georgina Campbell for preserving the McGredy rose heritage!

Several additional rose-related books were added to my collection during the research phase of writing this article about Sam’s roses. The first is *Look to the Rose*, written by Sam and wonderfully illustrated by Joyce Blake. In the forward Sam remarked, “My words would mean little without the magic of Joyce Blake’s brush (p. 10).” Her water color illustrations can be seen not only in Sam’s book, but also in *Joyce Blake’s World of Flowers* and *New Zealand is a Garden*. I happen to love water color as a medium and find her work very appealing! Next is *The Glory of the Rose* with text by Gottfried Boesch (translated by Susan McConachy) and water color illustrations by Lotte Günthart, the friend who suggested the name ‘Regensberg’ for one of Sam’s hand-painted introductions. The book is OVERSIZED, 12” x 18,” with illustrations virtually actual size. The text is accompanied by line-drawings in pencil and the amazing paintings are placed at the end of the book as a collection of individual color plates. A must-have for lovers of rose art.



‘Maestro’

Painting by Joyce Blake
From *Look to the Rose*



‘Salmon Spray’

Painting by Lotte Günthart
From *The Glory of the Rose*

*"There is pain in beauty at times -
The rose is proof."*

Sources

- 'Starberry' – Antique Rose Emporium
'Frulingsmorgen' – Greenmantle Nursery, widely available in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand
'Picasso' – Rogue Valley Roses, Palatine Roses
'Matangi' – Burlington Rose Nursery, available in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand
'Old Master' – Heirloom Roses, Rogue Valley Roses, Great Britain, and Australia
'Eye Paint' – widely available in Europe, and New Zealand
'Priscilla Burton' – Rogue Valley Roses
'Regensberg' – Burlington Rose Nursery, Rogue Valley Roses, Palatine Roses, widely available in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand
'Mighty Mouse' – not in commerce
'Sue Lawley' – not in commerce
'Maestro' – not in commerce
'Little Artist' – Burlington Rose Nursery, Burns Nursery, available in Europe
'Ragtime' – not in commerce
'Stretch Johnson' – Heirloom Roses, Rogue Valley Roses, widely available in Europe
'Redhot' – Northland Rosarium, Long Ago Roses
'War Dance' – available in Great Britain
'Champagne Cocktail' – Heirloom Roses, Rogue Valley Roses, available in Europe
'Laughter Lines' – not in commerce
'Modern Art' – available from Poulsen rose retailers
'Pat Shanley' – available in India
'Blastoff' – not in commerce
'Wonderful News' – available in Great Britain
'The Lifeline Rose' – available in Australia
'Jewel Box' – For Love of Roses, Rogue Valley Roses
'Tootsie' – Rogue Valley Roses
'Picotee' – available in New Zealand
'The Dahlia Rose' – Rogue Valley Roses
'Peggy M' – Freedom Gardens
'Marriotta' – Burlington Roses, For Love of Roses, Rogue Valley Roses

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Please feel free to share this newsletter with friends and fellow enthusiasts!

'Marriotta'
Min; Hyb. by Sam McGredy
Photo by Stephen Hoy

