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Stop and Smell the Flowers

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Flowers

Grace E. Spiro

I cannot remember a time where I did not love flowers.

When I was a little girl, I lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a place teeming with colorful and eclectic flora and fauna alike. It was dubbed The Land of Enchantment in 1999 because of its bright and bold deserts, snow-capped mountains, towering forests and bounties of flowers above ground and gemstone deposits below. These were magnificent and never far from me, but my favorite things were the wildflowers.

I remember being on my mother's lap in a wide field one afternoon as she dutifully plucked different flowers from the ground and placed them in my hands and my hair, only for me to inspect for a moment before stuffing into my shallow pockets. Red snapdragons, pink desert willows, dainty white fleabanes, and tiny purple yarrows had all seen the linings of my clothes at one point or another, as days like those were many. My mother was the only family I had at first.

When I moved to Dallas at 5 years old, I only seemed to see bush roses, potted pansies or petunias, and bluebonnets in the spring. There were no longer any stretching fields of unknown blossoms to explore, but rather just decorative sections on sidewalks with unkempt bushels stuffed into the corners. I eventually grew to hate the Texas landscape and longed for my old one. My aunt, with whom we moved in upon coming to Dallas, had a large bush of Rose of Sharons in her back yard, but it wasn't enough. My mother said we couldn't go back to New Mexico when I asked her.

As I grew I continued to pick flowers. Some were just parts of weeds, some were so tiny I had to clutch them between two fingers, some were so fragile I could never pick one without ripping it. Even when I was as old as age 10 I would come home with backpack sections full of half-dead flowers I had greedily harvested from my school's field. My schoolmates would look at me as if I was mental, probably because I picked so many and took them so seriously. I hated the way they stared at me as I picked them.

In the coming years though, I realized I didn't have to pick flowers to gain the joy of collecting beautiful things or feeling "rich" in my own way... But I always kept track of my favorites.