

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS—1993

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Another rough year for bearded irises. Heavy spring rains at just the wrong time, followed by warm (but still moist) weather after the bloom season, was fertile breeding ground for bacterial soft rot. Although my losses weren't as severe as experienced in the summer of 1992, I still lost about 1/3 of my planting. One good friend, with one of the most extensive and finest bearded collections in the country, lost virtually everything. How disheartening to see one of the major breeding programs in the United States be, essentially, wiped out – decimated – in a mere 4 weeks. I hope the American Iris Society wakes up and makes an honest, sincere effort to “find a cure” for this plague – and soon. Otherwise, growing bearded irises will become no more successful than the annual battle against fusarium in the gladiolus, and the AIS will go “on the skids” as has happened to the North American Gladiolus Council over the past 20 years. And our Assistant RVP wonders why our regional AIS membership has dropped dramatically recently! Sorry for the whining – and the soapbox – but with all these problems, I found it most difficult to buckle down and have the discipline and enthusiasm to assemble a major annual season in review this year. And, instead of November, Contemporary Views is being finished as late as it was last year – at least last year I had a good excuse!

All in all, I did much traveling, took a lot of notes, and did see some truly wonderful new entries into the iris world, although frankly they were few and far between. In spite of the cold weather and late bloom season, the “Median Spree in '93” would have to be considered a resounding success. The guests seemed empathetic and appeared to have a good time and appreciate all the hard work and planning we Sooner Staters did to make a successful event. I was pleasantly surprised at how well the Ft. Worth gardens bounced back from the devastation of soft rot in the summer of 1991 (many, many replacement plants were sent by the hybridizers). They had some very fine bloom – in spite of the fact that some, especially the Border Bearded, were so “overgrown” and pumped up that they lost their charm and proportion. They looked ridiculous.

All the rain had a negative impact on the glads, too. Midseason and late bloom was lousy, and hundreds of bulbs simply disintegrated right in the ground. But the early-planted varieties were spectacular, and the “gamble” to invest sight unseen in a major importation of about 150 varieties from Europe was well worth the effort and the money spent. Such incredible advancements have been made, and we were bedazzled by the sheer beauty of the heavily ruffled, waxy florets and the shimmering colors. Another 100 or so will be imported for evaluation in 1994.

Once again, the Louisianas and daylilies had a memorable bloom season, and their high-quality performance helped ease the heartache and disappointment of the bearded irises. Due to the extremely late season, I missed none of my Louisiana bloom, while I traveled to Italy to judge the Premio Firenze iris competition in Florence. I bloomed my first crop of daylily seedlings, and frankly, I was shocked at the high quality I saw in the patch.

Contemporary Views' award winners are reviewed first (with runnersup listed in order), then TBs by general color group, then medians reviewed by class, a few arilbreds, and then followed by a major portion devoted to Louisiana irises, American and foreign. Throughout the review, the term “New Iris” is defined as those introduced within the last 3 years inclusive (i.e., this year, irises introduced in 1991, 1992, and 1993).

AWARD WINNERS

1. The CONTEMPORARY AWARD, given to the Best New Iris seen: DRUM ROLL (Hager 1992) was selected as the finest of several high-quality blues released recently by The Master. Deeply channeled, well positioned rolling ruffles give motion to the pure, rich mid-blue color. Then the whole flower has an undercurrent in violet that gives added exuberance to the ensemble. Self beards are tipped a harmonious powder blue. Outstanding show stalks with formal candelabra branching, with 4 branches plus spur and even some lower rebranching. Although it will WOW them on the show bench, consistently opening 3 at once, it has backup buds up and down, making it a worthy garden iris, too. It also produces secondary late-season stalks that extend the period of bloom. But this added bonus does not jeopardize the healthy plant habits, leaving plenty of clean, disease resistant plants for next year. Broad florets are tightly constructed, in spite of the large size and heavy ruffling. The flower has substance supreme, and the whole flower is accentuated with diamond dusting.

Runnersup:

EVELYN HARRIS (McWhirter 1992) is remindful of a modern, healthy version of the old Dykes winner, 'Skywatch' (Benson 1964) which was one of the most beautiful but most despised Dykes winners of all times, according to the growers

around here. It had an infamous reputation of being extremely slow in growth; it bloomed, on the average, every third year; and had very low bud count. ‘Evelyn Harris’ captures this same elegant orchid color (perhaps a touch deeper) and adds elaborate deep ruffling on a show stalk with 10 buds, opening 2 to 3 at once with well timed backup buds. Healthy, strong plant habits, with vigorous increase producing a floriferous clump. The IB, **CEE JAY** (Lankow-Aitken 1992), had received much pre-introductory ballyhoo as being the best of the ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black, SDB) kids, and the first bloom here lived up to the expectations, although it isn’t firmly acclimatized to the Midwest yet. It is a broad, full violet on clean white plic, with the impeccable form and style of its famous super-parent, ‘Chubby Cheeks’. The band is wide and rich, and the color contrast between the pattern and the white base is outstanding. Stalks and plant habits appear to be flawless thusfar. **SESSIONS** (Cowdery 1992) is the “sleeper” in this group, and what a pleasant surprise. It is a shimmering, full blown pale lilac, gracefully fading to diamond dusted white in the center of the falls, capped with a brilliant coral-red beard. Broad and blowsy, adorned with heavy lace. Yet the flowers have the capability to open correctly, consistently. Notably healthy plant habits with a fine show stalk, opening 3 at once. Drop-dead gorgeous!

2. The **L’ELEGANTE AWARD** is given to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen this year. This does not necessarily address the overall plant habits, but all aspects must be acceptable to merit the variety receiving this award. And, of course, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, but these were the ones I was particularly smitten with: **MESMERIZER** (Byers 1991), well named! Space Age Irises are now taken to yet another planet in sheer beauty with this one. A captivating cold white, with flamboyant, persistent appendages that produce at least a spoon and sometimes a full flounce, resplendent with the fancy lacinating on the adornment equivalent to the fringed petaloiding Pauline Henry is now getting in some of her double daylilies. ‘Mesmerizer’ has broad form, yet still maintains an airy look. Broad candelabra show stalk branching is a notable improvement over predecessors in this color of Space Agers. My only complaint is that, thusfar, it seems to be a slow increaser, difficult to reestablish after transplanting. So, plant it and leave it alone!

Runnersup:

SUNCATCHER (Ensminger 1992). When first advertised, I thought, “no way, just another nice yellow”. WRONG! This tight, compact small-tall (28”) is the most beautiful yellow I’ve ever witnessed. The secret is in the buds. They begin like the old classic, ‘Light Fantastic’ (O. Brown 1968), with yellow buds almost totally infused with a mint to emerald green, and “crimped” on the tips as if a bug had been chewing on it! As the buds slowly unfurl, this crimping gives way to tight, deep ruffling, with a round little ball in sunshine to lemon yellow. But the mint green carries over into the expanding flower, giving a fresh look to a standard, traditional color. My only frustration with this iris is my inability to procure this one! Similar in form, style and size is **LACY PRIMROSE** (Hoage 1993). Almost missed this one in Ft. Worth, in that it wasn’t in bloom during the convention. However, I had to make one last spin through the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden, and I sure am glad I did! This one opened the day after the convention, and was it choice. Rather than a bright yellow, ‘Lacy Primrose’ is a more subdued, subtle (yes) primrose yellow with a fat antique gold beard, remindful of ‘Titian Gold’ (Rudolph 1973). In addition to the tight ruffling, it is further embellished with intense, complex lace. In spite of unseasonably cool nights, the blossom never tore or failed to open properly with the intricate lace. As with ‘Suncatcher’, it is at the lower end of the spectrum in size of flower and stalk height – perfect proportions. **FROSTICO** (Gartman 1992) is yet another on the smaller scale, this time in a soft, delicate light apricot with frosted white falls banded in the standards’ color. Tight lace is gracefully crocheted onto the florets. Compact stalks stretch just enough to adequately display its good branching. The plant habits appear to be a significant improvement over others released in yesteryear with this color pattern.

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break: **PELE** (Aitken 1993), First Runnerup to the Pick of the Litter Award last year, goes on this year to steal this award. What an incredible hybridizing achievement! And the word we get from the hybridizer is that he has stumbled upon a gold mine of a breeder! Wait for the offspring, in all different classes, mind you! Domed, closed standards are a glowing orange. The simply stated oval falls explode into molten lava-red/black, carefully edged the color of the standards. Thick, brilliant orange beards just set the whole combo off. Magnificent plant habits, vigorous, with slender foliage and slender stalks with 1 branch, 3 buds. Superb bloom-increase ratio. Brilliant although sultry.

