

## **CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 1988**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **AWARD WINNERS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul's creations, and apparently several of the 744 convention guests liked it too. Congratulations, Paul, and I give it a premature 9-1-1 Award too!

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

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

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

Runnersup:

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

Back to a positive review, by color group.

## **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

The great **WARRIOR KING** (Schreiner 1985) leads the pack. To date, the ultimate in a fine line of Schreiner reds that has been giving us quality improvements for 30 years. It is more vigorous and has healthier foliage than most, producing consistent strong stalks with 4 branches and double buds in excellent bloom sequence. The form is broad and finished. Its color and texture are more like the velvet of 'Post Time' (Schreiner), but with truer pigmentation, rather than the bright glossy look of 'Fireball' (Schreiner). Impressive enough to be a runnerup for the Sun Belt Award. In Oklahoma, **RED LION** (Hager 1986) has even better color than in the home garden in Stockton. The color is more of an oxblood red with leathery texture. I feel the shade doesn't have as much garden appeal or carrying power as, say, a 'Warrior King' or 'Clearfire' (Stevens), but it is unique and needed. Bold bronze beards are harmonious and aid the rather coarse hafts in being less offensive. Thick, well branched stalks support large blocky flowers. Its consistency as a good garden clump was noted in several area gardens. **CLEARFIRE** (Stevens 1981) is the oldest variety reviewed in this group, but still holds its own wit the newer ones. Sassy, nail polish glossy finish gives it the best carrying power in the garden. The first modern red to have competitive bud count (4 branches, double sockets). The stalks may require staking when opening multiple blossoms, but the flowers are so stunning, I don't mind!

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

with its fullness of foliage and decent vigor. The bold deep gold beards on the blocky, wide wine is a very masculine look.

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

### **BROWNS:**

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

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

### **APRICOTS TO ORANGES:**

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

The best of the new apricots is **Gartman 181-27P** (now named **ALLURING**, a 1989 introduction). From the Bay Area where competition in hybridizing is intense (that was a polite understatement!), Lilly has only thusfar introduced a handful of varieties, but her critical eye assures you that, if she releases a seedling, it will be worthy. This one, a runnerup for this year's Pick of the Litter Award, was blooming strongly in all 3 gardens in which it was blooming. A simple way to describe it would be an apricot version of 'Eastertime' (Schreiner), with perhaps just a few more waves and ruffles. Large flowers, thick 'Eastertime' stalks, lush wide foliage in a pleasing, surprisingly rare shade of blue-green such as 'Eastertime' has. Substance is like leather. In spite of this "bold" description, it is a more feminine iris, and its gentle appearance has a great impact in the garden. **VICTORIAN FRILLS** (Black 1988) is a shorter Tall Bearded, for the front of the iris bed, a trait inherited from 'Sun Blossom' (Kegerise). It also received the good qualities of 'Sun Blossom', namely its round form, thick stalks with especially good spacing of its 3 branches, double sockets, and healthy, clean foliage that is resistant to leaf spot. 'Victorian Frills' is a smooth, quiet apricot with moderate lace. The flowers are broad but compact, and have no difficulty in opening.

**PORCELAIN BALLET** (Black 1985) is still my favorite of Paul's introduced Tall Bearded, but its flower quality can be affected by weather conditions. In cool weather it can show some signs of virus flecking (not the gaudy purple gashes found in things like 'Joy of Springtime' (Sexton), 'Queen of Hearts' (O. Brown), or even 'Bride's Halo' (Mohr), but rather a breakdown in petal substance). But in warm weather, look out! Rich, glowing deep apricot with some of the best

stalks in iridescence (compliments of Opal Brown and 'Instant Charm'), with vigor and increase better than 'Instant Charm' or its other parent, 'Old Flame' (Ghio). This is one of the few that waited until after convention to show off! **ELEGANT ANSWER** (Hager 1987) was one of the first 'Beverly Sills' (Hager) children to be released by its hybridizer, and it inherited all the good qualities of Beverly, namely its plant habits and wide, compact form, but done in an appealing shade of medium approaching deep apricot, rather than pink.

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

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

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

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

### **PINKS:**

Always the most popular category, the advancements have been so rapid the past 20 years that major defects that we once turned and looked the other way on should no longer be tolerated. So many nice quality things to choose from now that it becomes just personal preference. If you had the honor to tour the Nancy Perkins garden during convention, you saw clump after clump, *en masse*, of 'Beverly Sills' in full bloom in radiant glory. Is it any wonder this milestone has broken all the records in awards and popularity? Choosing the best of the highly refined of Gatty pinks is impossible, but my personal favorite was **SATIN SIREN** (1987). Heavily laced deep pink in the tradition of the color intensity of 'Pink Sleigh' (Rudolph), but with a smoother saturation and not as much blue undertones that can make the color inconsistent. The form is finished and has the fat, compact, classical look of 'Paradise' (Gatty). Vigor and resistance to leaf spot was notable. The clump in the Black Garden that peaked bloom immediately after convention was memorable. **FRENCH PASTRY** (1987) was seen in the Spence Garden under seedling number N9-1. A larger flower on a taller show stalk with candelabra branching, and the color was more subtle, in the color range traditional of 'Pink Angel' (Rudolph), and also devoid of any of the apricot undertoning that is common in these color ranges.

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

irises I've seen, I don't ever recall seeing one with a beard quite that color, and it was most appealing. Taller and more stately than most from the Corlew line.

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

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

### **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

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

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

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

### **CREAMS TO LIGHT YELLOWS:**

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

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

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

### **MEDIUM YELLOWS TO GOLDS:**

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

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

### **LIGHT BLUES:**

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

As with so many Weiler creations, the emphasis on NAVAJO JEWEL (1984) is on overall garden quality. Tall strong stalks produce light blue flowers that can show turquoise undertones in cool weather or on cloudy days. As with ‘Holy Night’, it is among the strongest, healthiest plants in the garden. UNDERSEA ADVENTURE (Black 1986) has now made a name for itself, and is especially appealing in a clump. The flower size and form traces back to its grandparent, ‘Sea Venture’ (B. Jones), but has moderate lace. The best of the modern reverse blue amoenas. TIDE’S IN (Schreiner 1983) continues to set the standard for sparkling, shimmering light blues. The airy form dances in the garden. It has a long sequence of bloom, usually opening only 1 at a time, but I now have seen it at shows being very competitive with 2 and 3 open simultaneously with 3-way candelabra branching. Its child, ALTRUIST (Schreiner 1987), has thin, graceful stalks that I was positive would require staking, but stood on their own. They have a very flexuous quality. I kept doing a double-take, thinking it looked like an improved ‘Ruffled Ballet’ (Roderick). I checked the parentage and figured I was just crazy, until a couple of other growers made the same comment. It is a broken pattern, rather than true self like ‘Tide’s In’, so much so that it is approaching a pale blue amoena. A heavy bloomer but never to the point of jeopardizing its own existence.

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

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

### **MEDIUM TO DEEP BLUES:**

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

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

### **WHITES:**

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

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

### **PLICATAS:**

Many new, exciting, innovative introductions on the market today; yet I truly feel we have just scratched the surface of the gene pool. Note that 6 of the 9 varieties reviewed are from Keith Keppel: **SNOWBROOK** (1987) is the most elegant of plicatas. A glistening solid icy white with a narrow  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $\frac{3}{8}$ " band of the clearest blue ever seen, and only on the falls. Beards are a harmonious white tipped yellow only deep in the heart. It has the vigor and disease resistance that have been rare or nonexistent in others from the past that attempted this color pattern. Pleasing well branched stalks that have excellent bloom sequence. The effect of **ROMANTICIST** (1988) is a pink-rose plicata, but the standards are virtually a solid medium peach, heavily suffused rose, and the falls are a buff-peach with a distinct, even  $\frac{1}{2}$ " band of rose-pink. The flowers are larger than most in this pattern. **DAREDEVIL** (1988) is the first serious attempt at a red-bearded blue plicata. It was seen at OSU Tech under seedling number 81-188A. It is clean blue-violet with no marks in the center of the white falls. Broad form, somewhat informal, with light to moderate ruffling. Variable branching, with the best presenting 3 well spaced branches plus spur.

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

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

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

### **VARIEGATAS:**

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

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

### **NEGLECTAS:**

**CRANBERRY CRUSH** (Aitken 1986) was the surprise. Blue-lavender standards topped heavily ruffled and fluted deep cranberry-violet falls with smooth hafts. The midribs of the standards were deeply flushed with the falls’ color, giving a

harmonious look. The whole flower was highlighted with a luster and class that its parent, 'Mystique' (Ghio) frankly never had. Moderately sized flowers were carried on rather high-branched stalks, at least in the master convention planting at OSU Tech, but the stalks were strong enough to hold up the blossoms. **CONGRATULATIONS** (Keppel 1983) was producing "cup clumps" everywhere. Floriferous is an understatement. Also a child of 'Mystique', this one is very similar in color but with possibly richer colors, more ruffles, and definitely more carrying power.

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

### **AMOENAS:**

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

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

### **BICOLORS:**

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

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

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

### **POTPOURRI:**

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

The yellow beards make it look similar to a Tall Bearded luminata. The falls' color will vary somewhat from season to season and with differing weather conditions.

One of the better things this year that, like 'Ice Cave', received virtually no advance publicity, was VIDA (Daling 1987). An elegant 'Beaux Arts' (Plough) rose in the standards and falls, with a lighter area of buff in the midribs and the center of the falls. The falls then have a distinctive gold edge  $\frac{1}{4}$ " in depth. All this is accentuated with a yellow beard and light lace on all parts. The breeding potential with this will be limitless. GINGER SWIRL (Schreiner 1985) was popular during convention and was Second Runnerup for the Cook Cup. A large, pleasantly tailored copper with orchid falls distinctly banded with  $\frac{3}{4}$ " of copper. Unfortunately, had you seen it 5 degrees warmer, you would have found that it faded and burned significantly. Nonetheless, beautiful if the weather is favorable. CRYSTAL GLITTERS (Schreiner 1985) was also a Cook Cup Runnerup and most worthy. Usually, with good distribution, a good Schreiner release will receive pretty much its share of publicity, but this one has been overlooked. Keep in mind it came out the same year as 'Darkside', 'Warrior King', 'Breakers' ..... need I say more? Basically a sparkling cream with heavy, evenly distributed infusions of pastel apricot. Quite vigorous, and show stalks supreme! Not only that, but it's Miss Kitty's favorite iris - I knew she had good taste! Coming from two reds, but with gold ancestors, WHO'EE (Stevens 1986) is a unique blend of rich cinnamon, bronze, tan, and amber, and is glossed with deeper cinnamon-brown overtones. Totally unique, and quite sunfast in the Okie sun. I list it with the Tall Bearded rather than its erroneous classification of Border Bearded. [NOTE: This variety was later reclassified as a Tall Bearded by the hybridizer].

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

### **SPACE AGE:**

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

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

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

### **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

#### **MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:**

'New Wave', the 9-1-1 Award winner, has already been discussed. Also a fine white MTB, CRYSTAL RUFFLES (Dunderman 1986, diploid) was good again this year, as mentioned in "A Good Omen", although I found it blooming too

heavily. The success of **BUMBLEBEE DEELITE** (Norrick 1986) was a nice surprise. Few medians have beaten out “all those talls” in previous conventions, and certainly never an MTB! Small, compact, well shaped flowers are a bright variegata with solid yellow standards and quite bright maroon to brick red falls, distinctly edged yellow. Obviously, it is floriferous, and makes a stunning clump.

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

## **BORDER BEARDED:**

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

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

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

## **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:**

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

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

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

## **STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:**

At the top of the list – pure class – is **AZURE GEM** (Hamblen 1982), the most elegant, shimmering light blue with clean, deeper azure blue beards. The form is impeccable. Fortunately, it is proving to be an outstanding parent. Melba's finest median ever. **CHUBBY CHEEKS** (Black 1985) is already proving to be one of the best parents in SDB history. This fat little stud throws its width, substance, and strong plant habits with consistency to its children. A pure white plicata, heavily banded with lavender-blue, then a second band inside of steel gray plicata stitching. At the top of the limits of the class, it can be

overgrown in rich soil. **BAY RUFFLES** (Warburton 1985) is the best newer blue, a pure elegant sky blue with self beards. It has the classical form of 'Azure Gem', and I would like to see the results of a union of the two. I feel it has been overlooked thusfar.

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

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

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

## LOUISIANAS

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

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

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

**E.C. EVERINGHAM** (Raabe 1980) remains the most overlooked Louisiana of this decade. Although this glowing, broad violet received an HM, it deserves much more. **SINFONIETTA** (Raabe 1987) was the best ever, with smaller baby blue flowers with even truer blue tones than the classic 'Eolian' (Arny). It made up for the disappointing debut here of **BYRON BAY** (Raabe 1986). Two others from Australia bloomed for their first time here, and were most impressive: **SUMMER MINSTREL** (Raabe 1986) is a difficult color to describe, with amber-russet tones blended with undertones of

magenta. ‘E.C. Everingham’ has passed on its large, wide flowers, leathery substance, and strong plant habits to this quality bitone. SEXTET (Raabe 1982) is from bloodlines different from most pinks on the market, and is a very clear near-bitone soft pink with broad form, larger flowers, and reasonably weather-resistant substance.

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

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

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## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 1989

Perry Dyer

Last year’s positive response to my first formal review of the bloom season confirmed the need for such a writing in this part of the country and has encouraged me to make it an annual endeavor. There will be one major change: The “Return to Sender” Award will no longer be given.

This year’s bloom season was hardly the quality of last year’s. But then last year’s was the best I have seen in my 20+ years of growing irises. A series of late freezes took its toll, especially in the Louisianas. Fortunately, most of my plants survived, but many friends (especially in the Tulsa area) experienced major losses, even in established clumps.

As with last year, the award winners will be reviewed first, then Tall Bearded by color group, then medians, and finally, Louisianas. In each category, the best will be listed first.

### AWARD WINNERS

1. The CONTEMPORARY AWARD, given to the Best New Iris seen. “New” throughout this review is defined as the last 3 years inclusive (i.e., this year, an iris introduced in 1987, 1988, or 1989): GRACE DUHON (Haymon 1988). Of all the bearded viewed, and in spite of a subpar bloom season in the Louisianas, ‘Grace Duhon’ beats them all out this year. This magnificent new child of ‘Ann Chowning’ (Chowning) combines its vigor, show stalks, bud count, and intense signal with the luster and richness of the pod parent, ‘Full Eclipse’ (Hager). The result is a lightly ruffled and fluted intense dark red-violet, with falls slightly deeper. Especially impressive is that this is Dorman’s very first introduction. Watch for more great things from this new hybridizer in the future.

#### Runnersup:

MACUMBA (Hager 1988) sets a new standard in MDBs. A rich, shiny red-black, with standards deep wine-red, and the falls deeper black-red, edged the color of the standards. The form is impeccable, and the plant habits and bloom/increase ratio commendable. BOLD GOLD (Gatty 1987) is a glowing burnished deep golden yellow that is markedly improved over its parent, ‘Gold Galore’ (Schreiner), with better placement of branches and increased bud count. Completely sunfast under the brilliant Oklahoma sun. HONKY TONK BLUES (Schreiner 1988) performed in the same positive manner as I viewed it while still a seedling in the Schreiners’ patch in 1984. A rich deep blue, but unique in that it has a “wash” of white in the falls. Broad petals, but not gaudy or overstated. The description may suggest a coarse appearance, but just the opposite is the case: It is an elegant, appealing iris.

2. The L’ELEGANTE AWARD is given to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen this year. This does not necessarily address the overall plant habits, but all other features must be acceptable to merit the variety receiving this award. This year’s winner breaks tradition, in that it has not been officially introduced yet, although it has been

registered: **ANN BLOCHER** (Blocher 1990). Clarence has named this in honor and memory of his late wife. ‘Ann Blocher’, entered by Dale Satterwhite for Mr. Blocher, won Best Seedling at the Tulsa show. It was such an incredible show stalk that it would have easily been a contender (or winner) of the Queen of Show honors, had it been introduced. It is a big, full formed cold white with a self beard, completely adorned with light ruffling and heavy lace. In spite of the intensity of the lace, the flowers open with ease with no “assistance” required. From totally different bloodlines than the Schreiners’ laced whites and last year’s L’Elegante recipient, ‘Bubbling Lace’ (Black). It comes from the laced blue classic, ‘Charisma’ (Blocher), and should not even be compared, for it is a totally different style than ‘Bubbling Lace’ and the others. It also inherited ‘Charisma’s’ candelabra show stalk branching.

#### **Runnersup:**

**VICTORIAN FRILLS** (Black 1988) is the ultimate in smoothness in light peach-apricot tones. The broad flowers have perfect symmetry, and as with ‘Ann Blocher’, open easily and gracefully in spite of the heavy lace. A shorter variety from strong Kegerise bloodlines; I have no problem with its height. The branching is perfectly spaced. I usually find those with triple sockets to be objectionable because the third bud in the socket rarely develops to a representative flower. Such was not the case with ‘Victorian Frills’. **SHEER CLASS** (L. Miller 1988) is a new SDB that took us by storm. A rich rose-pink that is actually approximating watermelon in color, with a hint of a ray pattern in the falls surrounding bright corals beards. Although from “mixed” breeding -- the small-flowered IB, ‘Pink Kitten’ (Wood), crossed by the great SDB parent, ‘Inscription’ (Boushay) -- I found the flower size, foliage, height, and thickness of the stalks to be at the upper range of the SDBs, but still well within the class requirements, and the specimen viewed was grown in rich soil. The substance and texture are especially noteworthy. A perfect name for a median that will remain popular for years to come.

**CHURCHILL DOWNS** (K. Mohr 1988) is a clean, pleasant, medium lemon yellow with a patch of lighter color (near white) in the center of the falls around yellow beards. The emphasis here is on the form and the diamond dusting of the flowers which aid it in remaining colorfast here. Moderate lace on all parts. Average branching and bud count that is a bit lean (5 buds this year), but the length of time the flowers remain open compensates. The flowers also retain their substance until they fold, which is most commendable in this color.

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break. This year’s winner is the new Space Age iris, **CONJURATION** (Byers 1989). As viewed in Memphis at the master planting at Ketchum, it was a tall, commanding “amoena” in the tradition of its parent, ‘Alpine Castle’ (Blyth), but with drastically improved form. The stalks were somewhat thin, but tall and stately, and holding up average sized flowers with no problem in light rain and wind. Exceptionally vigorous and floriferous, it makes a smashing clump, but I feel it will also consistently produce show stalks. The color scheme is basically a white infused lilac-lavender, with the falls heavily washed on the edges in amethyst in the style of ‘Planned Treasure’ (Burger) or ‘Fuji’s Mantle’ (Schreiner). All of this is capped with consistent, bright tangerine beards and horns! A great breakthrough.

