

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS—1994/1995

Perry Dyer

To those of you who are used to seeing this review on a regular basis (and to those of you who subscribed for it!), here is a joint review of the past 2 seasons. In the summer of 1994, a full 40% of my division at the Federal Aviation Administration in Oklahoma City elected to take an early-out retirement option (including 90% of middle management). Those of us left behind have been scrambling ever since. Last winter, 12- to 14-hour work days were common. One doesn't feel like tackling a major project like Contemporary Views when one is dealing with acute mental exhaustion!

A late freeze in March 1995 zapped 80% of the dwarf bloom and 50% of the other bearded and Louisiana bloom. Much of this review will entail a much nicer 1994 bloom season and, of course, the ocean of bloom seen at the AIS National in Portland. My brain is still whirling from all the bloom.

For the seasoned reader of this review, a couple of comments you might not realize in the composition of this "epistle" each year. First, as I review notes and start grouping the varieties being considered for the write-up, I go back to the previous editions of Contemporary Views to see if I'm repeating myself. With rare exceptions (in the awards section), I only mention a variety once. Otherwise, this commentary would be twice as long! And some varieties, such as 'Silverado' (Schreiner) and Ron Mullin's great new plicata, 'Rhonda Fleming', would be reviewed every year! Second, the same philosophy applies to that select group of "classics" at the end of each color group. I keep a running list of those varieties, at least 15 years old, which had an impact on me in my life-long iris journey. A bit of nostalgia, shall we say. In some cases, for me, the "memory" has become "reality" again, in that I've added some of the old classics to my collection again. Things such as 'Bayberry Candle' (DeForest) and 'High Life' (Schreiner) have NO counterpart in today's market.

On with the review....

Contemporary Views' award winners are reviewed first (with runnersup listed, in order), then Tall Bearded by general color group, then medians reviewed by class, 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 1993, 1994, and 1995).

AWARD WINNERS

1. The **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**, given to the Best New Iris seen: **MELTED BUTTER** (Chun Fan 1994) was very impressive in the mass of bloom at Schreiners. It literally stood head and shoulders above the rest, held up on thick, strong stalks inherited from the great 'Cup Race' (Buttrick). Superbly named, the gigantic flowers are full-formed and leathery, done in a cream base with deeper butter infusions in the standards' midribs, at the shoulders, and then generously outpouring over the falls in an irregular manner. From a newer hybridizer on the East Coast. I was just as impressed with it on first-year bloom here in central Oklahoma in 1995.

Runnersup:

SMART MOVE (Keppel 1995). In a color class that is still weak for overall quality, the incorporation of the Hamblen bloodline ('Enchanting') gives a totally different approach to variegatas and should open some doors. Tall, borne on strong thick stalks carrying 2 to 3 branches. Standards are golden bronze, enlivened with a suggestion of butterscotch. Broad horizontal falls are a brighter cherry red than we have in other variegatas such as 'Smart Aleck' (Gatty). Although a large flower, the form is structurally more sound than others such as 'Supreme Sultan' (Schreiner). The beards are deep purple heavily tipped bronze. Notably improved plant habits with husky increase. **CAJUN SUNRISE** (Mertzweiller 1993) is already making a bold statement in the Louisiana world. I "predict" as bright a future for this stunning bicolor as its color presentation. It is a sizzling brick red with a brilliant gold sunburst ray pattern exploding from the heart of the flower, then edged in a dramatic halo in gold. **Fully sunfast** in the blazing Oklahoma mid-May heat. **ISLAND SURF** (Aitken 1994) is a reverse blue amoena type with personality. Standards are remindful of 'Sea Venture' (B. Jones) is a medium blue, flushed with a heavy infiltration of deep blue arising up from the base of the midribs. Horizontal falls have a tight look in light blue, heavily flushed a moody indigo blue, especially in the heart of the flower. Deeply waved (versus ruffled) parts, as suggested by the name. Outstanding plant habits with healthy foliage and strong increase.

2. The **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** is given to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen. 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 nonetheless, these are ones which impressed me for their sheer beauty: **SHIRLEY M** (Evelyn Keegerise 1995) is a fine advancement of its great parent, the overlooked ‘Sophistication’ (Hamblen). It is a bit taller with the same outstanding presentation of its modified candelabra branching and timing of buds. It has an eloquent satin finish to add to its pristine effect. The contrasting blue beards are out of this world, soft and elegant, and a perfect shade to complement the satin pink flower color. Love at first sight, but the closer you look, you’ll find a high-quality iris. Soul soothing!

Runnersup:

FULL FASHIONED (Blodgett 1993) was surely “the sleeper” of the Oregon Convention, discovered in an unpretentious clump amidst the mass of color at the Meek Garden. It is a deeply ruffled, laced claret rose, capped with bright tangerine beards. The form is full and rounded, strong enough structurally to handle the extravagant ruffling. A shining star in a color class amazingly limited in its number of worthy members. **FROSTY ELEGANCE** (C. Palmer 1994) is an IB which is perhaps the finest introduction from this Oklahoma hybridizer since the release of his great Sass winner, ‘Sea Patrol’. It has the same quality features of his overlooked white IB, ‘Snow Festival’, but the flowers have even wider form (the falls are actually round), complemented with perfectly placed moderate ruffling – any deeper would be awkward on the smaller IB flowers. Cool and crisp, with diamond dusting, yet thick leathery substance. Back at the Meeks’, one of Duane’s new ones easily made the final cut for Most Beautiful: **FALLEN ANGEL** (1995) is a refined, sophisticated spinoff from the great Shoop line of “reverse bicolors”. Standards are a deep mauved pink, infused even deeper in the midribs. Contrasting falls are a softer lavender-tinted ivory, gently blended with hints of mauve and pink. The colors are pulled together with a shrimp beard. A lovely color scheme, typically difficult to transcribe into a written description. Delicate ruffling and diamond dusting are the finishes touches.

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break. Those listed this year are a good indicator of what I think of the creative, innovative work being done Down Under by the genius, Barry Blyth. **ELECTRIQUE** (1994) is “simply shocking” (no pun intended). A mysterious, moody color array, with icy lavender-blue standards sitting atop falls done in an odd shade of slate rose, all set up with mesmerizing, indeed hypnotic black beards! Actually, upon close inspection, you’ll find that the beards are raspberry to purple based, then tipped bronze. Sounds as though, surely, the effect would be muddy. Not so. Nothing like it on the market, and it has great plant and stalk habits, too. Based on early results, it is already clear that this color break will become a major player in the evolution of bearded irises!

Runnersup:

AFFAIRE (Blyth 1994), another stunning new color pattern in bicolors. In a world of too many look-alikes, no one will mistake this (or ‘Electrique’) for any other! Standards are clear pale lavender, infused with blue in cooler weather. Contrasting falls are bold mustard yellow with self beards. Again, the description may sound drab or muddy. Instead, a bold template just begging to be used to achieve new and unique color combos. **SNOWY CHANGE** (1994), a color break in tetraploid Louisiana irises, is a super first introduction from Barry Clark, a new hybridizer from Covington, Louisiana. From a cross of ‘Professor Paul’ (Mertzweiller) selfed, this is the first introduced tet to have segregated to white. When first open, there are undertones of blue and lilac, but this quickly changes to a cold white self after the sun hits it. It retains some of the lime green texture veining, causing the flower to hold its fresh look until the flower folds. Superb form and substance, of course! It is very scarce, but will become very popular once it receives better distribution. Incredible, after hundreds of hybridizers and thousands of varieties registered over the years, the “name of all names” in irisdom is just now being used: **RAINBOW GODDESS** (Ernst 1994) is a smashing reverse bicolor type which the late George Shoop so masterfully unlocked. ‘Rainbow Goddess’ is a breakthrough in plant habits, stalks, bud count, and flower form. It makes strong healthy plants with above average increase. Standards are rich rose-purple, completely saturated. Falls are a cream base, but then blessed with colorful yellow-orange rims and shoulders, with some of the standards’ moody coloring filtering through. Bright tangerine beards add a pleasing effect to the color scheme. Wonderful form, with parts that are broad but still artistic and not blocky.

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): **PROUD TRADITION** (Schreiner 1990) has developed into the finest neglecta, for overall performance, in the Heartland. It is a very masculine flower, with a rich velvet texture, broad parts with virtually no ruffling. The color saturation is complete, with heaviest of substance, allowing the flower to retain all its pigmentation through the life of the flower. The stalks are husky and tall, holding up the large flowers with dignity. The plant habits are impeccable, with huge thick plants with strong increase. A total vision of health, head to toe.

