

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 1988

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It seems that each year I am asked to write a review of the bloom season, either locally or a review of a convention garden for the national Bulletin. I have a bit of a reputation for taking thorough garden notes. Good notes, plus a good writing technique, make for a good article. It is perhaps a bit ironic that, this being my first year as a Master Judge, I have decided to formalize my review and make it an annual exercise. Thus, you are reading the first (hopefully annual) edition of “Contemporary Views”.

If the format of this review looks familiar, it is because I openly admit that it is styled very much like that of Joe Ghio’s “Bay Views”. I suspect he began his annual review 25 years ago for many of the same reasons that I am. I offer the reader a Sun Belt point of view. I use his format as a compliment rather than plagiarism.

And what a perfect year to review. Remember the report of the convention gardens I wrote for the AIS Bulletin last year, “A Good Omen”? I’m sure there are several hundred iris lovers in a bit of disbelief that it indeed was a good omen.

As with the Bay Viewer, I will be “bestowing” annual “awards”. Keep in mind that the opinions and tastes expressed in this article are strictly my own. I pride myself in being an open-minded, objective iris judge. I will vote for an iris, if worthy, even though for personal reasons I might dislike a hybridizer or his/her philosophy in hybridizing or marketing. I think every good judge has this as a goal, but he/she will also tell you that it is easier said than done.

One more thing, this is to be a positive review. Although I may fault, say, the branching of a particular variety, the fact that it gets mentioned in this write-up is a positive. The one exception to this philosophy is the RETURN TO SENDER AWARD, and I have the right to change my mind in the future, if the recipient later proves itself. My promise is that, if this indeed does happen, you’ll hear about it from me in “Contemporary Views”. [NOTE: Decision was made, in the 1989 edition of this annual review, to drop this category in its entirety.]

In each color category, the best is listed first, then in descending order. At the end of each color group is a list, designated “Classics”, of those that are older (at least 10 years on the market), but still worthy. I would recommend these to any new grower who has a limited budget or is on a fixed income.

AWARD WINNERS

1. The CONTEMPORARY AWARD, given to the Best New Iris seen. “New” is defined as last 3 years inclusive (meaning, this year, an iris introduced in 1986, 1987, or 1988): SILVERADO (Schreiner 1987). Of the hundreds of Schreiner introductions I have evaluated and enjoyed in over 20 years, my feeling is that this is their finest achievement – ever! Starting at the ground, it has thick, husky, vigorous foliage. The stalks consistently throw 3 modified candelabra branches plus spur with backup buds. It will look good in a clump or on the show bench, as it tends to open 3 at once with perfect spacing. The stalks are thick and strong to support the weight of the flowers (no “Victoria Falls Down” here!). The flowers are large but not gross, set in a pure, crystalline silvery white with self beards tipped yellow in the heart.

There are some infusions of silver-blue underlying that set the whole flower in motion; the infusions are more of a mood than actually visible. The form is faultless. Broad but not blocky, with full but closed standards and flaring falls. The substance is thick as leather, yet an airy look is transmitted because of the diamond dusted finish and moderate ruffling.

Runnersup: SNOWBROOK (Keppel 1987); EDITH WOLFORD (Hager 1986); THRILLER (Schreiner 1988).

2. The L’ELEGANTE AWARD, given to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower (does not necessarily address overall plant): BUBBLING LACE (Black 1986). No matter how adverse the weather conditions or bloom season (no, I haven’t forgotten the Spring of 1987!), ‘Bubbling Lace’ opens each of its blooms smoothly, without twisting or tearing. For such a heavily laced iris, this is a major accomplishment. Large, fluffy, cold, icy-white flowers infused blue-lavender are supported by decent stalks (2 branches and 6 buds are the norm)

and plant habits and vigor that are average. This is the most beautiful flower in irisdom. It even replaced my former favorite iris, 'Clara Goula' (Arny, LA).

Runnersup: EDITH WOLFORD (Hager 1986); ICE CAVE (Wright 1986); ROYAL ELEGANCE (Gatty 1988).

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD**, given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break. 9-1-1 is the number you call when you think you're gonna have The Big One. Recipients of this award leave you feeling that way, or least just a bit stunned! NEW WAVE (Hager 1986, MTB). Anyone who knows the background of this iris will realize the significance of the breakthrough. Tetraploid MTBs are still rare, and progress in this area has been slow and tedious. 'New Wave' is a pure white with broad form, yet still retains the grace that the class mandates. Slender stalks are flexuous but strong enough to support up to 4 branches and rebranch, often opening 3 to 4 flowers simultaneously. Notably vigorous (tetraploid MTBs have sometimes been deficient in this area), with an increase/bloom ratio that makes an outstanding clump.

Runnersup: MAGIC (Hager 1987); GLITZ 'N' GLITTER (Black 1988); LATIN HIDEAWAY (Nichols 1986).

4. The **SUN BELT AWARD**, given to the Best Proven Variety (i.e., one that has been on the market at least 4 years; this year's winner had to have been released prior to 1986): DARKSIDE (Schreiner 1985). A great, quality complement to the Contemporary Award winner, 'Silverado', this is the ultimate in a very advanced line of Schreiner irises that consistently have choice progeny. Even in the Blanchard garden, where Miss Kitty had salvaged what was left of the June flood last year and replanted as late as November, 'Darkside' produced tall, well branched stalks this spring. Broad, blocky flowers are purest deep violet (approaching black) with light to moderate ruffling and a silk sheen. The overall form is even better than the very fine 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner) or 'Dusky Challenger' (Schreiner). Exceptionally vigorous, a consistent bloomer (obviously, if it bloomed in Blanchard this year!), and strong, telephone pole stalks that will not fall over in Okie winds, even with 3 or 4 of its large blossoms open. It makes for a good garden iris in the clump, too, as the 3 to 4 branches are modified candelabra. What is most impressive is that, even though the flowers are huge, it has backup buds that open in a proportionate size and with good bloom sequence.

Runnersup: HELLCAT (Aitken 1983, IB); WARRIOR KING (Schreiner 1985); NAVAJO JEWEL (Weiler 1984).

5. The **DARK HORSE AWARD**, given to the variety introduced within the past 10 years, that I feel has been overlooked by AIS judges, and deserves/deserved much higher praise in the awards system: HOLY NIGHT (K. Mohr 1983). Although it finally won a fairly respectable HM last year, this consistent performer is worthy of an AM or maybe more. It has the height (up to 48"!), vigor, and width its parent, 'Dusky Dancer' (Luihn), never had, yet it retained the richness of lustrous sheen. Even last year, with all the freeze damage, it stood tall and stately with 4 branches on stalks strong enough to withstand the worst gales. The bloom sequence is especially meritorious, opening with consistency to achieve a long season of bloom.

Runnersup: HEAVEN HELPED (Waltermire 1979); E.C. EVERINGHAM (Raabe 1980, LA); CLEARFIRE (Stevens 1981).

6. The **CREAM OF THE CROP AWARDS** go to the 5 varieties on the Dykes Medal eligibility list that I consider most worthy, in order of preference. This means you'll know what I support for the Dykes each year! **[NOTE:** This award category was discontinued in later editions of 'Contemporary Views']. PINK BUBBLES (Hager 1980, BB) is one of the best, more consistent BBs I have ever grown. I've seen it grow out of class only in those fanatical gardens where the soil is about 50% cow manure! (Meow!) An elegant clear pink with moderate ruffling and lace that even exceeds its worthy sister, 'Beverly Sills' (Hager, TB) in grace and charm. TITAN'S GLORY (Schreiner 1981), the first of many recent famous creations in this bloodline. It nonetheless holds its own for overall quality and dependability. ANN CHOWNING (Chowning 1977, LA) is still competitive today in the midst of many fine progeny in a very good Louisiana year. The richness of the red is beyond intense, and the large bright yellow signals are stunning. BRANDY (McWhirter 1981), so fine and finished, and with a color that cannot be mistaken for any other variety. Its form, plant habits, and branching are notable, especially being a color break. Its potential as a parent hasn't even been tapped yet! And CLARA GOULA (Arny 1978, LA), the most elegant of all Louisianas, having an impact on the whole species that 'Snow Flurry' (Rees) had on Tall Beardeds. It initially had the reputation for being a slow grower with weak vigor. This simply has not been the case at Bayou North (the

Contemporary Gardens Louisiana patch). It does not have the Johnson grass vigor of ‘Red Echo’ (Rowlan) or ‘Black Gamecock’ (Chowning), but the plant habits and vigor are quite acceptable.

7. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding seedling viewed this year. The winner by a landslide is **Black 8544B**. Remindful of ‘Brandy’ (McWhirter), in that it is totally unique in color, yet backed up with the branching, bud count, bloom sequence, vigor, plant habits, forms, and finish that all must merge to produce a quality iris worthy of release into a market that, frankly, is flooded annually with poor or, worse yet, more-of-the-same varieties. The color is even more difficult to describe. It would be interesting to see if there is an RHS color chart on it. At least with ‘Brandy’ you can say, ‘Think of the drink’. 8544B is a smoky (but not dirty) light to medium raspberry with absolutely smooth hafts. Some are calling the color “mauve”. Beards are henna to coral. My personal favorite of all of Paul’s creations, and apparently several of the 744 convention guests liked it too. Congratulations, Paul, and I give it a premature 9-1-1 Award too!

Runnersup, and very worthy: **Gartman 181-27P**; **Gatty N49-2**.

UPDATES: **Black 8544B** went on to be named **DESIGNER’S RAGE**, introduced in 1991. **Gartman 181-27P** was named **ALLURING**, introduced in 1989. **Gatty N49-2** was named **HOLLYWOOD BLONDE**, introduced in 1989.

8. And finally the one negative award, the **RETURN TO SENDER AWARD** goes to the variety that had a lot of advanced publicity, hoopla, and ballyhoo for being wonderful or a great achievement, yet **flopped** dramatically. Recipients are carefully evaluated and critiqued before giving this award. The award goes to the iris, not the hybridizer. The “winner” this year is **BLACKOUT** (Luihn 1986). The simplest way to make my point is to say that, in the same garden, a blossom of ‘Dusky Dancer’ (Luihn), introduced by the same hybridizer 19 years ago, was picked and brought over to ‘Blackout’ for comparison. There was little difference, except that ‘Blackout’ was having a more difficult time opening properly. ‘Blackout’ is taller, but even that’s not an asset, because it is high branched.

Runnersup:

OKTOBERFEST (Maryott 1987), a beautiful individual flower, just like its pictures, with pink undertones and elegant texture veins that add life to the color. But the stalks are so thin and weak that they fall over with only one terminal flower open. The vigor is average, but the plants are thin and anemic. And, as in the home garden, it is one branch shy, and the branching that it does have is high branched. With excellent oranges such as ‘Good Show’ (Hager), ‘Fringe Benefits’ (Hager), and ‘Montevideo’ (Ghio) on the market now, these defects are simply unacceptable. **MARRIAGE VOWS** (Ghio 1987) was dirty, muddy, and poorly shaped. Can’t blame the questionable color on the weather in a year like this one. Pencil thin stalks had only 3 buds to hold up. Plants were thin and watery and very susceptible to leaf spot and rot. Fortunately, there are nice, worthy varieties from even the same lineage to replace ‘Marriage Vows’ with, after you take the shovel to it.

Back to a positive review, by color group.

TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP

REDS TO MAROONS:

The great **WARRIOR KING** (Schreiner 1985) leads the pack. To date, the ultimate in a fine line of Schreiner reds that has been giving us quality improvements for 30 years. It is more vigorous and has healthier foliage than most, producing consistent strong stalks with 4 branches and double buds in excellent bloom sequence. The form is broad and finished. Its color and texture are more like the velvet of ‘Post Time’ (Schreiner), but with truer pigmentation, rather than the bright glossy look of ‘Fireball’ (Schreiner). Impressive enough to be a runnerup for the Sun Belt Award. In Oklahoma, **RED LION** (Hager 1986) has even better color than in the home garden in Stockton. The color is more of an oxblood red with leathery texture. I feel the shade doesn’t have as much garden appeal or carrying power as, say, a ‘Warrior King’ or ‘Clearfire’ (Stevens), but it is unique and needed. Bold bronze beards are harmonious and aid the rather coarse hafts in being less offensive. Thick, well branched stalks support large blocky flowers. Its consistency as a good garden clump was noted in several area gardens.

CLEARFIRE (Stevens 1981) is the oldest variety reviewed in this group, but still holds its own with the newer ones. Sassy, nail polish glossy finish gives it the best carrying power in the garden. The first modern red to have

competitive bud count (4 branches, double sockets). The stalks may require staking when opening multiple blossoms, but the flowers are so stunning, I don't mind!

I viewed **MAROON VELVET** (B. Brown 1986) for the first time this year, and although the garden had undergrown it, I was sold on it. A sultry velvety wine-maroon self, heavily underlaid in black (which produces the velvet). Absolutely smooth hafts and vigor were especially commendable. Rather slender stalks displayed moderate sized flowers on 3 wide candelabra branches plus spur. **STERLING BLAZE** (Innerst 1988) was seen in convention gardens as seedling 2421-1. This is an improved 'Palmer Leader' (Innerst), i.e., more of a garnet red approach, with large bronze beards. It has 3 candelabra branches and average growth habits. One blossom of **MINSTREL MAN** (Meek 1986) was seen at Dorothy Howard's in Tulsa. This smooth, rich maroon has great potential and is now on my Want List. For those of you who remember the distinctive color and beauty of the quasi-Border Bearded, 'Maroon Bells' (Magee), this is a child. **MARAUDER** (Ghio 1984) is from totally different bloodlines from the traditional reds, and I continue to be impressed with its fullness of foliage and decent vigor. The bold deep gold beards on the blocky, wide wine is a very masculine look.

CLASSICS: **SPARTAN** (Schreiner 1973); **MINISA** (Wall 1976); **FINE PRECEDENT** (Blyth 1977).

BROWNS:

One of the pleasant surprises this year was **VERISMO** (Hager 1987). As with Ben's 'Red Lion', the color and overall quality was better in Oklahoma than even in the home garden in California. I am convinced that reds and browns are more intense and vibrant in this part of the country due to the iron in the soil here. 'Verismo' is broad and absolutely smooth in a pure deep brown self (no copper tones present) with a sheen similar to 'Clearfire'. This is rare or previously nonexistent in this depth of brown. Branching is somewhat inconsistent in spacing but can be very good. It is also a heavy bloomer, but its vigor has now been proven. Clumps that nearly bloomed themselves out last year came back strong last fall and produced a full clump this spring, again with heavy bloom. **CALIPH** (Ghio 1987) also showed the intensity of color, perhaps even more towards deep chocolate tones. Vigor, branching, and bud count were questionable, and it doesn't appear to have as "finished" form as 'Verismo'. However, the two gardens where it bloomed had suspect culture, so I consider the potential of 'Caliph' to be worth growing and further evaluating. **CAFÉ SOCIETY** (Ghio 1985) was exceptional in several gardens, and consistently made attractive clumps full of bloom. A broad golden brown with bright gold beards. Rather large flowers were held on stalks stronger than most from this bloodline. It also had better branching and bud count. In the Parrish garden, each stalk in the clump had 3 branches plus spur. Vigor and overall plant habits were also better than most from this lineage. **COFFEE KLATCH** (Ghio 1986) is very similar to 'Café Society' above in describing its assets and improvements over many from this line of breeding. The color is less gold, perhaps more in the tradition of the classic 'Coffee House' (Ghio). The modified candelabra branching makes for a good clump.

CLASSICS: **COFFEE HOUSE** (Ghio 1977); **DUTCH CHOCOLATE** (Schreiner 1970); **STARBURST** (Tompkins 1967).

APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

Much improvement in this class as a whole, with several fine new offerings. A pleasant surprise, **MONTEVIDEO** (Ghio 1987) leads the group of new oranges. Moderate sized flowers in medium approaching deep orange are well shaped and lack the "informal" architecture that unfortunately have plagued many fine varieties from the 'Orange Empire' (Hammer) bloodline. Tall, reasonably strong stalks may require staking when opening multiple blossoms, but the improvement here is definite. Beautiful graceful S-curved stalks carry 4 well spaced candelabra branches. Foliage is thin but not skimpy, and more vigorous. **GOOD SHOW** (Hager 1988) is close behind in overall quality. It is a stronger iris, in that it has thicker, healthier foliage with more increase. The flowers are large and wide, and structurally aren't quite as sound as 'Montevideo', but still an improvement over predecessors. The color is a solid, moderately deep yet brilliant pure orange with absolutely no other distracting undertones. Deeper orange beards contribute to the intensity of color. Although not from 'Orange Star' (Hamblen), **FRINGE BENEFITS** (Hager 1988) is remindful in form, lace, and plant habits, but is more a true orange than the equally appealing toasted color of 'Orange Star'. It has tight, closed form with heavy lace that doesn't seem to have any difficulty in opening in warm or cool weather. Branching and bud count were lacking, but comments will be withheld until it can be evaluated on an established clump.

The best of the new apricots is **Gartman 181-27P** (now named **ALLURING**, a 1989 introduction). From the Bay Area where competition in hybridizing is intense (that was a polite understatement!), Lilly has only thusfar introduced a handful of varieties, but her critical eye assures you that, if she releases a seedling, it will be worthy.

This one, a runnerup for this year's Pick of the Litter Award, was blooming strongly in all 3 gardens in which it was blooming. A simple way to describe it would be an apricot version of 'Eastertime' (Schreiner), with perhaps just a few more waves and ruffles. Large flowers, thick 'Eastertime' stalks, lush wide foliage in a pleasing, surprisingly rare shade of blue-green such as 'Eastertime' has. Substance is like leather. In spite of this "bold" description, it is a more feminine iris, and its gentle appearance has a great impact in the garden. **VICTORIAN FRILLS** (Black 1988) is a shorter Tall Bearded, for the front of the iris bed, a trait inherited from 'Sun Blossom' (Kegerise). It also received the good qualities of 'Sun Blossom', namely its round form, thick stalks with especially good spacing of its 3 branches, double sockets, and healthy, clean foliage that is resistant to leaf spot. 'Victorian Frills' is a smooth, quiet apricot with moderate lace. The flowers are broad but compact, and have no difficulty in opening.

PORCELAIN BALLET (Black 1985) is still my favorite of Paul's introduced Tall Bearded, but its flower quality can be affected by weather conditions. In cool weather it can show some signs of virus flecking (not the gaudy purple gashes found in things like 'Joy of Springtime' (Sexton), 'Queen of Hearts' (O. Brown), or even 'Bride's Halo' (Mohr), but rather a breakdown in petal substance). But in warm weather, look out! Rich, glowing deep apricot with some of the best stalks in irisdom (compliments of Opal Brown and 'Instant Charm'), with vigor and increase better than 'Instant Charm' or its other parent, 'Old Flame' (Ghio). This is one of the few that waited until after convention to show off! **ELEGANT ANSWER** (Hager 1987) was one of the first 'Beverly Sills' (Hager) children to be released by its hybridizer, and it inherited all the good qualities of Beverly, namely its plant habits and wide, compact form, but done in an appealing shade of medium approaching deep apricot, rather than pink.

CLASSICS: SON OF STAR (Plough 1969); **FEMININE CHARM** (Kegerise 1974); **ORANGE EMPIRE** (Hamner 1974); **SPANISH GIFT** (Shoop 1965).

DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:

'Holy Night' and 'Darkside', mentioned in the awards section, lead the list. **NIGHT CLUB** (McWhirter 1982) will probably go on next year's Dark Horse Award list if it doesn't start getting more play. A large, sultry deep violet approaching black. It has some of the most elegant show stalks around. I suspect the reason for being overlooked was its finicky growth patterns early in its life. 'Navy Strut' (Schreiner) threw the defect of "bald" plants to many of its children. Now acclimated, this problem has corrected itself in 'Night Club'. **Black 8584A** (now named **OKLAHOMA CRUDE**, a 1989 introduction) really shook 'em up when conventioners walked through the reselects at Mid-America. Close inspection will reveal that this is actually a bitone, with deep violet standards and the deepest soot black in the falls. The broad falls display the intensity of their color at their best, and it is a most impressive garden impact. **BOOGIE MAN** (Meek 1986) is the deepest and best of many fine 'Cherry Smoke' (Meek) seedlings, with the texture being more velvet than silk, making the color saturation appear even more intense. It also has smoother hafts and better, more consistent plant habits than its parent and its sibs and cousins. Last but not least, **ORBITER** (Aitken 1985) was consistently superb in all the guest plants (first runnerup to the zany MTB, 'Bumblebee Deelite' (Norrick) for the Cook Cup). "Cup clumps" were everywhere in full bloom, consistently producing sturdy show stalks of modified candelabra 4 branches. An intense deepest violet with a satin sheen and moderate ruffling. Self beards. Perhaps its also-famous, also-worthy sib, 'Seawolf' (Aitken) has more finished form and more elegant flowers, but 'Orbiter's' overall qualities are stronger. It is most vigorous, and didn't inherit the "bald plant" syndrome from 'Navy Strut' that plagued so many of its earlier-released children (see 'Night Club' above).

CLASSICS: STUDY IN BLACK (Plough 1968); **DUSKY DANCER** (Luihn 1967); **NIGHT OWL** (Schreiner 1970); **INTERPOL** (Plough 1973).

PINKS:

Always the most popular category, the advancements have been so rapid the past 20 years that major defects that we once turned and looked the other way on should no longer be tolerated. So many nice quality things to choose from now that it becomes just personal preference. If you had the honor to tour the Nancy Perkins garden during convention, you saw clump after clump, *en masse*, of 'Beverly Sills' in full bloom in radiant glory. Is it any wonder this milestone has broken all the records in awards and popularity? Choosing the best of the highly refined of Gatty pinks is impossible, but my personal favorite was **SATIN SIREN** (1987). Heavily laced deep pink in the tradition of the color intensity of 'Pink Sleigh' (Rudolph), but with a smoother saturation and not as much blue undertones that can make the color inconsistent. The form is finished and has the fat, compact, classical look of 'Paradise' (Gatty). Vigor and resistance to leaf spot was notable. The clump in the Black Garden that peaked bloom immediately after convention was memorable. **FRENCH PASTRY** (1987) was seen in the Spence Garden

under seedling number N9-1. A larger flower on a taller show stalk with candelabra branching, and the color was more subtle, in the color range traditional of 'Pink Angel' (Rudolph), and also devoid of any of the apricot undertone that is common in these color ranges.

PINK INTERLUDE (Simon 1985) didn't have the impact it had last year (because there was so much more competition in bloom around it this year!), but was still fine and is perhaps the most intense of the pinks on the modern market. Its finish is more leathery than the diamond dusting of the Gatty line, and it has the best substance of any in the color class. To toot my own horn, the clump of **Dyer K-18** in the Merine Cole Garden was certainly a surprise, as I had already sent instructions to the Guest Iris Chairperson, Barbara Thain, to have it destroyed. After seeing how Merine grows it, I've reversed that request. It inherited that beautiful broad form of 'Wings of Dreams' (Woodside) and the color saturation and intensity of Melba Hamblen's 'Venetian Dancer'. K-18 probably won't be introduced because of a possible weakness in its standards' midribs, but it was fun to see a seedling do so well again and receive compliments. [NOTE: **Dyer K-18** was never introduced.] The surprise of the year in this color class certainly goes to **ELSIEMAE NICHOLSON** (Corlew 1986). We didn't say, "Oh, another good pink" to this one and walk on. The color is your usual medium pink with some apricot undertones and slightly lighter area in the heart of the falls. The flower size is good and the form is broad and sound. But the beards are a stunning orange and really make the flower distinctive. Of the hundreds (thousands?) of pink irises I've seen, I don't ever recall seeing one with a beard quite that color, and it was most appealing. Taller and more stately than most from the Corlew line.

