

COMING UP ROSES - FLOWERS A PASSION FOR JACOBS

Dolly Parton – full-figured, sweet-smelling and pretty – lives in a wagon in front of Bob Jacobs' home on Seminole Way. Julia Child sits just a few feet away. Out back, visitors experience an Awakening when they enter Jacobs' colorful garden, where Don Juan – another one of Jacobs' 295 rose bushes – peeps into a neighbor's yard. "When you show (such roses in competition), you have to have the name" of them clearly marked and spelled right, Jacobs said as he stood near Blueberry Hill, Sexy Remy and Incognito.

Jacobs is serious about his rose growing. At one time, he had 350 rose bushes, but said he cut back because of his age. Now, at 69, he's an American Rose Society consulting rosarian who teaches others how to grow roses and protect them. He's a member and past president, with his wife, Ann, of the Bowling Green Rose Society. Jacobs will attend the Bowling Green Rose Society Rose Show, of which he is co-chairman, from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. June 3 and 4 at Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

For years, he's taught rose-growing classes through Community Education. Kathy Dodson, president of the Bowling Green Rose Society, said Jacobs is an expert rose grower. "He's taught me so much and his garden is inspirational," she said. "The way it's laid out, there are so many roses in that back yard, when you walk in you think you're in heaven."

Jacobs often shares his roses with strangers he sees walking through his back yard and ogling his flowers. He takes roses to doctors offices, banks and Bowling Green Christian Church, which he and Ann attend. But growing roses isn't his only hobby. The retired police officer for the University of Illinois is an avid photographer, who was thrilled to pull his copy of "Outdoor Photographer" out of his mailbox Thursday. "I put my youngest daughter through college doing wedding photography," he said.

Jacobs developed his photography skills as a crime scene photographer and state certified crime scene technician for the University of Illinois. Through his police work, he attended many photography schools, including one run by the FBI. Many times Jacobs shot murder scenes. Shooting a wedding was a lot like a crime scene, he said, because "you only got one chance" to get a good photo. Jacobs grew up on a farm in St. Joseph, Ill. As a child, he always thought he'd be a farmer, but decided in high school he'd like to teach agriculture. He spent one year at the University of Illinois before discovering he and teaching "weren't going to get along," he said. So he dropped out of college and worked for Coca-Cola.

At 19, he married Ann, 17. "We're one of those marriages they say will never work" because the bride and groom are too young, Jacobs said. But he and Ann were devoted to each other. This



year, they'll celebrate their 50th anniversary. "He's a very nice, good husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather," Ann said. Jacobs says Ann has kept their marriage strong. "I don't know what I'd do without her." Together, the couple have three children, Sally Thomas and Steven Jacobs, who live in Bowling Green, and Cindy Wernighk, who lives in Illinois.

When his children were growing up, Jacobs was a police officer. He said he took the job after seven years with Coca-Cola because he wanted a career change and needed job security. But he soon found out he loved the work "because of the people you get to meet. "You could say you were on a first-name basis with the president of the University of Illinois," he said. Once, he provided security for dignitaries from Israel.

But things weren't always such fun on the job. "I was there for the Vietnam War riots," Jacobs said. "We were there in the '70s when there was upheaval over civil rights." After 30 years, Jacobs retired from the force. He'd had two friends killed in the line of duty and felt grateful that he'd never been hurt. "So I thought I'd get out," he said with a smile.

In 1990, Jacobs and Ann moved to Bowling Green to be closer to Thomas and her family. Now, Jacobs loves Bowling Green. "We like to travel, but we still have liked this area better than any we've been in," he said.

In addition to working with his roses and doing photography, Jacobs works part-time here for Comstar Systems, installing fire alarm systems and doing other duties. But he says he will never work on Fridays because Ann, who works part-time at an insurance company, is always off on that day. "We just enjoy being together," Jacobs said.

He also loves being with his children and grandchildren, who have helped him in the rose garden that Ann has filled with many whimsical touches. "Family comes first," Jacobs said simply. But he and Ann still make time for travel. This summer, they're going to Idaho, Washington and Oregon, the only three states they haven't seen. While Jacobs is excited about the trip, on which he'll take lots of photographs, he'll be glad to come back home.

"This is our little oasis out here," he said as he sat on a patio that overlooks his rose garden. "We come out to have a cup of coffee and see weeds that need to be pulled or roses that need to be dead-headed and the next thing you know we're up pulling. It's hard to just sit. ... To me it's not work. I can piddle at my own pace and it's relaxing."

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