#### **Runnersup:**

**DANCE AWAY** (Hamblen 1988). Although the henna/sienna bearded burnished look is becoming more common now, ‘Dance Away’ still deserves attention as a color break. Rich cocoa-pink is infused with violet undertones. Complementary warm ivory white falls are then banded with the principal color. All this is capped with sizzling deep sienna beards. You just won’t believe it until you see it. Of course the form, substance, and plant habits are up to contemporary standards – it’s a Hamblen iris! Another Byers Space Age introduction receives the next runnerup position: **LOVEBIRD** (1988), my personal favorite of Monty’s Space Age releases so far. It is a short, small-flowered, delicate pink based plicata, stitched in harmonious light red-violet, with fuzzy red-violet horns. The flowers are laced and have exceptionally good form and substance. And **PURGATORY** (Moores 1987) is technically a variegata, but unlike anything on the market. Average plants and stalks produce flowers that are smoldering, with shades of deep bronze in the standards and deeper, even richer falls. The whole flower is underlaid with tones of bronze, mahogany, and burnished reds and bronzes. The substance and resistance to inclement weather are especially noteworthy in this completely sunfast new iris.

4. The **SUN BELT AWARD** is given to the Best Proven variety, i.e., one that has been on the market at least 4 years. This year’s selection was the most difficult of all awards to decide, with the nod finally going to **HOUDINI** (Maryott 1985). It resembles its pod parent, ‘Midnight Special’ (Sexton), in basic color scheme, being a rich deep violet with even deeper falls. The whole flower has gloss like nail polish, and the falls very nearly approach a shiny black. The branching is somewhat variable, but it has stronger plants that are more resistant to late freezes and less prone to rot than ‘Midnight Special’. It is gratefully an earlier bloomer than most of the blacks on the market. It is simply smashing both in the garden and on the show bench.

**Runnersup** (and boy was it close):

**HOLY NIGHT** (K. Mohr 1983) reigns as king of the iris patch. The stalks are extremely tall (easily 40"), but so thick and strong that they hold up the large, tightly structured rich violet flowers with absolutely no staking required. The intensity of the color is close to 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner), whereas 'Houdini' is deeper, in the range of 'Dusky Challenger' (Schreiner). The lush, vigorous plants produce an array of stalks that time themselves so that the sequence of bloom is spread out through the entire bloom season. Overall, the best garden iris on the market today.

**SOPHISTICATION** (Hamblen 1984) is, in my opinion, Melba's most beautiful iris and worthy of highest honors. A caressing shade of soft pink, with diamond-dusted white falls banded in the elegant pink. The *piece de resistance* is a harmonious soft blue-violet beard. Pure class, and I hope to see it go further in the AIS awards system. And **CRYSTAL GLITTERS** (Schreiner 1985), from a wild parentage which includes red (!), I'm expecting this to be an incredible parent, giving a full gamut of variety in its children in the future. Slender graceful show stalks are amazingly strong, supporting 3 open blooms consistently. A unique, soft blending of palest peaches, creams, and pink tones, all capped with diamond dusting that gives the color an unexpected carrying power, both in the garden and on the show bench. All petals are moderately ruffled, and in spite of the finish, the texture of the flowers is very waxy.

5. The **DARK HORSE AWARD** is given to the variety introduced within the past 10 years that I feel has been overlooked by AIS judges, and deserves/deserved higher awards: **PLANNED TREASURE** (Burger 1985) is a bit new to be appearing on this list, and it did win an HM last year. But it is worthy of far more praise. In my opinion, the most significant color break of this decade. It has smooth clean pink standards, and then slightly lighter falls with a harmonious 'Fuji's Mantle' wash along the edge of the falls. The key word is consistency. Even in mediocre years such as this year's bloom season or disastrous years such as Oklahoma experienced in 1987, it comes through and performs with tall husky stalks with candelabra branching, double-budded sockets, and large, well-substanced, nicely shaped flowers. Additionally, it has strong, healthy plants. It is already producing some exciting seedlings and is very fertile both ways. I hope to combine it with the rather temperamental Shoop bloodlines to produce some entrancing new color combinations with good vigor.

**Runnersup:**

**BELLEVUE COQUETTE** (Bertinot 1984) is one of the highest quality 'Clara Goula' ('Arny) children I have seen, and there are dozens of superb offspring on the market now. This shimmering light blue has strong undertones of light lavender which intensify the translucent appearance. This Louisiana is then adorned with the classic form and heavy ruffling that 'Clara Goula' so graciously passes on to its seedlings. My favorite of several fine releases from Neil Bertinot. Had **BLACK WATCH** (Rosenfels 1982) been released by a more "famous" hybridizer, I contend it would have gone all the way to the Sass Medal. This IB is the blackest iris on the market – of any class. Rather simplistic flowers are borne on incredible show stalks. I have personally exhibited it and, in other years, also judged it at shows in the past where it had 3 open flowers with perfectly spaced branching. The falls are soot black, and the standards are nearly as intense, which is rare in any "black" iris. Another Bertinot Louisiana rounds out the list of runnersup: **JERI** (1985). That this iris (and 'Bellevue Coquette') has not received even an HM from judges of the American Iris Society is an absolute disgrace! 'Jeri' is a larger version of its parent, 'Full Eclipse', on taller, stronger stalks, and is an even more floriferous bloomer. The saturation of color in this deep violet (which approaches black) is intense, and the signal is virtually nonexistent.

6. The **CREAM OF THE CROP AWARDS** go to the 5 varieties on the Dykes Medal eligibility list that I consider the most worthy, in order of preference. The list for this year is virtually the same as last year – unfortunately, including the #1 spot. I considered it a tossup last year between my choice, the BB, **PINK BUBBLES** (Hager 1980) and the Dykes winner, 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner). 'Titan's Glory' is one of my favorite irises, and I'm very pleased that it won. Talk about consistency! And proving to be a marvelous parent, too. This year was a virtual tie for me again, and I once more give the nod to 'Pink Bubbles' one of the most beautiful and most consistent BBs ever. It is simply charming. However, close behind: **TIDE'S IN** (Schreiner 1983). I won't be the least bit upset if the Schreiners pull off back-to-back honors by winning with this shimmering, diamond-dusted light blue. The others: **CLARA GOULA** (Arny 1978, LA) is the most worthy eligible beardless contender and can hold its own with the best of the bearded, not just for its sheer elegance and beauty but also for its garden production. This ruffled white Louisiana sets the standard to judge modern Louisianas by. **ANN CHOWNING** (Chowning 1977, LA), in its own right, is worthy. It is perhaps a stronger overall plant than 'Clara Goula', and has show stalks supreme. Even in wretched years such as this, it came through and bloomed with good bud count. The rich red color with the huge, now-famous bright golden-yellow spear shaped signals scream at you from across

the garden. "Carrying power" is an understatement. And, again this year, **BRANDY** (McWhirter 1981), a wide, unique coloration of champagne to brandy tones with just the right amount of ruffling and lace to complement its broad form.

7. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding seedling viewed this year. For 1989 we have a dual winner: **ANN BLOCHER** (Blocher 1990), which also won the L'Elegante Award. About the only other thing about it I can say is that you will be able to purchase it next year through Roger Nelson at his new garden in Oregon.

#### **Runnersup:**

**Marvin Granger 82-6** is an imposing Louisiana – with flowers perhaps even larger than 'Elusive Butterfly' (Ghio), but done in soft, feminine colors of lilac-lavender with hints of pink. The upper part of the falls has an attractive diffused cream sunburst ray pattern spraying out from the unobtrusive light yellow signal. The stalks are tall and strong with 5 well spaced bud positions, with the branches' buds placed away from the stalk enough to ensure proper opening. The whole flower is then polished off with moderate ruffling and even a lot of lace and crimping. To be released in 1991 through Albert (Bobo) Faggard of Beaumont, Texas. [NOTE: It was named **DEIRDRE KAY**]. And **Paul Black 85254AA**, a TB that won Best Seeding at the Sooner State show this year, against tough competition. From an unusual cross of 'Divine Guidance' (Roderick) X 'Miss Personality' (Sexton), it is basically a 'Fuji's Mantle' type amoena. White standards have just a blush of lavender. The falls are also white, but heavily saturated on the edges with medium lavender, going so far into the heart of the falls that it almost creates a "zonal" effect. A very tasteful color combination. To be released in 1990. [NOTE: It was named **SIGHS AND WHISPERS**].

### **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

#### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

**WARRIOR KING** (Schreiner 1985) continues to dominate this category. There is no way even the most imaginative hybridizer could have envisioned such quality even 20 years ago. This clear, sunfast garnet to cherry red has consistency in branching, bud count, and vigor never before seen in reds. That it blooms earlier in the season than many of the others is an important asset. **CLEARFIRE** (Stevens 1981) continues to impress with its bud count and vibrant of color. The stalks aren't quite as strong as 'Warrior King' nor are the branches presented on the stalk as well, but is still worthy, and outperforms its contemporaries (except for 'Warrior King'). The successor, if it continues with its performance, will be **HEAT PUMP** (Stevens 1986), a wider formed, brighter, even more glossy red. The branching perhaps even rivals 'Warrior King'. **MARAUDER** (Ghio 1984) is different, in that it is more of the wine red, but contrasted with most attractive bright gold beards. Proving to be a fascinating parent, too. Please note that, in each of these varieties, the vigor once missing in this color range is now present. This advancement is most noticeable in the garden. Gone are the days when we had to "endure" finicky growers such as 'War Lord' (Schreiner) or 'Pride of Oklahoma' (Dyer)!

**CLASSICS: DEEP FIRE** (Schreiner 1979); **CHIEF WAUKESHA** (Blodgett 1978); **TAMPICO** (Luihn 1978).

#### **APRICOTS TO ORANGES:**

**VICTORIAN FRILLS** (Black 1988) leads the apricots, and has been reviewed under the L'Elegante Award. **ELEGANT ANSWER** (Hager 1987) is a deeply ruffled and fluted peach with even broader form and stronger stalks than its parent, 'Beverly Sills' (Hager). Exceptional, healthy plants. **GOOD SHOW** (Hager 1988) is probably overall the best of several fine new oranges that hit the market at the same time. Large, broad, clear medium orange flowers are well held on strong, thick, well-balanced stalks that take inclement weather well. That the stalks don't come crashing down, or worse yet, snake along the ground, is a marked improvement in this color class! **FUN FEST** (O. Brown 1988), on a first-year plant in Blanchard, looked different from what I remembered in Opal's garden after the 1984 Seattle convention. But then, by the time I got to Opal's, my poor mind was pretty well numbed out from seeing so many irises! 'Fun Fest' is a late-blooming (of course!) light to medium apricot, slightly deeper at the shoulders, which surround an even deeper apricot-orange beard. The waxy substance was appealing, and an important asset for a late blooming variety. **CORAL COAST** (Vizvarie 1989) has solid medium coral standards, topping chalky white falls (this is a new one on me!), then gently banded the standards' coral color. The band is really more like a halo, and the substance matches the chalky look of the falls. Most impressive.

**CLASSICS: TANGERINE QUEEN** (Marsh 1977); **FRESNO CALYPSO** (Weiler 1978); **MARMALADE** (Keppel 1979).

## **PINKS:**

This was probably the strongest color class this year. Dozens were noteworthy, but I'm limiting the review to only 5: **SOPHISTICATION** (Hamblen 1984), the most beautiful of all, has already been reviewed under the Sun Belt Award. One of the more impressive garden effects was **ANNA BELLE BABSON** (Hager 1985). It is very similar to its parent, 'Beverly Sills', with perhaps a clearer tone of pink and just a hint deeper. But the famous qualities of vigor, floriferousness, branching, and carrying power in the garden were passed on from 'Beverly'. **GIFT OF DREAMS** (Hamblen 1987) was one of the very few that was actually better this year than last year. A simple description would be that it is a deeper version of 'Sophistication', with even deeper blue beards that have a sienna base, creating almost a purple (or, more accurately, raspberry) effect! The colors weren't as "smoky" as last year, and there was more of a satin texture that gives elegance to the flowers. **ELSIEMAEL NICHOLSON** (Corlew 1988) continues to surprise me. Rather than the traditional "cold" pinks (i.e., blue-based) we've come to expect and cherish in the Corlew line, 'Elsiemael Nicholson' is a warmer pink (i.e., yellow to apricot undertones). Blocky form makes the lighter area around the beard to predominate the falls. This in turn causes the near-orange beards to shout from the heart of the flower. I love it. And dragging up the rear (you would think it were an Opal Brown iris, it blooms so late) is **IRIS IRENE** (Gatty 1985), a delicately laced pink (almost close to apricot sometimes) with simply impeccable form. It has never been better. There is a hint of a band around the somewhat lightened falls, which just emphasizes the precision of the lace all the more. Beautiful, shorter show stalks. One of these days, we're gonna have a real early season, and someone will walk in and take the show with this one!

**CLASSICS:** **THELMA RUDOLPH** (Rudolph 1976); **PLAYGIRL** (Gatty 1977); **SUNDAY CHIMES** (Hamblen 1978); **EVERLASTING LOVE** (Dyer 1979).

## **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

The hot class this year, with several new, unexpected surprises. Last year's Contemporary Award runnerup leads the group: **THRILLER** (Schreiner 1988) is a sensuous claret to cerise self that is technically called doge purple. The turn-on is the deep purple – indeed almost black – beards in the midst of absolutely clean hafts. A solid self without the traditional lighter patch in the falls around the beard. I am also impressed with its plant habits, with beautiful blue-green foliage. It is from a "mixed bag" of breeding, and I just have this funny feeling that it will be a wild, quality-packed parent. **NEIL DIAMOND** (R. Nelson 1987) is a resounding dark violet, with hints of deep blue undertones -- not unlike what 'Star Wars' (Roderick) has -- that enliven the flower. Heavy but not fanatical ruffling, all on a stalk and plant that you would expect from such a perfectionist as Roger Nelson. Smooth and suave.

Two new Opal Brown releases were most promising: **DRIFTING ALONG** (1988) is the palest lavender (virtually white), accentuated with delicate poppy red beards. Tightly formed flowers are ruffled and lightly laced. **SANDY ROSE** (1988) shows a lot of potential as a breeder, but beautiful in its own right. No mistaking the color – the name is the color. The mood of the burnished blend of colors is interrupted with large fat deep coral beards that have a violet base, again, adding to the intensity of their effect.

Two varieties that have been on the market for awhile now tried to steal center stage: **EXTRAVAGANT** (Hamblen 1983) is a well-named burnished amethyst-violet with bright red beards and heavy lace. Wide, show-stalk, candelabra branching. **PLUM NEWS** (Rudolph 1985) is a rich plum-violet, and although from his traditional line which emphasized muted or pastel colors, is deeply saturated. The lighter area in the falls yields to a most distinctive deep plum band. Again, another variety with superb, consistent branching. One of the more beautiful flowers was **NEWLYWED** (Ghio 1988), and it will be a strong contender for the L'Elegante Award in the future if the branching, bud count, and plant habits improve. In all fairness, the specimen I critiqued had not been grown well, so judgment in these areas is being postponed. 'Newlywed' is a medley (not blend) of colors somewhere between orchid, light violet, or pink, but possibly closer to a fuchsia – in a color I have never seen before in a Tall Bearded iris. All this luscious color is set off with diamond-dusting and heavy lace.

**CLASSICS:** **MARY FRANCES** (Gaulter 1973); **GRAND WALTZ** (Schreiner 1970); **LILAC TREAT** (Niswonger 1970).

## **DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:**

Amazingly, this is the class with the most competition these days. As with the reds, who would have thought it, just a few years ago. **HOUDINI** (Maryott 1985) and **HOLY NIGHT** (K. Mohr 1983) were reviewed last year under the Sun Belt Award. Last year's Sun Belt winner, **DARKSIDE** (Schreiner 1985) is just as worthy, and continues to flabbergast

me with its solid good health – from its blue-green, disease-resistant foliage to its sturdy, consistent, husky show stalks. Ah! That good ‘Titan’s Glory’ (Schreiner) blood! **DUSKY CHALLENGER** (Schreiner 1986) really shook ‘em up this year. And it surely set some kind of record. I hurry home from judging the Tulsa show on Saturday to see the Oklahoma Iris Society show in Oklahoma City before it closes. Jimmy Wage has entered one specimen and won Queen of Show – ‘Dusky Challenger’. I visit the Norman (Oklahoma) show the next day. The Spences have won Queen of Show – ‘Dusky Challenger’. The next Sunday I drive all the way to Amarillo to help judge their show. Their President wins his first Queen of Show – you guessed it, ‘Dusky Challenger’! Actually, the falls aren’t as wide nor the overall form as finished in appearance as ‘Darkside’. However, the flowers of Dusky Challenger are so huge that, if they were that wide and overlapping, they would be simply gross. The iris has a charisma about it that can’t really be described. I have yet to figure out the cause, but suspect it may be a satin underglow of deepest navy blue that makes the flower come alive. Officially, we don’t know the parentage, but you and I both know it had to have been a direct descendant of ‘Titan’s Glory’....Not quite as boldly stated, the Schreiners’ **BLACK DRAGON** (1982) is probably still the variety with the best saturation that most closely approximates true black. **EVENING GOWN** (Ghio 1987) was one of my surprises this year. I saw it last year, and it was nice, but this year (on established clumps), this velvety royal violet had more personality. The broad, blocky flowers are held up on stalks that are a bit more slender than the ‘Titan’s Glory’ children, yet strong enough to support the flowers. Impressive enough that it received one of my HM votes!

**CLASSICS:** **RAVEN HILL** (Carr 1975); **SUPERSTITION** (Schreiner 1977); **SWAZI PRINCESS** (Schreiner 1978).

### **BLUES:**

The producers of the great ‘Blue Sapphire’ continue to dominate this color class, releasing worthy advancement to grow and enjoy. It’s hard to choose one to lead the group, but this year the older **PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE** (Schreiner 1984) was the best iris of the entire Blanchard garden. It is a royal blue, deeply saturated, but with a “mink” texture that gives it a rather mysterious look. Superb branching and bud count, but more impressive was the way it timed its stalks, causing the clumps to be in bloom for virtually the entire TB seasons. **HONKY TONK BLUES** (Schreiner 1988) was reviewed under the Contemporary Award. **BREAKERS** (Schreiner 1986) continued to impress me with its rich full blue tones on broad flowers that are heavily ruffled and have a leathery texture. My fears that the graceful, rather slender stalks of **ALTRUIST** (Schreiner 1987) would not be strong enough to support its flowers in Oklahoma weather have been alleviated. Hardly just another blue, it’s closer to a light azure blue, diminishing gracefully in intensity to virtually a chalky white in the heart of the flower. Its light, airy look is in perfect harmony with its slender stalks. The surprise for me in this group had to be **PEACEFUL WATERS** (Schreiner 1988), as viewed in the Oklahoma Iris Society planting at Will Rogers Park in Oklahoma City. The catalog shot is quite accurate in depth of color – it is a simple, clear medium blue that is deeper than ‘Tide’s In’ or ‘Loyal Devotion’ and lighter than ‘Breakers’. It is close to the Schreiners’ ‘Sea of Joy’, but has a lilting flaring form rather than the globular look of ‘Sea of Joy’ (which is itself very attractive). However, the form of ‘Peaceful Waters’ is much prettier than the catalog shot. Two red-bearded blues are most worthy, and quite competitive with each other. You choose, or better yet, grow and enjoy both. **SKYBLAZE** (Keppel 1987) made stunning clumps in Memphis, and was a runnerup for the Cook Cup. It is the bluest so far, with deep tangerine beards approaching red. **SUPERMAN** (Maryott 1986) has even better, broader form, but has just a bit more lavender undertones in its makeup than ‘Skyblaze’.

**CLASSICS:** **NAVY STRUT** (Schreiner 1974); **DEEP PACIFIC** (Burger 1975); **CHARISMA** (Blocher 1976); **FIREWATER** (Keppel 1977).

