

## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 1996/1997

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After a lengthy “hiatus”, I am resuming my annual review of iris varieties I have seen and evaluated in previous seasons. At this point, the first couple of editions to be written must seem like “old news”. But here, as much as SIX years later, hopefully the comments being made are still “contemporary” and of value to the reader. In particular, I want to “bestow” my annual awards on some special irises, and acknowledge the work of that hybridizer. I am a hybridizer, but refrain from reviewing my own things – I’ll leave that to other writers, if the spirit moves them.

I try to be open-minded and objective. I’ll even review (and vote!) for an iris, even if I might not be overly-fond of the hybridizer! Those are rare, because I like and respect most of my contemporaries. But there are a couple or three “out there” who, for the most part, simply have no taste or that most important “critical eye”. I can think of one thing that’s worse than an ugly baby – that’s “more of the same”. The boredom of mediocrity cannot be taught in a judges training class or a hybridizing seminar. Some hybridizers just simply “don’t get it”. I joke and say “Even a fool can get lucky and create a beautiful iris at least once in his (her) lifetime”.

Judging the international competition in Florence, Italy has been an eye-opening experience. Even this “seasoned judge” who (cruelly, of course) is sometimes accused of thinking “he knows it all” left Italy humbled. The point scoring used there is superb, fair, and consistent. The American Iris Society, I think, tries to use similar scoring in our garden judging evaluation (it’s in the Handbook, ya’ know). I just don’t know how many judges actually use it. Just because an iris maybe has had a “bad year” this year, I will still give it its due consideration if it has performed admirably in previous years. I can only hope my fellow judges and friends feel the same about me. Lord knows I’ve had my share of “rough years”. Somewhere in the point score system is, surely, a goodly number of points for resilience (translation: “He just won’t go away!”).

I began Contemporary Viewed after the 1988 bloom season – this was the year when Oklahoma City hosted one of the biggest and greatest national conventions on record – the fantastic “Sooner State in ‘88”. The review is unabashedly modeled after the great reviews a long-time friend of mine, Joe Ghio, Bay View Gardens, Santa Cruz, California, did for many years. I felt it was important to give exposure to some varieties that perhaps had not been seen (and reviewed) on the West Coast. In modern times, let’s face it, the greatest amount of work – and progress made in the evolution of genus iris (at least in the Tall Beardeds) has been done on the West Coast. Middle California was (and still is) a haven for hybridizers (both on the coast, and inland, such as Stockton and Sacramento). In recent years, the Portland/Salem, Oregon area has become as much a “mecca” for hybridizing as central Florida has been to the daylily – and the iris folks have seen a remarkably similar “flight” of hybridizers from wherever they came to Oregon. Hotbed of activity, indeed! Fortunately, from what I’ve seen, the iris hybridizers have been able to maintain and flourish with healthy competition, versus some of the nonsense I’ve seen and heard from our dear daylily breeders....

To the new reader of this commentary, a few of my “rules” you are probably not aware of:

1. I maintain a database of all varieties I have previously reviewed. With rare exceptions, I refrain from devoting space to a variety in Contemporary Views more than once. The exception usually occurs in the awards section of the review.
2. I do not “politic” a variety, tell you, “oh you need to vote the Wister, or the Sass, or (heaven forbid) the Dykes, for This Variety or That One. I will give you enough substantive information about the quality of a variety that, hopefully if you haven’t “discovered” it yet, my comments will whet your appetite to keep an eye out for the variety or maybe even buy it somewhere and test it yourself, to see if I’m lying through my teeth. I will occasionally scold judges for “missing” a variety (even have an award called the “Dark Horse Award”). Usually, however, by the time I mention it, its eligibility for awards has passed.
3. I could care less WHO the hybridizer of a variety is. I review the work of famous, established hybridizers such as Keith Keppel, Paul Black, the Schreiner family, Joe Ghio, etc., etc. But I enjoy trying out “new” hybridizers, and if a positive review from me contributes to the “discovery” of a worthy, “lesser-known” artist, that’s super.
4. Recipients (and runnersup) of my “awards” receive nothing (except for maybe a warm fuzzy feeling).
5. I now refrain from negative reviews. In the first year, I included a “Return to Sender” Award, where I blasted varieties which had received all kinds of pre-introductory ballyhoo, either directly from the hybridizer or from other sources. This led to nothing but hard feelings, not to mention the fact that I have had to “eat crow” more than once, berating something that later proved to be more than fine, upon establishment in central Oklahoma.

6. “Classics” are my walk down memory lane – euphoric recall. I limit these to those I personally used to grow (and in some cases, have added back to my collection). As with other varieties in Contemporary Views, the “classics” are maintained in a database, and get mentioned only once.
7. “New Iris” translates as one which has been introduced during the past 3 years from the time of the review.

So, without further adieu, 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 limited reviews of Louisianas, Spurias, and Arilbreds, most years.

1. **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**, given to the Best New Iris seen: **NORA EILEEN** (Richardson 1994) is a vision of quality and health. This rich, glowing blend reminds me of a great old classic, ‘Martel’ (Muhlestein 1962), with its tapestry of wine, red, and magenta, complete with a flash of orchid below deep violet beards. This “backyard hybridizer” from Washington is well-known for his critical eye and demand for healthiness in his releases. And ‘Nora Eileen’ is the epitome of those standards. Wide, modern form, a conservative amount of ruffling, and branching and bud count all one would hope for. Beautiful deep green foliage, making husky, weather-resistant plants with excellent increase.

### **Runnersup:**

**IT’S MAGIC** (Maryott 1995), in an age of enlightenment (thank you, Monty Byers) where the “Space Age” iris has returned to popularity, and enough hybridizers are serious about improvement, this dazzling medium yellow is a cut above most of its contemporaries. I’m sorely disappointed it hasn’t received more attention. Wide, rounded form, encased with a generous amount of ruffling and lace, sunfast, and then those dramatic, huge, fuzzy deep yellow horns protruding from the heart. A white flash immediately below the beard/horn allows the eye to concentrate on the adornment. **HIPPO’Z TUTU** (Kasperek 1995), from the “King of Funk”, this non-color breaker plicata is a favorite, even though it hasn’t received the ballyhoo of some of its more “unstable” zoo-mates! Registered as a “cyclamen purple” on white ground plicata, I think of it as a “happy” deep orchid-lilac on white. Lace on plicatas usually doesn’t make much sense to me, aesthetically. On the hippo, it works. Fairly short (30-32”), with proportionately moderate sized flowers; it has 3 branches spaced perfectly over the upper 2/3 of the stalk – just like the Judges Handbook says. And coming from a “rough climate” as Utah, it is a notably reliable grower and performer. **SWINGTOWN** (Schreiner 1996) is yet another step forward in what would have to be considered a royal lineage of quality irises in this color range from this quality family. A stunning, bold, heavily ruffled intoxicating mulberry-claret self – not a blend, just can’t decide which color it more closely exhibits. A decided blue cast to the otherwise self beards adds contrast and further enlivens the flower. This one glows (maybe in the dark – I haven’t tried it). And of course, it has the show branching and bud count that comes with this bloodline. Not as generous an increaser as some others in this color group from these hybridizers, but still most acceptable in production. In spite of being a late bloomer, it hold up well in Oklahoma weather conditions, which often is really starting to get “toasty” by the end of the Tall Bearded season.