Runnersup:

PUMPIN' IRON (Black 1990) has emerged from the pack as the leader of several fine SDBs released by Paul at the same time. It is a rich full sooty black from the red side, with an even deeper intensification in the falls in the form of a black cherry spot pattern. Smooth at the waist (hafts), topped off with deepest purple beards. No steroids here – it's all natural, with floriferous bloom habits, plenty of increase for next year's performance, and gently rippling muscle-ruffles. Incredible carrying power in the garden, in spite of its deep saturation. **RASPBERRY FUDGE** (Keppel 1989) is a colorful warm plicata in a cream to light orange base, heavily marked in deep raspberry. The standards are almost completely overlaid in raspberry. The falls have more of the base color showing through, with sanding and peppering in raspberry at the edges, more intense in the shoulders. Deep carrot to brick red beards set the flowers aglow. A notable improvement in growth and disease resistance, and I think this one cultivar will turn the tide in warm plicatas, correcting inbred problems and reintroducing hybrid vigor to a highly evolved line. **FOUNDATION VAN GOGH** (Anfosso 1990) surely qualifies as the "sleeper of the decade" for me. Oh! What I almost missed! The more I grow this French amoena, the more fond I become of it, and my respect for its garden qualities increases each bloom season. From one of those lines that has been a "tough nut to crack", 'Fondation Van Gogh' is a colorful apricot amoena, with a distinct cream band evenly positioned amidst deep swirling ruffles. The standards are creamy white with a heavy flush of apricot in the midribs, which adds to its grace and fullness of color. Superb plants habits with strong, clean foliage.

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: **MARIACHI MUSIC** (Maryott 1988) is a gregarious color gem with rich tan standards heavily flushed plum, sitting atop bold electric red-violet falls with a hint of a band in brown. Deep ripple-ruffles set the flowers in motion. A shimmering texture gives added carrying power in the garden, with the suggestion of changeable silk. Commendable plant habits, with dependable performance year after year.

Runnersup:

It is inconceivable to believe that anything released by the famous hybridizer, the late Bee Warburton, could go unnoticed, considering Bee's popularity, the distribution of her introductions, and the respect among irisarians world-wide. Yet many of this artisan's last releases went virtually unheralded. The lack of recognition of **SUNNY FAVOR** (1984) is the greatest offense. An IB which is staged in clean yellow standards, with shiny glaciata white falls, rimmed and hafted with the principal yellow color. Tight rounded form with light ruffling. The dainty stalks have well placed branches with a grace and charm that every good IB should possess. Plant habits without peer. Another great median that got lost in a sea of introductions was **STAR SEARCH** (Willott 1985). This SDB, amazingly from pink breeding, is a mother-of-pearl effect with soft pale yellow standards somewhat infused with blue. The falls gradually transform from the pale blue around the violet beards, down to the standards' yellow coloring at the bottom of the falls. Incredible wide form, gentle ruffling, and unique sheen for texture. Subtle, refined, and very worthy. **LIPSTICK LIES** (Blyth 1985) is an intriguing "barely-plic" that provides the hybridizer with entirely new roads to travel. Moderate sized flowers are a cool chaste white, with only tell-tale plicata lines in deep blue extending from the shoulders. The "lipstick" is a sizzling bright red beard, bushy and daring.

6. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding seedling viewed this year. Of the hundreds of seedlings evaluated the past 2 years, I had to come home to pick the winner: **TOM JOHNSON** (Paul Black 1996) is the finest TB this talented hybridizer has ever produced. As Seedling #A68A, it won both the HC and EC pre-introductory awards. Many more honors will come its way. From a classy cross – 'In Town' (Blyth) X 'Witches' Sabbath' (Maryott) – this deep neglecta sets a new standard in neglectas. High-gloss, deep violet standards are well shaped. Debonair near-black falls have a suave velvet texture, outlined with a band of the glossy sheen of the violet standards' color. This is all set off with stunning bright carrot red beards and absolutely smooth hafts. The falls are full, rounded, and nearly horizontal. Tall, willowy stalks are deceptively sturdy, with formal candelabra branching with 4-5 branches, spur, and even lower rebranching. Once you total up a well-grown stalk, you're approaching 12-14 buds – a show fanatic's dream come true! It opens early in the season, and then often displays 3 full rounds of show stalks with 3-4 open at once. Sensational sequencing of bloom, with a long, consistent bloom season from each stalk. Plant habits are equally meritorious, with rich blue-green foliage. A great iris, named for the finest iris judge I have had the privilege to mentor over my 20+ years as an AIS judge.

Runnersup:

Barry Blyth has reached a new pinnacle in his long journey working with amoenas, with the release of **AURA LIGHT** (1996). A clean yellow amoena, with stunning contrast between the white standards and the full golden yellow falls. The standards have only a hint of yellow in the base of the midribs. The falls are so deeply saturated that I believe the coloring will be at its best in full blazing Oklahoma sun. 'Aura Light' is an important advancement in this color class. Since Barry Blyth appears to be "out of the loop" in the Australasian awards system, I am grateful that Keith Keppel will be releasing it in the USA first, so it will have a decent opportunity for the recognition it deserves. My favorite of the

hundreds of reselects which I evaluated in Oregon was one of the highly advanced blacks: **Schreiner Seedling #AA401-A** (now named **OLD BLACK MAGIC**, a 1996 introduction). The saturation is as deep as that of ‘Hello Darkness’ (Schreiner) with waved horizontal falls. Beards are also black, discreetly tipped mustard. More sultry than shiny, and the overall plant habits and quality of stalks will surely make this seedling yet one more player in the Schreiner family’s quest for the “ultimate black”. From the “big boys” back to the “backyard hybridizer”, the other seedling recognized this year here is from a relatively unknown hybridizer from Rockford, Illinois: **John Knaus Seedling #9009** is a small-flowered tight lilac amoena, blessed with exquisite heavy lace. Imbedded within the lace is a deeper orchid band around the falls. Contrasting yellow beards are a nice complement. Quite tall but slender stalks add to its graceful presentation, with 4 branches with superb placement. Standards are cold white, cool and shimmering with just a hint of icy lilac infusions. Falls are an eloquent shade of clearest lilac, gradually transcending to the deeper band on the edges. A very important offering to a pitifully weak color class; I look forward to its release. [NOTE: Named **FANCY FILIGREE** and introduced in 1996].

TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP

REDS TO MAROONS:

AUSTRIAN GARNETS (Maryott 1991) has become a favorite in the maroon reds, this time with more of a garnet red approach over another fine Maryott maroon which was overlooked, ‘Royal Premiere’. ‘Austrian Garnets’ has such an intense sheen I swear it surely glows in the dark! Self beards are tipped chocolate, suggesting a black effect.

FLORENTINE RED (Sutton 1992) is a broad full oxblood red with a velvet sheen. For me it has been difficult to reestablish (thusfar), but it is worth the extra effort – and patience. My favorite of the Schreiner reselect reds was **Schreiner Seedling #CC536-1**, an extremely large flower, with saturation not as rich as ‘Warrior King’ (Schreiner) but still appealing. It is somewhat bitoned, with wine-red standards and garnet-red falls. Purple beards are tipped bronze. Magnificent stalks – the best I’ve seen yet on a red – with 4 branches and lower rebranch presented in formal candelabra. Lightly waved, with extremely heavy substance. Another red to watch for is **VINTNER** (M. Smith 1997). Seen in Oregon as Seedling #90-54A, the hybridizer finally convinced me to quit calling it “black”. It is a deep-deep red, but transforms to a sooty black when the sun is overtaken by clouds (see, I was partially right!). Absolutely smooth at the hafts, blocky with a nice full shape. It has a glorious, sophisticated velvet pile and outstanding substance and weather resistance. And, typical of this demanding new hybridizer, the plant habits are flawless, with deep rich foliage producing formidable clumps.

CLASSICS: **PALMER LEADER** (Innerst 1982); **SUPERMANUEL** (Denney 1982); **VITAFIRE** (Schreiner 1968).

BROWNS:

We are finally seeing respectable advancement in the honey tones again. **AMBER ARTISAN** (Williamson 1994) is a lovely blend of amber, tan, and gold, slightly lighter in the center of the falls, around golden yellow beards. It is moderately ruffled with light lace. It possesses very good substance, allowing it to withstand the late-season sun. To have such subtle coloring, the effect of **WHIPPED HONEY** (Jameson 1996) is nothing short of flamboyant! It is so heavily laced I stand amazed that each fall is able to unfurl and open correctly, without tearing or twisting. This child of ‘Easter Lace’ (Byers) is a cleaner golden honey, with lavender-orchid in the heart of the falls, enlivening the color presentation. It also blooms late in the season here, a great season extender. **ARIZONA HOLIDAY** (Durrance 1988) was one of my “discoveries” at the Portland Convention. Earthy desert tones in a blend of copper and russet, with quite a bit of chocolate infused into the standards. Falls are horizontal, and the smaller flowers have a nice tight look. After receiving a bad rap, my opinion of **MOGUL** (Ghio 1992) changed when I finally saw it in a garden where it was happy! It is an unusual blending of russet, copper, and amber, with orchid infusions in the falls. Deep channeled ruffles give a sense of motion. Flowers were a bit larger than others in this style, and they retain their shape nicely.

CLASSICS: **ANOINTED** (Boushay 1975); **CHAMBER MUSIC** (Williamson 1973); **CONVERSATION PIECE** (D. Palmer 1973).

APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

APRICOT FLUSH (Blodgett 1993) makes a pleasing companion to Arthur’s ‘Full Fashioned’. ‘Apricot Flush’ is a different shade of apricot sherbet with strong green influences that give the flowers a fresh look. Compact flowers have tight

ruffling and lace. Willowy stalks have incredible branch placement, with a graceful S-curve with 3 branches in formal candelabra, opening 3-4 at once. **LOVING THOUGHTS** (Carr 1988) is a nice, simple medium to deep apricot-orange, complemented with big fat fuzzy deep orange beards. Heavy, leathery substance. **MANAGUA** (Ghio 1994) may be the best of a highly developed line of breeding for intense oranges. Tall stalks are sturdier than many of its predecessors, and it has superb branching and bud count. Plant habits are also notably improved. **CHAMPAGNE WALTZ** (Schreiner 1994) is an improvement of a personal favorite of mine, 'Exuberant' (Mohr). Standards are a satiny champagne to apricot. Diamond dusted falls are white with a distinct band in the principal color. Moderate sized flowers have a tidy look, and fit nicely on thinner, graceful stalks with 3 branches. Similar in color pattern is **Paul Black Seedling #916C**, with perhaps a richer color (more orange than apricot). The band in the falls is more deeply embedded. Plant habits appear to be an improvement over 'Champagne Waltz'.

CLASSICS: FLAMING LIGHT (R. Brown 1973); **HAPPY HARMONY** (D. Palmer 1974); **SALMON RIVER** (O. Brown 1971).

PINKS:

They just keep comin', don't they? I continue to be impressed with how this color group is evolving. We are to the point now that strong plant habits and dependable performance are imperative – anything less is now unacceptable. A trio of varieties, previously reviewed, continues to lead this list for overall quality and sheer elegance. **SOCIAL EVENT** (Keppel 1991) is a rich deep pink, heavily ruffled with an artistic shape. Sensational plant habits, making showy clumps which can be seen clear across the garden. **COMING UP ROSES** (Gatty 1992) has the same saturation of color, but adorned with even more lace. The texture is more diamond dusted, versus the chiffon look of 'Social Event'. Plant habits, overall, aren't as strong as 'Social Event', but it still meets the criteria for worthy acknowledgement – a fine tribute to a lifetime of work from a discerning hybridizer with a great eye for beauty. **SWEET REVENGE** (Meek 1992) is pure unadulterated sex appeal! Currently, my favorite pink. It is a voluptuous full baby ribbon pink infused with deeper pigmentation, all capped with extravagant ruffles and lace. Strong healthy growth habits. The Schreiner family has a reselect comparable in quality and style to the finest pinks on the market: **Seedling #BB1680-1** is a satin-smooth pink, with beards a slightly deeper coral. Diamond-dusted and graceful, with extremely tight waved ruffling and light lace. It has a perfect symmetry of ruffling on moderate-sized flowers. Falls are wide and horizontal. Stalks are much better than previous offerings from the Schreiners, very graceful in candelabra style with 3 branches. **RARE OCCASION** (Gatty 1994) is a genteel, muted medley of pinks, suffused with peach, salmon at the shoulders. Flowers are large and broad, yet retain their elegance. Beards are deeper, actually a combination of lavender, red, orange, and coral, providing subtle contrast to the pastel coloring.

CLASSICS: BALLET RUFFLES (Rudolph 1978); **BONBON** (Gatty 1977); **INFATUATION** (Corlew 1977); **STARFROST PINK** (Gibson 1976).

LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:

KATHLEEN KAY NELSON (Hager 1993) leads the group – a classy iris which was named for a classy lady. Kay's absence in the iris world leaves a great void. 'Kathleen Kay Nelson' is a dark violet blue, lightening to near-white in the heart of the flower, surrounding light yellow beards. Deeper texture veins give strength to the flower. Outstanding branching, with thick stalks in a gentle S-curve with 3 branches in modified candelabra placement. **MUSES' FIRE** (K. Mohr 1993) was a pleasant surprise, a somber muted orchid blended with a smoked overlay. Distinctive pink beards provide a totally unexpected contrast. The mysterious effect is reminiscent of its parent, the high-quality 'Spellmaker' (Corlew). **GYPSY ROMANCE** (Schreiner 1994) is a rich deep cranberry, deeper and larger than 'Thriller' (Schreiner) with much improved plant habits. The hafts are imprinted with a small portion of smooth chocolate. Stalks are a superb modified candelabra, with 4 branches, double budded, with excellent sequencing of bloom and later secondary stalks, further extending its bloom season. Overall form is tighter and improved over the Schreiners' 1992 offering of similar nature, 'Mulberry Punch'.

ENCHANTED APRIL (Lauer 1995), seen in Portland as Seedling #L88-104, is a late-blooming season extender in a blend of lavender, orchid, and mauve, remindful of a muted 'Lady X' (Gatty), topped off with a stunning sienna beard. Upon full expansion, the flower displays a silvery edge in the style of 'Full Tide' (O. Brown). Waved, horizontal falls. Smooth chocolate shoulders. A rampant grower, with superb branching (3 branches). Great carrying power in the garden. Larry Lauer is one of the most talented hybridizers at picking an appropriate name. This one may be his best yet, and it was given to a lovely iris. Two seedlings to watch for: **Paul Black 88116B** was the hit of the Craig Garden in Portland. Simply described, it is a larger, improved 'Grand Waltz' (Schreiner). A heavily laced orchid to lilac, lighter in the center of the falls, but then embellished with elegant, deeper texture veining. The branching is superlative, with formal candelabra branching which is very consistent from stalk to stalk. Healthy foliage, good increase, and does not overbloom. This will

be named **LOIS PARRISH** (Paul's sister), scheduled for 1997 release. The Schreiners had literally dozens of fine reselects to choose from in the lavender-violets, coming from a highly evolved line. My favorite at the convention was **Seedling #CC364-B**, a deeper version of 'Lorilee' (Schreiner), with not as much white in the center of the falls. Smooth hafted, with chocolate at the shoulders, extending over to the violet beards. Branching and plant habits are superb. There are 3 branches displayed well on modified candelabra stalks.

CLASSICS: **ACTRESS** (Keppel 1976); **DATEBOOK** (Corlew 1974); **PRETTY KAREN** (Hamblen 1973).

DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:

BLACK TIE AFFAIR (Schreiner 1993) is among the blackest available, with an inky finish and jet black beards to add to the intensity of the flower. Its moderate size has understated waving versus the deep dramatic ruffles of some of its contemporaries – a nice change of pace, and a nice effect. Great stalks, with 4 branches, double-budded. **MOUNTAIN MAJESTY** (Ghio 1995), seen in Oregon as Seedling #88-20C2, is remindful of the great classic, 'Dusky Challenger' (Schreiner), but is actually bred from one of the Schreiners' overlooked dark beauties from the same era, 'Darkside'. Well named, for it is a tall, stately (yes) majestic deep violet self, with no other colors to interrupt the mood. Absolutely huge flowers, shapely and ruffled, are kept high and mighty with telephone pole stalks. Branching is simply astounding, carrying 4 branches and spur, often opening 3 at once. Yet there are backup buds, enough to extend its bloom season greatly. To add to its grandeur, throw in a satin finish and outstanding substance. Surely THE overlooked Schreiners release this past decade is **INDIGO PRINCESS** (1992). A full violet in the tradition of Dykes Medalist, 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner), with perhaps a bit more indigo in its makeup. Thick husky stalks produce show stalk after show stalk. Consistency is the key. Thick, big, husky foliage is purple-based, hearty, with strong increase. Moderate to deeply pleated ruffling. Good color saturation and carrying power. **VIRGINIA BAUER** (Richardson 1993) is another variety that has been overlooked. It is a swirling violet with indigo blue beards, like an updated version of 'Silent Majesty' (Hamblen). The saturation is intense, and it has a royal blue mink finish that adds character. Very sophisticated, with even deeper texture veins in the falls that give greater intensity to its carrying power. Healthy purple-based foliage.

We have 2 more Schreiner seedlings to continue the legacy of a great bloodline: **Schreiner Seedling #DD483-1** is a magnificent tight round deep blue-violet in the style of 'Starina' (Schreiner). Standards are somewhat open, showing off their ruffling, but hold well with strong midribs. Falls are clean at the hafts, rounded, and nearly horizontal. The ruffling is symmetrical and deep. Moderate-sized flowers are displayed on rather tall stalks, double budded, with 3 well-spaced branches. Not just another purple; it has distinction. It dances. I hope, in spite of its modest flower size, it makes the Schreiners' "final cut" and reaches the wings of introduction. [**NOTE:** This seedling was named **DIABOLIQUE**, a 1997 introduction]. **Schreiner Seedling #DD240-1** is an extension of their high-quality black line to watch for. It blooms earlier (a definite plus in the Midwest). It brings back memories of the great classic, 'Dusky Dancer' (Luihn), with its velvet falls and jet black beards. Standards are so tight they're nearly conical. The flower is about 1" larger than 'Hello Darkness' (Schreiner). Tall, strong stalks carry 4 well-spaced, long branches.

CLASSICS: **ROYAL ALLURE** (Plough 1977); **SOUL MUSIC** (Meek 1978); **STORM CENTER** (Schreiner 1979).