### **WHITES:**

**ANN BLOCHER** (Blocher 1990) has already been reviewed, winning both the L’Elegante and the Pick of the Litter Awards this year. If ‘Ann Blocher’ is the most beautiful iris in the kingdom, last year’s Contemporary Award winner, **SILVERADO** (Schreiner 1987) is the most perfect. Broad, icy white flowers have heavy, waxy substance. The branching is well spaced candelabra to modified candelabra, making ‘Silverado’ both a great garden it is in the clump and a Queen of Show contender on the bench. Those who attended the national convention here last year won’t believe it, but **BUBBLING LACE** (Black 1986) was even more beautiful this year! It has more icy blue infusions than ‘Ann Blocher’, giving it a totally different look. Holding its own with the newer things is **PRAY FOR PEACE** (Plough 1982), one of the best of the ruffled whites. Wide, overlapping falls have starchy substance. I feel it has been overlooked.

**CLASSICS:** **WEDDING VOW** (Ghio 1972); **CARRIAGE TRADE** (Gaulter 1977); **CHRISTMAS RUBIES** (Hamblen 1978).

### **CREAMS TO YELLOWS:**

**BOLD GOLD** (Gatty 1987), **CRYSTAL GLITTERS** (Schreiner 1985), and **CHURCHILL DOWNS** (K. Mohr 1988) have already been reviewed in the awards section. **LACED DAISY** (Black 1987) is a different, late-blooming burnished lemon (not gold) with very heavy lace. The falls are lighter, and then banded with the principal color, which the lace emphasizes. It's a color that grows on you. Broad, classical form, and excellent plant habits, too. **SUNKIST FRILLS** (D. Palmer 1987) was the last variety to open and finish blooming in Blanchard this year. It is a waxy reverse yellow amoena in the style of 'Debby Rairdon' (Kuntz), but with more texture and infusions of 'Gold Trimmings' (Schreiner). Stalks with average branching were deficient in buds (2 of 3 stalks only had 4 buds each), but the heavy substance and timing of the blooms allow for a respectable season of bloom. **HERITAGE LACE** (Schreiner 1986) was a pleasant surprise, for I was expecting it to be similar to the very disappointing 'Lady Madonna' (Schreiner). Rather, 'Heritage Lace' is a rich cream with chalky white falls banded in cream. Beautiful form, with florets lightly laced. The self texture veins in the falls add to the crispness of the overall effect.

**CLASSICS:** **LEMON MIST** (Rudolph 1972); **TEMPLE GOLD** (Luihn 1977); **MONEY** (Roe 1977); **LEMON LYRIC** (Meek 1978).

#### **PLICATAS:**

**SNOWBROOK** (Keppel 1987) is the new star. Cold pure white standards are matched in the falls, but then only the falls are finely edged with a clean blue narrow plicata band. A whole new era of amoena plics has arrived! The blue is more blue than violet. Crisp. **PRIZE DRAWING** (Plough 1988) was viewed on an aborted stalk, but the individual flower showed great potential. Standards are rich old gold to tan. The base color of the falls is the same, but is then heavily striated and sanded a pleasing sandy brown over the entire petal. Very tightly constructed, and appeared to be sunfast. A muchly improved version of 'Pencil Sketch' (Plough). **MOMENTUM** (Dunn 1986) is one of the tallest irises I've ever seen – that is, and still be in an upright position after a day of Oklahoma winds. One of the best offerings from 'Spinning Wheel' (Nearpass), and very similar in appearance, with the attractive spoke pattern of plicating in the falls. The white base is very clean and a colder white rather than cream. The contrast between the pale blue stitching of the standards versus the medium violet stitching in the falls is most pleasing. Unbelievable stalks, easily with 4 branches and some lower rebranching. **PURPLE PEPPER** (Nearpass 1986) possesses that all-too-elusive trait of distinctiveness. You won't mistake it for any other. White to light blue base is then peppered (not streaked, stripped, or sanded) deep blue-violet throughout the entire flower. Zany but not gaudy. Respectable form. Marvelous branching. There were 2 stalks sitting side-by-side at the Tulsa show, so symmetrical they looked as though they could have been from the same clump. And yes, it's another 'Spinning Wheel' progeny.

**CLASSICS:** **RANCHO ROSE** (Gibson 1975); **MODERN CLASSIC** (Knocke 1975); **SKETCH ME** (Plough 1976); **BLUE STACCATO** (Gibson 1977).

#### **VARIEGATAS:**

The 9-1-1 Award runnerup, **PURGATORY** (Moores 1987) has already been reviewed. **SPICED CIDER** (Sexton-Black 1989) is a broad, huge bitone that, as with 'Purgatory', is technically a variegata. Standards are a solid golden yellow to light brown. The falls have the same base color, but are almost completely covered with varying degrees of intensity of a wash in colors of rust, copper, and cinnamon. Then there's a halo of the base color around the edge of the falls. So wide that the hafts virtually overlap. In the tradition of her 'Thanksgiving', but a far superior advancement. Thanks to Paul Black for rescuing this fine tribute to Neva's great breeding program from extinction and making it available for all of us to enjoy. And a great name, perfectly fitting the iris. Sounds like one that Neva herself would have come up with! I've had mixed emotions about **SUPREME SULTAN** (Schreiner 1988). Selectors who continue to lean towards such mammoth flowers apparently have never had to deal with adverse weather conditions such as we experience in the Midwest. The first terminal flower was floppy (the polite term is "informal"). However, rather than shut my mind and write it off, I continued to observe it throughout the rest of the season, and I must say, I was impressed. Bright clean golden yellow standards sit atop fiery garden red falls. A harmonious yet shocking combination of colors. The standards are strong enough to hold together, in spite of the flower's large dimensions, and the falls are wide, well shaped, and most definitely smoother at the hafts than predecessors. A light sprinkling of lace does not take from the very masculine look.

**CLASSICS:** **ORITAM** (Hoffmeister 1977); **GYPSY CARAVAN** (Moldovan 1978).

#### **NEGLECTAS AND AMOENAS:**

The leader in blue amoenas continues to be **DUTCH GIRL** (K. Mohr 1981). I respect this iris more and more each passing year. Closed standards are sparkling white. Smoothest light blue falls glisten and have touching hafts. The whole flower has just the right amount of moderate ruffling to complement the broad, full-formed flowers. Quite a show iris, often opening 3 at once. But its major impact is in the garden. It has all the garden qualities the Mohr family insists on when introducing. Fat husky plants are disease-resistant and are vigorous. A good companion for 'Holy Night' (K. Mohr). **CRANBERRY CRUSH** (Aitken 1986) is my favorite of many fine 'Mystique' (Ghio) offspring on the market. This neglecta has light blue standards that are heavily infused with a surprisingly rare shade of cranberry violet in the midribs. This cranberry coloration is the solid color of the falls. The heavily ruffled, leathery flowers have an underglow that gives strong carrying power in the garden. The branching is inconsistent but acceptable. **IN TOWN** (Blyth 1988) continues the tradition of 'Magic Man' (Blyth). It is your basic neglecta, but with a band around the falls in the lighter standards' color. All this is then set off with a bright tangerine-red beard. Fairly smooth hafts. So far, a very weak grower in the Blanchard garden, with poor increase, but I'm willing to give it another year or 2 to kick in and grow properly. From the same bloodlines is **WITCH'S WAND** (Blyth 1988), but much, much deeper and more intense. Technically a neglecta, but the contrast between the saturation in the standards and falls is minimal, although more so here than on the West Coast, where it almost looks like a dark violet approaching black self. The bright red beards are a breakthrough. Excellent form, and has smoother hafts and far better plants than 'In Town'. Watch for this one! **SPARKLING FOUNTAIN** (Black 1989) is not from traditional blue amoena breeding, and you can see it in subtle differences in the flower. The standards are warm creamy white rather than the usual cold white such as 'Dutch Girl'. The smooth light to medium blue falls possess diamond-dusting to give the flower carrying power, but the substance is as thick as leather. Elegant form.

**CLASSICS:** **MYSTIQUE** (Ghio 1975); **DOVER BEACH** (Nearpass 1972); **LIGHTED WITHIN** (Blodgett 1980).

### **BICOLORS:**

Oh, the star is **EDITH WOLFORD** (Hager 1986). The harmony achieved in combining these 2 colors that would normally clash has to be seen to be believed. Medium yellow standards have a hint of blue infusions that create perhaps even a suggestion of green in the heart of the flower. Gentle medium blue shades make up the falls, with an underglow of lavender that helps unite the two colors. The flowers have a billowing form, with a moderate but not overstated degree of ruffling. The shade of blue will vary, depending on temperature, humidity, the amount of moisture in the soil, time of day, and of course, mineral content of the soil and the grower's cultural habits. Rather than a defect, this variance adds to the aura and mystique of the iris. It won Queen of Show in Oklahoma City this year. In this show-crazy state, I have seen dozens of shows the past 20 years, and the specimen of 'Edith Wolford' was the most perfect Queen of Show I've ever had the privilege of viewing. Second only to 'Archie Owen' (Hager, Spuria), 'Edith Wolford' is the finest release ever from Ben Hager. The surprise bicolor for me this year was **SWEET MUSSETTE** (Schreiner 1986). A magnificent stalk won First Runnerup at the Norman (Oklahoma) show, and it shimmered under the artificial lights. A gentle combination of colors, with flamingo pink standards and soft rose-pink falls. The flowers have virtually no ruffling, yet are lightly laced. The Schreiners' picture fails to capture the true colors and form. Needless to say, it has fine branching, with the specimen in Norman having 3 blooms open with perfect placement.

Similar in the basic color pattern is **ROLE MODEL** (Denney 1988), but the flowers are more opaque and have an overall burnished look. Standards are smooth melon-peach with some pink blended in. The falls are a combination of a deeper version of the standards, with old rose blended in. Harmonious tangerine beards. Most impressive show stalk branching and bud count on a first-year plant. Completing a trio of new offerings in this color pattern is **WINIFRED ROSS** (Hamblen 1988), a refined extension of the pink-blue bicolor pattern begun 20 years ago with the release of 'Touche' (Hamblen). The standards of 'Winifred Ross' are peach-pink and the falls are rose-purple, with a lighter area in the center, allowing the accenting orange-red beards to be more predominant. Leathery substance and blocky form. Begins blooming in the last half of the season.

I consider **SPRING SATIN** (Black 1989) a breakthrough in the quest for haloed irises that began with 'Bride's Halo' (Mohr) in the early 1970s. 'Spring Satin's' standards are similar to 'Bride's Halo' – a glistening white, very finely edged in a gold halo of lace. The falls are pastel to light orchid-lavender, finely edged in a gold halo of lace. The falls are pastel to light orchid-lavender, even lighter around the harmonious yellow beards. The falls then have a laced halo of tan to gold, slightly wider than the standards' halo. Elegant is an understatement. Ironically, 'Spring Satin' does not have 'Bride's Halo' in its background. The merging of it with 'Bride's Halo' and its progeny such as 'Exuberant' (Mohr) and Niswonger's 3 new halo irises should be quite an event! **SWEETER THAN WINE** (Schreiner 1988) was seen only once on a quick trip through Ketchum Garden in Memphis, but shows good potential. A glorified 'Ringo' (Shoop) or 'Latin Lady' (Shoop), it has light pink (approaching white) standards and deep, vibrant wine falls with a narrower band of the standards' color than 'Ringo'. The hafts are a bit noisy, and the flowers are narrower than desired, but it is still a rich, appealing color combination.

**CLASSICS:** PIPER'S FLUTE (Blyth 1974); VERBENA MOON (Blyth 1976); HEATHER BLUSH (Hamner 1977).

### **POTPOURRI:**

Jewels such as PLANNED TREASURE (Burger 1985), DANCE AWAY (Hamblen 1988), and SIGHS AND WHISPERS (Black 1990) have already been reviewed in the awards section. VIDA (Daling 1987) wasn't nearly as good in Oklahoma this year, but still looked fine in Memphis. A glorious confusion of pastel colors, including rose, lilac, buff, light yellow, and pink. It all comes together in a distinctive band of golden-bronze that makes the tweezers click. Most promising. I am pleased to see that the hybridizer has changed the classification from BB to TB on WHO'EE (Stevens 1986). I could not vote an HM for this last year in the BB class with a clear conscience because of the size of the flowers. But now, one of my favorite newer irises is again eligible for an HM, but in its proper classification. A shorter TB (28-30"), it is the most unusual blending of cinnamon and rust-browns layering an amber base, with amber edges. The broadly formed flowers are tailored to give the full impact of the blending. This derivative from red breeding is unlike anything on the market today. It glows! The craziest thing on the market still has to be FANCY TALES (Shoop 1980). It is rather infamous for being a bitchy grower, and you have to stake it if you want to see it in an upright position (!), but there's just nothing like it. White standards with a hint of a gold halo. Pansy purple falls, with orange on the upper third of the falls. And a bright orange beard. I think it's sexy, and one of the few varieties I will gladly stake each year without complaining too loudly. One of Nate Rudolph's last introductions that has not received the praise it deserves is RUFFLED SURPRISE (1981). It is a smoky (but not muddy) blending of buff to tan, with palest lavender to white falls, banded the principal color. The standards are heavily infused smoky violet in the midrib, and then the beards are also smoky violet. Unlimited breeding potential from the 'Chartreuse Ruffles' (Rudolph) bloodlines. Minimally acceptable bud count, but makes a floriferous clump, and the flowers have good substance.

**CLASSICS:** CHARTREUSE RUFFLES (Rudolph 1976); FAR CORNERS (Moldovan 1978); SHEER POETRY (D. Palmer 1979).

### **SPACE AGE:**

The one class that has made the greatest strides this decade. The 9-1-1 Award winner, CONJURATION (Byers 1989) and runnerup LOVEBIRD (Byers 1988) have already been reviewed, and lead the class for innovative additions in breeding. The most beautiful and promising advancement is ART SCHOOL ANGEL (Vizvarie 1989). As you can see from the color ad in the April AIS Bulletin, we have arrived at a whole new era in Space Age irises. The picture is most accurate. As with any adorned iris, the appendages will vary in degrees from horns to the full-blown flounces. And you must take care to grow them culturally well to receive full benefit from the appendages. In some years, the flounce on 'Art School Angel' will approach blue. Branching and bud count are suspect and will have to be evaluated on established clumps under reasonable weather conditions. But the individual flowers are surreal, with substance and texture like carved wax. Also very fine was BLOWING BUBBLES (Byers 1988), a broad, bubble ruffled white with a warm infusion of yellow in the heart of the flower. Spoons/flounces are yellow to white. Very vigorous, and a good bloomer, but stalks are weak and do require staking. TWICE THRILLING (Osborne 1984) is older, but still most competitive with the newer Space Age releases. A heavily substanced medium pink with tangerine beards that turn into purple horns, and then sometimes end up with pink flounces infused purple! A parent of 'Art School Angel'.

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

### **MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:**

CONSUMMATION (Welch 1978) is still the king, with palest blue to white standards and amazingly smooth, rich velvety royal purple falls with a startling band of white. Proving to be an outstanding parent, and its child, FROSTED VELVET (Fisher 1989) may be (finally) a worthy replacement. The specimen I viewed had a more blue influence underlying the white/purple combination. BUMBLEBEE DEELITE (Norrick 1986) continues to get the rave reviews it deserves. A bright sassy color combo, with golden yellow standards and bright brick red falls. Similar in style is STRIPED PANTS (Fisher 1989), except that the falls are also a gold base, but then wildly striped rich, deep brick red to brown. Very exciting, and has ideal plant habits.

**CLASSICS:** CAROLYN ROSE (Dunderman 1971); SPANISH COINS (Witt 1976).

## **BORDER BEARDED:**

**NAUTICAL FLAG** (Black 1989) has the consistency of height and flower size that made ‘Soft Spoken’ (Dyer) a Knowlton winner. This new heavily laced, small flowered lavender blue has a lighter area in the center of the falls surrounding yellow beards. Tight, compact form, and good strong vigor. **CLASSIC TREASURE** (Burger 1984) is an improved ‘Emma Cook’ (Cook), with glistening white standards and falls, and then only the edge of the falls lightly washed a pure medium blue. Slender show stalks. **FIDDLER** (Stahly 1984) is one I have missed over the years. Consistency is the key here with this tight, compact maroon-red. It is slightly bitoned, with the standards just a tone lighter than the falls. I saw it in several gardens this year, and found show stalks in each, with perfect proportion in not only the height and size of bloom, but also in the thickness of the stalk (slender and graceful) and in the plants.

**CLASSICS:** **JUNGLE SHADOWS** (Sass-Graham 1960); **RASPBERRY SUNDAE** (Niswonger 1972); **PICAYUNE** (Keppel 1977).

## **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:**

**BLACK WATCH** (Rosenfels 1982) has already been mentioned in the Dark Horse Award. **HELLCAT** (Aitken 1983) continues to give unbelievable, consistent performance, year after year, no matter how adverse the season. Smooth, sultry, lustrous neglecta with the ultimate in form and plant habits. Undeniably the best IB on the market today. **BUBBLY BLUE** (Aitken 1986) is similar to ‘Silent Strings’ (Dyer), but is a slightly lighter, prettier shade of blue, has better form, and much better branching and bud count. Heavy, symmetrical ruffling throughout the flower. **DOLL** (Keppel 1987) is the best of a trio of releases from ‘Gigolo’ (Keppel TB) lineage (the pod parent was a sib to ‘Gigolo’). ‘Doll’ is an apricot ground plicata, suffused and striped with a mauve-lavender band. Beautiful form and subtle, pleasant colors. I finally got to see **DARK BLIZZARD** (Warburton 1984). It is very nearly black (deepest violet), but then a burst of white around the white beards. A superb, rare luminata.

Two new IBs are being released by Paul Black. ‘Hagar’s Helmet’ (Nichols 1977) was the world’s first median Space Age iris. Now, a dozen years later, we have **ERECT** (Black 1989), an antique gold self with broad, modern form. The “erect” part is a consistent horn at the end of the beards. The color of the adornment will vary from brown to purple. In the tradition of ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black SDB), **SHOOTING SPARKS** (Black 1989) is a clean, crisp white based plicata, distinctly edged with a narrow band of blue-violet. Tall stalks are thin and graceful, supporting 3 branches spaced in a candelabra style. Vigorous as a weed, but also a very floriferous bloomer.

**CLASSICS:** **ANNIKINS** (Warburton 1967); **VAMP** (Gatty 1972); **PINK KITTEN** (Wood 1977); **AVANELLE** (B. Jones 1977); **POT LUCK** (Hager 1977).

## **STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:**

The new watermelon pink, **SHEER CLASS** (L. Miller 1988) was reviewed under the L’Elegante Award. The star of the SDB season this year was **JAZZAMATAZZ** (Heidi Blyth 1986). Barry’s daughter has produced one of the most outstanding SDBs on the market today! The standards are lemon yellow, softly toned and clean. The falls contrast with a bright ruby to brick red, then distinctively banded with  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” of the standards’ yellow. The advancement is the leathery substance and ruffling as heavy as any dwarf – a first in this color pattern. **DELICATE PINK** (C. Palmer 1984) is my favorite pink SDB. It is an eloquent shade of baby pink (light but not pale), with the falls infused somewhat with ivory tones. Most acceptable form and superb substance. It baffles me that it hasn’t received more attention. The purest pink today is **PINK CRYSTAL** (Willott 1986). If you remember the shade of Corlew’s TB, ‘Cherub Choir’ you’ve got the color. Broad flowers have better than average substance. It is a good grower, but beware that it blooms heavily (some years it has completely bloomed out). This year it had an excellent bloom/increase ratio. Well worth the risk!