Runnersup:

TWEETY BIRD (Black 1992), the Pick of the Litter Award winner from the 1991 review, made a smashing showing at the Median Spree, winning the In-Region Best-Introduced Award by a landslide! In its own way, as stunning as ‘Pele’, but with light sherbet colors in tangerine and pineapple, topped off with a bright orange beard. Fat, sassy flowers have mint texture veining and are heavily ruffled. Very vigorous plants provide a generous display of blooms with excellent sequencing. **LUCY PAYENS** (Taylor 1993, LA) is very close to a variegata in appearance, brilliant and flashy, with the flamboyance and personality of its cousin, ‘Margaret Lee’ (Taylor 1992). Taller, with better branching and ability to open lower blossoms. Its overall approach in color comes more from the brown side rather than the orchid side, such as

‘Margaret Lee’. Creamy apricot standards are heavily marked with a red flush in the midribs. The wide, round, heavily ruffled falls are a rich purple-red. For me in Blanchard this year, the colors were more like a 2-tone brown, with the depth approaching the richness of ‘Gladiator’s Gift’ (Taylor 1991). **PINK SAPPHIRE** (Hamblen 1992) I nearly missed. As with so many from Melba’s line, it is a late bloomer, coming out after most of the crowd has gone home to rest up from the TB season’s hectic pace. It is the culmination of a line of pink/blue bicolors that goes all the way back to ‘Touche’ (Hamblen 1969). The standards are the pinkest and clearest yet seen in this attempt, and the falls truly as close to blue as seen in this color combo. All set off with a bright raspberry beard (orange beard tipped violet). Shimmering satin finish.

4. The **SUN BELT AWARD** is given to the Best Proven Variety, i.e., one that has been on the market long enough to be thoroughly tested in the Midwest (at least 4 years): **RARE TREAT** (Schreiner 1987) is a marked improvement of its mother, ‘Blue Staccato’ (Gibson 1977), which was in and of itself a fine iris. Chaste purest white ground is carefully stitched in a ¼” band of inky blue. Slender, graceful stalks are strong enough to hold up 3 moderate-sized, lightly ruffled flowers open at once. A great show iris with stunning carrying power when left in the garden. Super-fine plant habits. Deserving of its Award of Merit in 1992.

Runnersup:

BEFORE THE STORM (Innerst 1989) continues to impress with its overall health and cleanliness. A glowing black, approached from the blue (indigo) side, with a satin sheen in the texture rather than the soot black velvet pile of some of its contemporaries. Broad, suave flowers have a refined look, stalks are decent, and it is incredibly weather resistant, refusing to waterspot after the rain or bubble up and trash out from the heat. **SILHOUETTE** (Dunn 1989) continues to gain my respect, year after year. When other varieties floundered in the adverse weather conditions these past 2 seasons, this resilient plicata came through heads up. Substance appears soft, but is deceptively good. A soft medium violet-blue, with the standards almost completely saturated. The falls have a patch of white in the center, but are gently sanded with the standards’ color, gradually becoming deeper toward the petal edges in a smooth sanding, rather than the blotched, mottled manner so popular right now. Either way is attractive, but ‘Silhouette’ is one of the best of its type. **PENCHANT** (Harding 1986), winner of the Australasian Dykes Medal in 1991, has now truly proven itself in the States. It received the best each of its parents had to offer – ‘Mary Frances’ (Gaulter) and ‘Full Tide’ (O. Brown) – presented in a larger flower than ‘Full Tide’, with a hauntingly beautiful smoky undertoning that is (surprisingly) most unusual in light to mid-blues. Broad, full, and moderately ruffled, with show stalks supreme, inherited from both sides of the parentage. Flawless plant habits.

5. The **DARK HORSE AWARD** is given to the variety introduced within the past 10 years or so that I feel has been overlooked by AIS judges and deserves/deserved higher awards: **MOMENTUM** (Dunn 1986) was one of the convention guests here for the 1988 National in Oklahoma City, and I have been impressed with it everywhere I have seen it ever since. There have been a plethora of ‘Spinning Wheel’ (Nearpass) children the past decade. Although it was a fine iris itself, and a parent of many high-quality releases, there are 2 main defects it tends to pass on to its offspring: (1) The substance is “soft” –literally, physically thinner than we accept in most modern irises, and (2) the bottom branch, more often than not, gets very long and goofy, ruining the symmetry of the stalk by extending itself way up the stalks. I’ve seen cases, on highly-touted varieties, where the bottom branch literally came up and bloomed at the same level as the terminal blossom! Neither defect is present with ‘Momentum’. Tall, rather slender stalks will produce a consistent show stalk with 4 well-placed branches. The flower substance is strong and durable, holding the wide, well-shaped flowers together exceptionally. Here you have 2 plicatas in 1: The standards are white based, edged in diffused, bleeding stitching in deep violet, capped with the trademark spoke pattern (“spinning wheel”) at the shoulders around a full violet beard. A very classy, harmonious look. Amazing it never even got an Award of Merit!

Runnersup:

Two from Barry Blyth have not been grown and praised adequately here in America: **PASS THE WINE** (1985) is a glorified, modern version of the great old classic, ‘Camelot Rose’ (Tompkins 1965), with smoky pink standards atop velvet-smooth falls colored in a rich plum-wine. The broad, impressive flowers are topped with a brilliant tangerine-red beard. Great plant habits, producing husky well-branched stalks. **MAGHAREE** (1986) is one of the richest from the pink amoena lines. Standards are basically white, but heavily infused with an orange-pink glow in the midribs. Broad falls are a luminous peach brandy blend with an elegant, distinctive halo in white. Orange beards. It has a neon glow in its undertoning. This is one where I think a “strange” name has hurt its popularity. Neil Bertinot from Opelousas, Louisiana (just north of “mecca” – Lafayette) has produced several high quality Louisiana irises, but most, with the exception of the great black, ‘Jeri’ (1985), have gone virtually unheralded outside of Acadiana. **BELLEVUE COQUETTE** (1985) is one of my favorite varieties coming from the famous ‘Clara Goula’ (Arny 1978). It is a shimmering, deeply ruffled flaxen blue, with mysterious undertones in violet that add life to the flower. In cold, wet years, the coloration can be a bit “muddy”,

but in a “normal” year, it is sheer elegance. Strong vigorous plants produce magnificent show stalks with great positioning.

6. The **CREAM OF THE CROP AWARDS** go to the 4 varieties on the Dykes Medal eligibility list that I consider the most worthy, in order: **HELLCAT** (Aitken 1983, IB), which seems to be my perennial winner. Still didn’t get it, and this was the last year of eligibility, so you’ll see something else next year in this slot....This mesmerizing deep neglecta from the famous Dykes Medalist, ‘Mystique’ (Ghio 1975) has a richness and aura about it that I thought its parent lacked. **EXTRAVAGANT** (Hamblen 1983) was again my second choice this year. This late blooming amethyst with cerise-sienna beards never received its “probers” from us, and that’s a pity. **ACADIAN MISS** (Arny 1980) continues to impress me for its garden value and purity, with lightly ruffled, dainty solid white flowers on shorter, compact show stalks. **LATIN HIDEAWAY** (Nichols 1986), from home-grown Okie-turned-Texan, just grows in popularity and respect. My only complaint is its variability in coloring from one garden to the next and from one season to another. The 50’ bed of it at Max Clark’s Garden at the Ft. Worth Convention, in full bloom in all its glory, was an unforgettable sight.

7. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding seedling viewed this year. Heck, flip a coin. For the first time, we have a tie for this award: **SPIRIT WORLD** (Keppel 1994) was “discovered” at the Ft. Worth Convention. See, I didn’t lie to you! It swept the “Most Favored Guest” honors and would have won more, if it had not still been a seedling. Keith Keppel is a smart man, and with the avalanche of expectation and pre-introductory publicity, he wisely waited a year to release this and its sib, **MIND READER** (also 1994), to build up his stock. ‘Spirit World’ is a black luminata, in a pattern never seen before in Tall Bearded. Standards are deepest orchid, with a thin halo in ecru-tan. Falls approach black, shot throughout with “reverse marbling” in silver-white, and then edged with a more intense halo similar to the standards. Breaking from the “traditional” luminata definition, the beard is red, not white, but it sits atop a spot of white around the beard, giving the luminata glow. Of course, it’s a Keppel, so you know that even a color break will have good qualities to back it up, with outstanding branching (4 plus rebranching), bud count (at least 10), and plant vigor. ‘Mind Reader’ is basically a deeper version overall, especially in the standards, but the haloes are this time done in a shimmering silver. And rather than a red beard, the beard here quietly disappears into the white luminata patch at the top of the falls. At a time where I have become disheartened and disillusioned with bearded irises in general, these 2 may just resurrect my enthusiasm.