2. **L’ELEGANTE AWARD**: Bestowed upon the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen. This doesn’t 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: **PEWTER TREASURE** (Durrance 1994) is a cleverly named, eloquent statement in understatement – a gray iris. No, not the dirty dishrag, washed out colors when so many were working on “green” irises (and perhaps had smoked enough illegal substances to think they were seeing green). This is a pewter gray, with what must be metallic silver undertones, which give a glow and sheen to the flower. Close inspection will probably reveal a lavender-violet undercurrent which contributes to its carrying power; but the impact is gray. Yet it doesn’t “get lost” in the garden. Magnificent form, and substance and texture as to compliment the color presentation.

### **Runnersup:**

**VICTORIA’S CIRCLE** (Ker 1994) I first discovered “hiding out” in a back row at Stockton Gardens. This is modern, sophisticated version of the great but difficult-to-advance pattern, ‘Emma Cook’ (Cook 1959), with basically a solid white color, adorned with a narrow, elegant sapphire blue edge on only the falls (NOT plicata). The white is crystalline, and the sapphire is shimmering – beautiful (and different) in either full sun or partial shade. For fun, take a picture of it in full sun, on a cloudy day. Then take another shot when the sun hides behind a cloud. **FANCY FILIGREE** (Knaus 1996) is from one of the “backyard unknown” hybridizers I have somehow stumbled upon, along the way. Mr. Knaus hybridizes irises and daylilies in Rockford, Illinois, located about an hour northwest of Chicago, almost in Wisconsin. So he surely is in about Zone 4 or 5, and breeds his irises accordingly to withstand those tough winters. ‘Fancy Filigree’ is an elaborate orchid to lavender amoena, with cold white standards atop orchid falls with a hint of a deeper band, embedded in heavy lace. Tight, classical form from a brilliant mix of bloodlines involving the work of Melba Hamblen (‘Flamingo Blues’,

the red-bearded blue amoena – twice), Opal Brown ('Lightning Ridge'), and the exotic lace from Schreiners ('Grand Waltz'). **RIPPLING RIVER** (Schreiner 1995), in an ocean of quality blues, from a family who has specialized in advancement of blue irises for 50 years, is new and distinctive. No description of blue can truly convey the captivating tones in this heavily ruffled future classic. The hybridizers call it a medium navy blue, but it is much more. With traditionally high quality branching and bud count, this new blue has already been Best of Show at a couple of the highly competitive Oklahoma shows.

3. **9-1-1 AWARD**: A special award given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break. **KENTUCKY CAJUN** (Norris 1995). Tetraploid Louisianas are still very scarce. Getting a pod is an achievement, and then getting a seedling distinctive enough to merit release is a major hurdle. Here we have the first tet with a liberal amount of ruffling, as we have become accustomed to in the diploids. This alone would place it as a contender in this award category. Add to it the fact that it is noticeably improved in its ability to open properly, and you have a winner (many of the tet Louisianas have so much substance that the falls tend to "pop up"). Color is rich and dramatic, with a glow in the texture. Actually, quite remindful in color intensity and presentation as 'Rippling River'!

#### **Runnersup:**

**ROMANTIC EVENING** (Ghio 1996) is a major breakthrough in a difficult color combination: Red-bearded neglectas. The standards are anywhere from a medium blue to lavender with a decided lilac cast, which gives a mysterious illusion to the color combo. Falls are smooth, smooth velvety black-red, with some purple influences to strengthen the color carrying power in the garden. The mood is set off with stunning brick red beards (no carrots here, or tangerine). Well named, it is sophisticated –and romantic, indeed. Prediction: This one is going to be a great (superstar) parent. **LYRIQUE** (Blyth 1996). One of the most talented hybridizers on the planet has now stretched the *I. pumila* spot pattern beyond the MDB, SDB, and IB classes. And he has done so with years of persistent, critical seedling selection and probably a lot of faith and spirit of adventure! 'Lyrique' is a Border Bearded in blue-lilac with a silvery overlay which sparkles the flower. Then, in dramatic, bold contrast, we find a vivid deep burgundy to plum signal, extending halfway down the falls from the intense deep brown beard. **DEAR JEAN** (Kerr 1996). Fred Kerr is another one of those "picky" hybridizers, in a backyard in North Highlands, California, a northern suburb of Sacramento (the same hamlet as Bob and the late Mary Dunn, talented hybridizers in their own right). In Fred's releases thusfar, he obviously has an uncanny sense of what to marry up with which, and it shows in his selection process. This hybridizer obviously has a vision, and is willing to experiment to achieve those goals. 'Dear Jean' is in the basic pattern of 'Emma Cook' and 'Victoria's Circle', except this time "in color", in the style of the Schreiners' 'Gypsy Woman'. We have bright cheery yellow standards, pure and without distraction. Then the falls are a clean white base, strongly brandished with a diffused brick red 'Emma Cook' band (no subtle elegance of 'Victoria's Circle' here – this one is STUNNING!). The contrast of colors is all pulled together with thick, deep yellow beards and a warm glow of yellow in the hafts, in the heart of the flower. Although a bold statement, it refrains from being gaudy. Thusfar, it is a noticeably improved performed over its grandparent, 'Gypsy Woman'.

4. **SUN BELT AWARD**: 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). **LION'S SHARE** (Jameson 1992) is everything you would ever want in a good garden iris. I suspect the English will love it, in that it is remindful of the contributions we seen from English hybridizers, with the emphasis on health of the plant, strong stalks, plentiful, well-timed buds, and attractive foliage for 12 months of the year. 'Lion's Share' is a tall, classical study in simplicity, with soft (but effective) lemon-cream, with more color saturation in the standards. From unusual lineage, in that the pollen parent is blue (Schreiners' 'Tide's In'). Flower form is simple also, with graceful waving rather than elaborate ruffling, and the falls with the flair you see in its pollen parent. A vision of health, with incredible resistance to adverse weather conditions and dependability in both the flowers and the plants.

#### **Runnersup:**

**SOCIAL EVENT** (Keppel 1991). We always hear that so many of the full-toned pinks have difficulty growing, especially in the colder climates of the North and East. With 'Social Event', we have a major breakthrough in overcoming this long-standing defect. Although registered as a "buff-peach", for me it is more of a dazzling rich pink, with voluptuous, yea, indeed, sinful deep ruffling. The flower is so captivating, it takes awhile to move the eyes down to the plant. Instead of another disappointment, we find a most acceptable plant habit and increase. **POWER SURGE** (Ghio 1991). Again, for so many years, warm plicatas (those with a color base, not referring to white ground violet plicatas, such as the Schreiners' Dykes Medalist, 'Stepping Out') have been rather infamous for being difficult garden subjects. In more moist climates, the problem often was susceptibility to soft rot. In cold climates, often the bloom was so early that even a hint of a late freeze would wipe out the bloom point altogether or at least leave the plant with an embarrassingly deformed stub for a stalk. 'Power Surge', in central Oklahoma, where we are notorious for late freezes, usually begins its bloom a bit later in the season. And the vigor and "full fan of foliage" (instead of 3 or 4 pitiful, insipid leaves for a fan) helps support a very decent

chance at survival and strong performance. Colors are stunning – a warm, glowing salmon ground, insanely stitched and banded in richest magenta. Another plicata which has “broken through” here is **LIGHTNING STREAK** (Gibson 1992), certainly a far cry from the release of ‘Kilt Lilt’, Gibson’s Dykes Medalist from 25 years ago which, unfortunately, behaved more like an annual in Oklahoma instead of a perennial iris! Here we have a bold orange to golden-ground plicata, striated in the standards in caramel to sand, then boldly marked in the falls in varying gradations of sienna red and brown. Healthy, vigorous growth. Decent stalks and bud count. A fine achievement.

