The Sorry Garden (Best Of)

Portland, Ore. is officially recognized as the Rose City and Wasco, Calif. claims to be “the Rose Capitol of the World.” But I’m here to tell you there are more rose bushes per acre in Gardnerville, Nev. than anywhere I’ve ever been.

Unlike the roses in Portland or Wasco, the ones in Gardnerville are not grown commercially. You see, Chris and Faye have an unwritten agreement that whenever they work cattle together and Chris yells at his wife for something that was not her fault, she gets to retaliate by purchasing a rose bush or two. The number of plants depends on the severity of the attack.

That’s why everything is coming up roses in Gardnerville.

It really irks Chris when Faye wastes their hard earned money on something as frivolous as flowers. And you would think that alone would serve as a deterrent. But over the years, Faye has planted about 640 acres in roses, I think, and her plot of beautiful roses has since become known far and wide as “The Sorry Garden.” As in... “I’m SORRY dear. I’ll never yell at you again, dear.”

When you ponder the rose, the most beautiful of all flowers, it is entirely fitting that Faye chose that posy to remind the two love birds of their cherished moments together. As we all know, the rose blossom seldom blooms and to pluck the flower you must risk getting pricked by the ever-present thorns. If that description is not symbolic of married life I don’t know what is.

In Faye’s garden there are roses on trellises, roses pruned as trees and roses creeping on the ground. When you walk The Sorry Garden with Faye she calls your attention to the various varieties as if she were a botanist.

Only instead of referring to their genus and species she says things like, “I got that ruddy rose the time we were branding a bunch of cows in the chute and I accidentally branded Chris in the thigh. He had such a hard time keeping a lid on his can of cuss words that day. It’s such a beautiful rose don’t you think?”

“Beautiful,” I sincerely replied. “Do you plant them in the Spring?”

“Not necessarily,” said Faye. “Just whenever we work cattle together.”

“Isn’t that an American Beauty?” I asked as we strode through the garden.

“It sure is,” responded Faye, warming to her subject. “It is such a strong reminder of all the loveliness in this world of ours... and the time Chris jumped on my horse to catch a wayward cow. In his haste he failed to realize that I had loosened my cinch to give my horse a break. I swear, Chris laid on the ground bellering like a newly made steer and the air was colored with the fragrance of roses... and my husband’s language.”

“This pink beauty,” said Faye, “was planted the day we were castrating bulls in the chute. My job was to hold their tails above their backs so they could not kick Chris who was bent down behind them to get closer to his work. I accidentally lost my grip on a tail and poor Chris was as helpless as a cow in quicksand. It was not a pretty picture.”

“I get the picture,” I said, having experienced a similar scenario myself. “I see there are some new plantings.”

“That’s very observant,” said Faye. “Just last week we were working cattle together and Chris was in a particularly sour mood. The biscuits I made for breakfast were hard, the veterinarian was late, the cows were cantankerous and I seemed never to be in the right place at the right time. Nothing went well and I became the focal point of my husband’s derision once again. Chris yelled at me so much that day I took the 24 foot gooseneck to the nursery!”