Runnersup, and its’ almost a disgrace to call these 2 “runnersup” to anything:

STINGER (Byers 1994) is the world’s first space Age SDB, to now go with 3 or 4 truly worthy IB Space Agers on the market. A simple description would be a tan on cream plicata like its mother, ‘Muchacha’ (Gatty 1983), with burnt gold beards ending in smashing purple horns. The parentage (SDB X TB) should produce an IB, and I was a leading skeptic as to its classification. But after 2 years of testing in awfully rich soil, it remained truly in class (thanks to the daintiness of ‘Muchacha’, surely). We are grateful to Phyllis and Jack Dickey for “saving” Monty Byers’ important work and for keeping Moonshine Gardens alive after Monty’s untimely demise. **DANCING VOGUE** (Taylor 1994, LA) arrived in America with much anticipation as a breakthrough in breeding for the elusive hot pink Louisiana. It bloomed, and although it’s still not quite the screaming neon pink I can envision in my overly-active imagination, it is a major advancement in color, and is incredibly elegant! It is a clear orchid-pink to mallow, complete with the voluptuous form, finish, and ruffling we’ve come to expect from John Taylor’s work. Orchid buds open to the full formed flowers, with ruffling so deep that the underneath of the petals comes through. A complete package here, with outstanding stalks and strong vigorous plant habits.

TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP

REDS TO MAROONS:

ROSSETTO (Augusto Bianco 1995) marked the debut of a new, talented young hybridizer from Italy, winning 3rd Place out of 105 entries in this year’s Premio Firenze competition in Florence, Italy. It also won Best Italian Entry and Best Red. A wide, machismo oxblood to scarlet red from breeding different from any work currently being done in America. It has superb branching and bud count like the Stevens reds, such as ‘Clearfire’ and ‘Heat Pump’, but with even thicker, stronger stalks. Double budded, with 3 branches and spur on some stalks. The thick substance presents the rich glowing red with a velvet pile. Robust blue-green foliage is an added plus. Name pending, subject to formal registration/acceptance with the AIS Registrar in 1994. Current plans are that it will be introduced to the U.S. in 1995 by Yours Truly for Mr. Bianco. Two red seedlings in Ft. Worth looked most promising: **Sutton 5-18** is a lilting full maroon-wine self, tightly constructed with swirling standards and deeply ruffled horizontal falls. The flower has even deeper texture veins throughout and a self beard tipped chocolate. **Gartman 86-20** is a bitoned red with open upright standards in medium red, atop deeper

falls with a hint of a lighter halo. Frilly style arms have a heavy infusion of gold. Beards are deep bronze. The peppering of white in the shoulder area suggests it has a plicata heritage, and adds distinctiveness. [**NOTE:** Named **REDWOOD GROVE** and introduced in 1996.]

CLASSICS: **FIREBALL** (Schreiner 1967); **MANUEL** (Denney 1977); **PRIDE OF OKLAHOMA** (Dyer 1980).

BROWNS:

CHOCOLATE MARMALADE (Fort 1990) is a unique blend of colors, well named, with rich pure coffee standards and burnished, toasted orange falls, gradually transforming into cocoa edges, all topped with a thick, bright orange beard. Smaller, tight flowers on a shorter compact stalk. **BOSS TWEED** (McWhirter 1993) was remindful of a larger, improved ‘San Jose’ (Ghio 1978), a suntanned honey-bronze with an orchid flash below the medium gold beards. Slightly deeper brown at the hafts suggests a shoulder pattern. Contrasting gold style arms bleed into honey. One seedling, **Mary Dunn M87-887X**, was very different. The base color is light to medium brown, but the upper part of the falls has a deep mahogany spot pattern, similar to what you would find in a dwarf! Huge flowers that retained their saturation are placed on tall stalks that held up well in the wind. The standards are swirling – almost conical – and the falls are flaring. An attractive bold look with strong presentation – in no way drab or dingy.

CLASSICS: **MEADOWLARK FRINGE** (Peterson 1973); **PROSPERITY** (Keppel 1972); **ROMAN COPPER** (Schreiner 1973).

APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

LACE LEGACY (Greenwood 1992) was released by Terry Aitken for Doris Greenwood, and celebrates and honors the work she has done in heavily laced irises, all from a tiny backyard garden in Vancouver, Washington. Almost BB in proportions, this tidy, voluptuous apricot-orange has heavy, tight lace engraved into the edges on all parts. Remarkably improved branching (no nasty toe-in branches here), with double sockets producing buds that are even filigreed, all with a strong mint green influence. **ALLURING** (Gartman 1989) is a large, frothy soft apricot with ivory in the falls, gently haloed in the principal color. The color saturation is similar to ‘Frostico’ (Gartman), but the lace here is replaced with deeply fluted ruffling and a more airy form. Sheer elegance, with a waxen finish instead of diamond dusting. **CARACAS** (Ghio 1992) appeared to have the strongest and healthiest plants in a line of oranges that, although possessing wonderful individual flowers, has left a lot to be desired in plant production and stalk strength. It is a very rich, full orange, deeper than ‘Montevideo’ (Ghio 1987) or ‘Good Show’ (Hager 1988), retaining a glowing clarity of color despite the famous Ghio “toasted” look that is so attractive.

CLASSICS: **MELODIAN** (O. Brown 1972); **PEACH FROST** (Schreiner 1972); **SKYBURST** (Burger 1972).

PINKS:

SWEET REVENGE (Meek 1992) is a joyous appleblossom to baby ribbon pink, slightly lighter and diamond dusted in the heart of the flower. Tight, closed standards and wide horizontal falls are adorned in an elaborate networking of ruffles and lace. Very charming, with a “come hither” look. **AYLA** (Kegerise 1988) is remindful of a glorified ‘Pink Pirouette’ (Newhard 1970), the beautiful overlooked pod parent of ‘Beverly Sills’ (Hager), with a hint more apricot in its makeup. Rather short stalks have that most famous Kegerise trademark – thick stalks with great branching, in this case 3 branches plus spur, double socketed. Opens 3 at once on a perfect candelabra show stalk. **IN PERSON** (Hager 1991) was the best of the “next generation” of Hager pinks seen. An even wider, more sophisticated version of ‘Beverly Sills’ in the same basic color range. Large round flowers on outstanding stalks, although the bottom branch tends to reach for the sky. **NORMA JEAN** (Durrance 1991) is a waxy deep pink, with almost the same intensity as the classic ‘Venetian Dancer’ (Hamblen 1974), slightly richer at the shoulders, around a thick shrimp-coral beard. Widely spaced deep waves (not ruffles) are carved into the flower for a different look. Thick as leather; were the waves tighter and closer together, the flower would surely have difficulty opening.

CLASSICS: **BLOSSOM PINK** (Buckles-Niswonger 1975); **LIZ** (Gatty 1974); **LOUDOUN PRINCESS** (Crossman 1975); **VENETIAN DANCER** (Hamblen 1974).

LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:

Two from Ben Hager were favorably noted: **HORATIO** (1991), runnerup to the Cook Cup in Ft. Worth, is a noble, broad, imposing flower in full lavender. Extremely tall, with thick stalks that could endure that Texas wind, and still hold up 3 whopper-flowers open at once, with formal candelabra branching. Floriferous, but with markedly improved plant habits from predecessors from this line of work (this one doesn't bloom out). And **PRESTIGE ITEM** (1992) is a large but tightly constructed salmon-rose, approaching strawberry, with just a suggestion of a deeper band around the falls. It is remindful of a cleaner, brighter 'Entourage' (Ghio 1977), but with not quite the show stalks. **LIGHTNING BOLT** (Ghio 1993) was a pleasant surprise, especially in the plant habit department. A 'Cranberry Ice' (Schreiner 1976) type, but more muted/subdued in intriguing grayed overtones. The heart of the falls lightens gradually to almost a mother-of-pearl effect, then is rudely interrupted with a jolt (bolt) of thick burnished sienna to orange beards. Elegantly fluted, with superb branching and plant habits, with thick healthy increase.

I went on hiatus from actively hybridizing too long, for Jack Durrance beat me to one of "my" names. **GRAPES OF WRATH** (1989) is a perfectly named glowing grape juice self, heavily fluted in a tight formal structure. The beard is most unusual, a lighter smoky blue that truly adds charisma to the flower. **MY MAUVE** (Jameson 1994), seen in the Ft. Worth Convention gardens as Seedling #19-87, didn't really kick in to good bloom until immediately after the convention (naturally!). A 2-year clump produced 6 stalks, all at exactly the same height (approximately 34"), with exactly the same – carbon copy – candelabra type branching (3 branches), and each with its terminal opening the same morning. It is a burnished, crushed cranberry (i.e., mauve), with changeable taffeta translucence in the falls, lightly ruffled. Somewhat deeper at the shoulders, with some haft marks that do not detract noticeably around the sienna beards. Modest flowers on a more slender, graceful stalk.

