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**Conversations with Dr. John Pottschmidt
Hybridizer for 2008 AARS Winning Rose Dream Come True**

Story by: **Will Funk** - Photos by: **Gene Sasse**

For the past 25 years Dr. John Pottschmidt has had what he calls a hobby. The retired physician not only likes to grow roses, he likes to create them as well. Dr. Pottschmidt is one of only a few amateur rose hybridizers to win recognition from the All-America Rose Selections committee with his rose Dream Come True. For the doctor winning this award after his quarter century labor of love, it has been a dream come true.

This is no trivial hobby for Dr. Pottschmidt. He creates about 5,000 new varieties each year which requires the planting of 30,000 seeds. Although a small fraction of the number of "crosses" tried by Weeks Roses each year, this is a mighty endeavor for a single person. But when you talk with this witty gentleman from Ohio you get the sense that he would try more combinations each year if he could. He describes that during his tenure in the garden he continues to learn smarter ways to increase his chances of creating award-winning roses.



Dr. Pottschmidt doesn't seem to fancy a particular color of rose, he looks more for characteristics. Repeat blooming (at least four times a year), fragrance and disease resistance (noting black spot is a problem in his area) are all in the mix. However, what makes this man so good at what he does is that he seeks qualities that others would miss. The doctor doesn't simply grow roses he cherishes them.



As he describes the process of a bud slowly unfurling to open maybe a third of the in the garden before being clipped and brought inside to enjoy, you sense that just because he has thousands of roses in his yard at any time he still makes time to take pleasure in a single flower. The adoration is not in the number or roses for him, it's in the beauty of each rose.

Another passion apparent as he talks is his desire to share roses with others. He feels that perhaps many potential rose gardeners have become afraid of the plant because of the perceived maintenance issues. The doctor gives advice on starting small, "Plant three roses in ten gallon pots," he suggests. He believes that once people see just how stunning the display can be from this low-maintenance project that they will continue to add more roses to their garden. Dr. Pottschmidt wants new gardeners to, "Get the rewards," that we receive from the season-long blooms of roses. Perhaps this is good advice from someone who has managed to expand his garden exponentially over the past several decades

What grows in the good doctor's garden? Mostly his own creations. He develops his potential roses by using classifications that metaphorically follow the career of an up-and-coming baseball player. His new roses start in little league. Those that make the cut advance to minor league and into larger containers as well. Approximately 300 roses make the first transition. The young roses that didn't make the grade are discarded



because they may be prone to disease, have poor coloration or some other negative trait.

From the minor leagues another selection is made with the heavy hitters, once again going into larger containers, and into the major leagues. The best of these become All-Stars. If one of his All-Stars is selected to enter the All-America Rose Selections trials it becomes a Most Valuable Player. And with Dream Come True winning AARS accolades Dr. Pottschmidt now has, in his words, a Hall of Fame category rose. Indeed this is a worthy comparison with only a few roses or baseball players reaching this level each year. In fact over the past ten years there have been only 32 AARS winning roses yet over 40 people inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.



In addition to his own roses Dr. Pottschmidt also enjoys some of Weeks Roses varieties as well. Two of the roses he is particularly fond of also carry AARS winning titles. The buttery gold Julia Child is high on the doctor's list as is red and white climber Fourth of July.

Now that Dr. John Pottschmidt has a "Hall of Fame" rose is he interested in resting on his laurels? Not a chance. In fact when describing his future plans related to hybridizing projects he changes sports to hockey. Now Dr. Pottschmidt is in search of two more AARS winners to complete a hat trick!