The precursors to pinks with true blue beards are for real and they are here now. I predict a true pink with a true, intense, solid blue beard will be on the market by the end of this next decade. **MAGIC** (Hager 1987) was the most improved variety in Oklahoma this year. The intensity of pink is similar to 'Pink Sleigh' but the quality of color will vary from year to year and from one area to another, too, unfortunately. This was one of the good years. The beard was so deep it approached purple. I don't know if it was magic but rather some innovative, intuitive, patient hybridizing that produced this breakthrough. Warmer, drier weather cleans up the "mud" of the blue-pink, yet doesn't deteriorate the intensity of the beard. **GIFT OF DREAMS** (Hamblen 1987) bloomed a week after convention and might not have been seen by many. It is taller and deeper than its mother, 'Sophistication' (Hamblen). The color is actually a smoky effect. The beard is more intense and holds its saturation well in warm weather also. But the most elegant is still the first one, **SOPHISTICATION** (Hamblen 1984), one of my favorites and most beautiful of all irises. It is a pastel but not pale satin pink with a soft but noticeable true blue beard. Early reports were that the beard would fade out in warmer weather, but I have found this statement to be untrue in Oklahoma. Wonder how many different hybridizers crossed 'Sophistication' with 'Magic' this spring?

CLASSICS: PINK TAFFETA (Rudolph 1968); **PINK SLEIGH** (Rudolph 1970); **VANITY** (Hager 1975); **BUFFY** (O. Brown 1969); **PINK ANGEL** (Rudolph 1973).

LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:

There are so many varieties in this highly developed class that a new variety must really have charisma to merit attention. **THRILLER** (Schreiner 1988), a runnerup for the Contemporary Award, is a vigorous, floriferous claret-violet with deep purple beards that are nearly black. Large blossoms have a rather informal, airy look, but they maintain their shape. Branching and bud count are the best of this series from the Schreiners, with stalks consistently throwing 3 branches. The finish is done in a rich satin sheen. **EVER AFTER** (Keppel 1986) is a large, full-blown fuchsia with an appealing lighter area in the heart of the falls around the red beards. The blocky form has a "rolled-back", almost recurving look that could be a defect in certain color patterns, but is enhancing with this one. Taller, better branched, certainly more vigorous, and a more attractive color than its parent, 'Mulled Wine' (Keppel).

BUBBLING OVER (Ghio 1982) is one of the most beautiful individual flowers in irisdom. A heavily ruffled orchid that approaches lilac, with white to self beards. It is nice to see this color without the traditional tangerine-red beards for a change. Sometimes a flower can be so heavily bubbled ruffled that it is overstated. Sometimes they are so intense they have difficulty opening, like a laced iris. But with 'Bubbling Over', the depth and space of each ruffle is exact and perfect, and makes for an elegant creation. The foliage is clean and healthy and of average increase. The branching is close to the stalk, but not defective. Unfortunately, 'Bubbling Over' is consistently "missing" a lower branch, and this is the main reason I personally won't consider it for a higher award.

CLASSICS: LILAC FLARE (Rudolph 1969); **LILAC RUFFLES** (Rudolph 1971); **BEAUX ARTS** (Plough 1969).

CREAMS TO LIGHT YELLOWS:

The new star is the seedling **Gatty N49-2** (now named **HOLLYWOOD BLONDE**, a 1989 introduction), a classic, sparkling light yellow in the color range of 'Lemon Mist' (Rudolph), but with perfect, moderate lace on all parts. A clean, simple color, with diamond dusting throughout that gives carrying power in the garden. It has 3-way branching, well spaced on strong stalks. Joe's **PRECIOUS MOMENTS** (1983) was as beautiful as it has ever been, and had better vigor and stalks than previous years. A broad, bold blending of clean pale yellow and sparkling white. The ruffling is moderate and classical. **FIRST IMPRESSION** (1985) is more of a pure cream with the same form and ruffling, but with a more opaque, leathery finish. **CHURCHILL DOWNS** (K. Mohr 1988) was seen in only one garden, but this lemon yellow with white in the center of the falls appears to have the potential to be an improvement over one of my personal favorites, Hamblen's 'Ruffles and Lace'. Broad form with tight, finely applied lace and ruffling. **BUTTER CRISP** (Aitken 1986) is a charming, small flowered butter yellow and creamy white blend with tight, compact form. Advertised as a Small Tall, it fit the billing perfectly, and actually comes closer to being a good Border Bearded than some of the registered not-so-Border Bearded on the market! 'Butter Crisp' is overly floriferous, even blooming out in one garden, so you gardeners with lush rich soil will need to be sure to underfeed it. **SUNKIST FRILLS** (D. Palmer 1987) blooms very late in the season. It was a

full week after convention before the terminal blossom opened in one garden. The color pattern is similar to ‘Debby Rairdon’ (Kuntz), but one to two tones deeper. Rather than ruffling, the petals are edged in tight picotee lace.

CLASSICS: DEBBY RAIRDON (Kuntz 1965); TINSEL TOWN (Tompkins 1967); CREAM TAFFETA (Rudolph 1968); IVORY GOWN (E. Smith 1963).

MEDIUM YELLOWS TO GOLDS:

I am impressed overall that there are many fine varieties now that are sunfast. Oklahoma is a good testing ground for the bleach test. BOLD GOLD (Gatty 1987) was one of the biggest surprises this year, and its consistency in all gardens places it at the top of this color group. A deep, rich, almost brassy (but not dirty) gold with near-orange beards, it produced spectacular clumps. Vigorous plants produced strong stalks of moderate height with branching (3 plus spur) that its parent, ‘Gold Galore’ (Schreiner) never had. GOLD COUNTRY (Ghio 1987) has the broad, elegant shape of its father, ‘Speculator’ (Ghio), but fortunately has a strong stalk with a full complement of buds carried on a graceful S-curved stalk with 3 candelabra branches. A unique shade, close to saffron. It has a mink finish that gives a sensuous, mysterious look such as ‘Blue Lustre’ (O. Brown) possessed. AZTEC SUN (Dyer 1982) continues to impress its hybridizer with its brightness – perhaps the most brilliant sunfast golden yellow on the market. It is vigorous and floriferous, and is my best Tall Bearded introduction, but I still find the branching to be inconsistent. It can have Queen of Show stalks (and it has won before) and bunched stalks in the same clump. Black 8630A (now named FISSION, introduced in 1989) is a dazzling bright yellow self, so intense it can be seen clear across the garden. Heavily ruffled, and amazingly smooth at the hafts, considering half of its parentage is ‘Dazzling Gold’ (Anderson). MOON’S DELIGHT (Hager 1985) was the first to prove that ‘Beverly Sills’ would pass its qualities on to a wide spectrum of colors besides just pink. A broad blocky bright lemon with a patch of white in the falls and self beards. Show stalks abound. ACADEMY AWARDS (Nichols 1984) was a pleasant surprise this year. It has smaller to moderate sized flowers on tall, stately, leaner show stalks that are strong enough to support the weight of 3 open blooms. The depth of color is about that of ‘Aztec Sun’, but doesn’t have the intensity and carrying power. An early bloomer, it was past peak by the time of convention. Later flowers in warmer weather tended to have the virus flecking discussed earlier, but you had to inspect the flowers closely to see it; they did not distract or distort the flower form.

CLASSICS: NEW MOON (Sexton 1968); JOYCE TERRY (Muhlestein 1974); GOLD TRIMMINGS (Schreiner 1975); MONEY (Roe 1977).

LIGHT BLUES:

ICE CAVE (Wright 1986) wins the prize this year for the biggest surprise of the year. Who would have thought, just by reading the registration or the description in the ad, that we would view such an elegant creation! It was starting to rain when I saw it on tour in the Wauzelia Shelley Garden, so I went back a couple of days after convention to see if my eyes and the clouds had deceived me. A broad blocky icy blue-white, it approaches gray in color, and then the smooth texture veins radiating throughout the falls add to the ethereal beauty. LOYAL DEVOTION (Waltermire 1982) was as good as it has ever been; looking good in virtually every garden. I don’t know what the Spences have in that soil of theirs, but I have never seen ‘Loyal Devotion’ with such a true blue. The branching is rather close to the stalk, but the flowers open without touching the stalk, and it looks good on the show bench. The timing of the bloom sequence in a clump is especially good, assuring a long season of bloom. One of the newer stars was ROYAL ELEGANCE (Gatty 1988). It was only seen in one garden, but had such potential that I certainly will be watching for it in future bloom seasons. The color is remindful of the classic ‘Babbling Brook’ (Keppel), but the flowers are huge, full, and broad, with just the right amount of ruffling.