5. **DARK HORSE AWARD**: Awarded 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. **JAZZAMATAZZ** (Blyth 1986) is a well named SDB dazzler with rich bright yellow standards atop bold red falls with a dramatic ¼” edge in the yellow of the standards. Heavily ruffled, but not to the degree to interfere with the color presentation. A joy to grow, with rather husky foliage, loads of increase, and a floriferous bounty of bright and bold blooms each season. Consistency is the key, year after year quality. Blooms are well spread out over the established clump, and the backup bud in the terminal times itself so as not to interfere with the branch bloom. Had this variety been released in the United States first – or if the Australasian awards system was even remotely modeled after AIS, things would have been different, surely....

#### **Runnersup:**

**NEUTRON DANCE** (Blyth 1987). To say this would be the crowning achievement of 30-something years of work by Mr. Blyth to improve upon the work started in New Zealand with ‘Pinnacle’ (Stevens), wouldn’t be fair, in that Barry continues to produce excellent, worthy advancements in yellow amoenas and its “bi-products” (orange amoenas, apricot amoenas, crazy color combinations as offshoots from the work). But ‘Neutron Dance’ is among the finest created. Bold and stunning in its color staging. White standards with just a suggestion of a blush of yellow in their midribs. Magnificent, sunfast richest yellow falls, horizontal and dancing in their presentation (ah, perhaps thus the name!). Excellent plant habits, but probably should be protected from late freezes, as it tends to bloom quite early, as many do from this line of breeding. **BRIDAL FASHION** (Weiler 1980) is a heavily ruffled, purest white I first discovered when I saw a huge planting of it, in all its glory, at Superstition Gardens (Tasco/Duncan) in Catheys Valley, California. We connoisseurs seem to have gotten away from the simplicity of a classy, ruffled white. Otherwise, this beautiful garden subject would have received more attention, surely. **PURPLE PEPPER** (Nearpass 1986) is so incredibly distinctive and creative, I fail to understand its lack of popularity. A joyous occasion with, literally, purple peppering all over the flower, with more intensity in the falls. Charlie Nearpass was one of the few “eastern” hybridizers which found respect – and “support” – at the national level (as was evidenced with his pathfinder, ‘Spinning Wheel’). Yet this unique plicata went virtually unheralded.

6. **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD**: Goes to the most outstanding seedling personally viewed this season. The winner this year is most definitely a breakthrough: **LITTLE CAILLET** (Durio 1998), SPEC-X, is the first interspecies marriage between *I. virginica* and a tetraploid Louisiana iris. Yes, another namesake for the “grand dame” of Louisianas, Marie Caillet, and I hope this innovative creation receives the recognition others bearing her name have received. Basic color is a blend of orchid-blue, with elegant deeper orchid texture veins in both the standards and the falls, which gives vitality to the color presentation. The signal belies its *I. virginica* heritage, in a full golden yellow and rich green in a distinctive design. This will be one of those joys 52 weeks of the year, in that the base of the foliage (and the bloom stalks too, mind you) are deeply stained in purple. Beautiful. Healthy, vigorous growth. Strong substance and endurance from its tetraploid bloodlines.

#### **Runnersup:**

**SUDDEN IMPACT** (Tasco 1997) was viewed still under seedling number when visiting Superstition Gardens (the same day I “discovered” ‘Bridal Fashion’). Whether he knows it yet or not, mark my word, Rick Tasco is going to quickly become one of our premier hybridizers in America. Observing him evaluating his seedlings and reselects in his garden convinced me of that. The color of ‘Sudden Impact’ is certainly nothing new – a soul-soothing clean medium blue with undertones of lavender. The “impact” is the sheer size of the blossoms (and their endurance), coming from its mama, ‘Dusky Challenger’ (Schreiner), and the dramatic depth of heavy ruffling, carefully, architecturally placed around the flower (compliments of Rick’s first, great introduction, ‘Ruffled Goddess’). This is one of those releases which, on paper, sound like a million others. When you see it, you’ll know it has that certain distinctiveness about it which makes it a worthy release. **THIS AND THAT** (Black 1998) is another great contribution in a series of unique releases displaying the luminata-plicata pattern in IBs. This one is an unusual lavender-orchid base, deeply edged, sanded, and marbled in deepest violet – nearly black. Form is wide and simple and flaring. The real quality comes through in its outstanding show

branching, bud count, and strong plant habits. A future superstar for one of the most talented median breeders in America today. **OVERNIGHT SUCCESS** (Ghio 1997) – what a great name for a great new Louisiana iris. Seen as a seedling in the hybridizer’s garden in Santa Cruz, California, this intensely ruffled red-purple with velvet texture and a satin sheen appears to have corrected the inconsistent growth habits of its pollen parent, the famous ‘Margaret Lee’ (Taylor). The brilliant gold signal pattern is a dramatic contrast to the richness and intensity of the base color.

## **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

**RIVE GAUCHE** (Sazio-Anfosso 1993) is certainly a “sleeper”, from France, and most unique in its coloring. Can’t find it in the registrations, but suspect the bloodlines carry ‘Lady Friend’ (Ghio), for that mysterious toasted, even smoky look in its color saturation looks familiar. Decent wide form, and average substance and sunfastness in intense Oklahoma sun. Very different, and worth a try, if you can find it. **GOTHAM CITY** (Lauer 1994) is a wonderful, richly saturated maroon to smoky garnet concoction, with deep, selfed beards. Excellent substance and good carrying power in the garden, in spite of its rather unusual moody coloration. **REDWOOD GROVE** (Gartman 1996) was seen in the Roris garden in Sacramento (they introduce for the late Lilly Gartman, who was a talented hybridizer taken from us way before her time). Again, very unique color presentation. A vibrant maroon to redwood tone (well named!), with hints of striations at the hafts belying the plicata blood in its lineage.

**CLASSICS:** **CAPTAIN GALLANT** (Schmelzer 1959); **GYPSY JEWELS** (Schreiner 1963); **JEWELTONE** (Schreiner 1966).

### **BROWNS:**

**LUMIERE D’AUTOMNE** (Besse 1992), another French offering which has been a delight to grow, but I find no registration information on it. Wouldn’t have discovered it or ‘Rive Gauche’ had it not been for Stockton Gardens’ listing of them. Well named, this is a medley of autumn colors in bronze, brown, and rust, blended together in an appealing fashion. Excellent growth habits, where so many in this color class aren’t. **TOASTED WATERMELON** (Hoage 1994), from Colorado, but if you were to yank the tag, you’d swear you were looking at another neat advancement in the “toasted” colorations which Joe Ghio has made famous. Indeed, coming from ‘Lady Friend’ (perhaps Ghio’s most famous), this is a fabulous, creative blending of ashes of roses and varying degrees of brown, all topped off with a contrasty bright red beard. As with many of the toasted types, color may vary somewhat with weather conditions and varying soil content. So you show judges, watch your step (keeps it all interesting!). Can you believe that name hadn’t already been snatched up!? Sometimes the most obvious.... **CAJUN SPICES** (Maryott 1994) is a marvelous advancement in a difficult color class – copper. The color is smoothly applied, without the roughness in texture you sometimes see in this range. Sunfast, and topped off with bright yellow beards. And even a touch of lace.