BLUES:

WATER BALLETT (Ghio 1993) was a pleasant surprise. In a world of near-perfect blues, it's amazing that a hybridizer can still create one new and unique, in a common color such as blue. Remindful of its papa, 'Altruist' (Schreiner) in color style, being actually a **blending** of azure blues deeply swirled into ivory in its heart around soft cream beards. Form is simply impeccable. The flowers shimmer and glisten in the sun, and are set in motion with deep bubble ruffling. **MUSIC MAESTRO** (Blyth 1990) is a pulsating ruffled ultramarine shade of blue, complete with self beards. Flowers are large, with broad, nearly overlapping falls. A trio of Schreiner selections continues the evolution of a legendary line of work: **CAPTAIN'S JOY** (Schreiner 1994) exhibits the deep-sea-blue approach, complete with outstanding branching, bud count, and plant habits. The timing of its buds leads to a long season of bloom. Its flowers are consistently high-quality through the duration of its bloom season. The softer blue line, in the tradition of 'Tides' In' (Schreiner) is **DELTA BLUES** (Schreiner 1994), probably the finest of their azure blues released to date. Lavish ruffling is deeply chiseled into the round flowers, rippling and graceful. The architecture of the flower is flawless, as are its plant habits and show stalk branching. The color is fully saturated but cool and crisp. A reselect to look forward to is **Schreiner Seedling #DD69-1**. It is a billowing 'Altruist' type, but with a "looser", airy look than the tight round structure of 'Water Ballet'. A shade darker, close to 'Rapture in Blue' (Schreiner) in intensity, but with the 'Altruist' blending of glistening white bleeding from the white beards. Floriferous, with excellent foliage. Stalks have superb modified candelabra branching, with 3 branches. Refreshing and pristine.

CLASSICS: ADDD PRAISE (Boushay 1976); REGENT'S ROW (Denney 1979); SPACE BLAZER (Gibson 1976); VICTORIA FALLS (Schreiner 1977).

WHITES TO NEAR WHITES:

The best in Oregon was ARCTIC EXPRESS (Gatty 1996), seen in the gardens under Seedling #X60-3. Tall and stately in its presentation, it has a “finished” look to it that, frankly, I always found lacking in its parent, ‘Christmas’ (Gatty). The color is chaste – absolutely pure, right down to its self beards. The standards are domed and strong; the falls wide, rounded, and flare just enough to have strongest impact from the tall stalks, visually. Incredible branching, bud count, and bloom sequencing. It has been a long time since we’ve seen a pure white on the grand scale of the classics such as ‘Piety’ (Branch), ‘Winter Olympics’ (O. Brown), or ‘Flight of Angels’ (Terrell). This new white just might be the one. LADY BIRD JOHNSON (Mahan 1996) is a lovely new contribution to the quest for blue-bearded whites. Although technically this is a pale blue, it nonetheless conveys the effect of the cool whites. Powder blue beards (deeper at the base) add to the ensemble. Ruffling is very delicate, close but “shallow”, a nice change in style from the deep bubble-ruffles our eyes have become accustomed to. Diversity is the key to an interesting garden! ALL AMERICAN (Byers 1992) is actually a pale-pale reverse amoena in lilac, with the standards just a half-tone deeper than the icy white falls. The flower is contrasted with a shrimp to tangerine beard. Wide, ruffled, and early-blooming. Nope, no horns or flounces or other widgets. Don’t know if it reblooms. Still, Monty knew how to breed beauty into “normal” flowers too! His absence from the iris world is an immense void. Such a talented artist of a hybridizer. HILO SURF (Durrance 1990) was another “discovery” for me. Rather large flowers are a pure sea-foam white, with frothy billowing ruffles all over. The form is different – rather long in length of falls and not flaring (i.e., hanging!). Yet I kept being drawn back to it. It has appeal, and is not offensive in form. Actually, rather stylish. No cookie-cutter, fat, round, overlapping stereotype here. The flower has quality, plus the magic “D-Word”, distinctiveness.

CLASSICS: EMMANUEL (Boushay 1979); SILVER SHOWER (Schreiner 1974); VALENTINA (Spence 1973); WHITE LIGHTNING (Gatty 1974).

CREAMS TO YELLOWS:

The new star is OVERJOYED (Gatty 1994). No picture can capture its subtle nuances. No written description could ever convey the essence of its sheer beauty. Technically, a yellow amoena, but the blending gradations of tones between its cream-white and yellow are so artfully melted together that the effect is actually a blend. The broad round flowers have substance like wax, the ruffling deeply chiseled marble. You look and just let out a big, innocent sigh! Indelible elegance. Unforgettable. ALL TOGETHER (Gatty 1992) uses a much more direct approach in seeking your attention. A bright, clear, fully saturated light to medium yellow, intensified with a deep yellow beard. Broad and blocky, from the great, overlooked ‘Hollywood Blonde’ (Gatty). ABBEY ROAD (Silverberg 1994) was another one of those pleasant surprises in Oregon, yet looked even better here in Oklahoma the next year at a show in Edmond. A very unusual presentation of color – basically a reverse yellow bitone with hardly a band on the falls at all. The unusual trait is that, instead of the warm leathery look usually associated with this color pattern, it is a cool glistening “glaciata” texture, silken and shimmering. Simply huge flowers hold together admirably. From “the Doo Dah guy”, the talented new hybridizer from St. Jo, MO wound up with another hit in LION'S SHARE (Jameson 1992). Of the kazillion varieties I viewed at the Portland Convention, this billowing blend of whipped cream, ivory, and light yellow wound up being my pick for the Out-of-Region Cup. What an incredible garden iris – a vision of health and cleanliness.

A charming new golden-yellow was WAKE-UP DIANNE (K. Mohr 1994). Individual flowers were rounded and shapely. It was brilliant and appeared sunfast. Growth habits and branching were inconsistent, but we’ll see – certainly worth another look. REDEFINE SHINE (Burseen 1992) is a screaming yellow-gold possessing a trait I’ve wanted to breed for years in this color: lace. Reminiscent of an oldie that was overlooked in its time, ‘Winning Spirit’ (Blaylock) but, thankfully, appears to be more sunfast than its predecessor. The one specimen I saw had a clubby stalk with only 2 branches, and it was so heavily laced that some flowers had a difficult time opening correctly. Nonetheless, all kinds of potential here for the breeder. Ah! I guess patience really is a virtue, for I was finally lucky enough (persistent/pushy enough!) to acquire and bloom SUNCATCHER (Ensminger 1992). Truly the prettiest yellow I’ve ever seen. Compact rounded flowers are lemon to medium yellow, opening up from enchanting green buds. Shorter 30” stalks are in perfect proportion for the tidy flowers. My only complaint this year, on its maiden bloom in Oklahoma, was that it kept raining on my crosses!

CLASSICS: LEMON CROWN (O. Brown 1976); MING DYNASTY (Moldovan 1973); ORMOLU (Schafer 1973); SHINING LIGHT (Gatty 1973); STARRING ROLE (D. Palmer 1973).

PLICATAS:

CLASSIC LOOK (Schreiner 1992) is my favorite of the blue plics, to date. The white base is pure, pristine, unadulterated, without plicata markings drifting over into the centers of the petals (this includes the standards). The plicating is a carefully laid stitching in soft, eloquent lobelia blue, with markings just a touch thicker in the standards. Style arms are deeper blue, pulling everything together. Having observed this new plic in 3 states, 3 climate zones, in 3 seasons, the branching has been somewhat inconsistent. However, outstanding show placement tends to be the norm, rather than the exception. **DELICATE TOUCH** (Hager 1991) is another sleeper. Basically a very soft lilac plic in the color of ‘Rhonda Fleming’ (Mullin), but adorned with moderate lace. Form isn’t as splendid or refined as Rhonda, but still most acceptable. The color saturation is so subtle you might tend to miss it. But with that luxurious lace, you won’t! Another subtle “barely-plic”, this time in blue, in the tradition of the great old-timer, ‘Ribbon Round’ (Tompkins) is **WINNER TAKE ALL** (Ernst 1993). The flowers are broad and cleanly colored, with most of its blue marking concentrated in the heart of the flower, in the style arms. A pleasant surprise.

After the stunning success of the debut of the dark luminatas, ‘Mind Reader’ and ‘Spirit World’, Keith Keppel has toned things down a bit with **FANCY WOMAN** (Keppel 1995). It is a French lilac to mauve-pink luminata, marbled into a strange, lovely mother-of-pearl base. Bright reddish-orange beards sneak out from an ivory luminata patch. Very early blooming, but the generous bud count guarantees a long, happy bloom season. A dark luminata bred from an entirely different approach from the Dynamic Duo above, is **BALTIC STAR** (Stahly 1994). It is a stark deep purple (black to the eye, especially in full sun), with a breathtaking burst of pure white radiating from the beards. Form isn’t as wide and stylish as the Keppel luminatas, but still very attractive. I can’t wait to see the results, once it starts “socializing” with the Keppel line. Two colorful plicatas from Duane and Joyce Meek were popular in Oregon – and they’re different enough in style that only the worst of the brain-dead gardeners could confuse them. **BRAZEN BEAUTY** (Duane, 1994) is a wildly extroverted creamy-pink plic, unashamedly sanded and polka-dotted in bright rosy pink. A different look complete with exotic deep ruffling and lace-lace-lace. **RAIN MAN** (Joyce, 1994) is not quite so daring, with blowsy, deeply pleated ruffling instead of the lace. A clean white based plic, branded with wide raspberry pink plicating so thick it appears as a band. Both varieties are fun; both are worthy.