As with so many Weiler creations, the emphasis on NAVAJO JEWEL (1984) is on overall garden quality. Tall strong stalks produce light blue flowers that can show turquoise undertones in cool weather or on cloudy days. As with ‘Holy Night’, it is among the strongest, healthiest plants in the garden. UNDERSEA ADVENTURE (Black 1986) has now made a name for itself, and is especially appealing in a clump. The flower size and form traces back to its grandparent, ‘Sea Venture’ (B. Jones), but has moderate lace. The best of the modern reverse blue amoenas. TIDE’S IN (Schreiner 1983) continues to set the standard for sparkling, shimmering light blues. The airy form dances in the garden. It has a long sequence of bloom, usually opening only 1 at a time, but I now have seen it at shows being very competitive with 2 and 3 open simultaneously with 3-way candelabra branching. Its child, ALTRUIST (Schreiner 1987), has thin, graceful stalks that I was positive would require staking, but stood on their own. They have a very flexuous quality. I kept doing a double-take, thinking it looked like an improved ‘Ruffled Ballet’ (Roderick). I checked the parentage and figured I was just crazy, until a couple of other growers made the

same comment. It is a broken pattern, rather than true self like 'Tide's In', so much so that it is approaching a pale blue amoena. A heavy bloomer but never to the point of jeopardizing its own existence.

SKYBLAZE (Keppel 1987) can now claim the title of best red-bearded blue. I'm not sure if it was "that soil" again, but in the Spence Garden, it was a true light blue with none of the lavender undertones that have been common in this class. And the beards were truly bright. Also impressive was that the stalks were strong and not snaking, another common defect in predecessors in this color combo. **CODICIL** (Innerst 1985) makes no claim to being a white with blue beards. Rather, we have a clear light blue with simply the most stunning indigo blue beards ever seen. No other colors are present on the beards, and they are so inky they approach black. From the bloodline, the branches are still short and close to the stalk, but not as bad as its ancestors, and they open properly without interference. Also notable is the flower size is larger, now in proportion to the height and type of stalk. A great achievement!

CLASSICS: **SAPPHIRE HILLS** (Schreiner 1971); **FULL TIDE** (O. Brown 1972); **BLUE REFLECTION** (Schreiner 1974); **MAESTRO PUCCINI** (Benson 1972).

MEDIUM TO DEEP BLUES:

The highly advanced Schreiner line of full blues continues to dominate in quality. The finest of the recent offerings is **BREAKERS** (1986). Broadest, roundest form with tight ruffling and leathery substance. It has absolutely no white infiltrating the falls. It has especially beautiful at the Dallas show this year. It was a joy to see the special **CHUCK WALTERMIRE** (Waltermire 1985) looking so good at both the Spence and Skrapta Gardens. At the Skrapta's, I've never seen it with such an intense shade of true full blue. And at the Spence Garden, it had the show stalks (3-4 branches) and garden value that made the variety Chris' choice to name for her late husband. It also had that mink look that made 'Blue Lustre' so distinctive years ago. **EVELYN'S ECHO** (Kegerise 1985) is starting to get some attention finally. What makes it so distinctive is the high gloss finish that gives it carrying power in the garden. What incredible show stalks! It inherited the broad form and glossy finish from 'Deep Pacific' (Burger).

CLASSICS: **SHIPSHAPE** (Babson 1969); **ROYAL TOUCH** (Schreiner 1967); **BLUE LUSTRE** (O. Brown 1973); **FIVE STAR ADMIRAL** (Marsh 1974).

WHITES:

'Bubbling Lace' and 'Silverado', winners in the Awards Section, lead the group and have already been critiqued. **PRAY FOR PEACE** (Plough 1982) is still among the best of the ruffled pure whites. Large flowers with the broadest of form and elegance unsurpassed. The petals shimmer. **BRIDAL FASHION** (Weiler 1986) continues the tradition of Ghio bubble ruffling with moderate sized pure white flowers with intense deep channel ruffling. An early blooming variety with healthy foliage and well branched stalks. **TINTED CRYSTAL** (Hager 1988) bloomed in the last half of the season, and didn't peak until after convention. Approaching 4' tall in the Black Garden, the huge, somewhat tailored blossoms are a cold blue-white. The stalks are thick enough to support 3 large blossoms open simultaneously. It has the vigorous plant habits of 'Ice Sculpture' (Hager), but is less susceptible to freeze damage and rot. In cool weather, I imagine the flowers will be quite blue. Nine years after its introduction, there is still no finer white with true pink beards as **HEAVEN HELPED** (Waltermire 1979). It has apparently only been used on a limited basis in breeding, but its children have been of superb quality.

CLASSICS: **PIETY** (Branch 1960); **CUP RACE** (Buttrick 1963); **LIGHT FANTASTIC** (O. Brown 1968); **CARRIAGE TRADE** (Gaulter 1977).

PLICATAS:

Many new, exciting, innovative introductions on the market today; yet I truly feel we have just scratched the surface of the gene pool. Note that 6 of the 9 varieties reviewed are from Keith Keppel: **SNOWBROOK** (1987) is the most elegant of plicatas. A glistening solid icy white with a narrow 1/4" to 3/8" band of the clearest blue ever seen, and only on the falls. Beards are a harmonious white tipped yellow only deep in the heart. It has the vigor and disease resistance that have been rare or nonexistent in others from the past that attempted this color pattern. Pleasing well branched stalks that have excellent bloom sequence. The effect of **ROMANTICIST** (1988) is a pink-rose plicata, but the standards are virtually a solid medium peach, heavily suffused rose, and the falls are a buff-peach with a distinct, even 1/2" band of rose-pink. The flowers are larger than most in this pattern. **DAREDEVIL** (1988) is the

first serious attempt at a red-bearded blue plicata. It was seen at OSU Tech under seedling number 81-188A. It is clean blue-violet with no marks in the center of the white falls. Broad form, somewhat informal, with light to moderate ruffling. Variable branching, with the best presenting 3 well spaced branches plus spur.

Only a single blossom of **JITTERBUG** (1988) was seen in the Clark Garden, but it was one of my favorite new ones. This 'Rustic Dance' (Gibson) child inherited its glossy finish, making it a first in this color pattern, as most coming before had a more brash, coarse texture and finish. The standards are a bright solid yellow with no plicata markings. The falls' base is the same, perhaps leaning more to a chrome or lemon yellow, and then completely sanded, washed, and dotted bright reds, browns, and coppers, very exactly applied over the entire falls. Compact, finished form with ruffles and light lace. Incredible breeding potential, and it is one I will definitely use when I resume my hybridizing. The plicata that drew perhaps the most attention was **CHANGE OF HEART** (1986), especially during the week before convention. A hot, compact, smaller flower in elegant creamy-pink, washed deeper, and then drenched with brilliant, inky maroon in the heart of the flower. The bottom half of the falls then gently diffuses into the creamy-pink color. Superb form, complimentary lace and ruffling. Unfortunately, its plant habits aren't the best in the world. It is very susceptible to freeze damage and/or scorch and it has been known to do more than its share of rotting. The stalks are short and stubby, with a maximum of branches, but the 5 buds do open in good sequence. Enough defects that I would never vote for it for awards, but it is nonetheless one of my favorite newer irises, and I will grow it for years. One of the first Tall Bearded to bloom is **PINK FROTH** (1985), but it has such good bud count that there was still good, representative bloom by convention time. It is a glorified 'Pink Confetti' (Gibson) with a more ivory-cream ground and moderate to heavy lace. Flowers are broad and full-blown, but the gentle colors give the flower a feminine effect.