**CLASSICS:** **GINGERSNAP** (Schreiner 1965); **MARY TODD** (Randall 1961); **TASTE OF HONEY** (Schreiner 1966).

### **APRICOTS TO ORANGES:**

**ORANGE EMBERS** (Shockey 1993) is an excellent example of the quality of work this New Mexico hybridizer did in Tall Bearded. The “King” of work with arilbreds should not be ignored in the other areas he pursued. This is a brilliant, intoxicating deep orange, with undertones of red and pink to add zest to the overall color impact. Notably excellent plants habits and consistency in the garden. **FORBIDDEN FRUIT** (Gartman 1993) is not the red color you might expect (ya’ know, the Bible, Adam and Eve, the apple, and all that....). Perhaps Lilly was telling us she was allergic to persimmons, because this is a rich, glowing persimmon orange, with a thick leathery substance, allowing the color to maintain its intensity through the life of the flower. **FASHION DESIGNER** (Keppel 1995) is difficult to plug into a color category, but this is as close as any. An understated blending of cream base, melted with various pastel tones in yellow, peach, and apricot; then overstated with extremely ruffling on broad, sturdy flowers. Easily could be a “L’Elegante” contender.

**CLASSICS:** **FLAMING DRAGON** (Fay 1966); **MINNESOTA GLITTERS** (Bakke-Messer 1967); **ORANGE PARADE** (Hamblen 1961).

### **PINKS:**

**BIRTHDAY GREETINGS** (Ghio 1994) is an intensely passionate coral-pink introduced by Bill Maryott for Joe. Basically a self, but has yet deeper shoulders and coral beards tipped tangerine. Intoxicating, heavy ruffling to add to the drama. Will be curious to see this when established. Some from this bloodline have been difficult to grow in Oklahoma; early results thusfar suggest an improvement. **ANSWERED PRAYERS** (Keppel 1995) is a light pink “glaciata” from Keith, which easily explains why “glaciata” is so important in the pursuit of clarity of color. Although pastel, it has a carrying power to allow it to be an important garden subject. Broad, blocky form; intense ruffling. **MELLOW MAGIC** (Black 1992) is almost like a “toasted pink”, hauntingly beautiful in its flesh pink base color, intriguingly blended throughout with an almost-smoky mauve-blue-pink. Difficult to describe; unforgettable in person. Extremely late bloomer, and has the substance to endure any hot wind which may be “sweeping down the plains” at the time (this is Oklahoma, ya’ know!).

**CLASSICS:** **ESTHER FAY** (Fay 1961); **IRISH LULLABY** (Moldovan 1965); **ONE DESIRE** (Shoop 1960); **OVATION** (Tompkins 1969).

### **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

**WISHFUL THINKING** (Keppel 1996) is a strange mix, but basically a reverse lavender amoena, with undercurrents of hyacinth blue throughout. Huge flowers, tall, but on stalks strong enough to surely be able to withstand Oklahoma winds. Husky plants are in alignment with all its other attributes. **SPLASH OF RASPBERRY** (Hoage 1995) is a must-grow, if you’re one of those gardeners who just can’t keep up with the tags in the beds. Unique – nothing like it on the market! A strange array of burnished raspberry and burnt red, deep fiery red beards. But then a bold streak of ripe raspberry dribbling down the center of the falls. Yummy! **MARCY MICHELE** (Lauer 1996) was seen in the hybridizer’s garden when touring the Stockton vicinity. This is a classic orchid self, remindful of the style of the great lavenders and orchids hybridized by Larry Gaulter a generation ago. Impeccable taste, with impeccable form, and just the right amount of lace to add pure class to the effect.

**CLASSICS:** **DREAM TIME** (Schreiner 1967); **RIPPLING WATERS** (Fay 1961); **SUPERGLOW** (Schreiner 1967).

### **DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:**

What an explosion of quality in this color class! Each year, as with the blues for years, the Schreiner family seems to come out with yet another advancement. Gone are the flimsy stalks with 5 buds, blooming so late in the season that half the buds blast in the socket. Gone are the finicky, timid growth habits. With **PAINT IT BLACK** (Schreiner 1994), the emphasis is on its outstanding placement of branches, with 3 branches and easily 8 buds, beautifully timed for extension of season. Black velvet, with self beards, and standards just a hint lighter (full violet). **HAIL THE CHIEF** (Gartman 1995) is a full, deep purple self, more intense and with a greater sheen than the classic, ‘Titan’s Glory’ (Schreiner), which is in its background. Beautiful, deep blue-green foliage. Outstanding form, with moderately heavy ruffling. **EN GARDE** (Maryott 1994) is very nearly a jet black, with the intense ruffling and depth of saturation as its grandparent, the great ‘Houdini’ (Maryott). Thusfar, the growth habits are somewhat suspect, in that it seems slow to reestablish itself after planting/replanting. But we shall see. Very promising.

**CLASSICS:** **AFTER DARK** (Schreiner 1963); **BLACK SWAN** (Fay 1960); **PRINCE INDIGO** (Schreiner 1964).

### **BLUES:**

After seeing ‘Rippling River’, it’s hard to get excited about any other, in any shade of blue. But there are some most worthy additions out there: **NORDIC ICE** (Shockey 1993) is elegance supreme in an iceberg blue-white, with broad flowers, a sheen to them, and a deeper blue beard. Only an average to somewhat slow grower thusfar, but not to the degree of penalization. **STAR SAILOR** (Schreiner 1995) is a blowsy, full medium blue, with all the ruffles and flair you expect in this shade of blue which the Schreiners have mastered. Husky, strong grower. **OVERSEAS** (Ghio 1994) is more of a frothy, seafoam blue, with bubble ruffling, a true Ghio trademark. I’m amazed, with all those ruffles in so many of Joe’s things, few rarely ever have difficulty in opening. **SUSQUEHANNA** (Ed Roberts 1995) has been a nice surprise, from a Kentucky hybridizer who does quality work but, unfortunately, is virtually unknown outside of his general part of the country. ‘Susquehanna’ is a clever, artistic display of blue-violet, which is somewhat mottled over white-based falls. A worthy, distinctive child of Dykes Medalist, ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiners), and very exciting.

**CLASSICS:** **AZURE APOGEE** (Durrance 1967); **BIG LEAGUE** (Schreiner 1969); **BRISTOL GEM** (Leavitt 1965); **CROSS COUNTRY** (Knocke 1963).