Two 1990 SDB introductions from Paul Black should be watched for next year: **Black 86370A** has rich purple standards and deep near-black falls with a well-defined  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” band of the purple of the standards. The whole flower is shiny, and finished with broadest form and moderate ruffling. The proportion and plant habits are exceptional. [NOTE: This seedling was named **WELL SUITED**]. For something unique, there will be **Black 86269B**, an SDB version of the TB, ‘Pandora’s Purple’ (Ensminger). The standards are violet approaching grape in color. The base of the falls is white to pale lavender, but is almost entirely covered with a wash of violet and then banded with distinct grape. Tall (14-15”) with up to 2 branches and 4 buds. It is quite startling in the garden, and will be a sure hit on the show bench. [NOTE: This seedling was named **PRIVILEGED CHARACTER**]. My two favorites of Paul’s

SDB releases for this year are **PATACAKE** and **SASS WITH CLASS**. ‘Patacake’ is a much improved ‘Melon Honey’ (Roberts), with smoother color saturation and stronger stalks. ‘Sass With Class’ is a clean lemon yellow with falls that

are heavily streaked and washed with blood red veins, and then haloed in lemon yellow. Much brighter and prettier than the catalog shot.

One of the more elegant SDBs from Mid-America is **SILK PETALS** (Black 1988), a silky white self with the broadest of form and the heaviest substance I've ever seen in a dwarf. **CHUBBY CHEEKS** (Black 1985) remains the plic to beat in the class, and is transmitting its good qualities (especially form, substance, vigor, and bud count) on to its children, and not just in shades of violet or blue. You will find plies stitched in two distinctive bands of color and luminatas in every shade possible. **SMALL RITUAL** (Hager 1988) is an intense bicolor, with ruby red standards and soot black falls. No spot, ray pattern, or halo in the falls, which makes it unique. And, lastly, I finally saw **BLACK STAR** (Warburton 1984), and it was well worth the wait. Intensely deep violet black self with just a peek-a-boo of white luminata pattern right at the white beard. Oh my!

**CLASSICS:** **CANARY ISLE** (Hamblen 1972); **BOO** (Markham 1971); **MUSIC CAPER** (Roberts 1975); **PEPPER MILL** (Hager 1977); **SAPPHIRE JEWEL** (Hamblen 1978).

### **MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED**

The best new MDB, **MACUMBA** (Hager 1988) was reviewed in the Contemporary Award. Another fine achievement is **TINY CHERUB** (Hager 1988), a smoothly colored apricot self with deeper beards. Very fine form. Extremely vigorous, which is an asset that has been missing in this color. Also very floriferous. The dainty flowers produce a cushion of flowers, just as a good MDB is supposed to. **SPOT OF TEA** (Black 1989) is a compact, lightly ruffled buff-tan with a distinctive spot of tea-brown in the center of the falls. A strong grower, with a good increase/bloom ratio.

**CLASSICS:** **NUGGETS** (Sindt 1976); **ZIPPER** (Sindt 1979).

### **LOUISIANAS**

Another promising rising star is a sib to 'Grace Duhon', **Haymon 37-84-9**, a sensuous velvety deep violet with heavy undertones of red in the falls that make the whole flower glow. Different enough to indeed merit introduction. Leathery texture on a wide, moderately ruffled flower that is very flat in form, to give full visual impact of the rich color. To be released in 1990. [NOTE: This seedling was named **EMPRESS JOSEPHINE**]. **KAY NELSON** (Granger 1988) is an elegant lilac-lavender self with a strong suggestion of a pink underglow. Broad, flat flowers are finely serrated on the edges like lace. One of the prettiest new Louisianas, and well named! **DARK IDOL** (Granger 1980) is deepest, rich purple approaching black with smallest yellow line signal that is virtually hidden by the style arms. It has flat cartwheel form, in the style of 'Bajazzo' (Dunn). Graceful S-curved stalks have 4 bud positions.

Charles Arny has three fine new varieties that continue the tradition of quality, unique releases he is so famous for. **OVER FENCE GENEROSITY** (1992) is a smooth classical magenta self with tiny yellow signals almost completely covered by the style arms. Chiffon texture, moderately ruffled, and the ultimate in form and style. **GERTIE BUTLER** (1990) was the star of the Arny Garden this spring. A medium lavender, but so rich in color that it almost approaches raspberry. But then it is capped off with a distinctive sunburst ray pattern in white outpouring from the signal area. **GEISHA EYES** (1990) is a short, small-flowered flat blue to violet with distinctive, large white signals embellishing all 6 petals (hence, the eyes). Very charming. Also fine was **MAY THIBEAUX** (Arny 1986), the richest full medium yellow with even deeper signals. A bold, blowsy form, and completely sunfast in Louisiana. Charlie's next door neighbor, Dick Goula, has some marvelous, innovative new things to be released soon, including a pure baby pink diploid and a luxurious rose-pink tetraploid. To be released later this year is **SOUTHERN ACCENT**, similar in color and texture to Granger's 'Dark Idol' (including the hidden signals), but the form is done in the more traditional flat form. [NOTE: **SOUTHERN ACCENT** was never officially registered or introduced.]

Richard Morgan, now retired and living in Hot Springs, Arkansas, is having his new things introduced by Ed and Rusty Ostheimer of Houma, Louisiana (Bois d'Arc Gardens). Two of his new ones were observed in Louisiana this spring and were most impressive: **HEAVENLY GLOW** (1989), a moderately sized terra cotta to rust brown, but with unique, enchanting green (yes, green) style arms and tiny green signals. Very well named, and has excellent proportion, as it will bloom only about 2' tall. **SEA KNIGHT** (1989) is one of the richest blues I have seen, and intense royal blue that is even deeper than its parent, 'Clyde Redmond' (Arny). Again, virtually no signals. It is also at the lower end of the scale in size and height, and is a welcome addition, both in the landscape and on the show bench! From Mary Dunn, we have **DELTA DOVE** (1985), a soft, elegant pale to baby blue, with deeper texture veins in the falls that just send me into orbit. Three newer ones showed great promise Down South, and I will watch them closely here in Oklahoma next spring:

**PIECE DE RESISTANCE** (1988) is just what they said it would be – a fat, flat beauty done in tones that are new to the Louisiana world and, like her classic, ‘Delta Dawn’ (Dunn), is going to be very difficult to describe in writing. I’ll give it a shot: A soft blending of orange and red, indeed very much like the rose, ‘Tropicana’. **FAT TUESDAY** (1988) is a heavily ruffled butter to gold. It looked a bit muddy, but I anticipate the coloring will be smoother in this part of the country. Nonetheless, ruffling and form as good as any in its color class. And **WINE COUNTRY** (1988), one of the most vibrantly colored Louisianas ever seen. It is a shiny burgundy wine, completely self with only a tiny yellow signal. Tight, compact form, with the heaviest ruffling in this color class, so tight and symmetrically placed on the flower that the flowers looked corrugated. Its color is even richer than her great ‘Mary’s Charlie’ (Dunn), and will surely become as popular. Also from Bay View Gardeners, **SOUTHERNER** (Ghio 1983) continues to be a stunner. An old gold, but heavily washed and veined clean brick-red throughout the falls, becoming even more intense on the edges. Imposing stalks and a great color combo make for a fantastic show iris.

And, finally, 3 beauties from Down Under: **HELEN NAISH** (Taylor 1982), the Australasian Dykes winner, is playing to rave reviews here now. Ah! Clara, look what you have done! (Another child of ‘Clara Goula’). A cold, icy white (most white Louisianas are a warmer, creamy white) with lime green styles and green signals. Fresh and crisp. **CAMMERAY** (Taylor 1987), seen at the Lafayette (Louisiana) show, was a tall, stately show iris with huge, flat flowers done in a soft, serene shade of pure light to medium blue. And **GERRY MARSTELLAR** (Raabe 1988) is a well-substanced medium pink, more of a bitone in effect. Broad form with a nice lilt and great carrying power in the garden.

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## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 1990

**Perry Dyer**

This is the third annual edition of Contemporary Views. Thanks to all of you for the kind words from the previous reviews. This was NOT the year for an extensive review, and I have found it difficult to settle down and write it this year. Here in Oklahoma we experienced a late freeze in mid-March that really had a negative impact on the season. I initially didn’t think much of it because (as usual) the SDBs came through virtually unscathed. We were after half-way through the TB season before it dawned on me that I was having only about 50% bloom in the TBs in the Blanchard garden. Oh, but what did bloom was OUTSTANDING. A wet, cold, clammy bloom season resulted in not nearly the number of seed pods I desired, but as I write this, I am harvesting some wonderful crosses. I’m as excited over this batch as any I’ve ever produced. With such limited bloom statewide, you won’t see that many new things added to this review; many will be repeated from the previous 2 years.

And the Omaha Convention didn’t help, either. Unfortunately, they took a gamble (I think) and scheduled the convention a week earlier than their historical peak. We saw plenty of excellent medians and some very well grown early TBs. I only wish I could have returned to view them 10 days later. Actually, I have no complaints, for I saw plenty to keep me busy. It was a very enjoyable, well-planned event, and I’ve never seen more perfectly grown irises. This was the first convention EVER that I have attended where every single garden was worthy. The culture throughout was superb. The plants weren’t “pushed” and overgrown, and the layouts of the gardens were most thoughtful.

Anyhow, there will be a bit more emphasis on medians in this year’s review. Unbelievable things are happening in the median world.

Contemporary Views’ award winners are reviewed first, then TBs by general color group, then medians by class, then finally Louisianas. In each category, the varieties are ranked with the most impressive listed first. 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 1988, 1989, and 1990).

## AWARD WINNERS

1. The **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**, given to the Best New Iris seen: **HONKY TONK BLUES** (Schreiner 1988) is a magnificent hybridizing achievement from a family who has, in the past, specialized in more “traditional” releases in the blue color range. It took Oklahoma by storm, being voted the most popular iris on the Sooner State Iris Society bus tour. A rich deeper blue self, but washed overall in white. There is no other iris like it (isn’t that what we’re searching for?!),

yet its form, plant habits, branching, and bud count make it outstanding in the garden or on the show bench. Beautiful, disease-resistant blue-green foliage. The buds will fool you. Check it out next spring and see what I mean. As Paul Black's sister says, "sass with class" here rather than a novelty or kook.

#### **Runnersup:**

**GOOD SHOW** (Hager 1988) is far and above the leader in oranges now. Rich, brilliant, glowing pure orange that is totally sunfast and without the yellow in the falls that can be distracting. Simply huge, fat, lightly ruffled flowers are architecturally sound, with good substance. Thick, husky show stalks are sometimes asked to hold up 3 open at once and are successful. Put all this bravado on gigantic, clean plants (very resistant to leaf spot), and you have a great iris.

**RASPBERRY FUDGE** (Keppel 1989) was justifiably most popular in Omaha, garnering a runnerup slot for the Cook Cup. Dazzling colors of raspberry, chocolate, and a little henna heavily sanding and dotting a cream background. A sassy, saucy look. What impresses me most is the branching and bud count, consistency in color intensity and plicata patterning, and the plant habits (it grows and it doesn't rot!) – amazing characteristics that are often missing from 'Gigolo' (Keppel) offspring. **SHOOTING SPARKS** (Black 1989) is the first IB child to be released from the 'Chubby Cheeks' (Black, SDB) bloodline. It is a vision of health, with rampant vigor. When it starts blooming – and keeps blooming – you'll swear there'll be nothing left. Not to worry for there is always plenty of increase for next year's bloom marathon. At the top of the class (28") with wide candelabra branching comparable to the finest of the TB show winners (I won runnerup with it at our early show this spring). It sports 3 well-spaced branches, with 5 to 7 buds per stalks. The stalks are surprisingly thin and graceful, yet support multiple blossoms open, even in Okie winds. A clean, pure white plicata, neatly banded in a distinct pattern of deep blue to violet. A graceful iris, with the emphasis on consistency.

2. The **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** is given to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen this year. This does not necessarily address the overall plant habits, but all aspects must be acceptable to merit the variety receiving this award: **CRYSTAL DREAMS** (Shockey 1989), from a relatively new hybridizer who has already made his mark with his arilbred breeding. He has just as good a critical eye and sense of artistry and good taste in his TB selecting! Howard's picture of it in the January 1989 Bulletin is surprisingly accurate, but no camera can capture the mystique and the full gamut of color combinations and shadings this iris exudes. The form was fuller and more expanded here, retaining outstanding shape and just enough ruffling and lace to set the flower in motion. It is a montage of pink, lavender, lilac, and silver, subtly edged with a 'Chartreuse Ruffles' (Rudolph) band. The flower is topped off with a beard of changeable colors of purple, blue, to sienna. This is the first proof of my prediction a few years ago about the 'Chartreuse Ruffles' bloodline. The possibilities with 'Crystal Dreams' are unlimited. It could easily be the 9-1-1 Award winner, too, but I won't do that again this year!

#### **Runnersup (are you ready for this – take your pick!):**

First Runnerup: **HALO IN YELLOW** (Niswonger 1989); Second Runnerup: **HALO IN ORANGE** (Niswonger 1989); Third Runnerup: **HALO IN PINK** (Niswonger 1989). That was one helluva row, because this trio was just a few clumps down the row from 'Crystal Dreams'. These 3 offerings were my pleasant surprise of the year. To rank one above the others is difficult, for all 3 are simply gorgeous and are unique in their own respect. **HALO IN YELLOW** is mindful in style of the great classic, 'Debby Rairdon' (Kuntz), but with a deeper yellow saturation, cleaner, purer white in the falls, and a thicker band -- but not as thick as, say, 'Joyce Terry' (Muhlestein). Waxy substance that endured adverse weather conditions admirably. Ah, 'Chartreuse Ruffles' blood again, combined with the likes of the Mohrs' 'Bride's Halo' offspring, 'Exuberant'. **HALO IN ORANGE** is not a sib to 'Halo in Yellow', but also does have 'Exuberant' in its parentage, combined this time with another of Nate Rudolph's irises, 'Crystal Dawn'. A compact description would be a much improved 'Exuberant' with a slightly richer, prettier shade of orange. **HALO IN PINK** is a parent of 'Halo in Orange', but I'm grateful that Dave chose to release it also. Remindful of a pinker version of the older 'Trevi Fountain' (B. Jones), its form isn't as "flared" as the other two "Halos", but the falls retain a nice shape and don't transform into "dog tongues" with age! Perhaps the frillest of the lot, and for me the most fertile. The pollen was a-flyin' on that row, and there are pods all over the garden from and on these 3 -- in spite of the rainy season! Look out in '92! I enthusiastically recommend all 3, but you won't be seeing them in Contemporary Gardens' future price list for awhile – I'm hoarding the plants to hybridize with them!

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break. I had to fudge on the introduction data criteria a bit this year to award this one, but I had never seen it before, so it is "new" to me and most of you: **TIDE MARK** (Hummel 1986), a lavender-blue on white plicata with what is approaching a red beard. Actually, they're coral. This wide, clean breakthrough comes from a different approach to plicatas (Moldovan versus the Gibson/Keppel lines). Most impressive is the branching, bud count, and placement – supported by a clean, healthy, vigorous plant. This was barely in bloom in Omaha. Had the convention been a week later, we would have seen expansive clumps of this in full bloom. Elegant rather than bold. I predict the combination of this with other red-bearded

blue plic attempts will take the iris world by storm. Congratulations to this Nebraska family of hybridizers relatively new to the scene!

**Runnersup:**

**HELGA'S HAT** (Nichols 1990) is a great new Space Age median, with branching, buds, form, and plant habits worthy to compete with the outstanding IB class. A succinct description would be: Take Bill Jones' classically formed white IB, 'Avanelle', and add consistent, tasteful white horns protruding from the heart. A clever name to reprise the world's first Space Age median, 'Hagar's Helmet' – you've come a long way, Mr. Nichols! **SPRING SATIN** (Black 1989) is a halo attempt from a different hybridizing approach, and I predict we will see all kinds of halo variations because of it. A soft, gentle palette of colors. The standards are a creamy 'Bride's Halo' pattern with a distinct lemon to light yellow halo; the falls a light orchid-lavender blend, gracefully lightening in the heart, but then haloed in tan (distinctively different color than the standards' halos). **HUBBUB** (Ensminger 1989) is a first in the medians, as 'Hagar's Helmet' was several years ago. This IB is the first broken pattern "plicata" that 'Purple Streaker' and other Ensminger releases have made so popular. Yes, no 2 flowers are alike, and the patterning of purple on white is most fascinating. Surprisingly good form, and does not push the limits of the IB class, as one might fear. As usual, Alan has selected well and, as with 'Purple Streaker', this iris deserves more than a casual mention as a conversation piece.

4. The **SUN BELT AWARD** is given to the Best Proven Variety, i.e., one that has been on the market long enough to thoroughly be tested (at least 4 years). The winner this year is **EXTRAVAGANT** (Hamblen 1983), perhaps the ultimate in "class" from one of the most tasteful hybridizers this world has known. Some hybridizers just have a sixth sense for selecting seedlings for introduction, and Melba Hamblen is the Master at it! I describe 'Extravagant' as "burnished amethyst", but not as "smoky" as some other things on the market, which are themselves very attractive also. The sienna beards have just the right intensity to cap this piece of artwork. Heavily laced and moderately ruffled flowers are large but have no trouble opening. Typical Hamblen show stalk branch placement, sometimes with double sockets in the branching and sometimes not. A good judge will look at the overall length of time the iris blooms, and 'Extravagant' passes the test. I can already tell you, after several years of critiquing this iris, it will be the Cream of the Crop Award winner in 1991. All in all, and with dozens of candidates to choose from, this has been Melba's finest achievement.

**Runnersup:**

**HELLCAT** (Aitken 1983) is my perennial choice for best IB on the market, it seems. It still can't be beat. The color saturation of this neglecta is intense and richly applied with high gloss. The branching, bud count, tight classical form – it's all there. And it is dependable, no matter how adverse the weather conditions. Double sockets extend its bloom in the garden; perfectly spaced branching and sequencing make it a hot number on the bench, and yes, it has won Best of Show honors. I have had the privilege of enjoying and evaluating **CHUBBY CHEEKS** (Black 1985, SDB) since its days as a seedling, and now to watch the impact it is having as a parent ..... Ah, the advantage of living only 6 blocks from one of the top 3 median hybridizers in America! Wide fat flowers, lightly, pleasingly ruffled, are adorned with changeable shadings of silver, blue, and light violet bands on a white ground plicata. Look closely and you'll see a plicata halo in gold, producing a "double band". This is what gives the flower its carrying power in the garden and on the show bench. It presents itself well. **WARRIOR KING** (Schreiner 1985) is still the finest of many good reds on the market today. A brilliant garnet red, absolutely sunfast, clean at the hafts, and superior in its shape. But what sets the standard here to judge all other reds by is its branching, bud count, and vigor (remember how we toiled over and cussed at 'War Lord' (Schreiner), not that many years ago?). I'm a bit surprised/disappointed that this variety hasn't been more strongly praised and rewarded in the AIS awards system. The prettiest blue-green, leaf spot resistant foliage in the whole garden.