CLASSICS: PARIS OPERA (Benson 1972); **PEARL CHIFFON** (Varner 1972); **WHIRLING RUFFLES** (Rudolph 1972).

DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:

FOREIGN STATESMAN (Innerst 1993), in a market flooded with good but not unique 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner) look-alikes, had pizzazz and distinctiveness. A full purple self with absolutely no other color, except that the entire flower has deep violet texture veining running throughout the flower, including bleeding upward through the standards. Self beards with no bronze to ruin the effect. Classically waved and ruffled, just like a good 'Titan's Glory' kid should, plus outstanding stalks and plant habits. **MIDNIGHT DANCER** (Schreiner 1991) has taken a back seat to the highly praised (justifiably so) 'Hello Darkness' (Schreiner). For me, 'Midnight Dancer' was a deep indigo-black with decent form, superb substance, and stellar plant habits and stalks. It has a soot-black self beard. Watch out for those "Schreiner freebies" – sometimes they're among the best of the lot! **HELLO DARKNESS** (Schreiner 1992) was outstanding again this year, with its incredible branching and bud count, and its sooty black attire. It produced titillating clumps in Ft. Worth and received runnerup honors for the Cook Cup. **SON OF DRACULA** (Hedgecock 1991) was plain and uneventful in the Ft. Worth gardens, yet was so impressive in Italy, so far away from home, it earned First Runnerup to the Premio Firenze! Of course, the entries are secret-coded until after the competition has concluded. It was so good, I thought I was judging 'Hello Darkness'!

CLASSICS: BY NIGHT (Schreiner 1976); **PANSY ROYALE** (P. Smith 1977); **YANKEE MAID** (Gadd 1974).

BLUES:

AZZURRA (Augusto Bianco 1995) was another discovery in Florence, and I'm pleased to say it too has been imported and is scheduled for USA released through me, with 'Rossetto' in 1995, hopefully. As with 'Rossetto', the name is tentative, pending formal acceptance by the AIS Registrar. It is a pure, shimmering satiny azure blue with impeccable form. Not just another blue, it is remindful of the personality of the great 'Loyal Devotion' (Waltermire 1982), but perhaps a touch deeper and more sapphire in saturation. In addition to finishing in the Top 10, it was in serious contention for Best Blue and Best Branched at the competition. **YAQUINA BLUE** (Schreiner 1992) is another fine contribution to a legacy of magnificent Schreiner blues. When will it end? Somehow, they manage to come up with yet another great addition, and somehow each has distinctiveness and personality of its own. This one is an ultramarine blue, wide and ruffled with a lacquer finish. Rich blue-green foliage confirms its supreme plant habits.

CLOUD BALLET (Fort 1990) was finally seen in an established clump, and it was impressive! Fresh flowers, especially on a cloudy day, are a cool, pale azure blue. But look out! Let the sun come out, and magic happens, right before your very eyes! The heart of both the standards and falls gracefully fades to a pure crystalline white. Then all parts retain the azure blue on the edges. Crystal chandelier! Captivating! Its only notable defect is a tendency to produce short, rather clubby stalks that lose some of the branching/flowers in the lush foliage. This one is better in a newer planting rather than a large, established clump, I believe. In addition to the Contemporary Award winner, 'Drum Roll', Ben Hager had 2 other

choice blues: **CALM SEA** (1992) is similar to ‘Drum Roll’, but not quite as deeply saturated or infiltrated with violet undertoning. Moderate ruffling with show stalks supreme (4 to 5 branches, rebranching, and 12 buds). **BIG SKY** (1990) has similar form and stalks, but in a clearer, lighter, simpler flower with a silken sheen, with gentler ruffling.

CLASSICS: **AVALON BAY** (Hamner 1974); **MILLRACE** (Gaulter 1975); **PACIFIC PANORAMA** (Sexton 1960); **PALACE GUARD** (Messick 1977).

WHITES TO NEAR-WHITES:

SILENT SCREEN (Moore 1989) was a “cup clump” at the Ft. Worth Botanical Garden, and sure enough, it wound up First Runnerup in the Cook Cup voting. Tall, willowy show stalks produce eloquent, shapely icy blue-white moderate sized flowers, complemented with soft powder blue beards. Ruffling is tightly chiseled into the ice flow. The overall effect is silver. Technically, **PERILS OF PAULINE** (K. Mohr 1989) is a pale blue-orchid, but the effect is a cold icy white, blocky and heavily laced like its parent, ‘Wings of Dreams’ (Woodside 1975). But the beard is its unique calling card – coral tipped dark blue-orchid, giving the effect of raspberry! Unique? Nothin’ like it on the market, and a scintillating look. **PERFECT DOLL** (Hager 1991) is a fine addition to the red-bearded whites, blocky and broad with a thick tangerine to red beard and light lace. Outstanding show stalks. **INTEGRA** (Corlew 1993) is similar, but with a red beard so soft it is barely noticeable. It has softer substance (less starchy) than ‘Perfect Doll’, with heavier, deeper ruffling and only a hint of lace. It too has excellent show stalks and superb plant habits, producing floriferous, well-balanced clumps. **NEAT PLEATS** (Burseen 1992) is a much glorified version of ‘Silver Shower’ (Schreiner 1974), a silvery pale blue-orchid with white beards tipped tangerine. Deep, tight pleating/ruffling. Last year it was blooming out (as ‘Silver Shower’ often does); it seems to have settled down this year. **Gene Gaddie 336-6** is a heavily ruffled and laced billowing pure white with an attractive bright yellow beard. It is surely from the great laced blue, ‘Charisma’ (Blocher 1976) with those signature show stalks, tall and thick, with wide formal candelabra branching. It also has the same healthy plant habits and disease resistance we find in ‘Charisma’.

CLASSICS: **MISS DOLLY DOLLARS** (Benson 1970); **SOCIAL WHIRL** (Ghio 1976); **TRILL** (Terrill 1974).

CREAMS TO YELLOWS:

Several pleasant surprises here this year; ironically, several reminiscent of the color and style of the great old classic (should’ve won the Dykes), ‘Lemon Mist’ (Rudolph 1972). **EMILIE DOLGE** (Spoon R. 1990), to the best of my knowledge, I cannot find an introduction date of this variety, and am contacting the hybridizer for more information, for I certainly want to grow it. Perfection in form, dramatically ruffled and blessed with beautiful texture veining and diamond dusting, with a self beard in lemon. It has a chiffon look to it. Branching is flawless and consistent with 3 branches, double-budded, often opening 3 at once. Healthy purple-based foliage. [NOTE: It was introduced in 1995]. From England is **EARLY LIGHT** (Scopes 1992), famous in Europe already (British Dykes winner, and a former Premio Firenze runnerup), just now being released in the United States and discovered by us Yankees. Similar in nature and color to ‘Emilie Dolge’, but in a more fluffy look rather than blocky form. Half a world away, from Victoria, Australia, comes **TUNGKILLO** (Donnell R. 1988), a previous Premio Firenze winner (1991), but I don’t think it has been formally introduced yet. It is a softer, creamy yellow, highlighted with a brighter, deep yellow to near orange beard. A vision of health, producing massive clumps loaded with bloom and strong show stalks. One of the “sleepers” this year was **DAWN’S EDGE** (Carr 1989), understated elegance in ivory-cream with an inner glow of yellow and a thick deep yellow beard/beacon. Classical form, with chaste texture veining amid diamond dusting. Pure class! **TROPICAL MORN** (Hamner 1992) could perhaps be placed in the yellow amoena or yellow bitone group, as the falls are about one shade deeper than the standards. But the overall effect is a rich, seductive saffron gold, with amazing color retention so often lacking in this color. In the Sun Belt, they often completely bleach out to a limp white, completely devoid of pigmentation! Not so here.

CLASSICS: **CARONDELET** (Corlew 1972); **COUNTRY MANOR** (Kegerise 1973); **PEACE OFFERING** (Ghio 1973); **WARM GOLD** (Schreiner 1972); **WINNING SPIRIT** (Blaylock 1973).