## **WHITES:**

**PEMCAW** (Harding 1995) is a heavily ruffled pure white with white beards from Down Under. It inherited its formal candelabra branching from Dykes Medalist ‘Winter Olympics’ (O. Brown) and its ruffles and waves from Dykes Medalist ‘Mary Frances’ (Gaulter). Classical beauty with impeccable plant habits. **IVORY WAY** (Blyth 1995) is a fairly small-flowered ivory blend, slightly darker in the standards, with voluptuous ruffling which looks like carved wax. Thick leathery substance, yet a soft presentation. **NORDICA** (Maryott 1992) is an excellent advancement in the difficult whites with red beards. The beards here are intense and full, and a striking contrast to the chaste purity of the flower color.

**CLASSICS:** **ARCTIC FURY** (Benson 1964); **CHRISTMAS TIME** (Schreiner 1965); **ERMINE ROBE** (Schreiner 1969); **HAPPY BRIDE** (Sexton 1973).

## **CREAMS TO YELLOWS:**

**PRETTY IS** (Mullin 1995) is indeed just that. What a lovely companion for the great lilac plicata from Ron, ‘Rhonda Fleming’. ‘Pretty Is’ has flawless form, broad and full to show off its sunshine yellow coloring. Just a hint of a white spot below deep yellow beards is a nice compliment. Seductive ruffling and a hint of lace. **HALO IN GOLD** (Niswonger 1993) is a nice addition to the Halo series from Dave, and of the high quality as found in his earlier release, ‘Halo in Yellow’. In this variety, the form is even more “finished” with a rounded globular look, displayed in deep golden yellow, with pure white falls precisely banded in golden yellow. **FINE BLENDING** (Black 1996) is a promising recessive yellow, with light yellow standards and pearly white falls blended with yellow and even a touch of palest violet. Very understated, but very different. At the opposite end of the color class, **MAGIC RAIMENT** (Kerr 1993) is a striking, intense, sunfast golden yellow. Its ability to retain its intensity of color is its finest attribute, but it is also a strong grower, with husky plants and respectable branching and bud count.

**CLASSICS:** **BUTTERCUP BOWER** (Tompkins 1961); **CRAFTSMAN** (Knopf 1964); **KINGDOM** (Fay 1964); **SOUTHERN COMFORT** (Hinkle 1965).

## **PLICATAS:**

**CHANGING WINDS** (Tompkins 1994) is distinctive and pleasingly unusual, with its cream ground barely peeking through the heavy overlay of stippling, washing, sanding, and even marbling in various earth tones and rich violets. Gentle ruffling, just enough to enliven the flower’s menagerie of coloration. **COUNTRY RUSTIC** (Mohr 1995) is a superb advancement in the traditional brown on white plicata pattern. A strong, healthy grower in a class which is notoriously weak. Excellent branching and bud count – I hope this rich rust-brown plicata is discovered and goes far. **MASTER PLAN** (Keppel 1995) is Keith’s latest contribution to the warm plicatas, for which he has made a name for himself. This time, we have a creamy to ivory base color, with the standards almost completely saturated in a vibrant rose-cerise. The falls are more traditional plicata, with a distinctive ½” border in the colors of the standards, and then set off with an unusual brownish to brick red beard. Healthy plants, resistant to adverse weather conditions. **HOT CHOCOLATE** (Ghio 1995) is remindful of ‘Country Rustic’ in overall quality of plants, but the color is a more intense chocolate on yellow base, instead of the more traditional rust-brown coloring. Foliage is a respectable full fan of growth. **MAGIC SHOW** (Keppel 1994) is remindful of an improved, modern version of the maligned Dykes Medalist, ‘Kilt Lilt’ (Gibson), with yellow base color, stitched, dotted, and sanded in a series of rusts, brown, and rose, in gradations of tone.

**CLASSICS:** **DOT AND DASH** (Hall 1960); **DREAM SPUN** (Gibson 1962); **ROCOCO** (Schreiner 1960); **SIVA SIVA** (Gibson 1962); **WILD GINGER** (Gibson 1962).

## **AMOENAS AND NEGLECTAS:**

A great new star in neglectas/amoenas is **OVERNIGHT SENSATION** (Schreiner 1995), with a braggadocio name befitting the flower! Simply huge, dramatic, blocky flowers have substance like leather, and strong stalks to support the extra weight of the flowers. Light to medium blue standards sit atop stunning deep blue falls, intense in its garden presence. Husky plants of moderate growth and increase. **PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE** (Niswonger 1995) is the latest offering from Dave in a dedicated program he has worked for many years in the pursuit of the advancement of amoenas. In some varieties, the apricot or orange fall color can sometimes be somewhat “dulled”. In this release, brightness and clarity of color are noteworthy advancements. **GREAT GATSBY** (McWhirter 1995) is a neatly named neglecta, with blue-purple standards over sophisticated deep purple falls, complete with heavy ruffling and smooth harmony in its color separation. Remindful of a modern ‘Mystique’ (Ghio), with perhaps brighter, clearer colors. **JEAN MARIE** (Zurbrigg 1995) is a feminine yellow amoena, smaller in stature in both the flower size and height of stalk. Clean colors, and sufficient bud

count and sequencing to make a floriferous clump. **WINGS OF GOLD** (Maryott 1991) is similar, in impact, of the intensity of ‘Neutron Dance’ (Blyth), but perhaps with a more “polished” look in its form. The falls are bright gold, but with a noticeable presence of lemon in their makeup. The standards are pure white, with only a blush of lemon, only in the midribs.

**CLASSICS:** **DUSKY EVENING** (Schreiner 1971); **FUJI’S MANTLE** (Schreiner 1966); **LORD BALTIMORE** (Nearpass 1969); **MISS INDIANA** (Cook 1961); **SUNSET SNOWS** (Stevens 1966).

### **BICOLORS AND VARIEGATAS:**

**DEBREENEE** (Maryott 1995), seen in the hybridizer’s garden, was a pleasant surprise. Had heard virtually nothing about it. Warm, rich bicolor, with lavender standards flushed pink. Falls are smooth medium violet, complemented with bright tangerine beards. Bold but not gaudy. Strong plant habits inherited from its parent, ‘Mariachi Music’ (Maryott). **MARCHE TUROUE** (Anfosso 1991) is a vibrant variegata, virtually unknown in this country. Rich, deep gold standards sit atop sultry garnet red falls, accented with antique gold beards. Velvet smooth, colorfast, husky. A worthy addition to a limited, difficult color pattern. **EDITH P. WHEELER** (McWhirter 1995) is also, technically, a variegata, but presented in warmer tones not so dramatic in contrast. Standards are a rich blend of caramel combined with golden-honey. Falls are also blended, this time in varying shades of brown and burgundy, complete with a violet blaze below golden beards. Broad, with a “finished” look inherited from its great mother, ‘Brandy’ (McWhirter). The entire ensemble has a toasted appearance which is very unique and attractive. **MADAME FROTH** (Jameson 1995) is a nice extension of the Hamblen line of bicolors, but with more lace in its makeup. Standards are a soul-soothing lavender orchid; falls deeper, blended with rose-violet. Personable coral beards add a finishing touch. Broad flowers with silky substance. Although registered as Midseason, it blooms in the latter part of the season here.

**CLASSICS:** **BARCELONA** (O. Brown 1967); **GYPSY LULLABY** (O. Brown 1961); **LILAC CHAMPAGNE** (Hamblen 1965); **WINE AND ROSES** (Hall 1963); **WORLD NEWS** (Sexton 1977).