5. The **DARK HORSE AWARD** is given to the variety introduced within the past 10 years that I feel has been overlooked by AIS judges, and deserves/deserved higher awards: **BAY RUFFLES** (Warburton 1985) is the epitome of what an SDB should be. Stalks are consistently 12" tall, with 1 well-placed branch and a total bud count of 3, each opening one at a time as they should. The foliage is clean, disease resistant, and not coarse. Excellent increase, floriferous, with a superb bloom/increase ratio. Does not overbloom. The flowers are broad, yet still retain the grace and charm of a dwarf, and have light waving and ruffling that enhance the perfect form. A shimmering, sparkling light to medium blue, somewhat deeper than the color of 'Tide's In' (Schreiner, TB), but with the same translucence. That this offering from one of the world's finest, most famous hybridizers hasn't even received an HM from AIS judges appalls me! To make matters worse, this year's ballot listed it as "Baby Ruffles"!

**Runnersup:**

Ironically, the first slot goes to another SDB: **JAZZAMATAZZ** (Heidi Blyth 1986) was hybridized by Barry's daughter while she was still in grade school (good grief!). I nearly wet my britches when this first bloomed a few years ago. It has

the same basic color pattern of ‘Inflamed’ (Innerst), ‘Wow’ (A. Brown), ‘Be Dazzled’ (Boushay), etc. (i.e., bright yellow standards and bright red falls, banded in yellow), but it is broad, heavily ruffled, and with substance like I’ve never seen in this color pattern. Buds galore, vigorous, and floriferous. It is a brilliant, smashing color combination! I’m amazed that it isn’t more popular and widely grown than it is. **EVELYN’S ECHO** (Kegerise 1985) blooms rather late in the season and this is the only explanation I have for its oversight by AIS judges. A high-class, high-gloss deep violet to indigo blue with self beards – absolutely no other color present to blemish the effect. Show stalks supreme, often opening 3 at once. Another from Kegerise rounds out the list: **SULTRY MISS** (Kegerise 1986) is a unique soft bicolor with warm pink standards and rosy-violet falls, capped with coral-tangerine beards. The entire flower is then overcast with a smoky cast more elegant than muddy. Look closely and you’ll see a slightly deeper band  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” wide in the falls, inherited from its parent, ‘Nefertiti’ (Gatty). However, it has substance and hybrid vigor that ‘Nefertiti’ never dream of possessing! As with all Kegerise creations, a vision of health, with clean, vigorous plants and thick, strong, well-branched, double-budded stalks.

6. The **CREAM OF THE CROPS AWARDS** go to the 5 varieties on the Dykes Medal eligibility list that I consider the most worthy, in order of preference. My Dykes vote this year went to: **TIDE’S IN** (Schreiner 1983), the beautiful diamond-dusted, shimmering light blue that has a different type of form than some of their other famous blue offerings.

#### **Runnersup:**

Again **CLARA GOULA** (Arny ’78), the ‘Snow Flurry’ (Rees, TB) of Louisiana irises. An average increaser that is finicky for some people, apparently, but has always been a consistent performer in Blanchard. **SOFT SPOKEN** (Dyer 1980, BB) – well, what can I say....**PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE** (Schreiner 1984) is one of those that has improved with time – a lustrous rich blue with a mink texture that is surprisingly rare in this color class. It is one of those, like ‘Beverly Sills’ (Hager) that will put up secondary stalks as the first wave of blooms are finishing, thus extending the bloom season. And **EVERYTHING PLUS** (Niswonger 1984), to date the best of the ‘Spinning Wheel’ (Nearpass) children, with the most distinctive spoke pattern and better substance than many (‘Spinning Wheel’ tends to transmit “soft” substance, and so far this defect has been difficult to overcome).

7. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** is special, and goes to the most outstanding seedling viewed this year. The winner this year is **3-87** from Mitch Jameson, a new hybridizer from St. Joseph, Missouri. What a joy it was to walk into a garden for the first time and see the artistry being created by an enthusiastic hybridizer who has that all-too-rare gift of a critical eye and the discipline of true objectivity. Although we have corresponded for a few years, we had never met until this year at the Omaha National. Several of us stopped by the Jameson/Edelman Garden in St. Jo on the way home, and what a treat was awaiting us. 3-87, scheduled for 1992 introduction, will be Mitch’s very first release. Mitch has had seedlings that could have already been introduced, but he wanted the first one to be special, and that is exactly what he has accomplished. This seedling is from ‘Edith Wolford’ (Hager) X ‘Song of Spring’ (Hamblen), and is a simply elegant light blue amoena like you’ve never seen before. Clean light blue standards with an intense flush of true blue in the midribs. The falls are a medium blue with smooth, wide hafts and a harmonious medium yellow beard. The falls are nearly horizontal and have moderate chiffon ruffling, with each ruffle just deep enough and placed just right to emphasize the quality form and further enhance the color gradations between the standards and falls. The flush in the standards is the key. A stickler for overall performance and consistency, a Jameson introduction will have to have superior plant habits and stalks before it will bear his name, and he has been successful with the creation of this seedling. Very mindful of the standards adhered to by Kegerise. Watch for this one in 1992. What a way to start! Congratulations, Mitch, on this great iris! [NOTE: It was named **DOO DAH**].

#### **Runnersup:**

**8544D**, from Paul Black, now scheduled for 1991 release but not named yet, as of the time of this writing. [NOTE: It was named **DESIGNER’S RAGE**]. This was the first Pick of the Litter winner in 1988, so this tells you just how much I think of Jameson 3-87! This is still my favorite of all of Paul Black’s TBs, and I’m glad to see he will be introducing it. I’m still amazed at it, because it is not from the bloodlines that have produced other “toasted” colors so far (e.g., Ghio, Keppel, Hamblen). It is from ‘Breath of Morn’ (Stahly) x ‘Galen’ (Fairbanks/ Jasper-Rogers) X ‘Spellmaker’ (Corlew), and is a toasted raspberry color (some say “mauve”), but it has a creamy texture overlay that makes the color more gentle. Yet there is that oh-so-important diamond-dusting that provides such a mysterious color with carrying power to the eye in the garden. The self flowers are capped off with enchanting henna to coral beards. Classy form, good substance, and most acceptable branch placement and bud count. Not sure how it will look in the catalog next year for, like ‘Crystal Dreams’, the true color is elusive to the camera’s eye. Trust me, there’s nothing like it on the market, and you will enjoy!

Two seedlings were viewed in Omaha and came home on my Get List: **Q30-1A** by Joe Gatty and **83-401-1** by Evelyn Kegerise. Q30-1A was the best seedling seen in Omaha, and it looked like Joe had dipped into George Shoop’s pollen

box. I'll be curious to find out the parentage on it. Bright pink standards are heavily flushed lavender to purple in the midribs. Falls are a bright, cheery coral to orange, topped off with dazzling deep coral beards. The color coordination is smashing but in no way gaudy or offensive. In one garden, it had a strong stalk with 4 branches (plus rebranching) and double sockets up and down. A wider, more finished look than many of Shoop's exciting offerings of a similar style, and exhibited stronger, more vigorous plant habits. Knowing Joe, he'll come up with a dynamite name for it, too. He's one of the best! Evelyn's 83-401-1 is reminiscent of her earlier release, 'Steady Pace' (1980), which in and of itself was a fine iris but was overlooked. This seedling is an updated version, with more refined flower form and improved vigor. It is a rich deep bronze-brown self with self to deep gold beards. Again, overall Kegerise quality, but in a color range where other bloodlines have failed in the areas of plant vigor, strength of stalks, and bud count. Modified candelabra branching has 3 branches, with double buds at each placement. [NOTE: It was named **BRONZETTE STAR** and introduced in 1992].

**Pick of the Litter Updates:** From the 1988 review, the runnerup 181-27P (Lilly Gartman) was named **ALLURING** and introduced via Roris Gardens in 1989. Runnerup N49-2 (Joe Gatty) was named **HOLLYWOOD BLONDE** and was introduced in 1989 also. From the 1989 review, the Pick of the Litter winner, **ANN BLOCHER**, the great laced white from Clarence Blocher, is being introduced by Roger Nelson (Iris Country in Oregon) this year. As a guest in my garden this year, it was again outstanding. Runnerup 82-6, the luxurious, serrated lavender-pink Louisiana from Marvin Granger of Lake Charles, Louisiana, will be introduced in 1991 via Bobo Faggard in Beaumont, Texas, as **DEIRDRE KAY**. It looked good again this year at the SLI Convention in Lafayette, Louisiana. The other runnerup, 85254AA from Paul Black, has been named **SIGHS AND WHISPERS**, and is considered by many of us to be Paul's premiere TB introduction this year.

## TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP

### REDS TO MAROONS:

**WARRIOR KING** (Schreiner 1985), reviewed under the Sun Belt Award winners, still owns this color class. My only complaint is that it has had very limited fertility. But I have a few pods this year.... A pleasant surprise for me was **BURGUNDY BUBBLES** (Maryott 1987), a sensuous shade of rich burgundy-wine approaching maroon. The wide form and satin sheen are enhanced by a succession of tight, well placed ruffles. Vigorous, multi-budded, with excellent bloom sequencing that gave an extended season of bloom. It was good to see one of my favorites again, **ROYAL PREMIERE** (Maryott 1985). This overlooked small tall is probably the only true maroon on the market, excepting its parent, the pseudo-BB, 'Maroon Bells' (Magee). Finally, after all these years, **SCHORTMAN'S GARNET RUFFLES** (Schortman 1981) grew well enough to bloom. For a change, this one was worth the frustration of the wait. More of a wine than 'Burgundy Bubbles', but mindful in general shape of the flower (although 'Burgundy Bubbles' has better form) and intensity of ruffling. **STERLING BLAZE** (Innerst 1988), first evaluated while a guest here for the 1988 National, still shows potential. It has a different coloring than 'Red Lion' (Hager) or the Schreiners/Stevens bloodlines. It is a garnet red with a "smoky" underlay that gives a unique coloration to the color tone.

**CLASSICS:** **CLEARFIRE** (Stevens 1981); **ROYAL TRUMPETER** (Reynolds 1971); **SPECTACULAR BID** (Denney 1981).

### APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

The magnificent **GOOD SHOW** (Hager 1988) is the leader of pure oranges and was reviewed earlier in the Contemporary Awards. **VICTORIAN FRILLS** (Black 1988) is a lovely thing and among Paul's best releases. A clean, moderately laced apricot-peach self that has no difficulty in opening. Wide, classic form. Plant habits are beyond reproach, and the branching and bud count show its Kegerise heritage. **FRINGE BENEFITS** (Hager 1988) is a great companion for 'Good Show', released the same year. But they are so different that they shouldn't be compared against each other. Remindful of 'Orange Star' (Hamblen), it is notably improved in height, bud count, vigor, and plant consistency. A burnished rich orange with even deeper burnt orange to sienna beards. Heaviest lace yet in this color, with tight, compact flowers with marvelous substance. **ORANGE CELEBRITY** (Niswonger 1984) made quite a hit in the Blanchard garden, and it had strong stalks that held up well in spite of its relatively high branching. A smooth, rich pure orange with deeper beards and substance like leather. Rampant, strong plant habits. **MONTEVIDEO** (Ghio 1987) is slightly lighter, but still has good color saturation. Beautiful branching on somewhat slender but sufficiently strong stalks. Plant habits are better than its predecessors from this bloodline.

**CLASSICS:** **FAN CLUB** (Dalton 1980); **FIDDLESTICKS** (Spahn 1981); **ORANGE STAR** (Hamblen 1981).

## **PINKS:**

What a class! My favorite is still **SOPHISTICATION** (Hamblen 1984), a smaller flowered satin pink with elegant soft blue beards. Over the years, I have come to respect my own **WARM EMBRACE** (1980) more and more. Richest pink approaching hot pink with deep coral beards. It can be faulted for inconsistent branching and bud count, but I have seen it with Queen quality stalks (at least the way Dean and Georgia Brand from Tulsa grow it). My own hot stalk of it bloomed 2 days too soon for the show this year (of course!). A surprise for me this year was **AMOUR** (Corlew 1985), a diamond-dusted, refined soft pink with near-white falls softly banded in the standards' color. Different from the other fine Corlew pinks. A sure candidate for use with those great Niswonger bands. **FEMME FATALE** (Gatty 1988) is currently my favorite of a long line of high-quality, constantly improving pinks. A very clean medium pink with lace and superb, broad form. **BLUE CHIP PINK** (Niswonger 1990) was seen in Omaha, and shows good potential for an advancement in the elusive blue-bearded pink line. A soft, elegant affair with decent form and finish. Also seen in Omaha, **MEMOIRS** (Ghio 1988) was a reasonably strong plant. It is an unusual smoky pink (I believe the expression is "toasted") that has undertones that are close to apricot, which creates a totally different color effect. **ROMANTIC MOOD** (Ghio 1988) is a full blown clean medium pink/cream blending, slightly lighter and an improvement over the fine **DESIGNER GOWN** (Ghio 1985). It shows great promise, and is one of Joe's prettiest in this color, but so far is suspect in the plant habits. It seems to be very tender. In my own garden, it was one of only about a half-dozen plants that actually died as a result of the late freeze. At the Spence Garden, the individual flower was glorious, but blooming on a stunted stalk that had been bitten by the same freeze. Nonetheless, enough potential and sheer beauty to merit my giving it another chance – I'm growing it again this year.

**CLASSICS:** **CHERUB CHOIR** (Corlew 1968); **PINK DIVINITY** (Tams 1967); **STORYBOOK** (Corlew 1980); **WINGS OF DREAMS** (Woodside 1975).

## **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

An amazingly weak class, with limited real advancement in recent years. **EXTRAVAGANT** (Hamblen 1983) is the shining star, and was reviewed as the Sun Belt Award winner. Also nice is Melba's **GRADUATION** (1985), a deeper, more smoky version of 'Extravagant', with the color saturation gradually lightening in the heart of the falls (well named!). The same wide, finished form of 'Extravagant' and others from this line of breeding. Two lilacs were added to the garden again. Their bloom this spring brought back many fond memories. **LILAC FLARE** (Rudolph 1969) is pure class and the ultimate from the Orville Fay 'Rippling Waters' line. Small, tight, compact lilac with soft coral beards and horizontal falls. Shorter stalks in harmony with its smaller flower size. Actually, it'd make a better BB than many BBs on the market today! **MELODY RIPPLES** (Julander 1980) is a wonderful medium lilac-lavender with self to white beards. Fortunately, this heavily ruffled, relative unknown from Utah didn't overbloom as it had done when I grew it before.

**CLASSICS:** **ENTOURAGE** (Ghio 1977); **LILAC THRILL** (Niswonger 1979); **MULBERRY WINE** (Moldovan 1966).

## **DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:**

This is where the action is. So many fine candidates that they're now bumping each other off in the awards. Dark Horse runnerup, **EVELYN'S ECHO** (Kegerise 1985) leads this year, and has already been reviewed. **GYRO** (Aitken 1989) is a sib to 'Orbiter' (1985), and both are very worthy and distinctive enough to merit release. 'Orbiter' is well known for its high bud count and outstanding branching, but also has a classical, wide form with moderate, perfectly placed ruffling in deep violet. 'Gyro' is simply one step beyond, and Terry was wise in delaying its release until 'Orbiter' was well established in the eyes of the iris growers. A great hybridizer is also a smart hybridizer. It has nothing to do with hovering over your things at a national convention and politicking. It has nothing to do with winning awards, although that recognition is welcomed and humbling for many of us. The bottom line is a good sense of marketing, knowing how the iris wheels turn, and the distribution of quality plants to help assure quality performance in those first critical years. The more an iris is seen and respected, the more people will want it, add it to their gardens, and enjoy it. This all goes hand-in-hand with that all-important self-critical eye I keep harping about. Terry Aitken is one of those hybridizers who possesses this quality, and I think (I hope!) I do too. We are in the minority still today, but I truly believe things are improving, and "WE SHALL OVERCOME"! Off my soapbox (it's my review!), and on with the category....Last year's Sun Belt Award winner, **HOUDINI** (Maryott 1985) continues to impress – a rich, gratefully early-blooming bombshell in very-near-black with a glossy sheen that shoots the color clear across the garden. Beautiful disease-resistant plant habits, and branching that cannot be beat. Although a fine show iris (3 open at once), its strongest asset is the sequencing of its buds and the arrival of later secondary stalks within established clumps (like Hager's 'Beverly Sills'), assuring a long season of bloom well past midseason peak. **HOLY NIGHT** (K. Mohr 1983) is a giant, with telephone pole stalks to

support humungous but well-shaped flowers in even deeper violet. The size and style is mindful of the great ‘Titan’s Glory’ (Schreiner), but with even larger flowers, deeper color saturation, and a more “finished” ensemble in its form. Tight construction for such huge flowers, displayed on stalks right at 4 feet tall.

**EVENING GOWN** (Ghio 1987) is one of Ghio’s best, and we’re very grateful to Mr. Keppel for rescuing it. A highly refined violet black with rich deepest blue beards. Absolutely smooth at the hafts, and a moderate sized flower presented on perfect modified candelabra branching. Good backup bud sequencing, as ‘Houdini’. **ELECTRIC AVENUE** (R. Nelson 1989) still hasn’t been seen enough to merit full endorsement, but the limited evaluation is most favorable, coming from another one of “those picky hybridizers”. A more full deep blue rather than the sultry black of most of the others listed in this category this year. Watch for it. One of the surprises this year in Omaha was **MY SHADOW** (Magee 1990). It was much darker than the Bulletin ad, and certainly a lot taller. Very lightly ruffled purple with contrasting bronze beards and hafts that, although not as smooth as some others in this color group, was a standout in Omaha.

**CLASSICS:** **GOOD KNIGHT** (Ghio 1979); **NIGHT RAIDERS** (Burrell 1977); **SILENT MAJESTY** (Hamblen 1977).

### **BLUES:**

So many fine offerings to choose from, and many have already been reviewed in the Awards Section: The great **HONKY TONK BLUES** (Schreiner 1988) as the Contemporary Award winner; **TIDE’S IN** (Schreiner 1983), my Cream of the Crop choice; and **PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE** (Schreiner 1984), which I consider a fine runnerup any day. But also from Schreiner: **SEA OF JOY** (1985), a later blooming, round ball as close to turquoise (or aquamarine) as any I’ve seen. Rather than the traditional shiny, diamond-dusted look of ‘Tide’s In’, it instead has a leathery look and feel that causes its color pigmentation to transmit itself differently. This is part of the reason for unique coloring in a class of surely a thousand other offerings. Most pleasurable. Amazing that, with the justified popularity of Barry Blyth’s releases, **TOUCH OF BRONZE** (1983) has to be considered a Dark Horse. This light blue is contrasted with deepest bronze beards, sometimes approaching black. Might not sound attractive on paper, but wait until you see it – a smashing combo. This iris is a missing link in iris genetics, I believe, and will serve as the cornerstone of a whole new avenue of breeding I will be pursuing this next decade. Barry has already gotten some things that are simply unexplainable.