If you are a 'Dazzling Gold' (Anderson) fan, you will like **FANFARON** (Hager 1988), a taller, deeper version of its mother. Close to being a variegata, I place it with the plicatas because of its bloodline. A superb garden variety, with solid golden yellow standards and yellow based falls almost completely saturated with a brilliant oxblood red. The yellow shows through only in streaks and as a ¼" edge in the falls. Extremely vigorous and floriferous, it produced stunning 2-year clumps. The individual flower form and ruffling are not as refined as 'Dazzling Gold', but the carrying power is better. After viewing what seems like thousands of 'Spinning Wheel' (Nearpass) seedlings, both introduced and still in the patch, the most impressive is **EVERYTHING PLUS** (Niswonger 1984). A consistent performer in every garden. Typical of its father, it is not overly tall, and the branching begins right at ground level and works its way up through 4 branches. The lower branch is quite long, coming up almost even with the top branch. It is also rebranched. This is a common trait with 'Spinning Wheel' children; 'Eagles' Flight' from Schreiner does the same thing. The trick is, if entering the show with 'Everything Plus' (and you will!), just completely remove the bottom branch/rebranch and you'll have a Queen of Show entry. If you leave your stalk in the garden to enjoy for 3 weeks, you'll see that the long branch makes for a nice clump, displaying its blossom up from the heaviest part of the foliage. One of the most beautiful show stalks with only the terminal open (other than that incredible stalk of the Hawleys' 'Stylelite' (Dunn) that won Queen at Edmond (Oklahoma) this year) was a specimen of **STERLING STITCH** (Innerst 1984) at the Dallas show. A pure white, gently, evenly edged blue. The hybridizer disagrees in the registration, but I found the beard to be strongly hinting tangerine-red. Coming from 'Vanity' and 'April Melody' (Gibson), I don't think my eyes deceived me, and I would like to see someone cross it with 'Daredevil'.

CLASSICS: **STEPPING OUT** (Schreiner 1964); **HIGH LIFE** (Schreiner 1964); **CHARMED CIRCLE** (Keppel 1969); **GOING MY WAY** (Gibson 1972); **ANON** (Gibson 1975).

VARIEGATAS:

SMART ALECK (Gatty 1988), seen in the convention gardens as seedling number N26-1, has the same glossy, brilliant colors (golden yellow standards and velvety wine-red falls) as its double-shot parent, 'Show Biz' (Gatty). But the improvements are that it is somewhat more vigorous and has notably larger, broad flowers. Fortunately, **HAIL TO ROME** (R. Nelson 1986) has had its classification changed from Border Bearded to Tall Bearded. A wild, not-quite-gaudy variegata with standards almost approaching bronze, and wine-maroon falls with reasonably smooth hafts. The uniqueness is that it is evenly laced throughout, an improved, richer 'Gypsy Caravan' (Moldovan). The Sexton "DON'T KNOW" seedling that will be introduced next year by Paul Black is technically a variegata, but appears more as a golden-russet bitone. Absolutely huge and full-blown, with sunfastness as good as any other released thusfar in this color combination. The broken color pigmentation in the falls is innovative rather than distracting (blending and texture veining instead of splotches and blobs). I'm grateful that this final Sexton creation will be released. [**NOTE:** It was registered as **SPICED CIDER**, introduced in 1989].

CLASSICS: **GALA MADRID** (Peterson 1968); **MICHIGAN PRIDE** (Berndt 1976).

NEGLECTAS:

CRANBERRY CRUSH (Aitken 1986) was the surprise. Blue-lavender standards topped heavily ruffled and fluted deep cranberry-violet falls with smooth hafts. The midribs of the standards were deeply flushed with the falls' color, giving a harmonious look. The whole flower was highlighted with a luster and class that its parent, 'Mystique' (Ghio) frankly never had. Moderately sized flowers were carried on rather high-branched stalks, at least in the master convention planting at OSU Tech, but the stalks were strong enough to hold up the blossoms. **CONGRATULATIONS** (Keppel 1983) was producing "cup clumps" everywhere. Floriferous is an understatement. Also a child of 'Mystique', this one is very similar in color but with possibly richer colors, more ruffles, and definitely more carrying power.

CLASSICS: DREAM LOVER (Tams 1971); **CABARET ROYALE** (Blyth 1976).

AMOENAS:

Two Paul Black seedlings will be mentioned here: **8580D**, a large, leathery blue amoena with almost cream standards rather than the traditional icy white, and broad falls of light blue with Hinkle texture veins. The colors are united with a soft yellow beard. [NOTE: This seedling was named **SPARKLING FOUNTAIN** and introduced in 1989]. **851A** is one of the cleanest and brightest of pink amoenas from 'Infinite Grace' (Hamblen). Flower form is also an improvement. Tall, graceful stalks are still somewhat weak, as its parent's, and may require staking in established clumps. Nonetheless, a worthy improvement in a color pattern that is most difficult to work with. [NOTE: This seedling was named **GIRL NEXT DOOR** and introduced in 1990].

CLASSICS: MARGARITA (Schreiner 1968); **GAY PARASOL** (Schreiner 1974); **RUFFLED BALLET** (Roderick 1975).

BICOLORS:

EDITH WOLFORD (Hager 1986) is the most beautiful, elegant iris on the market, second only to 'Bubbling Lace'. What a harmonious combination of colors, with soft delicate light yellow standards and quiet, rippling blue-lavender falls. The entire flower is perfect in its ruffling and fluting, heavy but not overstated. The falls are quite blue in cool weather or on cloudy days. It has the plant habits, branching, and bud count to back up its beauty. It is so rare when literally everything comes together in an iris, even though there are hundreds (thousands?) of fine, worthy varieties on the market. **LATIN HIDEAWAY** (Nichols 1986) is a color breakthrough, in that it is the best attempt in many decades at a red amoena. The color of the standards is inconsistent, from a reasonable attempt at white to a smoky lavender-gray, but the falls are always a beautiful blend of changeable taffeta in reds, lilacs, browns, lavenders, and golds, with the predominant color being an oxblood to russet red. Incredibly smooth at the hafts, especially considering its background. It has decent form, above average substance, and is among the most vigorous of any Tall Bearded of recent years. That it won the President's Cup by a landslide was really no surprise at all, but what most don't realize is that it was better last year! **PLANNED TREASURE** (Burger 1985) is a true color break, in that it is the first of its kind in this color pattern: Pretty pink standards and falls, then washed only on the edges of the falls in lavender. It never fails, a color break usually has some major defect plaguing it, be it poor growth, crazy stalks, 3 buds, whatever. Not so with 'Planned Treasure'....

WINIFRED ROSS (Hamblen 1988) was one of the last to bloom, carrying on the tradition in color pattern and stalks of 'Rosabelle V' (Hamblen), but with each of its parts (standards, falls, and beards) one to two tones deeper and richer in color. George Shoop is surely the godfather of new color combinations, and 2 varieties were especially worthy. **HAWAIIAN QUEEN** (1986) has medium purple-brown standards and yellow-orange falls, accented with a coral-red beard. The whole affair may sound gaudy, but there's something (perhaps the pink heritage) that unites the colors and makes them pleasing to the eye. 'Hawaiian Queen' had noticeably better growth habits than many from this bloodline. Seedling **8210**, seen at OSU Tech, was a broader, more elegant 'Hula Girl' (Shoop), i.e., lavender-purple standards and peach-pink falls) with 2 branches plus spur and decent growth. [NOTE: This seedling was named **SPRING TIDINGS**, introduced in 1989].

CLASSICS: CAMELOT ROSE (Tompkins 1965); **TOUCHE** (Hamblen 1969); **LATIN LOVER** (Shoop 1969).

POTPOURRI:

A mixed bag of colors and patterns that don't really fit in any of the color groups above. **FANCY TALES** (Shoop 1980) is still wow-ing them! The craziest iris in the world, and unfortunately one of the most finicky. I'm getting it one more time to grow. Pure white standards. Falls split 50-50, with the top half a bright orange and the bottom half a grape-purple. Confused? Add fuel to the fire with a thick bushy tangerine beard. I love it! **GLITZ 'N' GLITTER** (Black 1988) isn't quite as wild, but I think it tried. A color break, with medium yellow standards and pansy to plum-purple falls with a zonal area in the heart of the falls of the standards' yellow color. Tan edge on the falls helps unite the colors. The yellow beards make it look similar to a Tall Bearded luminata. The falls' color will vary somewhat from season to season and with differing weather conditions.