### **POTPOURRI:**

The category when I can’t figure out where to put ‘em! A mish-mash of all kinds of things reviewed here. **AGE OF INNOCENCE** (Kerr 1994) is similar to ‘Victoria’s Circle’ (Kerr), but displayed with more of a silken look rather than diamond-dusting. Purest white is the base color, but then only the bottom edge of the falls has a staining (wash) in blue. The blue cast is more of a sea blue rather than the shimmering sapphire blue of ‘Victoria’s Circle’. Both are lovely; both are worthy of being grown. **DAWNING** (Ghio 1995) has been another pleasant surprise – the description simply can’t do it justice. The base color is a soft yet distinctive lemon. Then, as the name suggests, it is blushed in the standards and in the hafts of the falls with a luscious pink, capped with tangerine beards. Form is broad enough, but the finish is quite simple, lightly ruffled rather than the elaborate overstated ruffling so indicative of Ghio’s work. Lovely!

**HALO IN ROSEWOOD** (Niswonger 1993) makes a nice companion with Dave’s ‘Halo in Gold’. Well described by the name, the color of the standards and the rim on the falls is a mysterious, dramatic toasted rose color, with exceptional form and moderate ruffling. **LETMENTERTAINU** (Burseen 1995) is the latest contribution from the king of bizarre names. Spell it out – let me entertain you. Oh, I get it. The name suggests something gaudy, perhaps with circus stripes. Wrong! One of Tom’s most eloquent offerings to date, it is a study in pastels, blended with orange, pink, lavender, and some more orange. Laced broad flowers look like shot silk. A very respectable grower, which you can pretty well expect from TB’s Place! **TROPICAL MAGIC** (Shoop 1995) is an advancement in a pattern George made famous – colored, contrasting hafts. The base color of the flower is soft peach-pink in the standards. Falls are warm white with bold deeper peach-orange shoulder prints around orange beards. Where ‘Dawning’ is subtle, ‘Tropical Magic’ is dramatic.

**CLASSICS:** **ANTIQUÉ IVORY** (Schreiner 1972); **BACCARAT** (Gaulter 1967); **COMMENTARY** (Babson 1963).

### **COLOR BREAKERS:**

This is the first year to separate this style of iris into its own “category”. The intensive, selective work of Brad Kasperek, everyone’s favorite zoo-keeper, merits its own space in my reviews now. Others are doing exceptional work in this relatively new frontier, but this year, the discussion is limited to Kasperek varieties. **NIGERIAN RASPBERRY** (Kasperek 1995) is my favorite of this year’s releases, although all are entertaining and unique. The base color is creamy raspberry, then boldly splish-splashed all different directions with red-purple to deepest raspberry. Bold, broad form, with ruffling, no less. Incredible branching, not before seen in this coloration of color breakers. **SAHARAN SUN** (Kasperek



1995) is the sophisticated one of the bunch. Base color is sunshine to saffron yellow, but then lightly, subtly streaked in a silvery white broken pattern. Shorter, and the flowers not so “obtrusive”, elegant in its statement.

Now, the trio that kicked it all off: **GNU** (Kasperek 1994) is perhaps “the standard”. Upstairs we find a light lavender ground, fairly regularly washed in deeper lavender, with deeper violet streaks and white marbling. Falls are basically the same, but with a thicker concentration of color-breaking. Go one whole set deeper, top to bottom, and you basically have **GNU AGAIN** (Kasperek 1994). Although a sib to ‘Gnu’, the patterning and depth of color makes it a worthy addition. Then, taller and bluer in its color-breaking is **GNU BLUES** (Kasperek 1994). The blotches and streaks are decidedly more blue in their makeup, versus lavender, thus the name. All three have a sensible amount of ruffling and decent growth habits, thusfar.

## **SPACE AGERS:**

I continue to be wow’d by the explosion of work being done – in all parts of the country, even by some folks which you would’ve sworn had themselves “sworn off the freaks”. Appendages (I call them “adornments”) don’t have to be nasty, or deformed, or inconsistent, or a joke. Some of these things, such as ‘Mesmerizer’ (Byers) are down-right elegant. I’m sure iris folks are going through similar growing pains and eye-opening and even controversy as the daylily growers experienced when “doubling” first start showing up in hemerocallis. As with the doubling, it will take persistence, good selection, and good taste in order to see the adornments become more consistent and stabilized. There’s a mad rush to get Space Agers on the market, just because they are Space Age. Don’t fall for it. Hybridizers, the newness has worn off. Settle down and use your critical eye. Use some of the ones listed here as a good role model.

**GRAND STYLE** (Byers 1996) is a major breakthrough in cold plicatas with horns. For whatever reason, improvement in ‘Stepping Out’ (Schreiner) colored plicata work has been slow coming. This is a fairly short purple on white plicata with a purple horn. Branching is acceptable, in spite of its relative shortness of stalk. Clarity of color is a major attribute here. **BRAVE NEW WORLD** (Feuerstein 1996), seen first in the home garden at Stockton Gardens, is elegance supreme in a cold-cold white with overtones in a watercolor lavender. The adornment is a white based beard, uprising into a complimentary lavender horn. Impeccable form and substance, moderately ruffled. **ALABASTER UNICORN** (Sutton 1996) is perfectly named, in that the color is a waxy alabaster white, with yellow-based beards ending in white horns. It inherited outstanding branching, bud count, and plant habits from its father, ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiner), and for me thusfar, the best of the new offerings from the hybridizer who devotes much time and energy to Space Age advancement. **SNOW SHOES** (Osborne 1995), from the California hybridizer who opened the floodgate 15 or so years ago with the release of ‘Sky Hooks’ (Osborne 1980), comes one of the coolest whites we have seen, announced with an icy blue-white with a large white adornment extending from a blue-based beard. Quite heavily ruffled. **BRASS HORN** (Barnard 1995), created by one of the lesser-known California hybridizers, is being guested in Oklahoma. Very different and appealing. The colors are surprisingly similar to ‘Thornbird’ (Byers); however, the overtones are brighter, with a brassy finish, in contrast to the rather dull “thud” of ‘Thornbird’. Flowers are small, tighter, and more leathery in nature, on somewhat shorter stalks. A nice surprise.

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

### **MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:**

The popularity of some recent releases, namely the nearly cult following of ‘Bumblebee Deelite’ (Norrick) has rejuvenated interest – and serious work – in the class, never seen before. Even at the diploid level, we are seeing some very satisfying advancements. **ROBIN GOODFELLOW** (Mahan 1994) is a lovely little thing, with perky warm white blossoms contrasted with distinctive yellow beards. Shorter and at the smaller end of the MTB spectrum, it suggests a great future in median gardens. The popularity thusfar of **BANGLES** (L. Miller 1995) sure looks like we finally have a modern “replacement” for Bumblebee, as far as the widespread acceptance and sheer numbers of gardeners growing it. The color is rather unusual for a diploid MTB, with varying degrees of lavender shades, with a tight little flower on impeccable, correct bloomstalks. This is one of those that is so much fun to watch as the weather changes, especially on a cloudy day. As the sun peeks through, you have a sparkling lavender. As the sun disappears behind the cloud, the flower takes on more of a moody, enthralling look in its makeup. Love it!

