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# udolf Geschwind

Erich Unmuth

*I*t took more than a century before one of Rudolf Geschwind's roses brought him the honor he deserved. GRUSS AN TEPLITZ, which he launched in 1897, was nominated for the Hall of Fame in the Old Garden Rose category of the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS) in 2000. A rose with a complex ancestry, GRUSS AN TEPLITZ is still one of the best strongly scented red shrub roses.

Complex ancestry is one of the surprising aspects of most of Geschwind's creations. In his book, *Die Hybridation und Sämmlingszucht der Rosen, ihre Botanik, Classification und Cultur nach den Anforderunge der Neuzeit* (Leipzig: H. Voigt, 1885), Geschwind tried for the first time in the history of rose breeding to lay down the practical and theoretical problems that occur in the process of creating new rose varieties. Written around the same time that his countryman Gregor Mendel was formulating "Mendel's Law," the foundation of our genetic knowledge, Geschwind's work, which was not published until 1885, was revolutionary. Most breeders of the period used two famous roses to try to create a new variety that would surpass its parents. Geschwind clearly propounded what is now widely known: it is just pure luck if the merits of both parent varieties are passed to the next generation and not their weaknesses; the latter qualities usually predominate.

When Geschwind, an educated forester born in Hrdle, now



LEFT: Areana (El Areana, Ariana)  
RIGHT: Gruss an Teplitz.  
Photos by Erich Unmuth.

Czechia (the Czech Republic), in 1829, began hybridizing roses as well as cucumbers, pelargoniums, fruit trees, and forest trees in the 1850s, most roses being bred were the result of crosses between Hybrid Perpetuals or between the early Hybrid Teas. Lacking hardiness, many of these “sensational new roses” fell victim to disease and vanished after a few years. To combat this, Geschwind proposed using Species roses as parents because of their natural resistance to disease and cold.

In 1865 he introduced his first rose into commerce—PREMIER ESSAI, a hybrid of *Rosa roxburghii*. Like the famous French breeders Vibert and Descemet, with its breeding he followed the principles of heredity. But unlike the French, he was the first, in my opinion, to use an extensive number of formerly unknown or neglected Species roses.

In his own garden, Geschwind collected more than one hundred different species and succeeded in crossing them with Teas and Noisettes, which he cultivated in pots as the Czech climate made cultivation outdoors extremely difficult. He even cultivated one of the parents of GRUSS AN TEPLITZ, an unnamed seedling cross of SIR JOSEPH PAXTON (Laffay, 1852) with FELLEMBERG (unknown, 1857), for nearly twenty years as a potted plant before using it to breed his famous red rose.



Geschwind frequently crossed several subspecies of *Rosa canina* with Tea roses, especially with FORTUNE'S DOUBLE YELLOW, then widely known as BEAUTY OF GLAZENWOOD. Those crossings led to a fabulous series of more than twenty varieties with *R. canina* in their ancestry. The Canina hybrids CRÈME, GRISELDIS, FREYA, and WALKÜRE still impress us with their remarkable abundance of flowers every year.

Other Species that Geschwind favored were the CHESTNUT ROSE—*R. roxburghii*, and *R. setigera*, *R. rugosa*, *R. beggeriana*, and *R. californica*. From *R. setigera* he achieved several hardy large-flowered climbers with blooms of extraordinary colors. Fortunately some of them are now becoming more admired and, like ERINNERUNG AN BROD, are experiencing a new popularity. But others—EURYDICE, FORSTMEISTERS HEIM, TROMPERTER VON SÄCKINGEN, VIRAGO, CORPORAL JOHANN NAGY, and OVID—ought to be more widely grown.

In 1996 at Professor Fineschi's Roseto di Cavriglia, I found two gigantic old specimens of EURYDICE and FORSTMEISTERS HEIM growing almost side by side in the section of the Setigera hybrids. Neither I nor those with me will ever forget that sight. And one of us, Mrs. Hella Brumme, former director of the Europarosarium Sangerhausen, said, “Most of all we need these two roses.”

Among the roses Geschwind created with *R. rugosa* were SCHNEELICHT, a pure white-flowered, strongly armed shrub, and the very unusual purple-blooming, almost indestructible climber called HIMMELSAUGE. By crossing *R. roxburghii* with *R. beggeriana* Geschwind got hardy hybrids with climbing growth. Further crossbreeding led him to a series of roses he called Nordlandrosen—hardy roses for the North. The most popular variety of this series is GESCHWIND'S NORDLANDROSE NR. I. Its silvery pink flowers which appear a second time on older specimens in autumn are in my view unique among roses. From *R. californica*, Geschwind bred THEANO, a variety that was for years regarded as a synonym for *R. californica plena*. Comparing both roses in the world-famous collections at Sangerhausen or Roseto di Cavriglia, one can easily verify that they are different roses.

Another important rose in Geschwind's breeding was DE LA GRIFFERAIE (Vibert, 1845), which displays traits of Multiflora and Gallica. The best Geschwind roses with DE LA GRIFFERAIE as an ancestor are ERNST DÖRELL, ERLKÖNIG, MERCEDES, and NYMPHE TEPLA.



LEFT: Nordlandrose. Photo by Erich Unmuth.

ABOVE: Portrait of Rudolf Geschwind. Engraving courtesy of Erich Unmuth.



The following roses are of such a particular character that they don't fit into any of the groups already described. ASTA VON PARPART, a repeat blooming climber, shows the strong influence of *R. glauca*. PRINZ HIRZEPINZCHEN is a climber whose blood red flowers fade to an almost true blue, and GESCHWIND'S SCHÖNSTE is a climber with bright red blooms that flow-ers for a long time.