A pleasant surprise was **YANKEE PRIDE** (Maryott 1989). A simple, clean sapphire blue in the tradition and color depth of the Schreiners’ ‘Sapphire Hills’. Excellent branching and plant habits after only 1 year in Blanchard. I had favorable notes on this one, under number, in the Maryott reselects at the 1986 San Jose National. The best of the red-bearded blue attempts remains **SKYBLAZE** (Keppel 1987), a light to medium blue with deepest tangerine to red beards that carry their color saturation all the way to the base of the beards. Husky plants produce superbly branched stalks. Substance is markedly superior to others in this color combination. An old favorite was added to the garden again and gets reviewed: **BUBBLING SPRINGS** (O. Brown 1971). This was the first introduction I ever bought (I was a sophomore in high school at the time). I bought it then for hybridizing, and although a rather reluctant parent, have acquired it again to resume a line that I side-tracked myself on years ago. Kinda finicky, sometimes belligerent, this is still one of the most beautiful irises ever created, a soft gentle blue (lilac undertones sometimes) with self to white beards. The heaviest lace ever seen in this color range.

**OTHER CLASSICS:** **BABBLING BROOK** (Keppel 1966); **VICTOR HERBERT** (Benson 1977); **MIRRORED SKY** (D. Palmer 1979); **ST. LOUIS BLUES** (Schreiner 1979).

### **WHITES:**

It’s time for the return in popularity of the classically formed, heavily ruffled pure white, such as ‘Angel Choir’ (Schliefert) or ‘Flight of Angels’ (Terrell). I consider **SILVERADO** (Schreiner 1987) a white, although technically it could be considered by some as palest blue or even lavender. A glacier white with absolute perfection in ruffling. It will show more of the icy undertones in cooler weather or cloudy days, but the substance and finish are never suspect. A faultless vision of health and beauty. It is the first iris I have ever point scored at 100 in the garden (no, I don’t do that much point scoring – I’ve got better things to do with my time – but on occasion, when it’s obvious that it’s that close to “perfection”, I’ll point score one, just for fun). Perhaps this makes it the perfect iris? Perhaps I’ll read this review 20 years from now and chuckle at myself – but I doubt it. It is large flowered, has robust plants and thick husky stalks; yet it maintains a grace and eloquence that causes you to just stand there and revel. **ANN BLOCHER** (Blocher 1990 via Roger Nelson) didn’t have the wide, tight form I remembered from the Tulsa shows in previous years as a seedling, but the shape was not objectionable to me at all. The heavily laced, pure white florets have no difficulty opening. Improvement in substance is notable. As with ‘Touch of Bronze’, this is to be the foundation of a new line of breeding I am now commencing.

**PURE-AS-THE** (Innerst 1989) also shows promise for being a worthy laced white addition, but characteristics such as branching, bud count, and hybrid vigor could not be justly evaluated on a first-year plant. Substance appeared to be acceptable. Watch for it. Another laced white, but from a warm (creamy) approach was **KUNIKO** (Gatty 1989). Broadest, well constructed form with most charming, contrasting yellow beards. Perhaps like an improved ‘White Lightning’ (Gatty), but later blooming and no nearly so susceptible to late freeze damage and rot. I predict ‘Kuniko’, along with ‘Hollywood Blonde’, will go down in the books as being among the best offerings ever from Joe Gatty. (By the way, put the accent of the first syllable in ‘Kuniko’). **CRYSTALYN** (B. Dunn 1986) is one I had missed until this year. A huge, pale blue with light ruffling and self, near-white beards. The effect is white. Might sound on paper like ‘Silverado’, but each is unique and worthy. Fat formal flowers held up on multi-branched stalks with backup buds at all positions. Undeniable vigor. **BUBBLING LACE** (Black 1986) is a heavily laced cold white with perfect form and superb substance. Plant vigor, branching, and bud count have been variable for some of us. Too bad it doesn’t perform everywhere like it does for Perry Parrish – he can really grow that iris! The heaviest lace in the entire lot, yet it never has difficulty in opening, even after a cool night – they’re usually rare in Oklahoma during bloom season, but not this year! **MICHELE TAYLOR** (Schreiner 1984) is the type of iris that makes being a hybridizer fun. Who would think that this laced ice-cold white is actually from pink plicata breeding. Look real close at it next spring, especially early in the morning on a fresh bloom, and you’ll see tell-tale hints of pink lines in the shoulders right around the beards. This one usually lacks the stamina and bud count of some of the others reviewed, but is still a very lovely affair and worthy of garden space and time. Last but not least, **PRAY FOR PEACE** (Plough 1982). This blocky, moderately ruffled pure white reminds me of ‘Joyce Terry’ (Muhlestein), in that I can’t believe it could have possibly been overlooked from a hybridizer who had a long string of winners. Not a warm white, not an icy white, rather, a traditional pure white which is unexplainable rare in today’s market.

**CLASSICS:** **FLIGHT OF ANGELS** (Terrell 1968); **HEAVENLY ANGELS** (Gatty 1979); **WINTER OLYMPICS** (O. Brown 1963).

### **CREAMS TO YELLOWS:**

Those that approach the reverse amoena pattern and the halo effect are also included in this category this year: **HALO IN YELLOW** (Niswonger 1989) was reviewed in the Awards Section. I’m still amazed at its leathery substance. A promising star is **BERTWISTLE** (Innerst 1990), seen in Omaha still under number. It is a tall, imposing improvement over ‘Eastertime’ (Schreiner), with texture in the falls that doesn’t break down and crepe before its time, as ‘Eastertime’ unfortunately did. ‘Bertwistle’ did inherit from ‘Eastertime’ some of the prettiest, healthiest, blue-green foliage in the garden. A clear mid-yellow with a large area of white precisely displayed in the center of the falls, then evenly banded in the standards’ color. **CHURCHILL DOWNS** (Mohr 1988) continues to impress me. A clean, bright yellow with a large area of white in the center 2/3 of the falls, all adorned with well placed, moderately heavy ruffling and lace. Full, well structured flowers. Average branching and bud count, but is most effective in the garden. It puts up auxiliary stalks on established clumps as the season progresses. If you attended Omaha, I am convinced that what you saw there was an imposter, and it was incorrect in at least 3 gardens. What we saw there was a lighter yellow self with much better, different type of branching, but not nearly as good form. What we bloomed in Oklahoma looked more like what Pacific Coast Hybridizers advertised in color in their catalog. **SUNKIST FRILLS** (D. Palmer 1987) is similar in color pattern to ‘Churchill Downs’, except even richer, and with a different yet pleasing form. Tight lace adorns the carved wax substance. Very late blooming (among the last to open), so many have missed it. Very unfortunate, because it was one of my departed friend’s most beautiful creations. Good show quality branching, often opening 3 at once. But for me, even on an established planting, it was regrettably single-socketed, with a maximum of 6 buds, giving a short season of bloom .... Its only major defect. Again, in a similar reverse amoena type color combination, but much softer, is **BUTTER CRISP** (Aitken 1986), a quiet shade of light butter yellow with white falls with a band of the principal color. An elegant affair, at the smaller end of the TB scale (height and flower size), with looping, deep chiffon ruffling. I had been hesitant to review this in the past, because I have seen it completely bloom out before. This defect was not evident this year, and it was seen in more than one setting in different parts of the country. Beautiful proportion, and from a whole new approach to hybridizing this color pattern: ‘Pink Angel’ (Rudolph) X ‘Brown Lasso’ (Buckles-Niswonger BB) – great breeding potential.

A trio of pure golds vies for top honors in this color range. Impressive is that each is from different bloodlines, is completely sunfast, and exhibits fine branching, bud count, and good plant habits. **GOLD COUNTRY** (Ghio 1987) has fat, wide flowers in a color approaching saffron. It is the best branched, with strong show stalks. **BOLD GOLD** (Gatty 1987) is perhaps the truest gold on the market today, with notably better branching and bud count than its great parent, Schreiners’ ‘Gold Galore’. Deeper, thick, fuzzy beards are reminiscent of the work of Opal Brown. It has been shorter than the registered 35”, but not stunted or aborted. **FISSION** (Black 1989) has the heaviest ruffling of the 3, with variable branching that can be on the par of the other 2. From ‘Flaming Victory’ (Weiler), it has potential for yellows with true red beards. I don’t usually review my own things, but will mention **AZTEC SUN** (Dyer 1982). I consider it my best TB

introduction to date, and feel it is one of the cleanest, smoothest true deep yellow selfs on the market. It too should be useful in red-bearded yellow breeding. A sleeper for me has been **FIRST IMPRESSION** (Gatty 1985), an early-blooming ivory-cream that has substance like wax. Show stalks supreme, and doesn't seem susceptible to late freezes as so many early-blooming, tender varieties are here. It is sad that many of Nate Rudolph's last introductions (that he selected) didn't receive the distribution and acclaim that those earlier releases such as 'Pink Taffeta' and 'Lemon Mist' garnered.

**YELLOW FLOUNCE** (1984) is a broad, full-blown lemon-yellow reverse amoena with tight lace. The tone is different from others – not dirty or smoky, yet has undertonings that give a totally different visual impact. Minimally acceptable bud count (6 to 7), but displayed on well spaced, well placed branching.

**CLASSICS:** **DREAM AFFAIR** (Gatty 1978); **EASTERTIME** (Schreiner 1980); **GOLD GALORE** (Schreiner 1978).

### **PLICATAS:**

Some of the most exciting work is being done here – with all kinds of crazy color combinations and types of patterning. Contrasting, never-seen-before-on-plicatas beards just further whet the appetite. But in many of the bloodlines, significant defects such as tender growth, susceptibility to soft rot, and erratic growth habits **must** be acknowledged by the serious plicata hybridizer, or this creative work will be all for naught. Fortunately, I am beginning to see evidence that some hybridizers are undertaking this mammoth task of correcting the problems. The first 3 listed are my proof: Keppel's blue plic line seems to be the healthiest of the West Coast lines, and **SNOWBROOK** (1987) is his best offering. It is certainly his most beautiful. Pure icy white standards top falls that are only finely edged with the purest blue seen to date in plicatas, with a deeper, heavier concentration of blue in the shoulders. Incredible branching and bud count, as Keith has become famous for. An absolute vision of health, with strong, full-fanned plants loaded with increase. Contemporary Award runnerup **RASPBERRY FUDGE** (Keppel 1989) is thusfar the healthiest and strongest from the Gibson bloodlines. And the 9-1-1 Award winner, **TIDE MARK** (Hummel 1987) gives the most promise, for, keep in mind that it is from a totally different approach to plicatas that originated in a cold weather climate (from Moldovan's recessive plicata, 'Guardian Gate'). This one, combined with West Coast bloodlines, will produce the elusive red-bearded blue plicata, I predict.

**JITTERBUG** (Keppel 1988) is a sizzling bright gold, with the falls precisely sanded, stitched, and peppered deep cinnamon brown. Basically an improved, taller, brighter version of this year's AM winner, 'Wild Jasmine' (Hamner), but the marking is more distinctive. For me, 'Jitterbug' has had exceptional growth habits. Another razzle-dazzle plicata is **HOT STREAK** (Ghio 1988), a tall, imposing child of 'Gigolo' (Keppel), with pure deep gold standards atop white and gold blended falls that are boldly, irregularly patterned in red. Branching and bud count are good, but growth habits need to be further tested here in the Midwest. Jim Gibson's most overlooked later plicata release is **MOUNTAIN MELODY** (1984), a unique blending of softer colors of mulberry stitching and sanding on an apricot to buff base, with more intensity of patterning in the falls. Very vigorous, but with inconsistent health. Here, in a wet, cooler-than-normal growing period, every single plant in one area rotted. Yet, another planting was absolutely rot-free. I am finally "sold" on **MOMENTUM** (Dunn 1986), the best and brightest of many nice 'Spinning Wheel' (Nearpass) derivatives. One of the tallest in the garden, with stalks that amazingly withstand our Okie winds. Quite a show iris, and some of the prettiest, most vigorous foliage in TBs.

**CLASSICS:** **FLAMENCO** (Keppel 1977); **GRAPHIC ARTS** (Hager 1978); **PINK CONFETTI** (Gibson 1976); **SPINNING WHEEL** (Nearpass 1976).

### **VARIEGATAS, NEGLECTAS, and AMOENAS** (kinda lumped all together this year!):

**CHAMPAGNE ELEGANCE** (Niswonger 1987) is technically a pink (or apricot-peach) amoena, but the standards are a different champagne, and then the falls a soft blending of buff, apricot, and peach. The entire flower is then underlaid with gray-lavender tones (never dirty) that give a hauntingly beautiful effect. Nothing like it; it grows on you. And it is a quality iris. For you reblooming enthusiasts, this one is a **must**. Pink amoenas have reached a new plateau with the release of **GIRL NEXT DOOR** (Black 1990). Standards are truly white, but veined in the midribs with a pretty shade of pink. The falls are the brightest, cleanest depth of pink I have seen. It is tall, and although the stalks are typically thin, they hold up the moderately sized flowers consistently. A refreshing flower. **SPICED CIDER** (Sexton-Black 1989) is technically a variegata, but the falls are deep burnished gold, with broken pigmentation like Neva's earlier offering, 'Thanksgiving', that suggests to me a lineage of plicatas in its background. Broad, chubby flowers with one of the best names ever for an iris! Does well in cold weather climates, including Colorado. **WAKEUP CALL** (Black 1990) is barely a yellow amoena, with creamy yellow standards only a tone paler than the falls. Shorter of stature (only 30"), but with perfect Kegerise branching on thick, strong stalks. Outstanding plant habits. Unpretentious, gentle flowers that grow on you.

Barry Blyth is doing some of the most innovative work in these color combinations in this category of this review. IN TOWN (1988) is a highly improved neglecta from its ancestor, 'Cabaret Royale' (Blyth). Crisp medium blue-violet standards, heavily saturated with deeper violet in the midribs. Plush velvet falls in deepest purple, but then edged in a silvery band (thicker than a halo). Tack on a bushy red beard – smashing! Excellent branching and sound, vigorous plant habits. Very deservedly was a contender for the Out-of-Region Cup in Omaha. A fine show iris too ....Miss Kitty won Best Two-Toned Variety with it at the Sooner State show this year. CRIMSON SNOW (1987) is a notable advancement towards the elusive red amoena. Broad, blocky flowers have white standards (flushed orchid) and ruby-rose falls. As with 'In Town', it is quite smooth-hafted and exhibits a halo in the falls. Unfortunately, 'Crimson Snow's' plant habits are highly suspect, but worth the effort, especially if hybridizing.

CLASSICS: BLAZING SADDLES (Dyer 1978); DUTCH GIRL (Mohr 1981); MAGIC MAN (Blyth 1979); NAVAJO BLANKET (Schreiner 1978).

### BICOLORS (again, a wide variation reviewed under this heading):

EDITH WOLFORD (Hager 1986) remains the queen. A heavily ruffled, improved 'Lilac Champagne' (Hamblen), with soft yellow standards over elegant blue-lavender falls. In this cool bloom season, the standards had a chartreuse tint to them, and the falls were very closely approaching blue. Leave it to Ben Hager to take a potentially gaudy color combination and turn it into a work of art! PASS THE WINE (Blyth 1985) could conceivably be placed in the other category with 'In Town' and 'Crimson Snow'. It is from the same general line of breeding, but comes off as a deep wine bitone, also with a halo in the falls, and then capped with a brilliant red beard. Vigorous, and vivid in the garden. ENCHANTING (Hamblen 1987) is another one of those late bloomers (literally), and this alone has adversely affected its recognition. Nothing like it on the market! Clean light to medium pink standards. Changeable taffeta falls masterfully blended in varying degrees of plum, rose, and magenta. The deep sienna to henna beards actually appear black against this color combination. Outstanding Hamblen branching. Hopefully the word will get out about this one. Another shamefully overlooked variety is SULTRY MISS (Kegerise 1986), already reviewed as a runnerup in the Dark Horse Award section. Similar, but lighter, smaller of stature, and without the smoky overlay, is TRUE BLISS (Hamblen 1987), a true improvement over the famous 'Touche' (Hamblen). As with 'Enchanting', 'True Bliss' is one of the last to grace your bloom season. Worth the wait!

CLASSICS: AMIGO'S GUITAR (Plough 1964); DUALTONE (Ol Brown 1977); LATIN LADY (Shoop 1978).

### POTPOURRI:

The great CRYSTAL GLITTERS (Schreiner 1985) is Miss Kitty's favorite iris (she has good taste). This soft blend of pastels in apricot, peach, cream, pink, and gold is outstanding on the show bench. Yet its intense diamond dusting and chiseled ruffling give it carrying power in the garden. Another muted beauty that was a pleasant surprise was EASTER LACE (Byers 1988). Although Monty has made sensational advancements in Space Age breeding, this is his best release to date. A simply elegant medley of orchids, pinks, lavenders, and tans, then all highlighted with gold. Heavy, heavy lace does not prohibit the compact, moderately sized flowers from opening properly. A child of 'Beverly Sills' (Hager), with all of its mother's attributes coming through. As with the aforementioned 'Yellow Flounce', another late Rudolph release that has regrettably been overlooked is Nate's RUFFLED SURPRISE (1981). An enchanting, sultry blend, with smoky plum standards over falls that are white, diffused with smoke, then rimmed with chartreuse. Smoky blue beards add a veil of mystery to the flower. Incredible breeding potential.

Last year's Dark Horse Award winner, PLANNED TREASURE (Burger 1985) is still a favorite, and is the foundation of nearly a quarter of my hybridizing endeavors at this time. Pink standards are harmoniously contrasted with falls that are a blend of white, light pink, and then washed on the edges in lavender. Some of the best plant habits and branching in existence. No picture captures the beauty and significance of this iris. A new one with similar patterning, except done in blue amoena tones, is SIGHS AND WHISPERS (Black 1990). Remindful of the classic 'Fuji's Mantle' (Schreiner 1966), but with stronger coloration in the falls and a healthier plant. Sure hope we don't have to wait another 25 years for the next advancement! Another new one that opens a whole new arena is SPRING SATIN (Black 1989), already reviewed under the 9-1-1 Award section. A magnificent hybridizing achievement that was well noted and rewarded at the Premio Firenze in Italy this spring. Two varieties seen in Omaha went on the "Get List": MINTED HALO (Mueller 1987) is a muted blend of a thousand colors (well, maybe a dozen or so!). To name a few – there's lavender, lilac, tan, white, gold, russet, rust – all somewhat unevenly blended. Then, the flower is capped with a halo of gold to tan. Just wait till it and 'Spring Satin' start going steady.

The pollen will be a-flyin'! And from the master of new color combinations is SPRING TIDINGS (Shoop 1989), a reverse bitone in varying degrees of lavender and pink, with the Shoop flush in the standards' midribs and a bright coral pink beard.

