

# CHANCELLOR'S ROSE GARDEN

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA'S IRVINE CAMPUS

By Joseph W. Foraker

The idea for a Chancellor's Rose Garden on the University of California's Irvine campus was conceived in the fall of 1995. Two students, both seniors, wanted to provide leadership for a memorable project that would be a permanent campus fixture. They came to me because they knew of my involvement with other campus outreach programs. After examining a list of potential projects, our immediate consensus was to create a large, formal rose garden.

Getting approval for a rose garden of our proposed dimensions meant going through many layers of a bureaucracy. The two university officials who could have helped us with approval were not rose devotees. Both readily admitted that their attempts to grow roses at their homes had failed. They had strong feelings that such a rose garden would not be appropriate for the Irvine campus.

The prospects for a garden continued to be discouraging until a grounds supervisor provided a subtle suggestion. He revealed that within a week the university chancellor would be chairing a public meeting, where current and future campus projects are reviewed. He suggested that we use an opportunity to speak when members of the audience are asked near the end of the meeting for comments and/or suggestions.

Chancellor Laurel Wilkening was flanked by the two close associates who had already vetoed our project. When our opportunity to speak arrived, I quickly introduced the student leaders and got right to the point: "Chancellor Wilkening, we (students, staff, and faculty) propose the creation of a beautiful rose garden that will be a campus focal point. UCLA, USC, and CAL Tech have lovely rose gardens, but ours will be the most beautiful campus rose garden in Southern California. We will raise the funds and provide labor for this ambitious project. We propose that this special garden be designated "The Chancellor's Rose Garden".

Chancellor Wilkening, smiling broadly, quickly clasped her hands together and exclaimed, "How wonderful! I accept on behalf of the university!" Our project was approved on the spot by executive order. Within days, several vice chancellors and deans of various schools had pledged more than \$8,000 to the project. By December our account had reached \$14,000. This amount would cover an irrigation system, landscaping, concrete walkways, rose bushes, planting mix, and other expenses. We soon started shopping for rose bushes.

The location selected for the garden is directly across the street from the Administration Building, and adjacent to the Barclay Theater. Thick turf covered the entire area, so it had to be peeled off as sod. We invited people to help themselves to the rolled up sod, but the demand did not begin to equal the supply. Six huge dumpsters were loaded with sod and moved to a landfill on a distant corner of the campus.

The weather became a serious threat when January through March proved to be one of the wettest seasons of all times. Between rains we designed the garden. Civil engineering students used their surveying instruments to make certain our circular area

was divided into four reasonably equal sections. All rows would be parallel and 36 inches apart, and 36 inches would also separate each rose in a row. The first rose in every other row was to be placed 18 inches forward to give each adjacent rose plenty of growing room.

We had been purchasing bare-root roses three dozen at a time. As the collection grew, we were forced to start planting bushes in 12 inch peat pots. By late February, rose bushes in their peat pots filled nearly every square inch of my back patio. And the rains continued. Finally, in mid March, we had an opportunity to start the garden, but digging the holes was a major task. The manager of building and grounds took pity on us and provided one of college tractors with a power-driven, 24inch auger to finish the task. I used bright orange spray paint to mark where each hole was to be reamed out. Within an hour after this task was completed, the rains started another long cycle.

On April 15, we were finally ready to move the roses to their destination. The university's vehicle pool gave me permission to use its huge moving van to haul the potted roses from my patio in Mission Viejo to the garden site. About 45 students who attended my earlier "planting seminar" were waiting when the van arrived. We quickly organized the rose bushes by species on the sidewalk in front of the garden. Up to four students would pick up a designated potted bush and follow me to a specific location.

We clustered *Double Delight* and *Chicago Peace* at the entrance to the Barclay Theater. *Tournament of Roses* and *Singin' in the Rain* would greet visitors at another entrance. *Ole* and *Pascali* encircled the hub of the garden, while *Livin' Easy*, *Apricot Nectar*, and *Allspice* dazzle those walking along the street side of the garden. *Fragrant Cloud*, *Oklahoma* and *Just Joey* are within easy sniffing distance of the crosswalks. Supervising this operation was much like directing a symphony. Other volunteers carried tubs filled with planting mix to each site. Four hours later the Chancellor's Rose garden was home to 365 rose bushes, representing 92 different species.

The rose garden has fulfilled our prophecy. We constantly receive emails, phone calls, and letters expressing gratitude for our efforts. Each June hundreds of graduates in caps and gowns, accompanied by families and friends, choose the garden for picture taking. During the blooming season, buses from the many retirement homes in the area bring residents to enjoy the sights and scents. The walkway from the Irvine Marketplace crosses Campus Street and brings more than 25,000 people each week to the campus, providing a breathtaking view of the garden. Patrons from the Irvine Barclay Theater rush to view the garden before performances and then return for another visit during intermissions and after the concert.

Future additions to the garden will include benches, two entryway arbors, and a circulating fountain. Ideally, a benefactor with deep pockets will endow the garden and provide a perpetual living memorial for someone who had a love affair with roses. With proper care, the Chancellor's Rose Garden will be around to welcome the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century.