**LASTING MEMORY** (Fisher 1994) is the latest in a line of quality work from my home region (Ken lives in Region 22 in Arkansas). A rich neglecta in the style of its grandparent, ‘Consummation’ (Welch), but with flowers in better MTB proportions on outstanding branched stalks that fit the strict requirements for compliance with the class. Falls are horizontal, and the flowers dance in the breeze. Normally I wouldn’t be reviewing one on the market so long, but in the

case of **FUN AND FANCY** (Guild 1980), I missed it! What a distinctive, cute MTB! It displays the quality of its parent, ‘Carolyn Rose’ (Dunderman), but is a rich yellow ground plicata, joyfully sanded and stitched with a bold, deep chocolate brown, with suggestions of red veining in the heart of the flower to give an even stronger appearance. Dazzling and different. **SNICKERDOODLE** (Wulf 1993), from Nebraska, is a wonderful addition to the class, this time with a golden-yellow base, lightly dashed with cinnamon and brown sanding. Falls are basically a warm white, edged in the yellow base color of the standards, and have just a suggestion of the contrasting coloring which appears in the standards. Cute name, cute flower!

**CLASSICS:** **ICE FAIRY** (Witt 1966); **MOCKINGBIRD** (Roberts 1963); **RING BEARER** (Cook 1967).

### **BORDER BEARDEDS:**

Still a difficult class, with few stabilized, worthy offerings to even begin to review. I’m hesitant to include in Contemporary Views if I know the flower is going to go off on a tangent and exceed the specifications. If it gets mentioned in this review, chances are it’ll be in class! **TOMMYKNOCKER** (Lyons 1994), from Colorado, has been a pleasant surprise. An unusual type of red, described by the hybridizer as a red-black self, but appears to me as an intense deep brick red. Deepest bronze beards really add to the mood. A very “masculine” flower in appearance, but thusfar, tightly compliant with the class. A nice velvet texture adds the final touch. **BRIGHTEN THE CORNER** (Ensminger 1995) is well named, with bright, spunky sunshine yellow base color, but white falls boldly banded in the primary color. Lemon yellow beards complement. The stalks are graceful and willowy, with nicely spaced branching; the flowers are compact in size. But the height of the stalks thusfar appears unstable. Either as a Border Bearded or a small-flowered Tall Bearded, it is nice, and worthy of growing.

**CLASSICS:** **BAYADERE** (O. Brown 1962); **BOTANY BAY** (B. Jones 1967); **BOY SCOUT** (Reynolds 1968); **LITTLE GREMLIN** (Hall 1962).

### **INTERMEDIATE BEARDEDS:**

So many new high-quality releases, it’s difficult to limit the review to only the absolute cream of the crop in this class. **RADIANT BURST** (Willott 1994) has been a virtual “sleeper” from this well-established and respected hybridizing duo from Ohio. Amazing how some things just “fall through the cracks”. Well named, this is a smashing plicata in dazzling royal purple to red stitching on pure white ground. The form and substance – impeccable. Plant habits – outstanding. Contrast – bold and dramatic. It bloomed a bit heavy one season, but output strong increase to compensate, and has settled down with a good bloom/increase ratio ever since. **TACT** (Keppel 1995) is a high-quality yellow amoena, with warm white standards and “aureolin” yellow falls and sunflower yellow beards. The ultimate (surely?) in overall quality of flower form, substance, and carrying power of color in the garden. Impeccable plant habits without peer. **MAGIC BUBBLES** (Willott 1994) has been another “wow”, except this time in sheer elegance and beauty. Clearest of colors in a ‘Pink Bubbles’ (Hager) medium pink, deep coral beards, then embraced with heavy ruffling and moderately heavy lace. Superb plant habits in a color class that has had some difficulty in the IBs previously. A joyous, happy flower. **POOKANILLY** (Innerst 1994) is a fine advancement in the brown amoena type, a color pattern virtually nonexistent in the Tall Bearded. Warm creamy white standards sit atop dashing brown falls with a thin edging of white, contrasted with orange beards. On the shorter end of the IB class, you nonetheless notice it in the garden. For a change, the strange name fits the iris perfectly. Outstanding plant habits, with mounds and mounds of flowers on the established clump.

**FINE DÉCOR** (C. Palmer 1994) is an elegant offering from this deceased Oklahoma hybridizer – 1994 was a great year for Cleo, with several exceptional releases in the IB class. Here we have a very sophisticated, understated light yellow, with the falls lighter in makeup, but then banded with the slightly deeper yellow in the edges of the falls. Beautifully formed, with flaring falls, and the flowers are completed with ruffling and lace. **MESSENGER** (Innerst 1995) is a nice contribution to the dark plicatas, of which there have been many high-quality predecessors. Straight from ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black), another superb violet-purple on white plicata, with the form, substance, and ruffling you should demand from this lineage. The saturation is intense; the plicata banding precise and clean. **YOUNG BLOOD** (Hager 1995) is a very strange shade of deep red, quite unique to the class (nothing like ‘Red Zinger’ (Black), the most famous red to date). This is a somber, somewhat smoked maroon red, contrasted with a bushy, thick, deep yellow beard. Nice form, decent substance, and totally different from other reds on the market, making it a worthy addition.

**CLASSICS:** **CLIQUE** (Keppel 1969); **CUTIE** (Schreiners 1962); **HAPPY MOOD** (A. Brown 1968); **JUNE PROM** (A. Brown 1967); **MAROON CAPER** (Warburton 1964).

### **STANDARD DWARF BEARDEDS:**

Of particular note, I have added extensively to my collection the work of Barry Blyth. As with his Tall Bearded, he is doing some innovative, trailblazing work. Thus the heavy emphasis on his introductions reviewed in this classification. **BEE'S KNEES** (Blyth 1994) must surely have the cutest and most clever name in the lot, and is perhaps my favorite, too. Dainty flowers are a spunky medium pink, but with standards flushed lavender. Falls are more of a creamy white, with plicata markings in medium pink, with lavender scratches at the shrimp beards. Tends to get a bit tall as the season progresses, as with many from the 'Chanted' (Blyth) lineage, but still within the specifications of the class. **ROMANITA** (Blyth 1993) is an odd one that grows on you, the more you see it. Base color is a creamy apricot. Yet there is a strong suggestion of green in the standards, and undertones of lavender in the falls. Pretty, soft lavender beards. The whole ensemble may sound like a muddy, jumbled up mess, but it works! **VOYAGE** (Blyth 1993) is a bolder plicata, where 'Bee's Knees' is subtle. Here we have solid-colored standards in a moody smoky lavender-pink (heavy on the lavender, undertoned in pink). Falls are white with a distinct ¼" band of stitching in the standards' color. White beards tipped tangerine. Again, the stalks can get a bit "rangy", and the standards are also open (which show delightfully colored style arms). These are fun, and I'm hybridizing heavily with them, in spite of some characteristics which could be perceived as defects.