**CLASSICS:** BRANDY (McWhirter 1981); FORBIDDEN (Dunn 1980); STORMY SEAS (W. Jones 1979).

### **SPACE AGE:**

If there was any doubt before, no more. Space Age irises have “arrived”, with ‘Sky Hooks’ (Osborne) placing as a runnerup this year to the highest award in the land. A new Space Age introduction must be competitive in form and finish with its non-adorned, bearded counterparts. There can be no excuse for inferior form or other defects – there are too many good ones on the market now that meet the challenge. The significance of the arrival of Space Age medians has been discussed under the 9-1-1 Award section, with the introduction of the white Space Age IB, HELGA'S HAT (Nichols 1990). LIKE A CHARM (Byers 1989) is Monty’s first median Space Age release, and most promising. Soft yellow standards with warm white falls gently blended into the standards’ color. Then there are blue horns. High quality, with respectable form and great show stalks. His MAGIC KINGDOM (1989) is his most beautiful to date. Soft, romantic blend of pastels, but basically an orange-pink and lavender bitone. The broad modern flowers have red-orange beards that tastefully, gracefully extend into slender white horns. Outstanding in Omaha. One of Monty’s first offerings, SILVER SPOONS (1987) is still a favorite, with simple silvery-blue flowers displayed on ‘Song of Norway’ (Luihn) quality stalks. Blue beards extend into horns and then spoons/flounces. Somewhat erratic plant habits, but oh so classy. And then LURID (1987), a personal favorite because it is a child of Chris Waltermire’s great pink-bearded white, ‘Heaven Helped’. The beards on ‘Lurid’ are even more intense, displayed on blocky pure white flowers. Sinfully beckoning even when the beards don’t transform into horns! A brand new Space Age introduction mysteriously appeared at the Sooner State show this spring. TRIPLE WHAMMY (Hager 1990) is a colorful blending of old gold with light lavender in the falls, then with decadent bright purple beards and horns protruding from the heart. A tall, almost lanky stalk with wide branching, opening 3 large flowers at once. A wild one that is distinctive and most popular. SPECIAL FEATURE (Osborne 1988) continues the Manley Osborne tradition of absolute quality. This one is among the deepest released to date, a deep purple near-self, with deep purple adornments that can be anything from horns to full flounces, depending upon the weather conditions and cultural practices of the grower.

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

### **MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:**

Admittedly, my least favorite class, but I acknowledge their extreme popularity. The voting in the Williamson-White class this year was among the most difficult decisions I’ve ever made in my 18 years as a judge, with all 3 of the top vote-getters deserving of the award (and I predict all 3 will eventually make it). My choice this year was the winner of last year’s 9-1-1 Award, NEW WAVE (Hager 1986). This clean, pure white tet has consistently produced the best flowers, with substance never seen before in the class. They are wide, yet still graceful enough to be charming. Contrasting yellow beards are a plus. Above average, healthier plant habits than other tets released thusfar, and show stalks supreme. In its own way, CRYSTAL RUFFLES (Dunderman 1986) is just as significant (it is diploid) and certainly as charming. Slender, proportionate stalks display cool white florets that hint at its plicata heritage in the shoulders, if you look closely. WELCH'S REWARD (Welch-Hall 1988) was very popular in Omaha. The best of the ‘Pretender’ (Cook TB) color pattern (yellow standards, purple falls), but the falls have a yellow edging that really enlivens the flower. ZULA (Fisher 1990) was seen in Omaha also, but was still under number on the tag. A cinnamon brown plicata, with just a little bit of plicata sanding in the falls. JOLLY JIM (Dunderman 1988) is a pert white self with contrasty deep golden-orange beards. Superb shape. LADY OF MARIETTA (T. Varner 1988) is a clear yellow with white falls crisply edged in yellow. It will have occasional purple markings in the falls upon first opening (especially in cooler, wet weather), but these quickly disappear after the sun hits the flower.

**CLASSICS:** CHICKEE (Dunderman 1980); DOLL RIBBONS (Dunderman 1978); PUPPY LOVE (Hager 1980, Tet).

### **BORDER BEARDED:**

No BB stood out above the others this year. But the nod for best BB here this year went to PECCADILLO (Keppel 1983). Still my favorite of the many great BB plicatas from Keith. Even in a year when TBs and BBs averaged only about 50% bloom due to the late freeze, ‘Peccadillo’s’ branching remained consistent with the good years – 3 branches, double socketed, and absolutely in class (flower size, stalk height, thickness of stalk, and foliage). Less susceptible to the woes of soft rot that plague many of its TB plicata contemporaries. ‘Peccadillo’s’ standards are a gentle, pleasing shade of salmon to peach, with cream to pale peach based plicata falls, delicately washed and sanded a harmonious light violet. PINK BUBBLES (Hager 1980) is still great, and many of us actually like it better than its much-heralded, worthy sister,

'Beverly Sills' (Hager TB). Tight, compact form, with just enough ruffles and lace to make it one charming iris.

**FIDDLER** (Stahly 1984) is the one I'm just now discovering, and I respect its ability to remain true to class the more I grow and observe it. A simply stated maroon to red bitone that is close to being a self. **CLASSIC TREASURE** (Burger 1984) does grow out of class sometimes, but I have seen it at the proper height more often than not. A cold, icy white with a dazzling edge of blue on only the falls. Always has slender, graceful, well-branched stalks. The consistency of **NAUTICAL FLAG** (Black 1989) is reminiscent of 'Soft Spoken' (Dyer BB), with tight little compact flowers with rounded, horizontal falls. A lavender-blue self, fading to near-white around the harmonious yellow beards. All capped with tight lace. **FRIZZY LIZZY** (Weiler 1989) was pagan in Omaha, with bright screaming orange flowers, completely encased in heaviest lace. Unfortunately, its plants were skimpy (as many of its orange BB predecessors were), bud count was minimal, and branching toed-in – another defect common to this color. But what a sizzling flower!

**CLASSICS:** **MARMALADE SKIES** (Niswonger 1978); **PICAYUNE** (Keppel 1977); **SOMETHING SPECIAL** (Hager 1978).

### **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:**

This is the hot class with the most rapid advancement. It is obvious that the judges are rightfully taking note of what's happening, with an IB being First Runnerup to the Dykes this year, and **two IBs** being runnersup last year. Many are reviewed here, and **all** are a cut above in quality and personality. **HELLCAT** (Aitken 1983), as mentioned in the Sun Belt Award section, is still the leader, and now it has received its much-deserved Sass Medal. **MAUI MOONLIGHT** (Aitken 1987) was my Cook Cup choice in Omaha, where we saw huge, vigorous clumps of this over and over. One of the cleanest light yellows you'll see – an absolute self (no white in the falls), down to the beard. Outstanding branching and bud count. And **MORNING SHOW** (Ensminger 1988) was my choice for the President's Cup in Omaha! (There were plenty of TBs seen to compete with these 2 IBs!). A bright, cheery, cherry red with self beards with some black hairs in them to add intensity. The color is closest to the Louisiana iris, 'F.A.C. McCulla' (Arny), and in no way should even be compared to the other great red IB on the market, 'Red Zinger' (Black), because they are totally different in color and style. A marvelous median. Ensminger's streaked **HUBBUB** (1989) has already been reviewed under the 9-1-1 Award section. His **BLUE-EYED BLOND** (1989) was also very attractive, and a significant hybridizing achievement in and of itself: A clean, crisp light yellow with rich, deep blue beards. The form isn't as wide or as finished as others reviewed, but still acceptable and pleasing to the eye.

**SHOOTING SPARKS** (Black 1989) has already been reviewed under the Contemporary Award section, and is one of the best new IBs. You can expect to see many more fine IB plicatas in the near future from the 'Chubby Cheeks' line. **HOT SPICE** (Aitken 1989) is a sizzling new, well-shaped plicata in the style of 'Butter Pecan' (Hager), but with more intense, deeper plicating in both the standards and falls. **HOT WHEELS** (Black 1990) is a fun new bicolor plicata. Standards are almost solidly colored in orchid to tan. The falls are a creamy white, then edged with a traditional thick band of red-purple, very evenly applied, but then "bleeding" into the white ground in the center. Another progeny from the 'Chubby Cheeks' bloodline. **WHITE CHAPEAU** (Blodgett 1989) was seen in Omaha, and shows promise of being the best and brightest of the yellow amoenas. A very clean color combo on broad but proportionate flowers. **WHITE LILACS** (Warburton 1984) has been overlooked. A heavily ruffled icy white with blue-lavender (lilac) undertones that inherited its superb vigor, branching, and bud count from the great blue TB, 'Full Tide' (O. Brown). Absolutely unique is Bee's **DARK BLIZZARD** (also 1984), the only modern "luminata" IB I'm aware of. Deepest spectrum violet standards over fancy patterned falls that are white-based, then washed, sanded, and shot with black throughout. The white area around the light beard gives the suggestion of luminata breeding.

**ALL RIGHT** (Hager 1988) is a bright orange with pleasing form and good substance. It has an even deeper orange beard. Very hardy. A more subtle orange is **OBLIGATO** (Stahly 1988), a sherbet orange with the magnificent branching and bud count of its parent, 'Marmalade Skies' (Niswonger, BB). A big hit in Oklahoma this spring at the Paul Black Garden. Superior plant habits, also. A well shaped, medium orange with deeper beards is **SUNNY HONEY** (Shoop 1985). Great visual impact in the garden, and nicely formed. **PIECE OF CAKE** (Hager 1989), blooming here on first-year plants, showed promise of being a fine addition to the "barely plic" group of IBs, almost a solid baby pink cake frosting with suggestive soft plicata markings in only the shoulders. **NIGHT SHIFT** (Aitken 1986) is the richest spectrum violet, wide, and with absolutely no haft markings. Good bud count and plant habits, but its chief defect has been that it blooms a bit short to be truly proportionate. Nonetheless, a classy iris. And I must mention **ART GALLERY**, introduced by me for Bennett Jones in 1984. A rare, scarce IB that is white with a huge bright orange spot in the center of the falls. Finicky and cantankerous, but when it settles down, it is one impressive iris. For us, it won Best Median at both shows in which it was entered. Blooms very late in the median season – well into the TB season. Worth the extra effort (and extra prayers!).

**CLASSICS:** BLACK WATCH (Rosenfels 1972); OF COURSE (Hager 1979); RARE EDITION (Gatty 1980); SILENT STRINGS (Dyer 1979).

### **STANDARD DWARF BEARDED S:**

Some surprises this year! I had somehow missed these first ones in previous years, but have now added them to my garden: PURE ALLURE (Ritchie 1987) is an absolutely pure white, chaste with no other color, and with the classic form of its ‘Cotton Blossom’ (B. Jones) heritage. LIME MIST (Willott 1988) is a well formed near-amoena, with white standards and falls, but the falls lightly washed in lime-green, giving the visual impression of a light green amoena. Superb substance and plant habits. Fancy-patterned SDB plicatas are rare, but a fine contribution to this group is COURT MAGICIAN (Nichols 1985), a white ground plicata, heavily washed and sanded in varying degrees of royal violet, ever deepening towards the edges of the petals. A bit short sometimes. WOODLING (Sobek 1985) was a big hit at the Boston Median Muster in 1989, and is one of the most unusual dwarfs I’ve ever seen. An odd concoction of colors, all blended into a tapestry of earth tones: Light greenish-gold, purple undertones, dark brown spots in the falls, and another underlay of charcoal. Vibrant – not muddy at all. The form isn’t fat and rounded, yet the petal shape, in harmony with its colors, leaves a most desirable impact. Even more oddly, this is from orange and laced yellow breeding!

BELLE PLAINE (Lankow 1984) is a beautiful, shapely ivory self with yellow beards straight from ‘Cotton Blossom’. A very warm, classical offering. Another ‘Cotton Blossom’ derivative from Carol is BROAD GRIN (1987), a creamy amber-pink with yellow undertonings. The emphasis is its smoothness and wide petals. It doesn’t exhibit the heavy-blooming tendencies so many pink dwarfs are plagued with. Two other pinks were most promising: PINK CRYSTAL (Willott 1986) is the prettiest, clearest light pink I have seen. It has excellent form and substance. I have seen and grown it when it completely bloomed out, but the increase/bloom ratio was proper this season. KANDI MOON (Blyth 1986) is a fine attempt at a blue-bearded pink. A shrimp to coral pink self with purple beards tipped azure blue. Worlds of breeding potential. After much anticipation, the rare black luminata, BLACK STAR (Warburton 1984) was found, acquired, and bloomed well. I found it to have fine growth habits, even though I had been warned it was finicky. Clean, vigorous healthy plants with leaves that are thinner and more true to proportion than some SDBs on the market. ‘Black Star’ is a deepest violet to jet black, then highlighted in the heart of the flower with white beards and a white luminata pattern. The first of its kind.

Several SDBs compete today with the best of the IBs for top honors overall in the medians. The quality is just unbelievable. I predict there will be a Dykes Medalist in one of these classes some time during this decade. The great blue, BAY RUFFLES (Warburton 1985), the vivacious variegata, JAZZAMATAZZ (Blyth 1986), and the classic plicata, CHUBBY CHEEKS (Black 1985) were reviewed in the awards sections. AZURE GEM (Hamblen 1982), a pale blue with deep azure blue beards, joins this elite group. I was deeply disappointed at the outcome of this year’s Cook-Douglas balloting, for ‘Azure Gem’ is the standard in form and finish by which to judge SDBs today.

Several new SDBs show great promise for becoming popular additions to any median garden: WELL SUITED (Black 1990) is a welcomed return to a type of SDB color pattern, once very popular, that has been neglected – a rich, formal, velvet purple, with a deeper spot in the falls approaching black. The entire flower is enveloped in a glossy lacquer. PRIVILEGED CHARACTER (Black 1990) will make a great mate for ‘Black Star’. Basically, a silvery-white ground plicata, but washed overall with light violet (like Ensminger’s TB, ‘Pandora’s Purple’), then heavily edged deep grape purple. Another fascinating avenue that ‘Chubby Cheeks’ offers. This one has outstanding growth habits, with 1 to 2 branches and 3 to 4 buds. SASS WITH CLASS (Black 1989) is a zany color show, with yellow standards and falls, but then the falls heavily tiger-striped brilliant maroon, deepening towards the edges. The form is very shapely. The impact is the excitement of a new color combo, rather than the horror of a gaudy mini-Frankenstein! Wonderfully colorfast. SILK PETALS (Black 1988) is my favorite of Paul’s whites, a rather large but still proportionate, broad waxy white with a satin sheen and softest blue beards. Substance like no other SDB. A hint of palest butter yellow in the standards’ midribs gives warmth to the flower. PATACAKE (Black 1989) is the best “orange” SDB today. Actually a clear creamy apricot-peach, then topped with a deeper orange beard. Hardy, thin foliage produces stalks carrying 2 branches and 4 buds – thin and graceful yet stronger than its grandparent, ‘Melon Honey’ (Roberts). DARK VADER (L. Miller 1987) is a wide, rich black near-self, with the standards just a tone lighter than the falls. Lightly ruffled and waved. So far overlooked, SMALL RITUAL (Hager 1988) is a dwarf version of the unique bicolor TB, ‘Dark Ritual’ (Hager) – deepest crimson standards and velveteen black falls, capped with bluish beards. A rich, sultry color combo.

**CLASSICS:** APRICOT ELF (Hamblen 1979); DIXIE PIXIE (B. Jones 1978); HELTER SKELTER (Dyer 1978); MICHAEL PAUL (W. Jones 1979).

### **LOUISIANAS**

A wretched year to attempt a review. The mid-March freeze was especially harmful to the Louisiana bloom in Oklahoma, with only about one-third of the blooming-sized rhizomes producing stalks. Those that bloomed were shorter and inferior in bud positions and count. The temperatures during Louisiana peak in Blanchard were high, a rude awakening after the cold weather during bearded bloom season. Then, most of the bloom occurred while we were gone to the national convention in Omaha. We did take the trip Down South again this year to Lafayette, Louisiana, to the annual convention of the Society for Louisiana Irises, so we got to see a few new things there. In Lafayette, two of Dorman Haymon's new introductions stole the show: **FESTIVAL'S ACADIAN**, named in commemoration of the flower festival held at the same time as our iris convention this year, was very popular, and nearly won Best of Show during the iris show! A bright colorful blending of reds and purple, with yellow shot through. Then, inherited from its parent, 'Charjoy's Mike' (Arny), all segments are offset with a contrasting halo in yellow. Lifting form, with ruffled, flat petals. **EMPERESS JOSEPHINE** is a sib to the great 'Grace Duhon' (Haymon 1988). Choosing between these 2 offspring from 'Full Eclipse' (Hager) X 'Ann Chowning' (Chowning) would be difficult. 'Empress Josephine' is an even deeper approach to black, with the standards just a shade lighter than the royal black falls. The classical flat form of 'Ann Chowning' predominated this cross, and the Empress has the best shape. Large bright yellow steeple signals from 'Ann Chowning' just serve to enhance the glossy finish of the falls all the more. Captivating!

Another rising star, first mentioned in last year's review still under number, is **DEIRDRE KAY**, to be released by Marvin Granger via Bobo Faggard in 1991. A huge elegant blending of lilac, lavender, and pink, with a predominant sunburst ray pattern of cream to sunshine yellow outpouring over the falls. Then, the entire flower is filigreed with fine picotee lace that is still very rare in Louisiana irises. This is the introduction to watch for next year, although Marvin will have 3 or 4 other excellent releases in 1991 also. One of my favorites is **EXQUISITE LADY** (Owen 1987), a unique mid-blue with a concentrated silver halo on all floral parts. Most exciting! I can't wait to see what kind of parent it is, especially when crossed with the 'Charjoy's Mike' bloodline.

One new tetraploid gives the best of the Mertzweiller releases some stiff competition: **COORABELL** (Raabe via Melrose Garden 1988). Directly from Joe's tet blood, this import from Down Under is the ultimate in lustrous velvet royal purple tets. Extremely heavy substance, yet it unrolls and opens as it should – a trait which some of the tets have had difficulty with. Broad, expansive, rich flowers are embellished with huge bright yellow steeple signals. Two diploids from Bob Raabe are meritorious: **SINFONIETTA** (1987 via Melrose) is one of the most beautiful shades of blue in irisdome – an aqua to nearly turquoise light to mid-blue. Growth and vigor are perfect. And **GERRY MARSTELLAR** (1988 via Melrose) is a different shade of shimmering pink – reminiscent of the coloration of the pink TB, 'Pink Taffeta' (Rudolph). Substance, sunfastness, and carrying power in the garden are commendable.

A relative unknown hybridizer from Opelousas (just north of Lafayette) is Neil Bertinot. He has released several high-quality Louisianas in the past 5 years, but the most worthy is **JERI** (1985), and I'm pleased to see that this child of 'Full Eclipse' is finally getting some of the recognition it deserves. It is a full black self with the finish of patent leather, with a tiny yellow line signal. Tall, graceful stalks are thin but support the weight of the flowers. Produces quite a show stalk; it won Best of Show at Lafayette this year. **HURRICANE PARTY** (Haymon 1988) will fool you. With its broad, rounded form, thick petals, and lush blue-green foliage, you would swear it was a tetraploid. Huge full red-violet flowers are placed on thick zigzag stalks, with each branch flower opening in perfect position. Another child of the great 'Ann Chowning'. **SUN FLARE** (Haymon 1990) is a tall, imposing brilliant yellow (approaching gold) that is totally sunfast. Ruffled and flared, with incredible bud count and placement on the stalks. And lastly, **KAY NELSON** (Granger 1989), considered by many as the most beautiful of the newer Louisiana releases. Basically a lavender self, but totally underlaid with a warm pink glow. Classical compact form with horizontally flaring falls. As with 'Deirdre Kay', all petals are intricately serrated, to the point that many of us consider it "lace". A beautiful iris name by a true southern gentleman for a true gentle lady. Pure class!

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## **CONTEMPORARY VIEWS—1991**

**Perry Dyer**

This, the fourth annual edition of Contemporary Views, is a bit later than previous editions. I'm just now recuperating from a wild year of gardening to settle down and do some serious writing. With the addition of daylilies and gladioli to the garden, and the expansion of the Louisiana iris planting, it makes for a busy year. I've learned the joys of gardening by

floodlight! Fortunately, I pushed to get everything planted and the glad bulbs dug before I left for Lafayette the first weekend in November for the Society for Louisiana Irises (SLI) Board Meeting. While I was gone, the temperature in Oklahoma City dropped (plummeted) to 11 degrees. And it was 30 degrees in south Louisiana! Miss Kitty kept saying we were in for an early, long, hard winter; even she was surprised it came so soon.