Beside these climbers there are some inter-esting smaller roses—the dark red Hybrid Tea WENZEL GESCHWIND and “MAGGIE,” a rose that seems to be very familiar to Ameri-can rose lovers. I got this rose about 15 years ago from a Texan friend as a mystery rose, perhaps identical to a lost Geschwind rose called EUGENIE E. MARLITT, which was intro-duced in the United States in 1908. Compar-ing it over the years with numerous roses in the Sangerhausen and Caviglia collections, Martin Weingart identified it as JULIUS FABI-ANICS DE MISEFA, a rose that does very well in cold areas like Sweden as well as in the hot climate of Texas.

From the many articles Geschwind wrote, we do have a rather precise impression of his work. By the end of 19th century he was rais-ing around five thousand rose seedlings a year, and his collection included more than six thou-sand of his own hybrids. He offered unnamed seedlings in packages of 10s, 50s and 100s, but sadly we don't know who bought these roses. But since there is some evidence that Geschwind sold unnamed seedlings to other nurseries throughout Europe and the United States, further rediscoveries may be possible.

LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Parkzierde, Asta von Parpart, Zigeunerknabe. Middle and bottom photos by Ron Robertson. All others by Erich Unmuth.

TOP RIGHT: Geschwind's Orden  
RIGHT: Griseldis

Some roses were sold to Peter Lambert (ZIGEUNERKNABE and PARKZIERDE) and to J. C. Schmidt (HIMMELSAUGE, SCHNEELICHT, and THEANO) and are still attributed to them.

Geschwind bred roses for nearly 50 years. He died in the summer of 1910 in Krupina (now in Slovakia). The last entry in his diary, written barely a month be-fore his death was “. . . hybridizing with God's help finished.” As far as I know only one important breeder, Jacques Vignerou, worked as long.





After Geschwind's death, his roses were moved to the rosarium of his patron Marie Henriette Chotek in Dolná Krupá in what is now Slovakia. Chotek was also an important early patron of Sangerhausen, but with the beginning of World War I a steady decline of her once famous collection began. After the economic depression of the 1930s and then World War II, not one rose survived in Dolná Krupá. Only 35 years after his death, the complete heritage of Rudolf Geschwind was lost.

In the 1990s, stocktaking at European collections revealed that different roses had survived at L'Haÿ, Cavriglia, and Sangerhausen. That spurred me on to help Sangerhausen and Cavriglia to complete their collections of Geschwind roses. Through the active help of two nurseries—Loubert of Les-Rosiers-sur-Loire, France, and Weingart of Bad Langensalza, Germany, rose lovers around the world now have access to most of the Geschwind roses that have survived.

But the search for lost roses bred by Geschwind goes on. Norwegian rose friends recently discovered that a rose called AREANA, which is very common in the region around Bergen, South Norway, actually is thought to be the lost Lutea hybrid EL AREANA. They found documents stating that it was imported in 1916 from the nursery of Peter Lambert to a nursery in Norway and there it survived as a mystery rose, undiscovered for nearly eighty years.

Apart from the large collections in Sangerhausen and Cavriglia, some smaller collections preserve Geschwind's remaining hybrids. Good collections are to be seen at Zvolen, Slovakia, and Baden, Austria. In the extensive collection of Raymond and Thérèse Loubert in France, Rudolf Geschwind's roses are playing an important role. Here visitors can easily recognize their unique character and exceptional beauty.

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ERICH UNMUTH was born in 1954 in Vienna, Austria, where he still lives and works as an IT consultant. Interested in nature, plants, and gardening since childhood, he was early on especially attracted by roses for their diversity and beauty. He has been collecting roses for nearly thirty years and in his garden focuses on old garden roses, Species, and climbers. As time permits, he engages in research on roses and their breeding in Middle-Europe.

## Profile: Martin Weingart

Erich Unmuth

Martin Weingart studied horticulture in Berlin and completed a course of practical training at the Europarosarium Sangerhausen. He has run a nursery in his hometown of Bad Langensalza, Germany, since the early 1990s. It is located in the area known as Ufhoven, which has a tradition of rose growing established nearly a hundred years ago. One of the wonderful Rubiginosa hybrids of Wilhelm Kordes, ROSENDORF UFHOVEN from 1949, is a reminder of that heritage. Louis Rödiger, mayor of Bad Langensalza before World War II, was immortalized by Kordes, who named an orange-pink Macrantha hybrid for him in recognition of Rödiger's support of the rose industry of Bad Langensalza, which became known as the *Rosenstadt*, or city of roses.

During the nearly 15 years Martin Weingart has run his nursery, the number of varieties he propagates has steadily increased. Last season the nursery offered more than 1,000 varieties, many of them not sold anywhere else in the world. Martin's focus goes beyond old garden roses; his goal is to offer *good* roses. Knowing Sangerhausen's collection so well, he wonders why so many valuable roses are grown only by specialists or are hidden in a few historical collections. Who, for instance, has seen FERNAND KRIER, a sport of EXCELSA with red and white flowers? Or SOUVENIR DE ADOLPHE CHARVOIK, a strong-growing Wichurana hybrid with recurrent bloom?

Martin's primary goal is to sell only first-quality roses, correctly named. Sometimes his customers must wait an extra season if the plants don't meet his high standards. He buds on selections of *Rosa canina* 'INERMIS,' *R. rubiginosa*, and *R. corymbifera* 'LAXA.' The nursery produces between 20,000 and 30,000 plants each year. They are shipped worldwide as bare-root plants, and are for sale as well through the summer as potted plants at the nursery.



TOP LEFT: Geschwind's *Schönste*.  
Photo by Erich Unmuth.

LEFT: Martin Weingart, left, with Erich Unmuth