PLICATAS:

Of course, the Iris World is getting ready to be “revolutionized” with the release in 1994 of the 2 deep luminatas from Keith Keppel, ‘Spirit World’ and ‘Mind Reader’, reviewed in the Pick of the Litter Awards. Keith has some other very nice things happening in his diverse plicata lines. In general, we are starting to see stronger, more resilient and healthy, rot-resistant releases from him. It is very obvious that he is cognizant of the ongoing problem with these fancy plicatas, and is being cruelly scrupulous in his selection process. **FILM FESTIVAL** (Keppel 1993) is a bravado mauved-wine on

buff plic with a stunning burnt henna beard. The standards are fluted, held upright, and are almost completely saturated in color. The falls are heavily ruffled, horizontal, and heavily banded in a deeper, purer wine, then irregularly sanded into the ivory heart. Robust, blue-green plants producing sturdy, well-branched stalks, all remindful of the great ‘Raspberry Fudge’ (Keppel 1989). **DISTANT ROADS** (Keppel 1991) I personally don’t care for, in the color patterns and combinations, but it is a fine iris. Shapely, domed standards are a muted ochre-olive, heavily flushed in violet. A small white patch in the center of the falls gives way to a broad plicata band in plum and violet, with peppering infiltrating the white patch, which is also dissected with a wide belly stripe. Broad flowers are shapely and moderately waved. Outstanding Keppel stalks, with 3 branches plus spur.

POWER SURGE (Ghio 1991), was probably the best newer fancy plicata in the Blanchard garden this year, an improvement over the zesty but low-budded **INDISCREET** (Ghio 1988). It is a gregarious plic with deep salmon to apricot ground, heavily saturated in rich magenta stitching and peppering. Much better branching than many of its contemporary ‘Gigolo’ (Keppel) kids, with thick sturdy stalks. Deep blue-green foliage appears to be healthy and rot resistant. **FLAMING SUN** (Carr 1989) was yet another “sleeper” discovered at the Ft. Worth gardens. It is a brilliant plicata from ‘Flamenco’ (Keppel), with clean solid sunshine yellow standards. Falls are heavily ruffled, horizontal, with a yellow base patch heavily sanded and stitched in brown and red. Thick deep gold beards add to the brightness. Excellent substance and sunfast. **RASPBERRY SNOW** (Sutton 1991) was most definitely a pleasant surprise. Ivory standards are almost completely covered in a clear, happy raspberry-pink. Snow white falls are carefully edged in a ½” band of raspberry, with more peppering and a “V” at the shoulders right around the bronzed sienna beards. The form is tight, with artistic, billowy ripple-ruffles.

CLASSICS: HAPPY HALO (Gibson 1973); **PEEK A BLUE** (Sexton 1975); **THUNDERCLOUD** (Keppel 1973); **WINNER’S CIRCLE** (Plough 1972).

AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, AND NEGLECTAS:

CHOCOLATE VANILLA (Blyth 1991) is, by far, the best attempt to date at a brown amoena. Standards are a waxy, creamy ivory with very little flush in the midribs which is so common in modern amoena work. Rounded, simple falls are a leathery bronzed chocolate, topped with deep brown beards, approaching black! Yet another neat color break we have seen come from the innovative work being done with the great parent, ‘Touch of Bronze’ (Blyth 1984). **REGAL AFFAIR** (Shoop 1989) is a fun attempt at a red, white, and blue iris, with cool pale blue standards atop royal blue to violet falls, accented with a bold red beard. There are some white lines at the hafts, but they do not distract too much. There is a light blue rim completely encompassing the flower. **BOOGIE WOOGIE** (Nichols 1993) is actually an amoena-plic, with solid white standards with just a suggestion of a flush of orchid in the midribs. The falls are technically a white-based plic, elegantly marbled and striated with orchid and plum – *a la* old ‘Aladdin’s Wish’ (Murawska) – more deeply saturated at the top, forming a shoulder pattern. The falls are horizontal and lightly ruffled and laced, showing off the fancy pattern.

I initially thought the substance was soft; however, after a full day of mid-80s temperatures on a windy Texas day, it held itself together very well. Fairly short, but still maintaining good branching and bud count.

Although reviewed last year, **IN REVERSE** (Gatty 1993), deserves another mention, in that it is definitely the finest reverse blue amoena advancement I have seen. However, just wait – there’s a new one coming out of Italy with even more intense contrast, to be released in a few years. **Virginia Messick M85-2-J** is a fat, squatty flower in a reverse blue amoena, an ethereal light grey-blue with extremely deep ink-blue infusions predominating the lower half of the standards from the midribs. Unusual olive green texture veins permeate the falls. The beard is a rich old gold and makes a nice contrast. The falls are so wide they nearly overlap. In the neglecta class, **ALASKAN SEAS** (McWhirter 1992) is a nice contribution. Harking back to ‘Dream Lover’ (Tams 1971) days, it is a wide blocky flower, with cool blue standards and velvet-smooth deep blue falls. Outstanding show stalks with multiple branching and healthy blue-green foliage. It is a very dramatic color combination.

CLASSICS: BAROQUE PRELUDE (Zurbrigg 1974); **DIALOGUE** (Ghio 1973); **PEACH SPOT** (Shoop 1973); **SEA VENTURE** (B. Jones 1972).

BICOLORS:

TANGO BRAVO (Blyth 1987) was a sleeper for me; I had never seen it before. It is a zesty bi-product of pink amoena breeding, with glowing apricot standards flushed coral and falls 2 tones deeper, complemented with a bright orange beard. However, the whole flower is underlaid with a strange chartreuse underglow, giving an eerie look to the flower. Unlike anything I’ve ever seen in TBs. Brighter, with a rounded, full form, is **ENGLISH CHARM** (Blyth 1989), perhaps

technically a peach amoena, has too much color to be formally recognized as an amoena. Standards are a warm cream, heavily pulsated with a rich apricot presence. Falls are smooth medium apricot, encircled with a distinctive ¼" edge in cream. The whole flower has a glow like its parent, 'Cameo Wine' (Blyth 1983). **DIFFERENT APPROACH** (Innerst 1992) is similar to its mother, 'Dualtone' (O. Brown 1977) in coloring, but with richer tones. Standards are a full pure peach, gently waved with carved wax substance. Falls are a translucent lavender-blue, again elegantly waved and waxy. There is a blending of peach in the shoulders around orange beards, pulling the 2 principal colors together. Outstanding strong, thick, well-branched stalks. The only problem observed as that the clump evaluated was blooming out. Nonetheless, so good it is "worth the risk".

MARY D (Hamblen 1988) is a tall, extremely late-blooming 'Touche' (Hamblen) type, but with a captivating smoke screen throughout the flower. It inherited its beard from its great mother, 'Sophistication' (Hamblen 1984) – burnt orange, but heavily tipped deep blue, giving the illusion of raspberry to the eye. Superb show stalks, typical of this line. **PARTY QUEEN** (L. Miller 1991) is a bizarre burnished rose bitone, deepening to a ruby red in the falls. Big brazen burnt orange beards just add to the overall funky look. Small and compact, with glowing colors inherited from its mother, 'Far Corners' (Moldovan 1978), which appears to be turning out to be a super-breeder for unique new colors. 'Party Queen' is remindful of a brighter, deeper, modern version of 'Burnished Rose' (Fail 1967).

CLASSICS: **ARTWORK** (Keppel 1976); **FREEDOM ROAD** (Plough 1976); **NEW ROCHELLE** (Hamblen 1974).

POTPOURRI – just too confused and mixed up to attempt to put in a color class – and some of you wonder why AIS "wisened up" and did away with the dinosaur Color Class shows!!!

TRAITOR (Jameson 1994), I've been watching (and hybridizing with) for 2 or 3 years, and I'm glad to see he's going to release it. I love it! (Can't wait to see the babies – I went wild and crazy with it). A simplistic description would be an improved 'Pantomime' (Babson 1970), mother-of-pearl gray, with wonderfully outrageous, bushy electric blue beards! **ISN'T THIS SOMETHING** (Ensminger 1993) is finally one registered in the correct class! (Sorry, Alan). A broad-flowered, shorter TB in clean pink lemonade, mischievously splish-splashed in bright purple. The best yet in this pink-based broken color pattern, and the first one I've really considered a finished product. **CANTINA** (Byers 1990) is well named (as were so many of Monty's things), a reblooming dusty blending of medium violets, reds, and plum, unusual and attractive in its smoky tones, right down to the smoky violet beards. **COMPETITIVE EDGE** (Ernst 1991), so similar to 'Different World' (Ernst, also 1991), that probably one or the other shouldn't have been introduced, but nonetheless, as with its sib, very worthy, and a glorified, refined version of Rick's first major introduction, 'Afternoon Delight' (1985, Award of Merit 1993). Standards are a bronze-honey blend, which carries over, deeper, as a band in the falls. The falls are a soft blending of lilac and orchid, gradually diminishing to near white in the center. Stalks are taller and stronger than its sib.

