



# Rose Garden Memories

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I sit alone behind the top tier of the Berkeley Rose Garden. The rest of the family is exploring other areas of this little-known haven on the outskirts of San Francisco, but there's a bench here that beckoned to me as a resting place and offered a breathtaking view of the Bay. We have been out since morning celebrating an occasion. My husband's birthday? Mother's Day? I can't remember which. Both occur in May, a good month to be born, a gracious month to celebrate mothers, and the best month to enjoy a rose garden in full bloom.

Whenever we're out for the day, we find a garden to relax and unwind in. Gardening is an essential element of life for the men in my life. For my husband, it's a passion; for my son, it's a profession. Memories of the two of them in our own garden in the home we no longer live in, my husband a young

man, my son a toddler, fill my mind and warm my heart as I sit here. I would watch from the kitchen window as Bobby trailed his Dad around the yard, mimicking his every move. When Dad knelt to weed the rose garden, Bobby knelt beside him. When Dad looked up into the branches of a tree, assessing the winter's damage, his hands behind his back, Bobby looked up, too, his hands behind his back. He once asked as they stood there gazing above, "Daddy, what are we looking at?"

When my daughter was not much more than a toddler, my husband's garden was a special place for her too. She would wander among the new springtime blooms, deciding which she would pick, then gather them into a small nosegay that she clutched in hands hardly big enough to hold it, and climb the steps back up to the kitchen door and present



it to me. One day, I was at the door when I heard her rehearsing what she and I would say when she gave me the flowers. “I’ll say, ‘These are for you, Mommy.’ And she’ll say, ‘Amy, how did you know? That’s just what I wanted!’”

I ran back into the kitchen and waited for her knock. When I opened the door, she thrust the little bouquet at me and said, “These are for you, Mommy.” Feigning great surprise, I exclaimed, “Amy! How did you know? That’s just what I wanted!” I have received many elaborate gifts of flowers in my life but none have meant more to me than those ragged little bunches picked by little hands.

We’ve moved far away from that house where two young children were raised in a garden grown by their father. Their love of nature’s beauty took root there. It continues to bloom.



The rose garden I rest in now is in the shape of an amphitheater. There are five descending rows of roses in bloom, each row containing a variety of hues—pink, orange, white—as if the seeds were sprinkled from a heavenly hand and allowed to mix and match at will.

At the bottom of these floral rows is a stone medieval-looking fountain. My family is gathered around it. They look up, and wave to me.

Many years have gone by since my husband was a young man and my son a boy, but gardening is still a mainstay in their lives. My husband lovingly tends his collection of potted plants on our apartment balcony. My son is chief horticulturist at San Francisco’s Botanical Gardens. When he looks up into the branches of a tree now, he knows what he is looking at. In our later years, my husband’s private garden has been replaced by my son’s public park.

That’s where we go now to breathe in the serenity of this grassland in the middle of a vibrant city. That’s where we go for solace in sad times, where we all gathered to plant a magnolia tree in memory of my granddaughter, tamping its fragile roots with water and tears. That’s where my husband and I go just to sit on a bench in a secluded foliage nook, soothed by its ethereal beauty. It comforts us to know that our son had a hand in creating the beauty that surrounds us. 