**VAVOOM** (Ensminger 1994) is the best of a group of SDBs introduced by Allen in 1994. Blooming quite late in the SDB season, this is a warm yellow amoena, with white standards infused canary, and bright canary yellow falls with white beards. Superb form with a mink finish. A nice season extender to the dwarfs. **RUBY TUESDAY** (Maryott 1993) is an unusual bicolor from the great Australian SDB, 'Jazzamatazz' (Blyth). Standards are brown; falls are a deep reddish-mahogany, edged in the standards' shade of brown. Beards are deep mahogany also, and blend in nicely. Not a drab color whatsoever – the flower seems to have a glow about it. **ARCTIC BLAST** (Shoop 1995) is an excellent advancement in white dwarfs – a cold, cold ice-white with absolutely no other infusions to contaminate the effect – right down to pure white beards. Excellent form, sparkling texture. An average to somewhat slow grower and increaser thusfar, but still within acceptable limits. **WIDOW'S VEIL** (L. Miller 1994) is a pulsating deepest red-violet to black with dark violet beards, quite heavily ruffled, with a deeper intensification of color in the falls. It has that exciting satin sheen which sparks the flower. Same high quality as its famous parent, 'Dark Vader' (L. Miller).

**PIBBLING** (Innerst 1994) is yet another outstanding progeny from the great parent, 'Chubby Cheeks' (Black). The plicating is a richly saturated deep mulberry-violet, with blue beards, tipped bronze. Of course, excellent form and substance, with heavy ruffling. Thusfar, the only defect found is a tendency (not always) to bloom in the foliage somewhat, with some blossoms "rosebudding". **SNOW SEASON** (E. Jones 1993) is a gentle, new look in SDBs, unique to anything on the market to date. Pure, cold white self, but instead of traditional blue beards, we find a unique lilac-pink beard. As with 'Pibbling', some of the blooms have been in the foliage, and have trouble opening ("rosebudding"), but those that make it are worth it! Oh, the breeding possibilities here!

**CLASSICS:** **BE DAZZLED** (Boushay 1975); **CLAP HANDS** (Hager 1976); **CROWN PRINCESS** (A. Brown 1975); **MELON HONEY** (Roberts 1973); **RAINBOW MUSIC** (Willott 1973).

### MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED

I am just now starting to rebuild my dwarf collection, and the number of MDBs being grown in central Oklahoma remains rather limited. Thus, the number of varieties reviewed remains underrepresented. Also, Oklahoma is far enough south that I find many of those directly from *I. pumila* have difficulty establishing and flourishing. **BUGSY** (Hager 1993) is a bedazzled bright yellow with a spunky deep maroon (near black) spot in the falls, which is then edged in the yellow of the standards. Cute, and well named. From unusual breeding (pink bloodlines), **KID STUFF** (Hager 1990) is a brilliant yellow spot in the early garden, with falls even more intense in color. Beards approach orange. Very vigorous, rewarding the gardener with multiple bloomstalks. **FAIRY FUN** (Black 1995) is a choice little plicata from the breeder who gave us 'Spot of Tea' and 'Cinnamon Apples'. 'Fairy Fun' is a butter yellow base color, splattered with sparse bronze and brown plicata markings, slightly more intense in the falls. Tight, tidy form. Excellent plant habits.

**CLASSICS:** **LIBATION** (Hager 1975); **PROMISE** (Cook 1952).

### ARILBREDS

As with the MDBs, I have just begun trying to expand my collection of arilbreds again, after several years of taking a back burner. Exciting work is being done here from, really, only a limited number of breeders. Of course, at the top of his game, Shockey has **SERAPH'S JEWEL** (1992), half-bred (OGB), in white with a stunning, sharply defined grayed-

maroon signal predominating the recurved falls. Excellent contrast in color, with great clarity and placement of signal. Right at 2' tall, with strong, sturdy stalks. **ANCIENT SCROLLS** (Rich-Whitely 1990, OGB), introduced by James Whitely after the death of Jonnye, has standards that are white ground, but heavily sanded and adorned with mulberry veins. The falls are further marked with veins in rust tones and a rust signal pattern.

Three arilbred-medians deserve mention: I discovered **ANTHRACITE** (Gadd 1987) at a Sooner State show, entered by our local expert and arilbred ambassador, Loretta Aaron. This is a soot black arilbred-median that is stunning both on the bench and in full sun, which brings the soot out even more. Very distinctive, and excellent plants habits from this New England pathfinder who devoted much of his hybridizing efforts to developing aril-blooded irises which would thrive in cold, moist climates. **JACOB'S WELL** (Brizendine-Fry 1986) has been another arilbred-median which has been a pleasant surprise. A dark velvet-brown bitone, with the falls approaching chocolate in intensity. It displays an SDB-sized flower on rather tall stalks (about 20"). The earth tone colors won't get lost, competing with the dirt! **SHE DEVIL** (Black 1996) is a fun, zany bicolor, with rich beetroot purple standards atop dark red falls with black veining and diffused signals. Compact flowers are displayed on SDB-sized stalks. Colorful, with excellent carrying power in the garden.

### **SPURIAS**

Another class which I am again starting to grow more of. Only reviewing three Spurias this time. **ZAMBOANGA** (Hager 1992) is a dark beauty, with deepest red-brown standards, style arms light yellow with a ridge of brown. The falls are a scintillating gold base, but heavily veined in deep brown, gradually turning into a solid band at the edges. A small, bright gold signal pulls the colors together. Outstanding substance and sun resistance. **MY GOLD** (Jenkins 1992) is a compact flower in absolute purity of golden yellow – no other colors present to interfere with the effect. Leathery substance, intense, and a nice kick-off to the Spuria season. **EDITH'S COLOR** (Jenkins 1992) is actually a menagerie of muted colors, with the basic color being mauve, complemented with a spacious yellow signal covering a large portion of the falls. Subtle and elegant.

### **LOUISIANAS**

**BERA** (Mertzweiller 1996) is proof positive that Joe still has the touch with diploids, even though, of course, he has left a legacy in his work with tetraploid Louisianas. 'Bera' is a shadowy blend of smoked blues and purple, with a hauntingly beautiful narrow silvery-white edge on both the standards and falls. Somewhat remindful of 'Exquisite Lady' (Owen) in style and presentation, but with apparently better bud count. Rather small, triangular yellow signals do not distract. **WATCH FOR IT** (Taylor 1996) is a bold, daring offering from Down Under, with huge flowers in a deep orchid-violet. Petal parts are so wide and overlapping you will be amazed that they are able to open with ease. A very flat look, with tighter, more "controlled" ruffling than its parent, the extravagant 'Margaret Lee' (Taylor). **BOY CRAZY** (Dunn 1995) is a wide, flat deep red-purple, with yet deeper texture veining. The falls display only a line signal, but the bright yellow color nonetheless makes it noticeable. The whole flower seems to glow, for in the heart of the flower, the style arms have a pink edging. Most unusual! **RICH JEWEL** (Morgan 1995) is a nice addition from Arkansas. Richard Morgan has, without fanfare or ballyhoo, done some very creative, important work in his little back yard. 'Rich Jewel' reminds me of a modern version of its parent, the sometimes-finicky 'Charles Arny III' (Arny), with a vibrant dark red-violet base color, and the style arms lightening. A large steeple shaped yellow signal adds contrast. Noteworthy excellent plant habits, with deep green foliage and strong increase.

**CLASSICS: CONTRABAND DAYS** (Granger 1968); **CREOLE FLAME** (Wyatt 1973); **DEAN LEE** (Arny 1971); **ELLENE ROCKWELL** (Arny 1973); **F.A.C. McCULLA** (Arny 1973).

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