CLASSICS: **PAGAN** (Dunn 1973); **REFRESHING** (Hoage 1972); **SANDBERRY** (Noyd 1971).

SPACE AGE:

The presence of the late Monty Byers was felt all the way to Italy, and he took the competition by storm, placing five in the Top 20 finalists, and two in the Top 10! For the first time in the entire history of the competition, a Space Age iris won the top prize: **CONJURATION** (Byers 1989). The local Italian ladies would walk by the spectacular clump and proclaim, "bella, bella"! **THORNBIRD** (Byers 1989), the hauntingly strange and beautiful amber-brown with downright scary purple-black horns (!) which won the top Award of Merit here in 1992, also placed in the Top 10 and was most impressive there, as it is here. Admittedly, a love/hate kind of iris, but when a good judge point scores it, the quality rises to the top. **Byers G60-1**, a lovely, simply-stated violet-blue with self horns/flounces, won the Best Fragrant in Italy, and also looked very promising in the Ft. Worth gardens. To be released via Jack and Phyllis Dickey, new Moonshine Gardens owners, in 1994, probably.

GODSEND (Byers 1989) is a soft 'Beverly Sills' type pink, changing to ivory in the heart of the falls, then decorated with a purple beard ending in orange-coral horns. Super substance, stalks, and placement of branches. Florets are well formed and gently waved. **CAPE HORN** (Byers 1991) was the best newer release in the Blanchard garden this year. It is remindful of its parent, 'Song of Norway' (Luihn 1979), an elegant soft powder blue, adorned with deep electric blue beards turning into horns. Show-stalk branching like its parent. **LET'S PRETEND** (Byers 1990) is similar to the L'Elegante Award winner, 'Mesmerizer', except it has more ice-blue infusions, especially in the standards. And different, the beards are a light yellow, but extending upwards to the sky in a lacinated (jagged!) ice-blue flounce. Exotic yet elegant. **PAGAN PINK** (Byers 1988) is probably the deepest pink Space Ager so far, a hot pink with the falls somewhat blended with orchid and tan. Smart orange beards end in amethyst horns. Sometimes inconsistent in its ability to produce horns, but a beautiful flower even when it doesn't.

MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

CAROL'S DREAM (Dunderman 1990) is a smooth, refined light blue, paling in the center of the falls around soft yellow beards. Rounded, simple form adds a touch of class to this iris. **PETITE MONET** (Steele 1990) was a pleasant surprise

— a delicate plicata from a new hybridizer from North Carolina. It is a crisp creamy white, heavily marked blue-violet in the standards. The falls have narrower stitching and peppering, more concentrated in the shoulders around light yellow beards. A child of the famous 'Carolyn Rose' (Dunderman 1971), with the same fine stalks and plant habits. Excellent proportions throughout. **WELCH'S REWARD** (Welch-Hall 1988) made a fine showing in Blanchard, proving its worth as a Williamson-White winner. A smart color combo, with smooth yellow standards contrasted by rich red-purple falls, carefully edged with a distinctive halo of yellow. Outstanding plant habits, and very floriferous, with good timing of the many buds.

CLASSICS: **LEMON FLIRT** (Dunderman 1979); **PANDA** (Dunderman 1975).

BORDER BEARDED:

Many pleasant surprises here – I actually see some progress here in plant strength, consistency, and class proportion. Unfortunately, it was difficult to evaluate most of those blooming in the Texas gardens due to the crazy weather conditions and convention plantings that were so “pumped up” that I would bet even classic, well-proportioned varieties such as 'Tulare' (Hamblen 1961) could be blown out of class. It was ridiculous seeing a dainty flower such as 'Tink' (Durrance 1991) on 3' tree-trunk stalks! Nonetheless, we saw some things with great potential.

BIG VICTORY (Burch 1990) was a shocking surprise. Stalk height was correct and the flowers were maybe just a touch big in Texas, but what flowers! Pristine, cold, purest white, right down to the beards. Concise, heavy, tight ruffles and fluting with impeccable form. Superb stalks with 3 well-spaced branches. But what a stupid name for such a beautiful, delicate new Border. **ISLAND CHARM** (Aitken 1991) is remindful of Terry's great Sass-winning IB, 'Maui Moonlight' (1987) in basic color ensemble, but with form more like you would find in a BB, and a bit “brighter” instead of creamy texture. A clear sparkling light lemon yellow, completely solid in color in the standards. The falls are a touch lighter, with a strong presence of white throughout, returning to yellow at the shoulder areas, accented by a bright deep yellow (not gold) beard. Tight, compact form, with closed standards and horizontal to flaring falls, edged with just a hint of minute ruffles and a suggestion of lace. Branching was somewhat variable but can be very good. **ONE LITTLE PINKIE** (Durrance 1992) is another one of those that bloomed the day after convention in Ft. Worth at the Botanic Garden, and I'm really sorry most of you missed it. My discovery of it produced a screech, and drew strange looks from most of the Sunday afternoon strollers-in-the-park, staring in wonderment at the weird guy with the beard trying to take pictures and talk into a cassette tape player at the same time. In a world bombarded with an overrun of a thousand-and-one pinks, pinks, pinks, this one talks to you. Good things come in small packages, and this compact little ball of sweet decadence has all the trappings of a heart stealer. Thick starchy standards are rich, with such strong midribs and heavy ruffling that you don't realize they are “Utah standards”. Perfectly round, leathery falls are a bit more gently embellished, but still very showy, and so thick they aren't even diamond dusted (the “traditional” finish in a good pink of this depth of color). I've never seen quite this shade in any pink – not salmon, not shrimp, not even a screaming hot pink – but it is intense, and then the whole flower is set afire with an infusion of apricot in the lacinated style arms. YOW-ZA! OOMPHA! And a great name!

ORINOCO FLOW (Bartlett 1993), from England, has the basic colors of its mother, 'Blue Staccato' (Gibson 1977), but in a scaled-down version, more floriferous, and with heavier markings in the standards. The base color is pure white, and the stitching is a glowing indelible ink in indigo. It might be right on that imaginary dotted line between classes, between BB and TB, but an occasional “overflow” won't keep me from growing this wonderful new plic. Keith Keppel may not have “invented” the amoena-plicata, but he is the one who took the pattern, refined it, and made it palatable. **PETITE BALLET** (1992) is a classy amoena-plic, with light flax blue standards with a miniscule patch of white peeking through in the midribs. Broad billowy falls show much more white in the centers, with an extremely wide (at least 1”) band in bright rich violet-blue, and a cute belly stripe extending down the center from the soft powder blue beards. The dance is in

the ruffles, moderate in the closed standards, and extremely heavy and deep in the falls, which makes the plicata pattern even more lively. As with its taller cousins, outstanding stalks, with 3 to 4 branches, well spaced in spite of the shortened height of its class. **RINKY DINK** (Keppel 1993) is a diminutive version of the ‘Gigolo’ (Keppel 1984) line, remindful of a brighter “bad boy” ‘Shenanigan’ (Keppel 1985, BB) or ‘Peccadillo’ (Keppel 1983, BB). Downright decadent, if you ask me, and not even ashamed! Bright apricot/peach standards are nearly solid in color, closed, and heavily ruffled, with an infusion of muted rose sneaking in. Horizontal, lilting falls are complemented with exotic ruffling, to go with the joyful color patterning – a salmon-based plicata, almost completely covered in bright rose-plum-wine (“coronation purple” – duh!), in all different ways – sanding, stitching, peppering, mottling, streaking. A burnt brick red just sets it off! **Keith Keppel 87-60A**, seen at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden, is a haunting luminata, much more subtle than the TBs ‘Spirit World’ and ‘Mind Reader’, but nonetheless just as appealing. A muted mauve, slightly deeper in the falls, with shallow haloes in cream around both the standards and falls. Soft apricot style arms. The beard is white, heavily tipped coral, deepening as you go into the heart, sitting atop a dime spot white luminata. Creamy-pink washing bleeds through and comes to the surface amidst the mauve coloring. Tight form, gently waved so as not to disturb the impact of the luminata pattern, all presented on tidy show stalks opening 2 to 3 at once. {NOTE: This seedling was named **LOW SPIRITS**, introduced in 1994}.

CLASSICS: PASSPORT (Ghio 1971); **PLUM CREEK** (Hildenbrandt 1975); **TAWNY GOLD** (Hickerson 1976).

INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:

The shining star in the “post-Median Spree” bloom was **BRIGHTEN UP** (Hager 1990), a dazzling, sizzling bright orange with screaming orange beards, thick and sassy. Notably brighter, richer, and with tighter form than the similar ‘All Right’ (Hager 1988). Totally sunfast here, and so bright you see it from clear across the garden. Now that’s “carrying power”! **DREAM WALTZ** (Willott 1990) is totally unique from any IB on the current market. A cold pure white with a definitely presence of lace on all parts – not heavy, just a light sprinkling (heavy lace on such a small flower would look kinda silly, wouldn’t it?). The shape of the flowers is more oval than rounded, but still pleasing and acceptable. In a different style is **LADY DAY** (Lankow 1990), a warm, almost creamy white with chiffon substance and bright yellow contrasting beards. Form is extremely wide, with well held, strong, open standards to show you the warm inner glow. The verdict is still out on **LEVITY** (Aitken 1991), but was good enough to deserve mention. Similar in color and pattern to its parent, ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black 1985, SDB), but then set off with an intense, near-black beard tipped bronze. Unfortunately, the form has been inconsistent thusfar, with rather strange, almost twisted standards sometimes, but it may prove to be most worthy after it acclimates better here.

PUN (Keppel 1991) is a cute name, and knowing Keith Keppel, there’s probably some special joke behind this iris. A very strange iris – I recommend you see it first before buying it! Personally, I grew to love it, although it was a bit cantankerous for me in the growth department at first. Basically a yellow based plicata, almost completely saturated rosy-chocolate in the standards. Falls are also heavily marked, but have more of a peppering (almost polka-dotting) in the contrast color. A very plain form gives you the opportunity to study and appreciate the intricate colorings. **ZONING** (T. Blyth 1988) is a warm plic from Barry’s kid that I had missed until this year. A creamy yellow based plicata, heavily banded in a colorful montage of light rosy lavender, tan, and golden-brown. All parts then have a thin halo in gold. Nice shape, good substance, and sunfast.

CLASSICS: CHEERS (Hager 1974); **RASPBERRY BONNET** (Hamblen 1977); **SHAMPOO** (Messick 1977); **VIRTUE** (Gatty 1976).

STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:

Two ‘Pepper Mill’ (Hager) type plics from Ben Hager did very well in the Median Spree gardens: **ANECDOTE** (1992) is a brilliant yellow, heavily banded in rich maroon to nearly chocolate brown. Bright, thick yellow beards add to the clarity of color. With a pedigree that is half pink/pink plicata, there’s all kinds of breeding potential here. From traditional plic breeding is **CHUM** (1991), a more muted effect overall, with a “duller” base color, stitched in a lighter toasty brown. These 2 are different, and both have high quality with excellent form. **COPPER GEM** (C. Palmer 1993) is a totally new color in dwarfs, and it is an enticing new look. Coming from Earl Roberts pink SDB breeding, with a little bit of Barry Blyth pink plic work thrown in to confuse the issue, we have a luminous coppery melon-orange, slightly deeper in the falls. The falls also have a hint of a lighter halo. Beards are red, but then tipped light blue, harking back to ‘Dove Wings’ (Roberts 1968). Shape is not a “finished product” – more of an elliptical oval, but not offensive. A great new color array. Another new one from Cleo was very attractive at the Sooner State Median Spree show: **EBONY EYES** (C. Palmer 1993), a suave near-black bitone, with shiny red-purple standards, then deeper falls with a jet black spot. A bright rich purple beard is very full and thick, and emphasizes the richness of color saturation. This one also has more of an oval-shaped form. **NUT RUFFLES** (Lankow-Aitken 1992) was an excellent first-year performer for me, and I won Best SDB

(and First Runnerup to Queen) at the SSIS show with it. It is a captivating mahogany-chestnut to red with an even deeper (richer) spot in the falls. Outstanding form, substance, and plant habits. Extremely floriferous, but with plenty of increase remaining for next year. It appears the colors are going to be variable, with differing climate, weather conditions, and mineral content in the soil. Not necessarily a defect, but it will keep the exhibition judges on their toes. **PILGRIM'S CHOICE** (Willott 1990) is going to be one of those love it/hate it types. This is an elegant true-gray blend (nearly a self), ironically from the great black, 'Michael Paul' (W. Jones 1979). Wide, broad form with a fascinating opaque finish. More than a bit too large for the class, but still a nice addition with distinctiveness. Amazingly good carrying power in the garden in spite of the somber color. **PIXIE DELIGHT** (Fillmore 1993) is a charming, petite raspberry-pink on white plicata at the lower side of the class, in not only size and height, but even plant habits. Healthy, grassy foliage, with excellent increase. A refreshing sight, after so many in this class pushing the upper limits these days.

SMART (Innerst 1991) made an impressive showing at the Median Spree. A vibrating silky full red-violet with a deep purple spot in the falls and a blue beard. Superb plant habits and floriferousness, with 1 branch and 3 buds per stalk. Impeccable form and worlds of substance, highly resistant to the pesky waterspotting a dark one will often have during those cold wet springs. **SOFTWARE** (Hager 1990) is a diminutive pastel plic, with gentle blush apricot standards and warm creamy falls softly edged in buff apricot plicata airbrushing. Solid tangerine beards. Flower size is almost small enough to be MDB, on modest 10 to 12" stalks with 1 branch. Even the foliage is scaled down, so it should be a valuable parent to use with those plics that have gotten just a bit too big. **TOY CLOWN** (Gatty 1991) is a spunky plicata, similar in quality to 'Anecdote' and 'Chum', but with more colors infiltrating the brown base plicating – dazzling wines, reds, and plums mixed in. A bit slow to reestablish after planting for me, but it seems to grow OK after it has settled in.

Two seedlings deserve a special mention this year: **MIDNIGHT MIST** (Paul Black) won Best Seedling at the Median Spree show. It is the most sophisticated dwarf luminata yet, very nearly jet black with the white luminata patch gently bleeding and marbling down through the falls. Magnificent form, substance, and finish gives evidence of its 'Chubby Cheeks' heritage. Introduction date is unknown at this time – watch for it. [NOTE: It was introduced in 1995]. **Marky Smith**

90-07A, seen at the Median Spree in my garden, is a mysterious slate grey with heavy infusions of purple, followed up with a deep electric to purple (nearly black) beard. Such intrigue! Marky says, back home, its nickname is "007". [NOTE: Very fitting, since it went on to be named **JAMES BOND**, a 1996 introduction].

CLASSICS: **AMAZON PRINCESS** (Nichols 1973); **BLUE POOLS** (B. Jones 1973); **CANDY APPLE** (Hamblen 1972); **SPRING BELLS** (B. Jones 1972); **STOCKHOLM** (Warburton 1972).

ARILBREDS

There aren't that many newer arilbreds being grown here in central Oklahoma, and I've come to the conclusion that they've received a "bad rap". The reputation is that they have a propensity for rotting; yet, after 2 seasons in a row of soft rot sweeping through the bearded like a firestorm, the arilbreds were unscathed. The main concern here is their susceptibility to the infamous Okie late freezes. Therefore, I mulch them during the winter months, just like the daylilies and the Louisianas, taking it off only after the stalks have begun forming.

BABYLONIAN FIRES (Rich 1992, OGB) was the best of the newer ones I bloomed this year. Classical domed standards and recurved (onco) falls in brass, with veining and infusions of rose and lavender in the standards. Almost a solid sheen of orange to mahogany in the falls, with a black signal. The whole flower glows, and it retained its "embers" look well. **BURRA SAHIB** (Hager 1990, OGB) is a wide, full-figured yellow amoena in the tradition of the great classic, 'Syrian Moon' (Brizendine 1969), but with a bold brown signal rather than black. Standards are creamy-white, and the falls a medium yellow. The yellow style crests comes on out, hiding the yellow beard, leaving only the large well-defined signal in view. **DESERT FINERY** (Rich 1990, OGB) is a clean violet with deeper violet veining throughout. The falls have more of a rose influence in the coloring, then set off with perfectly round wine signals about the size of a nickel. Elegantly refined!

MAROON ELF (Rich 1983, OGB) is a sultry little arilbred-median (1/2 SDB, 'Cherry Garden', B. Jones 1967) with the height and flower size so small it approaches MDB proportions. A rich maroon-wine, totally selfed, with a bronzed beard instead of the purple beard of 'Cherry Garden'. Just a hint of an even deeper signal. A magnificent grower. **ZERZURA** (Hager 1990, OGB) is a really nice attempt at a white onco-bred with a deep signal. Form could be rounder and more domed, the substance could stand to be a touch better, and the signal is not as big and stunning as some varieties, but it's definitely there – a velvety black signal, somewhat diffused.