CHINA NIGHTS (Mahan R. 1990, never officially introduced) is a unique chocolate to redwood, with just a flash of white emerging from the center of the falls, dissected by a bold belly stripe extending from bronze beards. Moderate-sized flowers are held up well on rather thin, willowy, graceful stalks. Another warm plicata that showed great potential was **HEARTSTONE** (Ernst 1993). A copper-russet to chocolate on white plic, much in the style of the great ‘Cayenne Capers’ (Gibson), but then a heavy flush of gold in the standards’ midribs. Very unusual black appears up and down the stalks and in the spathes, like Keppel’s luminata, ‘Spirit World’. Simply presented, with only light waving – no lace or other clutter. Commendable plant habits, with good increase. And lastly, a neat new plic from a rising star from the Czech Republic: **Paul Nejedlo Seedling #RRSMOIC-90-1**. Different and *avant-garde*, unlike anything I’ve seen to date in the USA. Standards are pale blue, lightly airbrushed with deep blue washing and plicating. Horizontal falls are a white base, then heavily peppered, sanded, and airbrushed irregularly in a deeper blue and pansy purple. Moderately heavy ruffling and crimping. A tight, compact, tidy look, with superb form and substance. Watch for great things from this creative, talented new hybridizer from abroad.

CLASSICS: **LOOP THE LOOP** (Schreiner 1975); **MICHIGAN PRIDE** (Berndt 1976); **OSAGE BUFF** (Gibson 1973); **ROUNDUP** (Keppel 1974); **SOCIALITE** (Keppel 1974).

AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, and NEGLECTAS:

DRESDEN DANCER (Knaus 1990) was very consistent in each of the Portland gardens in which it was gusted. A clean, perky lilac amoena with a subtle red beards and light lace. Flowers are small for the height of the stalks (as with Byers’ Space Ager, ‘Conjuration’). But the stalks are lean and willowy, creating an attractive overall effect. Similar, and from the same hybridizer, **NEW GLORY** (Knaus 1990) is a blue amoena with a more distinctive bright carrot red beard. The falls have a suggestion of an even deeper band. Good clean color contrast, with a glistening diamond dusted finish. From a brilliant cross: ‘Firewater’ (Keppel) X ‘Flamingo Blues’ (Hamblen). **ASTRID CAYEUX** (Cayeux 1991), from France, is a most elegant lavender to lilac amoena, with white beards tipped carrot. Domed standards have a flush of lilac at the base of the midribs. Falls are horizontal and well shaped. **DELTAPLANE** (Cayeux 1991) is zany, and perhaps some folks won’t like it (of course, you know I do!). A medium to deep blue amoena (approaching neglecta). The falls are so horizontal and ruffled they tend to pop back up! Outstanding plant habits. Strong healthy stalks carry 3 branches. Although it already has a great name, another “descriptive” possibility could have been “Skirt Alert”!

JUST MAGIC (Blyth 1990) is a gigantic pale reverse blue amoena, broad and determined on thick well-branched, very tall stalks. Blocky, classical form. The falls are chalky pure white. Very sophisticated. **Gatty Seedling #S29-5A** is very

similar in style to 'In Reverse' (Gatty), so much so that Keith may opt not to release it. The saturation of this reverse blue amoena is even greater, and the falls ever more chalky. And, as with 'In Reverse', the stalks and branching are outstanding. **Schreiner Seedling #CC173-1** is a rich neglecta in the manner of 'Proud Tradition' (Schreiner), but the falls have a unique variation in tones, with the deepest blue in the center of the falls. Attractive chocolate shoulders are smooth (no haft marks). Substance is leathery. **Schreiner Seedling #CC1208-1** is a brave attempt at red, white, and blue, a la 'Regal Affair' (Shoop). Standards are well shaped, in white, with only hints of blue. Falls are rich deep blue, with an intricate network of white veins exploding from the red beards. In a new twist, this one is adorned with lace. Very floriferous; it makes a showy clump. **Schreiner Seedling #DD420-1** is a smaller-flowered version of 'Proud Tradition', this time with lace. A totally new look in true neglectas. Standards are clean light to medium blue, noticeably devoid of the deeper flush in the midribs, so common in this color pattern. Horizontal to slightly flaring falls are lustrous deep inky blue, blessed with the 'Proud Tradition' velvet sheen. Exceptional stalks, with 4 perfectly placed modified candelabra branches. Whopper plants, very healthy foliage. The finishing touch is a halo around the falls, in the same shade as the blue of the standards. With the lace, the flower dances!

CLASSICS: **PRESIDENT FARNSWORTH** (Muhlestein 1975); **SKYLAB** (Sexton 1974); **TWIST AND SHOUT** (Blyth 1974).

BICOLORS:

RUTH BLACK (Black 1996) is a beautiful new pink and lavender color gem which has survived the nasty springs central Oklahoma has experienced several years in a row now. Broad, huge flowers are tight structurally, adorned with just the right amount of ruffling and lace. The falls have a fascinating changeable taffeta blending of various lilacs and lavenders, capped off with stunning red-orange beards. True to its Hamblen/Opal Brown heritage, this is a very late bloomer, with the first blooms debuting after many TBs have "called it quits" for the year. **COLETTE THURILLET** (Cayeux 1990) is a muted, almost surreal blending of many colors, ending up as a bicolor, technically. Nearly conical standards are a subdued apricot, heavily flushed orchid-violet in the midribs. Flaring to horizontal falls are shot silk in orchid, plum, pink, and mauve, with a buff band and bright carrot beards. It is smooth at the hafts, but has tan shoulders. Delicate ruffling and a touch of lace. **TEMPTING** (Ghio 1992) is a stunning pink and black attempt, with clear medium pink standards atop bold wine-purple falls, narrowly edged in pink. Blazing red beards in the middle of it all. Very colorful. **COLLECTOR'S ART** (Shoop 1991) is a refreshing reverse bicolor, with medium orchid-rose standards over pink grapefruit falls, touched off with a band in the color of the standards, showcased with dazzling shrimp beards. Form is very simplistic, but the plant habits and stalks (3 branches) were impressive. Excellent contrast between the standards and falls.

MAVIS WAVES (Jameson 1994) carries on the tradition of the Hamblen bloodline in a combination like 'Adventuress' (Hamblen): Pink standards, lavender-blue falls, complete with one of those "mixed" beards (tangerine at the base, heavily tipped blue, giving a visual effect of raspberry). As with 'Adventuress', It has tall formal candelabra stalks, blooms in the latter half of the season, and has a haunting smoke overlay through the entire flower. I had to go home and pull out the checklist to get the scoop on the next one: **CREGRINA** (Maureen Foster 1995) is an English origination that, as far as I can tell, has not been marketed in the USA yet. Basically a yellow and lavender bicolor. The standards are swirled and closed in a blending of golden yellow and cream in the style of 'Gold Trimmings' (Schreiner). Horizontal, broad falls are soft orchid-lilac, gradually transcending to a lighter shade in the center of the falls. A 3/8" tan band on the falls is embedded in soft lace and gentle ruffling. Smooth at the hafts, with a gold beard complementing deep gold shoulders. The flower has a thick leathery look that is most intriguing. The flower opens clean, but then gracefully fades to an even prettier color combo as the flower expands to its full size. Spectacular formal candelabra branching, with 4 branches in perfect placement. Watch for what will surely be one of the most beautiful of all bicolors, **Ghio Seedling #87-129W3**. The coloring is a mix between the great 'Heather Blush' (Hamner) and 'Sweet Musette' (Schreiner). Standards are soft apricot-pink. Falls are an elegant lilac to rose-mauve, finished with a bright shrimp beard. It possesses a translucent, captivating satin sheen throughout. Broad and full in form, but still artistic and graceful. A network of deeper texture veins, in the style of 'Heather Blush', adds depth and charm. Swirling ruffles throughout. Strong stalks with 3 branches. Melodious!

CLASSICS: **BETTY SIMON** (Hamblen 1976); **RINGO** (Shoop 1979); **TEQUILA SUNRISE** (McWhirter 1978).

POTPOURRI (or, just too confused and mixed up to attempt to put in a color class!):

WITCHING (Blyth 1994) is certainly well named. Down-right spooky in its coloring, with a bold black beard adding to the mood. Clean light blue standards are starkly contrasted by a bizarre concoction of gold, tan, and lilac falls, all mixed up, yet smoothly applied. If there's a color chart reading that accurately depicts the coloration, I have to see it to believe it. Extremely early bloomer. Very floriferous, although branching is sometimes inconsistent. Excellent plant habits, with thinner (but not wimpy or watery) foliage. **GLORY BE** (Hamblen-Meek 1995) is one of those "gold mine" parents which

we are fortunate to have today because of caring friends such as the Meeks. A cornerstone in Melba's later work; the possibilities are endless in hybridizing. Standards are subtle tan, fairly heavily infused with a muted mauve. Simple creamy yellow falls have a big fat bushy brick red beard. A stunning contrast. **ISLAND DANCER** (Shoop 1991) is a perfect example of the innovative work the late George Shoop pulled out of a small backyard seedling patch. Deep brown standards are enlivened with intense flushing in rose and orchid. Smooth velvet honey-tan falls make a marvelous contrast. Had enough? Bright red beards! Zowie! Notably improved branching and bud count from previous releases in this bloodline. My, how we will miss the King of Color!