One of the better things this year that, like 'Ice Cave', received virtually no advance publicity, was **VIDA** (Daling 1987). An elegant 'Beaux Arts' (Plough) rose in the standards and falls, with a lighter area of buff in the midribs and the center of the falls. The falls then have a distinctive gold edge ¼" in depth. All this is accentuated with a yellow beard and light lace on all parts. The breeding potential with this will be limitless. **GINGER SWIRL** (Schreiner 1985) was popular during convention and was Second Runnerup for the Cook Cup. A large, pleasantly tailored copper with orchid falls distinctly banded with ¾" of copper. Unfortunately, had you seen it 5 degrees warmer, you would have found that it faded and burned significantly. Nonetheless, beautiful if the weather is favorable. **CRYSTAL GLITTERS** (Schreiner 1985) was also a Cook Cup Runnerup and most worthy. Usually, with good distribution, a good Schreiner release will receive pretty much its share of publicity, but this one has been overlooked. Keep in mind it came out the same year as 'Darkside', 'Warrior King', 'Breakers' need I say more? Basically a sparkling cream with heavy, evenly distributed infusions of pastel apricot. Quite vigorous, and show stalks supreme! Not only that, but it's Miss Kitty's favorite iris – I knew she had good taste! Coming from two reds, but with gold ancestors, **WHO'EE** (Stevens 1986) is a unique blend of rich cinnamon, bronze, tan, and amber, and is glossed with deeper cinnamon-brown overtones. Totally unique, and quite sunfast in the Okie sun. I list it with the Tall Bearded rather than its erroneous classification of Border Bearded. [NOTE: This variety was later reclassified as a Tall Bearded by the hybridizer].

CLASSICS: **BAYBERRY CANDLE** (DeForest 1969); **PUNCHLINE** (Plough 1968); **BRIDE'S HALO** (H. Mohr 1973).

SPACE AGE:

This class of irises is called many things, including some that I would rather not commit to paper. Like it or not, Space Age irises have arrived. That the 'Snow Flurry' of them genetically, 'Sky Hooks' (Osborne), won an Award of Merit is historical and makes a statement. The intense, careful work that Manley Osborne and Monty Byers have done has catapulted these "novelties" into a legitimate class of irises. The advancements in only one decade have been, at a minimum, astounding, and most of the credit goes to 'Sky Hooks'. **Osborne 6-20-4** was a rich royal blue approaching violet, with the color and form in the tradition of 'Royal Touch' (Schreiner). Strong stalks carried 3 branches. The flowers consistently produced well-shaped self-colored horns and sometimes flounces.

The last 7 are all the products of Monty Byers from northern California: **SILVER SPOONS** (1987) is perhaps the best, and certainly the best named! An elegant silvery blue with diamond dusting. Silvery blue horns turn into consistent, well-shaped spoons, thus the name. **GOLDEN CALF**, a Border Bearded that may be pushing the limits, is a clean bright golden yellow with deeper, near orange horns. An established clump of this in the Spence Garden was most impressive. Smaller flowered and dainty, yet still nicely shaped. The cleanness of the hafts was especially noteworthy. [NOTE: **GOLDEN CALF** was never officially introduced.] **SCENTED BUBBLES** (1988) unfortunately inherited its parent's Victoria-Falls-Down weak stalks, although some in the clump stood up and were well branched. A medium blue-violet self with broad, round form and nice spoons that were consistent. Very vigorous with lush, healthy foliage (a trait that 'Sky Hooks' passes on to most of its children).

MAUVELOUS (1988), seen at OSU Tech under seedling number D209-1 on an aborted stalk, is a different smoky (perhaps muddy under certain conditions) mauve-pink with blue horns. 'Sky Hooks' is throwing its blue horns to its offspring. Perhaps this is the way to accomplish a blue-bearded pink. **DEITY** (1988) has broader form but not as finished a look as 'Silver Spoons'. It initially opens a blue-white, shortly thereafter fading to a white, retaining its light blue horns. Here we are again with 'Sky Hooks'. The elusive white with true blue beards? **LURID** (1987) is the most special to me, as it is a child of 'Heaven Helped'. A clean, sparkling white with consistent medium pink beards and horns, even more intense in saturation than 'Heaven Helped'. And my favorite of all, **LOVEBIRD** (1988), seen at OSU Tech after convention under seedling number D204-1. A small flowered, tightly

compact pale pink ground plicata stitched and distinctly banded red-violet. Then big fat fuzzy tangerine beards and horns. Simply charming and elegant.

MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

'New Wave', the 9-1-1 Award winner, has already been discussed. Also a fine white MTB, CRYSTAL RUFFLES (Dunderman 1986, diploid) was good again this year, as mentioned in "A Good Omen", although I found it blooming too heavily. The success of BUMBLEBEE DEELITE (Norrick 1986) was a nice surprise. Few medians have beaten out "all those tall" in previous conventions, and certainly never an MTB! Small, compact, well shaped flowers are a bright variegata with solid yellow standards and quite bright maroon to brick red falls, distinctly edged yellow. Obviously, it is floriferous, and makes a stunning clump.

CLASSICS: DISCO JEWEL (Guild 1978); CONSUMMATION (Welch 1978); NEW IDEA (Hager 1970, Tet).

BORDER BEARDEDS:

SHENANIGAN (Keppel 1985) is a rich pink based plicata, with rich medium salmon-pink standards and falls, and then the falls heavily sanded and washed a clean, harmonious bright wine-purple. Tangerine beards add a finishing touch. Typical high quality we've come to expect in Keppel BBs, with superb proportion and branching.

PEASANT DANCE (Helsley 1985), from straight Keppel blood, was well in proportion and class, and made a nice clump. Golden-brown standards are flushed violet. Falls are a white ground plicata, heavily marked with a wide border of red-violet with a charming belly stripe down the center. Compact flowers are heavily ruffled. **NURSERY SCHOOL** (Ghio 1985) sometimes grows too tall, but the simple clean apricot flowers are always small and in proportion. The quality of 'Marmalade Skies' (Niswonger) shows through. **FLASHDANCE** (Roderick 1986) is a rich violet with shocking red beards – the thickest yet. A nice attempt at a red-bearded blue. If you look closely, you can see a hint of a deeper halo/band around the falls. Growth habits, branching, and bud count are just average, but the color and flower form are special.

Durrance DL27, in the Spence Garden, was a bright gold remindful of the intensity of Jack's TB, 'Curious Yellow', but with compact flowers on proportionate stalks with 3 well-spaced branches. [NOTE: This iris was named **MOSTEST**, introduced in 1990]. **Black 8490C**, in full bloom during convention, is a heavily laced, small flowered lavender-blue with soft yellow beards. Nice stalks, but an especially fine garden variety. [NOTE: This iris was named **NAUTICAL FLAG**, introduced in 1989]. **Stahly 83-6** bloomed the week after convention at Wauzelia Shelley's, and was a fat little wine-violet (remindful of Les Peterson's TB, 'Song of Paris' from a few years back) with a silk sheen and absolutely smooth hafts. A hint of a blue flash below the beard made the flower vivid. Substance like leather, and everything, including size of plants, in perfect BB proportion.

CLASSICS: **TULARE** (Hamblen 1961); **BROWN LASSO** (Buckles-Niswonger 1975); **AMI BLUE** (Denney 1977).

INTERMEDIATE BEARDEDS:

HELLCAT (Aitken 1983) is the finest available today. A rich, deeper 'Mystique' neglecta in IB proportions. Strong plant habits, with consistently good stalks with 2 branches and double sockets. The silk sheen gives the flower a rich, inky look. Terry has produced 2 other fine IBs: **BUBBLY BLUE** and **NIGHT SHIFT** (both 1986, and both directly descended from 'Mystique'). 'Bubbly Blue' is a shimmering, ruffled light to medium blue with the form that similarly colored 'Silent Strings' (Dyer) failed to consistently produce. 'Night Shift' is the smoothest deep violet, nicely formed and lightly ruffled. Similar, but leaning more towards a deep navy blue, was **HERO** (L. Miller 1987). Strong, vigorous plants, and also has a nice sheen to add to the intensity of the color. **WHITE LILACS** (Warburton 1984) was a pleasant surprise, previously missed. A small-flowered, graceful, heavily ruffled icy white, completely infused blue-lilac throughout. Slender stalks are fairly tall for the class, to properly display its consistent 3 branches. Makes an elegant clump. A child of 'Full Tide' (O. Brown, TB), so no wonder the quality.