LOUISIANAS

So many of the Taylor Louisianas have already been reviewed the past 2 years that I'm not going to repeat myself. There are a few that have settled in and acclimated now that deserve mentioning, and there's a whole crop of 1993 and 1994 introductions that should be well established for evaluation for next bloom season. **ALLUVIAL GOLD** (Taylor 1992) made a fine showing at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden, where it had ever better stalks and better plant habits than their planting of the wonderful sunshine yellow 'Apollo's Song' (Taylor 1991). Superb branching, with 1 stalk having 4 open at once (and still in an upright position!). It is a simple bright medium yellow. Although it doesn't have the deep ruffling of 'Classical Note' (Taylor 1991) or the leathery look of 'Apollo's Song', it is still a worthy addition. With these 3 yellows, you'll never have another excuse for a yellow that falls over, as so many did before John Taylor came along! I finally bloomed **BYRON BAY** (Raabe 1986), and it was worth the wait. It is a clear medium blue (the hybridizer uses the color "gentian blue") with the flawless form you would expect from a double shot of 'Clara Goula' (Arny 1978). The ruffling is not as heavy as Clara or some of her other kids, such as 'Bellevue Coquette' (Bertinot 1984), but it is definitely there, with gentle sea-breeze waving.

CAJUN SUNRISE (Mertweiller 1993). At the time last year's Contemporary Views was written, I had the "unofficial" name Acadian Sunrise, which was incorrect. 'Cajun Sunrise' is the correct name, released through Cordon Bleu Farms (California) in Fall 1993. It is a breathtaking *avant-garde* in a sunfast brick red, heavily veined and haloed on all 6 parts in amber gold, with a brilliant golden sunburst pattern bursting from the top of the falls, filtering down into the main part of the falls. **CAJUN WHIRL** (Haymon 1988) is a cold white, heavily ruffled with a gold signal, with olive texture veins around the signal and into the upper part of the falls. For me, it will sometimes produce deformed flowers (it is probably tender and susceptible to late freezes) and has been a bit finicky in the growth department. The plantings in Texas seemed to have a respectable amount of vigor and increase. When it's good, it is unbeatable. **COUP D'ETAT** (Dunn 1990) had to be one of the big surprises for me in Louisianas this year. The description sounds drab (maybe even dirty) and boring. Wrong! And the more I kept being drawn to it and studying it, the more I liked it and respected its overall quality – enough so that it received 1 of my HM votes in this class this year. It is a rather large flower, in spite of coming from 'Gold Reserve' (Chowning 1977), and nearly a foot taller than its mother. A unique, definite bitone in a blending of coppery orange and bronze, with the standards a full 2 shades lighter than the falls. Top notch plant habits, with many buds presented on a decent stalk. **FRANK CHOWNING** (Rowland 1987) shocked me when it won the Debaillon this past season. It is really a nice iris, but the Debaillon??? A full, composed currant red, almost completely devoid of signal pattern (a small thin gold line-signal). The smoothness of color is very fine, although I have seen plantings when the coloration was very nearly dirty. Tight rounded florets with acceptable sun resistance. At least the stalks stand up on this one!

GLITTERING PRIZE (Taylor 1992), as it bloomed here, has a rather deceptive name. Rather than the lustrous, silky texture, which has become a trademark in Taylor dark purples, it has more of a mysterious opaque finish in its texture for me, making it very unique. Flower size is also smaller and compact, in contrast to the broad, expansive varieties such as 'Jazz Ballet' (Taylor 1989). **LASER SHOW** (Taylor 1992) is a well named color gem in magenta and mauve, with the standards marbled in cream and the falls a changeable taffeta, luminescent with undertoning in roses and pinks. A moderate-sized flower with typical flat form and heavy wax-ruffling. **LINA** (Taylor 1989), after a turbulent love-hate relationship with me, has finally won me over. Basically a grayed mauve-orchid, slightly deeper in the falls, with texture a combination of both silk and chiffon, all wrapped in the heavy ruffling you see in the more flamboyant Taylor varieties. No sizzler here – a study in understated elegance. **MARIE'S CHOICE** (Haymon 1988) is a charming, soft spoken mallow pink, somewhat bitoned, with harmonious signal patterns in yellow and artistic waving and ruffling. Yes, yet another tribute paid to my favorite "Louisiana mama", Marie Caillet.

Once upon a time, shortly after its initial release, I had grown **MARTHA MISTRIC CLARY** (Bertinot 1983), but lost it one year when I lost some things to summer sun-scald (back in the not-so-good-old-days before I learned the fine art of using a year-round mulch on my Louisianas!). Neil had "misplaced" it in his own garden also, and I feared that this, one of the most beautiful of all Bertinot introductions, had gone the way of the dodo bird. Fortunately, Neil "found" it again, and generously sent me a start again. When it bloomed this spring, my euphoric recall proved itself quite accurate. It is an extremely large, ruffled mauved old rose. Its large brilliant yellow signal is inherited from its parent, 'Ann Chowning' (Chowning 1977). Flat flowers are a different, somewhat oval shape. Elegance supreme! **PIECE DE RESISTANCE** (Dunn 1988) was originally advertised as having a glowing orange-red the color of the Tropicana rose. Indeed, this is an accurate description, with a very tiny, almost nonexistent yellow signal and compact form. Thick leathery petals are sunfast, even here in the Sun Belt, and the flowers retain their magnificent glow.

PROFESSOR FRITCHIE (Mertweiller 1994) is the yellow tet that was seen at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden as Seedling T85-41A. Joe had not planned to release this tet due to its similarity to its sib, the beautiful 'Professor Barbara' (1992). However, after much arm-twisting, he has agreed to release it through Cordon Bleu in Fall 1994 for these reasons:

(1) It is a much stronger, more vigorous grower than Barbara – the 2-year clump in Ft. Worth must surely have had 50 increases, just loaded with bloom, with vigor so rampant it was trying to crawl out of the bed!; (2) This color is still so rare, that its release would give one more player in a limited gene pool; (3) It has proven to be more fertile than Barbara; and (4) It seems to be healthier and cold resistant than Barbara, producing extraordinary stalks. The individual flower is not quite as refined as Barbara and is a touch lighter/less intense in color. But in all other areas it is the better of the two. As with so many of the tets, the falls tend to “pop up”, especially if the nights have been cool.

RICH TRADITION (Taylor 1991) was a bit slower to acclimate to this hemisphere than the others from the 1991 and 1992 crop from Australia, but it made a fine showing this year. It is a heavily ruffled velvety violet, much lighter in the backsides (the buds) and in the haloes surrounding the petals. Yellow star-signals appear on all 6 petals. Moderate-sized flowers are so heavily ruffled that the lighter tones from underneath come into the picture, giving added motion to the flower. Creamy style arms peer out from the heart, giving a warm glow to the heart of the flower. **ROKKI ROCKWELL** (Haymon 1992) is a great medium yellow, glowing with golden striations throughout the flower. The very heart of the flower has a suggestion of mint green, followed with a gold line signal on the falls. Outstanding show stalks comparable to the best of the Taylor yellows. It comes from a marriage made in heaven: ‘Valera’ (Arny) X ‘President Hedley’ (Mertzweiller). Dorman picked up the best of both families with this one, and for overall quality, it is one of his finest releases. A classy iris named for a classy, brilliant lady.

SWAMP FLAME (Mertzweiller 1987) has been overlooked. A larger, more subdued ‘Cajun Sunrise’ (Mertzweiller), presented in a burnished orange to copper with an intricate network of brick red and deep bronze veining. Broad, intense yellow signals polish the flower. Indications are, though, that it may be tender north of Oklahoma. **TOMATO BISQUE** (Morgan 1987) is another “sleeper” that is just now being discovered. A well-named, compact flower with a small gold line signal. The tomato soup color is unique in Louisianas, similar to the shade found in the daylily, ‘Tomato Surprise’ (E.W. Brown 1984). Slender, willowy stalks are deceptively strong, retaining an upright position even when opening 3 at once. A quality iris in every way, just missing an Award of Merit by only 1 vote this past ballot. And last but not least, **VERMILION QUEEN** (Goula 1993), probably the finest new American release seen this year. Smoothest opulent yellow with golden-orange spear signals. Sophisticated, classical form, ruffling, and substance from its parent, ‘Clara Goula’ with a stalk so find you’d swear it were a Taylor!

CLASSICS: **CAROLYN LAPOINTE** (Arny 1973); **FREDDIE BOY** (Mertzweiller 1974); **HARLAND K. RILEY** (MacMillan 1974); **MARY DUNN** (Hager 1974); **PRICE REDMOND** (Arny 1971).

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