Technically a blue amoena, **MARBRE BLEU** (Cayeux 1993) is just too mixed up to stereotype into a color category. Absolutely whopper-flowers have white standards with a touch of blue at the edges and at the base. Falls are a white base, then heavily marbled in brilliant sapphire blue, with the marbling intensifying at the edges. Thick carrot-red beards sit amidst the white ocean spray. Husky stalks can withstand the pressure of the huge flowers, and there are 3-4 branches, well placed in modified candelabra position, double budded. A very heavy bloomer that may very well bloom out in the temperate climates. **PRISM VIEW** (Ernst 1992) is a mesmerizing blend of pastels. Much more subtle than its relatives such as 'Afternoon Delight', 'Competitive Edge', and 'Different World' (Ernst). It changes colors in different degrees of sunlight and different angles in the clump. Fascinating; a great name! Muted tan, amber, lilac, and orchid outlaid delicately for a serene picture. **BURNT CRISP** (Burseen 1993) is a wild and wooly plicata derivative. Mocha standards are laced; horizontal falls are brick red to chocolate and wine blended, with howling (plicata) hafts. Huge flowers. The blossoms open quite well, even though the falls are edged in quilled 'Kilt Lilt' (Gibson) lace. Branching could be a bit under the weather; we'll see. The fair state of Utah may never be the same -- and the last shall be.... **TIGER HONEY** (Kasperek 1994) is the first release from this enthusiastic new hybridizer, and is a major advancement in the work Allen Ensminger began with the broken color pattern types (I refer to them as "splish-splashes"). Base color is bone, but then it is irregularly, irreverently mottled, streaked, and blotched with butterscotch, honey, and golden yellow. Like it or not, the zoo has arrived, folks – DEAL WITH IT!! (Personally, I fall into the "greatest fan" category – Mr. K is fresh and innovative in his approach to breeding and marketing, but dead serious about his work – he'll go far!).

CLASSICS: **GYPSY BELLE** (Hamner 1974); **PEARL ISLAND** (Muhlestein 1975); **PISTACHIO** (Ghio 1974).

SPACE AGE:

STINGER (Byers 1994), previously reviewed, deserves another mention. It is truly in class, as the world's first Space Age SDB. Unsuspecting, innocent honey plicata blossoms suddenly have purple horns poking up from the beards. WOW! **ALL AFLUTTER** (Byers 1994) is in the style of the sensuous 'Mesmerizer' (Byers). A bit taller, with stronger, thicker stalks, this white doesn't have the high-drama adornments of 'Mesmerizer', but the flounces are still there, and very consistent. A beautiful iris in its own right. From a new hybridizer, we saw **Knudtson Seedling #89-62-H** in Portland. A tidy blue amoena displays imposing white flounces. No red in the beard whatsoever. Flexuous stalks like 'Conjuration' (Byers), but they hold the smaller flowers up very well. Very different.

MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

PARDNER (Fisher 1993) made a very impressive clump in Oregon; very floriferous with stalks spaced nicely throughout the clump. It retained its daintiness in spite of "ultimate" cultural conditions. Standards are a blend of honey to old gold. Falls are dusky red with a precise, narrow gold rim. **REMINISCENCE** (Mahan 1994) has been consistent in many different climate zones and growing conditions. Standards are warm violet, the falls with more a plum influence. White haft markings are attractive rather than distracting. The entire flower possesses a glow that is, unfortunately, all too rare in this class of iris. High quality, from the high-quality cross: 'Consummation' (Welch) X 'Rosemary's Dream' (Dunderman).

BORDER BEARDED:

Several very promising varieties have been released recently. **HULA HOOP** (Shoop 1995), seen in Oregon under Seedling #85-34, is an odd color array, even for George Shoop! Standards are light orchid with plum veining and a tan to brown border. Falls are an opalescent mother-of-pearl with some lilac and gray shadings. They then have a distinctive tan band and bright coral-orange beards. Great name! **TROPICAL PUNCH** (Aitken 1994) is a fruity reverse bicolor from the Shoop lines, which the hybridizer cleverly describes as papaya orange in the falls. They are rimmed in a distinctive melon to purple blended color, which is also the color of the standards. Bright coral beards add to the color splash. Splendid

tight form. **BIG ISSUE** (Burch 1994) carries on the color scheme of one of its parents, ‘Dark Ritual’ (Hager), with rich maroon standards atop sultry black falls, which are overlaid with a dramatic maroon sheen. Excellent proportion throughout. **VERY VARIED** (Ensminger 1993) is correctly classified and compact in its body parts. In Oregon it was planted near ‘Batik’ (Ensminger), and although of similar patterns, the misclassification of ‘Batik’ stuck out like a sore thumb (and the Batik Fan Club cries, “Fowl! Such heresy!”). The base color of ‘Very Varied’ is even richer (approaching black), allowing the white splashes to be even more sizzling. Slender stalks have modified candelabra branching with 3 branches.

MOSTEST (Durrance 1990) is a bedazzled saffron gold, as bold as the rowdy ‘Curious Yellow’ (Durrance, TB) but in a smaller, simpler flower. Velvety texture. **RED ROOSTER** (Durrance 1990) will sometimes grow out of class, but is usually consistent enough to be worthy in your median collection. Compact flowers are a velvety deep garnet to crimson with black undertones. Slender, straight stalks have 4 nicely-placed branches. Simple form with few ruffles (who would want a rooster with ruffles!). **PUNCH** (Tompkins 1989) was different, and I liked it. Basically an improved, smoother-hafted ‘Miss Nellie’ (Burch) with ochre standards and horizontal falls in a vivacious plum, with a sharper look at the smooth hafts. The falls tend to bleed to a lighter blue-lavender edge, which adds to the charisma. The color is then followed with a dark bronze band. Good plant habits and stalks. **SILKS** (L. Markham 1992) is a diminutive shimmering silky white, nearly MTB in size, similar in character to ‘New Wave’ (Hager, Tet MTB). Clean purple-based foliage. Charming, and a pleasant surprise.

BABY GRAND (D. Meek 1994) is a cleverly named compact reverse blue amoena. The standards are quite dark, heavily infused throughout in ink-jet blue. The falls are several degrees lighter, providing a stunning contrast. **APRICOT FROSTY** (Niswonger 1992) is the best of the pink amoena BB offshoots. Another well-named one, this billowing apricot-peach amoena has a frothy, frosted finish that adds character and distinctiveness to the display. This one has been in class in the different climates I’ve observed it. Outstanding plant habits. I guess **BABOON BOTTOM** (Kasperek 1994) wound up being a wee bit controversial. All I can say is, “Lighten up, folks!” A clever splish-splash in a light pink base, mischievously streaked and swirled with blotches of everything from medium pink, old rose, red-purple, to even white. Certainly unusual! The flowers even have a touch of lace. Smaller flowers, too – NOT a “short tall”.

CLASSICS: **MAROON BELLS** (Magee 1976); **SHANNON** (Wolff 1975); **STOP FLIGHT** (Danielson 1977).

INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:

Although I maintain a rather extensive, modern median collection, **NORTHERN JEWEL** (Schreiner 1991) was a “sleeper” for me. It is a wide glacier white warmed in the heart with yellow shoulders and beards. Magnificent branching and bud count, with double-budded sockets up and down. A very dependable performer. **BLAST** (Hager 1993) is a howling bicolor that won’t be mistaken for any other. Standards are dazzling apricot-orange. Falls are intense, bright magenta, topped with tangerine to fire engine red beards. Broad and bold, with outstanding branching inherited from its plicata mom, ‘Shenanigan’ (Keppel). **SAILOR** (M. Smith 1996) is a sensational new neglecta-plicata, with medium blue standards so heavily saturated they appear solid (only a touch of white showing through). Glistening white falls are heavily banded in deep blue-violet plic stitching, complete with belly-stripe tattoo. Form is broad and solid. Branching and bud count are beyond belief. It will be smashing in the garden and on the show bench. **FATHOM** (M. Smith 1997) is an updated version of ‘Silent Strings’ (Dyer), complete with deep ruffling and fluting. The form is impeccable, with nicely domed standards with strong midribs, and wide, round falls. Branching and bud count are markedly improved over ‘Silent Strings’. The flowers have a fascinating mink texture, usually associated with the deep blues. **BOLD STROKE** (E. Jones 1993) has nice contrast – a soft French blue decked out with an intense indigo-blue (nearly black) beard, inherited from its parent, ‘Codical’ (Innerst, TB). **ZING ME** (Blyth 1990) is a dazzling new color pattern in IBs, with creamy lemon standards, creamy white falls edged lemon, then a deep chocolate brown spot pattern exploding over 2/3 of the falls. All this is accented with deep chocolate – nearly black – beards! Most importantly, it is fertile, and many of us are convinced that this progenitor will be the key to finally pull the elusive *pumila* spot pattern up into the TBs.

CLASSICS: **LOVER BOY** (Ghio 1978); **RIKKI TIKI** (Rogers 1976); **SCOUT’S HONOR** (Gatty 1979).

STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:

LOVIN' SPOONFUL (Bausch 1992) was the surprise of the decade for me in the medians! Cold, glistening pure white, right down to the self beards, with the magnificent form and substance of its parent, 'Azure Gem' (Hamblen). It is one of the finest SDBs I have bloomed in years, and I hope more people "discover" it too. The Portland Joneses have scored a hat trick with their 1994 releases: **ADVANCE DESIGN** (Bennett) is a colorful bicolor, with smoothly blended peach and pink in the standards, contrasted with tawny rust-orange falls which are widely banded in lemon-yellow. Tangerine beards are harmonious with both color schemes. **CAPTIVE SUN** (Bennett) is a joyous yellow amoena, with purest white standards atop bright canary falls, which are then edged in white. Wonderful form, substance, and brilliance. Sunglasses required. **MORNING'S BLUSH** (Evelyn) was my personal favorite of the trio. Serene elegance, a blending of sherbet-smooth colors with lemon, yellow, orange, and rosy pink, with a dynamite carrot-red beard. Tends to be at the top of its class, coming from IB X SDB breeding, but still meets the current criteria for SDBs, and should be a valuable parent.

Three new ones from Paul Black continue his tradition for high-quality SDB work: **SPIN AGAIN** (Black 1995) is a clean reverse yellow amoena, with soft light yellow standards and clear white falls with a band of the standards' yellow. Light violet beards are subtle. Superb form and substance. **SWEET BITE** (Black 1995) is a by-product of his extensive pink work. Smaller flowers are an understated buff-pink, contrasted with muted cocoa spots around the beards. Cute and different. His finest luminata to date, and probably the darkest to make the final cut for introduction, is **MIDNIGHT MIST** (Black 1995), a broad, classy spectrum near-black with a white beard and white luminata spot in the heart of the flower, changing to a dramatic washing over most of the falls. Impeccable substance, plant habits, and consistency.

CLASSICS: **BEAU** (Gatty 1974); **CONCORD TOUCH** (Willott 1974); **PET SET** (Schmelzer 1973); **PIXIE PLUM** (Hamblen 1972); **SKY AND SNOW** (Warburton 1972).

LOUISIANAS

The 1994 season was extremely late for all irises in central Oklahoma, and the "mostly beardless" show sponsored by the Sooner State Iris Society in Oklahoma City wound up being "mostly tall bearded". The Australians, John Taylor and brother-in-law Graeme Grosvenor of Rainbow Ridge Nursery (whom I was escorting for 3 weeks in May), got to return to Blanchard with me for one whole day – right at peak Louisiana bloom – in between the national daylily convention in Florida and the national iris convention in Oregon. John Taylor seemed amazed at the difference in appearance of some of his cultivars a hemisphere away from home. In some cases, however, he claimed some were even better here than in the home garden. The great white orchid-like **OBVIOUS HEIR** (1992), donned in its immaculate white with lacy ruffling, was a special standout. Now he could see first-hand why it and the shimmering satin yellow **NOBLE PLANET** (1991) had done so well in previous "L'Elegante Award" write-ups in Contemporary Views.

AMERICAN LOUISIANAS:

CAJUN COOKERY (Hager 1990) is one of the most vibrant reds today. A velveteen garnet-red with satin-smooth finish, totally sunfast. A small yellow line signal is almost hidden in the plush coloring, giving the appearance of an absolute self. A nice contrast to the bold, wide signals that accentuate the great 'Ann Chowning' (Chowning 1977) and its derivatives. **CAJUN SUNRISE** (Mertzweiller 1993), Second Runnerup this year for the Contemporary Award, as with 'Cajun Cookery', is fully sunfast in the blazing Oklahoma mid-May heat. **CHARGE D'AFFAIRE** (Dunn 1992) combines 2 relatively new patterns in Louisianas all into 1 – a silver halo embedded around plum to violet-blue falls; and falls with a tight ruffling that approaches lace, such as is found in 'Dr. Dorman' (Conger 1973). The halo pattern is becoming more common now from several hybridizing programs, but the delicate "pinking shears" style of serration is found on only a handful of cultivars thusfar. A rather large flower, well shaped (of course, the great 'Clara Goula' (Army 1978) is its mom).

CHERRY CUP (Morgan 1989) is one of my favorites from this Arkansas hybridizer, and for me it improves each year I grow it. It is a simply stated bright cherry-red, reminiscent of the glorious coloration of the Army classic, 'F.A.C. McCulla' (1973), but scaled down in size and proportion. Definitely a "cheery" cherry, bright and spunky. Another release from Richard Morgan, just now being discovered, is **CLOWN ABOUT** (1993), a well-named, petite color splash in reds, dusty rose, and golden yellow. The falls are inverted in coloration: Old gold to burnished-bronze, washed and edged in medium red to dusty rose. Has to be seen to understand the color pattern – there's nothing else like it on the market! In spite of its huge flower size, the soft colors of **DEIRDRE KAY** (Granger 1992) retain its elegance and sophistication. It is a genteel medley of muted lilac and lavender, blending to soft pink on the edges. Falls are a tone darker, complemented with a diffused, cream sunburst ray-pattern signal spraying out from the heart of the flower. In some years the concentration of pink on the edges is further contrasted with a lilac to silver halo, belying its 'Charlie's Michele'

(Arny 1969) background. The wide flowers are heavily ruffled and crimped, with even some lace to add to its charm. A great new iris from the hybridizer who gave us the magnificent 1995 Debaillon winner, 'Kay Nelson' (1988).

The work Mary Dunn is doing in dark tones is without peer. She has released several dynamic creations in tones of velvety black, plush violets, and blues so deep they approach indigo. To date, my favorite is **EXTRAORDINAIRE** (1992) – appropriately named, for it is truly an extraordinary iris. A large, flat flower in ravishing, metallic purple that shines in the sunlight. The heavy ruffling and that rare serration on the petal edges come from the pollen parent, 'Clara Goula', with the richness and intensification in coloring coming from a brilliant combination of 'Blue Shield' (Davis 1966), 'Black Widow' (MacMillan 1953), and 'Full Eclipse' (Hager 1978). What a star-studded cross – in my opinion, the finest release to date from this Debaillon Medal-winning hybridizer from California. **FAR AND AWAY** (Dunn 1992) is a sib to 'Extraordinaire', but very different, with more of a red underglow against the purple base color, and a bit more prominent yellow signal. It has a velvet pile, versus the metallic sheen of 'Extraordinaire'. Another large-flowered cultivar with heavy ruffling without serration.

FELICIANA HILLS, from Baton Rouge hybridizer Pat O'Connor (1992), is a large, glowing mallow-pink with rose undertones that enrich the depth of color. It is a strong, husky grower with sturdy, tall stalks. Unfortunately, it lacks the branching and bud count of many of its contemporaries, but the breeding potential for richer, clearer pinks goes without saying. Not widely grown, but we hope that changes. Another "sleeper" here has been **FRINGED GOLD** (Shepard 1992), hybridized in Phoenix. Yes, Louisianas are very popular in both Phoenix and Tucson, in spite of the hot climate. It is a tidy, compact brick red – delicately haloed in a pure gold. A unique way to exhibit its contrasting colors, totally different from other haloes on the market. Further, the buds are gold, opening into the stunning red tones. Well proportioned with shorter stalks and well positioned branching – a pleasant surprise. One of the best examples of star-signals appearing on all 6 parts is **GEISHA EYES** (1990), one of Charlie Arny's last introductions. Smaller in stature, the flowers are absolutely flat, rounded, and only gently waved, so the eye is not distracted from viewing the golden yellow signals lying on pure blue-violet. Tightly constructed with magnificent branching and plant habits – truly a weed, but tends to make a highly desirable, compact clump.

To date, the heaviest concentration of the serrated look occurs in **GOURMET** (Dunn 1990). A glowing, clean yellow with wide, rounded petals with such heavy ruffling, crimping, and serration that the heart of the flower appears to be doubling. Thusfar it has been a finicky grower here, but other growers report acceptable performance. Elegance supreme! Another "sleeper" from Mary Dunn has been **INNER BEAUTY** (1991). Very non-spectacular here the first couple of seasons, but this cultivar has redeemed itself to become one of my favorites from Mary's breeding. Another great name – a fully saturated violet with the "inner beauty" being classy, contrasting, soft yellow style arms. Flat-formed flowers enable you to see the color combo even more clearly. Most Louisiana iris cultivars bloom and perform well here in central Oklahoma. One of my favorites, the Debaillon Medal winner, **EASTER TIDE** (Arny 1979), unfortunately has a difficult time producing an acceptable stalk. It is very cold-tender here – any hint of a late freeze and that's it – the stalks abort. **JUST HELENE** (Mertzweiller 1991) seems to be more hardy, and is presented in the same basic colors, though deeper in saturation. It is a true bicolor in blue-lavender and yellow with yellow intricately veined in the blue colors. A great new addition to a very limited color class. However, for sheer elegance, you still can't beat a good 'Easter Tide'. Although most of the Arkansas cultivars bloom later in the season for me, **KELLEY'S CHOICE** (Morgan 1993) is one of the first to bloom here. This color gem is basically a warm yellow overlaid rose to brick red. As the flower ages and expands, the color pattern transforms (not fades) to an old gold with a *plicata* edge in the original overlay color. A shorter cultivar with tight compact flowers to complement the tidy plant habits – there is simply nothing else like it on the market.

KENTUCKY CAJUN (Norris 1995) is the first tetraploid with a significant degree of ruffling. Quite a breakthrough with broad, bold indigo blue strongly contrasted with bright yellow signals remindful of those of 'Ann Chowning'. As with Dunn's 'Extraordinaire', this great new iris has a scintillating metallic sheen.