RED ZINGER (Black 1985) has been one of the more consistent newer IBs, with solid burgundy tones, a hint of a deeper spot, and a bronze beard. Has vigor and increase that its parent, poor ol' 'Pride of Oklahoma' (Dyer 1980, TB), could only dream of! **Black 85458A** always looks as though it will bloom out, it is so floriferous. But the increase is so rampant that it returns the next year in the same fashion. A clean white plicata, simply banded blue-lavender. Tall – at the top of the class – with rather small, ruffled flowers, but thin, graceful, harmonious stalks that consistently produce Queen of Show quality in nice proportion. [NOTE: This seedling was named **SHOOTING SPARKS**, introduced in 1989]. **Black 86432B** is a compact, IB version in the color of 'Aztec Dance' (Blyth) or 'Peasant Dance' (Helsley) -- tan-brown standards and white plicata falls banded violet. Superb form and proportion, and a pleasantly different color combination for this class. [NOTE: This seedling was named **HOT WHEELS**, introduced in 1990].

CLASSICS: **SEA PATROL** (C. Palmer 1970); **SNOW FESTIVAL** (C. Palmer 1975); **RASPBERRY BLUSH** (Hamblen 1976); **PEACHY FACE** (B. Jones 1976); **SNAPPIE** (Warburton 1976).

STANDARD DWARF BEARDEDS:

At the top of the list – pure class – is **AZURE GEM** (Hamblen 1982), the most elegant, shimmering light blue with clean, deeper azure blue beards. The form is impeccable. Fortunately, it is proving to be an outstanding parent. Melba's finest median ever. **CHUBBY CHEEKS** (Black 1985) is already proving to be one of the best parents in SDB history. This fat little stud throws its width, substance, and strong plant habits with consistency to

its children. A pure white plicata, heavily banded with lavender-blue, then a second band inside of steel gray plicata stitching. At the top of the limits of the class, it can be overgrown in rich soil. **BAY RUFFLES** (Warburton 1985) is the best newer blue, a pure elegant sky blue with self beards. It has the classical form of ‘Azure Gem’, and I would like to see the results of a union of the two. I feel it has been overlooked thusfar.

Another that is apparently being overlooked is **DELICATE PINK** (C. Palmer 1984), simply the finest pink SDB available. It is a wide soft baby pink the color of ‘Cherub Choir’ (Corlew, TB), with finished form and substance like leather. Unfortunately, we’ll never know the parentage, but the breeding potential is unlimited. In a class with so many good representatives as the yellows, a good new one must really have personality. **HIGHBORN KINSMAN** (Nichols 1985) is a clean bright lemon to medium yellow in the tradition of ‘Merry Sunlight’ (B. Jones), with a deeper brilliant gold spot half-way down the falls, blending harmoniously into the principal color. Excellent form, with horizontal falls that are finely edged with picotee. **Black 86253C** is a stunning plicata in the tradition of ‘Auburn Valley’ (Willott), with cream ground distinctly banded in deepest wine to maroon.

Black 86319B is the best improvement seen so far in the apricot class, a much improved ‘Melon Honey’ (Roberts), slightly deeper and better formed and substance. There is a hint of an orange spot around medium orange beards. It even has a touch of lace in the falls. 1 to 2 branches with up to 4 buds. [NOTE: This seedling was named **PATACAKE**, introduced in 1989]. **SERENITY PRAYER** (Dyer 1989) will be the last Dyer introduction for several years probably, as my own hybridizing endeavors are currently taking a vacation for a few years! From some extensive work for blue-bearded whites, it is actually a glowing cream with undertones of soft butter yellow and a mother-of-pearl sheen. Then, an intense, quite clean azure blue to indigo beard produces a nice contrast. A very stately, elegant median.

CLASSICS: **COTTON BLOSSOM** (B. Jones 1970); **ROYAL CARNIVAL** (C. Palmer 1974); **SAPPHIRE GEM** (Schmelzer 1975); **AXIOM** (Hager 1977); **COMBO** (Hager 1977).

LOUISIANAS

I may have lost most of my bearded irises in the floods during June 1987, but the Louisianas loved it! Bayou North had the best bloom ever, and I took several stalks to both the Oklahoma City and Tulsa shows when they were at peak. Only a true iris lover (nut?) would lug 30 stalks in the back of a little Chevy S-10 King Cab pickup 130 miles to a show!

The Bertinot bed went bananas. Increase was intense, and 3’ tall show stalks abounded. The star was **BELLEVUE’S COQUETTE** (1985), a simply glorious, sparkling light blue from ‘Clara Goula’ in the general color range of the TBs ‘Loyal Devotion’ or ‘Tide’s In’. It does have lavender undertones, but the effect was very blue. Broad, flat form with moderate ruffling inherited from Clara. Consistently opened 3 at once – even on the day of the show! **BELLEVUE’S ANGELA** (1984), **BELLEVUE BEAUTY** (1985), and **BELLEVUE BUTTERFLY** (1984) are also all from ‘Clara Goula’ and are all in the same general color range of cream to light yellow. Yet each is distinctive enough to have merited introduction. This year the best was ‘Bellevue’s Angela’, with the tallest, strongest stalks and the widest, most airy form. **BELLEVUE’S MICHELLE** (1983) was Neil’s first introduction, and is still one of his best. Pure elegance in a mauve-lavender bitone effect (an improved ‘Charlie’s Michele’ (Arny), with brighter tones) and even heavier ruffling than those listed above. Yes, again, a child of ‘Clara Goula’. The most popular, and my favorite second only to ‘Bellevue’s Coquette’, was **JERI** (1985). From ‘Full Eclipse’ (Hager), the saturation is not as deep a black, but the flowers are larger and open properly to full-blown size. Stunning in the garden. It was in full bloom on May 14, when I cut 2 stalks for the shows. It finally finished blooming on May 31, the last iris to close at Contemporary Gardens. Now that is excellent sequence of bloom!

VALERA (Arny 1980) is still a favorite, an absolute nonfading self in tones remindful of creamed coffee – about the color of the TB, ‘Coffee House’. I have yet to see another Louisiana like it. Superb show stalks too, often opening 3 blooms simultaneously. **BOLD COPY** (Rowland 1983) and **BOLD PRETENDER** (Morgan 1984), both from ‘Miss Arkansas’ (Chowning) – and therefore kin to ‘Ann Chowning’ (Chowning) – are fine reds. ‘Bold Copy’ was a little shorter, with a brighter, more cherry red with huge ‘Ann Chowning’ yellow signals. ‘Bold Pretender’ was a bit taller, with more of a dulled red and smaller, more diffused yellow signals. **DELTA DAWN** (Dunn 1983) is still my favorite of the Dunn varieties, with soft, elegant blended sunrise colors of peach, tan, orange, and rose-pink. **MARY’S CHARLIE** (Dunn 1982) comes next, with the most vibrant magenta tones in the species. Tall and finely ruffled.

E.C. EVERINGHAM (Raabe 1980) remains the most overlooked Louisiana of this decade. Although this glowing, broad violet received an HM, it deserves much more. **SINFONIETTA** (Raabe 1987) was the best ever, with smaller baby blue flowers with even truer blue tones than the classic ‘Eolian’ (Army). It made up for the disappointing debut here of **BYRON BAY** (Raabe 1986). Two others from Australia bloomed for their first time here, and were most impressive: **SUMMER MINSTREL** (Raabe 1986) is a difficult color to describe, with amber-russet tones blended with undertones of magenta. ‘E.C. Everingham’ has passed on its large, wide flowers, leathery substance, and strong plant habits to this quality bitone. **SEXTET** (Raabe 1982) is from bloodlines different from most pinks on the market, and is a very clear near-bitone soft pink with broad form, larger flowers, and reasonably weather-resistant substance.

And, finally, 2 other Australian releases returned with unique patterns that again drew a lot of attention: **C’EST SI BON** (Taylor 1983) is one of the most unique Louisianas on the market, with deep blue-violet principal color, then heavily washed and sprayed with a white ray pattern in the heart of the flower and on the edges of the falls. It has been likened to a plicata, and the resemblance is stunning. **OUR MR. BAILEY** (Hutchinson 1984) is a blue bitone, similar in style of ‘Mac’s Blue Heaven’ (MacMillan), but darker in both the standards and falls (and consequently more true blue). The white style arms are even more distinctive. It has been shorter and not as well branched and budded as some, but is most vigorous and floriferous, making a nice clump effect.

CLASSICS: **MARIE CAILLET** (Conger 1960); **CHARLIE’S MICHELE** (Army 1969); **CLYDE REDMOND** (Army 1971); **ILA NUNN** (Army 1969); **MAC’S BLUE HEAVEN** (MacMillan 1973); **WALTER DUPREE III** (Army 1971).

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