



# *A Rose Named Peace*

*by Susan Wroble*

BARBARA CARROLL ROBERTS was sitting with fellow students at Hamline University during a break between classes. "You know how you can never visit one of your old homes," one student remarked. "The new people have always changed something."

"I know," Barbara said. "At my old house, they dug up the 'Peace' roses."

"What are 'Peace' roses?" another asked. Barbara knew the basic facts – that the 'Peace' rose had been created in France just before World War II. That the plant was saved by being mailed out just before the country was invaded, and that this rose had become one of the world's most beloved flowers. That was enough for the other students. They were all part of Hamline's Master of Fine Arts in Writing for Children and Young Adults program. They knew a great story when they heard it, and they convinced Barbara to write it.

Barbara started researching. She quickly learned that the hybridizer was Francis Meilland. She reached out to his grandson, Matthias Meilland, at Meilland International in France who recommended a book about the history of the family. Beth Smiley, the Publications Director at ARS, gave her several articles that helped Barbara get started with information she could trust.

Barbara found that Francis Meilland was a teenager when he first saw a brand-new rose in a neighboring town, and he was hooked. It took years of hybridizing before he began having success. In 1939, he invited rose growers to look at his new offerings, and there was one they all loved. But their meeting was tinged with worry, as they knew that war was looming.

Before the Germans invaded, Francis sent cuttings of that incredible rose, then named 3-35-40 (the third cross of 1935 and the 40th plant to grow from seeds of that cross), to his rose growing friends around the world. The Meilland family knew that their land would be needed to grow food



for the French soldiers. They dug up their 20 thousand rosebushes – and burned them.

In the U.S., Francis had sent 3-35-40 to Robert Pyle. Robert grew cuttings of the rose at his planting beds in Pennsylvania, then shipped it to friends around the country, where it continued to thrive. With mail service to France cut off during the war, Robert didn't even know whether his friend Francis was alive. But he filed a U.S. Patent on the rose in Francis's name. And in April of 1945, in a ceremony in California marking the German surrender, he named the rose after the world's greatest desire: Peace.