LAKE OUACHITA (Morgan 1992) is a cute *I. brevicaulis* hybrid with small, simple light to medium blue flowers displayed on traditional zigzag branching. A proverbial weed, making an instant clump. True to form, the stalks and the foliage are shorter. By the way, it's pronounced "wah-shih-tah", an Indian name and a famous mountain range and lake in west-central Arkansas. **OVER THERE** (Dunn 1992) is the last of a trio of dark-toned Dunn releases reviewed this year. It is from a totally different approach to breeding, and has more lime green in the line signal. Superb flat form with more moderate ruffling, all presented in a rich, full blue-violet with excellent color saturation. **PRALINE FESTIVAL** (Haymon 1992) is totally unique in color. A smooth, honey to butterscotch with a green-gold signal that blends into the color scheme well. In some years, deeper texture veins appear. Thick, leathery substance allows flowers to be totally sunfast, even in the humid, warm weather of Lafayette, Louisiana. Show stalks supreme, often opening 3 to 4 flowers at a time, yet it makes a great garden iris, too, with its high bud count and superb timing of its buds.

The American review concludes this year with 2 very special irises from Richard Morgan, Hot Springs, Arkansas. They are personal favorites here. **WILLOW MINT** (1994) is a smaller-flowered, full sulfur-yellow with rich mint-green signals and style arms. The outpouring of green from the heart of the flower is the most intense concentration of green to date in any iris. **WINDOW SHOPPING** (1993) is a bright and bold variegata that begs to be mated with the flamboyant bicolors from ‘Margaret Lee’ (Taylor 1992). ‘Window Shopping’ has light yellow standards, heavily infused in red at the midribs. The falls are deep brick to oxblood red, contrasted with light yellow steeple signals. A rich carnival of colors.

AUSTRALIAN LOUISIANAS:

CURRENCY (Taylor 1994) is totally different from anything we’ve seen from ‘Margaret Lee’, and proves the diversity this super parent holds in its genes. Very flat and broad, so broad the falls overlap into the standards. The color does vary from season to season and in different soil types, presenting a challenge for the good judge. A muted blending of creamy buff overlaid and veined in pink and copper to old gold. Don’t turn up your noses – wait until you see it. Very unique, and it grows on you. **DANCING VOGUE** (Taylor 1994). Ah, the great one! The closest thing, to date, to hot pink, but it is more elegant than gregarious. Broad flowers sport ruffles and waves, displayed in voluptuous medium pink with clear yellow signals. Some years (especially if cooler and overcast) the coloration approaches mallow pink. Either way, it’s beautiful. **DEDSIGNER’S DREAM** (Taylor 1993) is a full yellow with the saturation of ‘Apollo’s Song’ (Taylor 1991). But the overall effect is much more refined and feminine. The texture is more of a silky look, rather than leathery. Deep, deep ruffles, so deep you stand amazed that the flowers could ever open properly – but they do. **DURAL DREAMTIME** (Taylor 1993) is an expansive, warm white enriched with lime green to yellow signals and texture veining. Deep ruffling lends a fluffy look to the flowers.

We waltzed into the Sooner State show in 1995 with a stalk of **FASHION WORLD**, scheduled for release in 1997 by Taylor. It went on to win Best Seedling (the first AIS award for this Aussie, can you believe it?). Well named, it’s one of those “designer colors” you just won’t find in any color chart. A mauve with pink undertones, complemented with yellow signals and presented with a taffeta finish and deep ruffling precisely cut into the flower as only an artist could do. Small and tightly constructed with excellent, rounded form, but with smaller flowers and shorter stalks reminiscent of ‘Gladiator’s Gift’ (Taylor 1991). A new Taylor introduction that performed very well here as a seedling was **FREEDOM RIDE** (1996). It is a full violet-blue, more blue than violet here, from ‘Margaret Lee’. Light blue buds open to reveal the deep-toned flowers embellished with a silvery halo. Deep ruffling causes the undercarriage color to show through, adding to the mystique of the flower. Further contrast is added by white style arms gently brushed violet-blue. **GOING SOUTH** (Taylor 1994) is remindful of the cultivar ‘Our Parris’ (Carroll 1990), but with a rounded form and richer coloration. The large vanilla flowers are heavily flushed tan-caramel and veined mustard. The overall effect from a distance is a caramel to old gold self. The standards are slightly lighter than the falls. Magnificent plant habits, and a stronger grower than many of the ‘Margaret Lee’ kids. Show stalks throughout the clump with double buds at most positions when well grown. Gentle ruffles and waves make for a nice change from the deep ruffling of so many of the ‘Margaret Lee’ offspring.

Another guest Taylor seedling that went on to be named was **GUESSING GAME** (1995). Totally unique in color presentation and texture. It’s another one of those ‘Margaret Lee’ children that has to grow on you, and that it did! Think of the blue bitone, ‘Colorific’ (Mertzweiller 1979), broad and full, add a misty, smoky overcast to the entire flower, and you have the basic look. The standards tend to have a mottling that usually varies from flower to flower, one reason for the name. Not dirty or muddy – hauntingly beautiful. **HEATHER PRYOR** (Taylor 1994) also carries a mysterious smoked look to it, but against a creamy pink amoena, rather than blue. It is an eloquent blending of pastels, displayed on broad, heavily ruffled flowers. Incredibly, yet another release from ‘Margaret Lee’ breeding lines. It possesses the same aura as another Taylor favorite of mine, which has unfortunately been overlooked, ‘Dawn Planet’ (1990).

From Janet Hutchinson, the breeder of ‘Soft Laughter’ (1990), we have another honey-tan blend that is sure to please. **HONEY STAR** (1993) is a vision of health with strong plant habits and vigorous increase. Deeper apricot to caramel texture veining adds life to the flower, and a bitoned effect with the standards a tone lighter than the falls. A “sleeper”, as Mary’s Dunn’s ‘Inner Beauty’ has been, is **ICE MAGIC** (Taylor 1992). I thought nothing of it the first 2 bloom seasons, but the past 2 seasons it has been superb. It is a warm, creamy white decorated with deeper texture veining throughout the falls. This past season it had more of a silky texture, giving evidence to why it was so named. Faultless plant habits with broad, moderately ruffled flowers, graced with orange to golden signals. Sometimes these Down Under plants have to have the time to “kick in” and acclimate fully before performing at their best.

‘Margaret Lee’ also throws rich, dark colors. The best to date is **JACK ATTACK** (Taylor 1994). A tall, imposing purple bitone with a satin sheen and the deepest ruffling yet in the dark-toned cultivars. A bold ‘Ann Chowning’ type, bright yellow signal adds superb contrast – great iris – great name! **JOSEPHINE SHANKS** (Taylor 1993) is similar to ‘Dancing Vogue’ in basic color, but is more a mallow pink (like Raabe’s 1988 pink introduction, ‘Gerry Marsteller’) with

a flatter, rounder appearance, and more of a silver halo. The yellow signals form on all 6 petals, creating a “star” effect. Substance is thick and it has a leathery to waxy texture. Another one of those that will be difficult to judge, as it gracefully transforms its color as the flower expands and ages. The mottled, marbling effect, especially in the standards, is becoming a trademark of numerous ‘Margaret Lee’ progeny. Some like it, white others may find it to be a defect. **MARBLE CAKE** (Taylor 1994) shows this pattern the greatest of any cultivar released thusfar. Huge flowers are exhibited with cream standards, heavily and irregularly marbled in pink and deep purple. Falls are almost solid violet-purple with lighter mauve mottling. Taylor has taken an unusual pattern and capitalized upon it and enhanced it, as Allan Ensminger has done with the broken pattern “splish-splish” in the bearded irises.

Just when you think we’ve reached the ultimate in sheer beauty, along comes Taylor with **PAMELA HART** (1994). All-in-all, this is perhaps the finest mid-yellow released by John to date. In addition to the impeccable form, deep ruffling, and carved-wax texture, the plant habits and floriferousness are commendable – pure elegance! In white tones, the heavily ruffled creamy white, **RACHEL’S REQUEST** (Taylor 1994) vies for equal attention in lighter tones. Broad and sophisticated, it was slow to acclimate here, but seems to be improving each year. Perhaps the prize for the most deeply ruffled iris should go to **SHY ROYAL** (Taylor 1995). A more subtle version of its parent, ‘Margaret Lee’, it has muted pink-lavender standards and dusky rose to magenta falls – topped off with creamy style arms blushed in pink. Too soft to be flamboyant – let’s try luxurious. The ruffles are so deeply embedded they are channeled.

Last but not least, a strong contender to ‘Obvious Heir’ for “most beautiful of all”: **SPANISH BALLETT** (Taylor 1993), an extremely heavily ruffled pure white (remindful of ‘Helen Naish’ (Taylor) in clarity of color). Whereas ‘Obvious Heir’s’ ruffling is tight and close, as if crocheted into the flower, ‘Spanish Ballet’ has the “bubble ruffling” made famous by Joe Ghio in his Tall Bearded iris introductions. Shorter in stature, but not short of personality. Either a flower has it, or it doesn’t. Personality is a subjective trait, but on cultivars such as ‘Spanish Ballet’, anyone who exclaims “Oh, just another white” must surely, simply, have no taste!

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