It will be very apparent, as you read this year's review, what kind of season we had, by seeing where the emphasis is. The median season was very good, and many crosses were made. Then the rains came – right in the middle of the Tall Bearded season. The TBs were very lackluster, and the rot that had started last fall kicked in again. I got fed up with them, dug everything up (medians too) and started all over this summer. I guess all the spring rain turned out to be a blessing for some things, because the Louisiana bloom was the best I've experienced in my 15 or so years of growing them. The Taylor introductions were especially dazzling. Never have I seen such magnificent bloom. The daylily bloom – only my second season – was exceptional.

There are not that many new TBs reviewed this year and, with a few exceptions, I see no reason to repeat those reviewed in previous years. I'm not a rich man, and I could not/would not spend those French Riviera prices to attend this year's national convention. And from the looks of things, I won't be attending the Atlanta Convention either. Fortunately, we see a lot of the newest and best right here in Oklahoma City each year.

There will be a heavy emphasis on medians, and with 1500 guest plants now residing in 8 tour gardens for the Sooner State Iris Society (SSIS) "Median Spree in '93", you'll be seeing more reviewed the next few years. Over 50 hybridizers have sent guests to our median convention. The Blanchard garden will be on tour with 132 guests planted.

The Australian Louisianas were so outstanding that a separate article is being written for publication in the SLI newsletter, titled "State of the Art: An Assessment of Australian Cultivars", but will be included with this review as an addendum.

Contemporary Views' award winners are reviewed first, then TBs by general color group, then medians by class, a couple of arilbreds, and last but not least, those unforgettable Louisiana wonders. 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 1989, 1990, and 1991).

## AWARD WINNERS

1. The **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**, given to the Best New Iris seen, goes to **APOLLO'S SONG** (Taylor 1991). What a fantastic new Louisiana! A first-year plant produced 2 tall 50" stalks with show branching of 4 well spaced branches, wide enough to allow the moderately large flowers to open and expand with ease. Plenty of buds, and opens 2 and 3 at once. This creamy butter-yellow was the king of the patch, with strong stalks that held up beautifully (unusual for this color range). Clean colors with no other infusions to contaminate the effect, lightly ruffled, and completely sunfast, with tough leathery texture and outstanding substance. Extremely vigorous, husky plants with plenty of increase. Surprisingly, a child of 'Screen Gem' (Arny) X 'Helen Naish' (Taylor).

### Runnersup:

**RASPBERRY FUDGE** (Keppel 1989) was a Contemporary Award runnerup last year also. I continue to be impressed with its notable resistance to rot, excellent plant habits, and superb branching and bud count. Worthy of the top HM this year in the suspiciously-sparse group of winners (with only 16 winners out of 884 eligible TBs, something is terribly wrong somewhere). This is the best, overall, of the Keppel warm plicatas. A vivacious medley of rich raspberry, chocolate, and sienna colors, artfully arranged on a cream background. **ROSETTE WINE** (Schreiner 1989) was a surprise for me. This rich tapestry of rose cerise has a white area radiating from the heart of the flower (similar to what the Schreiners call their "zonal" pattern, but the light area is not quite full enough to meet their definition). Magnificent show stalk branching – a great one to have to "save the show" when we have those early bloom seasons, for it blooms very late in the season. Beautiful foliage, and the plant habits appear to be much more dependable than some of the predecessors from this bloodline. **KUNIKO** (Gatty 1989) was highly thought of even while still a seedling and continues to impress. Remindful of Joe's earlier introduction, the popular 'White Lightning', except that 'Kuniko' is a cleaner, "colder" white and has prettier, heavier lace. But the bright yellow beard really makes the flower, as with 'White Lightning'. The difference is that 'Kuniko' blooms later in the season and won't fall victim to our notorious late Okie freezes, which unfortunately, the very fine 'White Lightning' was so susceptible to because of its extremely early season of bloom and tender growth. I was shocked when 'Kuniko' didn't even make the HM list this year, for it is one of Gatty's finest creations – ever!

2. The **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** is given to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen this year. This does not necessarily address the overall plant habits, but all aspects must be acceptable to merit the variety receiving this award: **MAUI SURF** (Aitken 1990). This divine new BB bloomed so late that the Louisiana season was already in full force. So you know it must have been grand to tear me away from my Louisiana patch even for a few minutes! First-year bloom on this produced a nice stalk with decent bud count and plant habits. I reveled at the individual flowers – heavily ruffled, frothy self in an unusual shade of medium blue, with undercurrents of violet that give intensity to the color saturation and carrying power in the garden. Terry, you've done it again – "Mr. Bubble Ruffling", Joe Ghio, must be proud of this grandchild of 'Mystique'!

#### **Runnersup:**

**MALIBU MAGIC** (Taylor 1991) was actually my favorite of all the wonderful new imports from John Taylor from Australia. A first-year plant produced one 30" stalk with graceful, slightly zigzagged branching (3 branches + terminal) and 5 buds. As with 'Maui Surf', this has an unusual shade of blue in its base color – this time almost a "grayed blue", but eloquent rather than muddy. Then, shot throughout the entire flower is an intricate network of deeper texture veining, even more pronounced than Mary Dunn's Louisiana, 'Delta Dove', or the old Georgia Hinkle TB classics. Moderate-sized flowers have crisp substance, just the right amount of ruffling that makes the flowers airy, and a picotee "crimping" never before seen in this color of Louisianas. The hue is not quite as deep as the shot of it on the cover of the Rainbow Ridge catalog, but it is even more beautiful. Superb plant habits, too, and as vigorous as a weed. **CORAL COAST** (Vizvarie 1989) is a glorious pastel array of gentle apricot standards, wonderful chalky-white falls, and then enhanced with a very narrow band (almost halo) of the standards' color. Broad, blocky flowers are gently waved rather than ruffled, and the unique texture gives carrying power to such delicate colors. The hybridizer is from right here in central Oklahoma, and this is his finest achievement to date. Worlds of breeding potential with this one, and I'm using it extensively.

**EMPRESS JOSEPHINE** (Haymon 1990) is a rare and exquisite near-black Louisiana from one of the great new hybridizers in South Louisiana. Its sib, 'Grace Duhon' (1988), was the Contemporary Award winner in 1989. The Empress is an even glossier, more intensely saturated gem, with texture more like silk than velvet. Stock is very, very limited, so watch for it and get it just as soon as you see it offered. Named for a classy lady from Houston, former fellow SLI Board Member, Josephine Shanks.

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break:

**GLADIATOR'S GIFT** (Taylor 1991), the first Louisiana I've seen that I would consider true brown. For me, on first-year bloom, it had none of the rose undertones that show in the color shot of it in the Rainbow Ridge catalog. Instead, it was a pure medium chocolate, mindful of the coloring and intensity of a Spuria. The sepals are only a touch lighter in henna, and the falls even have a suggestion of a deeper band. One first-year stalk was 33" with 4 branches and terminal and 6 to 7 buds, displayed on a sturdy, gracefully zigzagged stalk that allowed all florets to open properly. Moderate-sized flowers, with tight compact form and leathery substance. Completely sunfast and resistant to waterspotting and wind burn. Small yellow dagger signals appear on all 6 petals but are more pronounced on the falls. A totally different color than the great Arny browns of yesteryear, but this, like most of John's things, is a direct descendent of that master's bloodlines: ['Edith Fear' (Taylor) x 'Valera' (Arny)] X 'Limited Edition' (Taylor). A magnificent achievement!

#### **Runnersup:**

**FASCINATOR** (Hager 1990). Such breeding potential here, and I can't wait to use it. Yellows and browns with red beards will be achieved with this iris – it's just a matter of time. I will be using it with my 'Aztec Sun'. 'Fascinator' is a bravura concoction of browns, russets, tans, and golds, with the standards slightly deeper. All this is punctuated with a bright flame beard. **PRIVILEGED CHARACTER** (Black 1990, SDB) is the vanguard of a whole new era of 'Chubby Cheeks' (Black) kids, in that it is the first I would consider a *luminata* pattern. A rich spectrum violet with a light (nearly white) area at the beard. The falls are edged in spectrum violet also, but the centers are a marbled, mottled light violet. Remindful of the mini-version of the Ensminger TB, 'Pandora's Purple'. Paul will have several very fine *luminatas* coming out – all from 'Chubby Cheeks' heritage – and this first release is most impressive. Joe Ghio's pre-introductory publicity for **TEST PATTERN** (1990) touted it as a modern version of the great old classic, 'Joseph's Mantle' (Craig). Well, he was right on the money, and the release of this iris shows just how diverse the 'Gigolo' (Keppel) line can be. A butterscotch-tan with the standards a self and the falls a lighter base, then etch-a-sketched with a joyful marbling and washing of deep russet, brown, and violet. A pleasant surprise. Nice broad form to show off the *déjà vu* pattern, and a decent plant and stalk. I have special plans in my hybridizing with this one, but it's a secret....

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 (at least 4 years). I was so pleased to see that the 1988 Dark Horse Award winner has now been "discovered", winning an AM this year: **HOLY NIGHT** (Mohr 1983) is the epitome of what a good iris should be. It is the standard by which hybridizers should be striving for: Strong, tall, thick stalks rise above lush blue-green foliage with

amazing increase. The flowers are large and well structured, holding together even in the most adverse weather conditions Oklahoma can throw at it. The backup buds expand to the same size as the principal blooms, and the branching is beautifully spaced in a modified candelabra. The rich glossy flowers of black satin have just enough ruffling to complete the form. And, incredibly, ‘Holy Night’ is a proven rebloomer. Here last year, it began its second season of bloom in October and continued until the first hard freeze the last week of November. All this, and our Awards Chairman can’t even get the name spelled right on the awards list – oh well!!!

**Runnersup:**

**NEUTRON DANCE** (Blyth 1987) is a “sin-sational” yellow amoena, the brightest and best on the market. Completely sunfast, a beacon shining across the garden. Vigorous, strong plants produce stalks of moderate height with 3 well-placed branches and plenty of backup buds. Miss Kitty will be pleased to see this one listed, for it was her favorite in the garden this year. **CHAMPAGNE ELEGANCE** (Niswonger 1987) is one I originally overlooked (or ignored). The color scheme is a sophisticated bitoning and blending of champagne and pink tones, finished with an elegant diamond-dusting over the entire flower. A good companion for ‘Holy Night’, having all the same qualities but on shorter stalks. The coloration will vary with the season, moisture, and mineral content of the soil, but rather than a defect, it adds to the enchantment. (Judges, be careful with this one on the bench. Those artificial lights can be especially tricky with this one!). Also a dependable rebloomer, reported to be a near ever-bloomer in the temperate, Mediterranean climates. Another Barry Blyth original completes this group: **TOUCH OF BRONZE** (1983) is a superb garden variety that consistently produces great show stalks also, although shorter and more delicate than some. An unusual shade of powder blue (with some slate undertones, but not drab), capped with shocking deep blue beards that are heavily tipped deep brown. The visual impression is a black beard, and against the light blue flowers, gives a dramatic effect. Smaller, compact flowers are in compliance with the shorter, leaner stalks. But the flowers are fat and wide and nearly tailored (just some light waving). Buds galore, and I hybridized nearly every one this year – in between showers. Barry is already getting a wide array of unbelievable offspring from this one, including the wonderful blue on white “barely-plic” with red beards, ‘Lipstick Lies’. I predict this one will be a Progenitor in TB and BB breeding.

5. The **DARK HORSE AWARD** is given to the variety introduced within the past 10 years that I feel has been overlooked by AIS judges, and deserves/deserved higher awards. I’m pleased to see that last year’s winner, ‘Bay Ruffles’ (Warburton 1985) has gone on to win the second most number of HM votes in the SDB class this year. The Dark Horse winner for this year is: **AZTEC SUN** (Dyer 1982). Surprise! Those of you that know me personally know that I’m not the type of hybridizer that goes around the country bragging and politicking my own things. If anything, I tend to be overly-critical and harsh with my work. My philosophy is to choose the right thing to release, put its best foot forward and try to get good distribution, then sit back and see what the public and the AIS judges think. I will take exception this time and just say that I think ‘Aztec Sun’ deserved more than it was awarded, although it did win a decent HM. Over the years, I have come to respect this brilliant yellow with deeper beards more and more. The richest, totally sunfast full yellow (not golden yellow) I’ve seen. Leathery, smooth substance. Branching and bud count can be excellent, and I’ve gotten to get to see it win Best of Show honors more than once. A vision of health and vigor, with husky blue-green foliage. My finest TB introduction (so far).

**Runnersup:**

**RUFFLED SURPRISE** (Rudolph 1981) is a hauntingly beautiful jungle blend of smoked-violet standards atop ecru-ivory falls that are distinctively banded with a chartreuse-gold band, and then smoked. Form is perfection *par excellence*, finished with heavy ruffling. Totally different from the type of work you would anticipate from the late great Nate Rudolph’s program, yet one of his finest achievements. And it is proving to be a sensational parent whose possibilities haven’t been fully tapped. I am still using it heavily. Had **GENIALITY** (O. Brown 1981) been a midseason bloomer rather than one of the last to open (after all the judges are pooped and “traveled out”), it would have easily won an AM. An elegant, melodious bicolor, with standards of medium rosy-pink and the falls in mauve-pink, tapped with deep shrimp beards. Deep pink style arms pull the two colors together, and the whole flower is finished with heavy lace. Ironically, one of its parents came from Nate Rudolph: The classic ‘Pink Sleigh’. In a world full of all kinds of crazy, zany plic patterns, **PURPLE PEPPER** (Nearpass 1986) is unique. Well named, it has pansy purple standards and white ground falls that are almost completely bombasted with a heavy peppering of purple even deeper than the standards’ color. Smoothly tailored, with none of that silly lace that would ruin a color pattern such as this. Mixing this with the more popular plic lines today should be quite a combination!

6. The **CREAM OF THE CROP AWARDS** go to the 5 varieties on the Dykes Medal eligibility list that I consider the most worthy, in order of preference: **EXTRAVAGANT** (Hamblen 1983), last year’s Sun Belt Award winner, deserved a second chance, so to speak. And had the AIS Board of Directors responded properly to the petition presented them last fall, there would have been a runoff for the Dykes this year, and ‘Extravagant’ would have been one of the players.....

Magnificent burnished amethyst with deep burnt orange to sienna beards, with wide flowers caressed with intricate ruffling and lace. **HELLCAT** (Aitken 1983) was my second choice this year, and still impresses me as the benchmark of IB breeding in today's market. A rich neglecta with a shoe polish sheen, with branching and bud count we should now expect and insist upon with new IB introductions. This cross-breed truly captured the best of both worlds. **ACADIAN MISS** (Arny 1980) has become a classic in its own right among white Louisianas. It is smaller and more compact in flower size than its parent, 'Clara Goula' (Arny), but is a purer white. It also has nice ruffling and great show stalks. Also a "cross-breed", it inherited the elegance and ethereal beauty of *I.giganticaerulea* ('Clara Goula') and the vigor, stamina, and compactness of *I. brevicaulis* ('Clyde Redmond', Arny). **CRYSTAL GLITTERS** (Schreiner 1985) has been a bit of a dark horse, relatively speaking. This is a medley of pastels in hues of ivory, champagne, peach, and pink, all heavily ruffled and encased with diamond dusting. The rather thin, graceful stalks are deceptively strong, easily supporting show-stalk branching with 3 open at once without faltering. And **SOFT SPOKEN** (Dyer 1980), the soft lilac BB with shrimp beards which won the Knowlton Medal in 1988....

7. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding seedling viewed this year: **TWEETY BIRD** (Black 1992). This SDB (seedling #85259A) is Paul Black's finest and most exciting achievement in a decade of median hybridizing. It is a fat little yellow with contrasty bright orange beards and a touch of orange at the hafts that gives an inner warmth. The entire flower is enlivened with a mint julep underglow. Crisp and clean, with form, substance, and clarity of color and contrast never before seen in the SDB class. It has very busy plant habits, with plenty of bloom stalks and plenty of increase left over for the next year. The foliage and stalk height are in good proportion, with stalks carrying 1 branch and 4 buds. Its maiden bloom in Oklahoma City was, needless to say, a momentous, joyous occasion!

#### **Runnersup:**

**MARGARET LEE** (Taylor 1992) has been receiving rave reviews Down Under, named for a popular lady who was President of the Iris Society of Australia. I'm pleased to report it is just as smashing so far from home, a hemisphere away! A much glorified, deeper, richer version of the Debaillon winner, 'Charlie's Michele' (Arny). This great grandchild of 'Charlie's Michele' has quite a royal lineage. I have charted its bloodline all the way back to the species (chart available upon request), and it has three Australasian Dykes Medalists and no less than eight different Debaillon winners in its background, with 'Charlie's Michele' on both sides of the family. The substance is so thick and the ruffling so intense that the flowers take 2 full days to open. The sepals are magenta pink with somewhat of an entrancing mottled effect, and the falls are 2 to 3 shades deeper. The buds are buff colored, and the ruffles cause the underside to show, even on a fully expanded flower. Breathtaking! The ultimate in bubble ruffling!! **Paul Black 89U25** is an insane new type of plicata from 'Glitz 'n' Glitter' (Black) breeding. The standards are a creamy white to pale yellow base, banded in plum-brown, with a gilt-edged gold rim at the top of the standards. The falls are a warm white base, with the hafts a heavy concentration of plum-brown. Then, as you go down the falls, the band transfigures into a more brassy-gold band, finally diminishing to a chartreuse color in the band around the bottom of the falls. Try putting all of THAT on a registration card! The stitchery is stippled and dotted within the  $\frac{3}{4}$ " band. A 1992 introduction, and has been named **MIX AND MATCH**. *Wunderbar!*

#### **Pick of the Litter Updates:**

Last year's winner, **DOO DAH**, will be introduced by Mitch Jameson of St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1992 – his first introduction (what a way to start your hybridizing career!!). The name of this garden is "Knee-Deep in June". Watch for the ad in the January 1992 Bulletin. Runnerup **83-40-1** (Kegerise) is being introduced in 1992 as **BRONZETTE STAR**. Pick of the Litter runnerup in 1989, **82-6** (Marvin Granger), was released this year as **DEIRDRE KAY**, and was one of the finest new Louisiana offerings this year. The winner in 1988, **Paul Black 8544B**, was named **DESIGNER'S RAGE** and introduced this year – my favorite of all of Paul's TBs to date.

### **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

#### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

Bill Maryott owns the market in maroons, and **BURGUNDY BUBBLES** (1987) continues to impress me. This wide, sunfast maroon-wine is the heaviest ruffled of the lot, and the satin sheen is exceptional. **ROYAL PREMIER** (1985) is a smaller, tighter, more compact flower that is actually my favorite. It is more of a true maroon than wine. And now **ALMADEN** (1990) arrives. It is a deep velvety wine with a nice luster and good shape. Exceptionally strong stalks have 3 well spaced branches and double buds.

**CLASSICS:** **POST TIME** (Schreiner 1971); **RED PLANET** (E. Smith 1970); **WONDERFUL ONE** (Reynolds 1970).

## APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

**GOOD SHOW** (Hager 1988) is still far and above the best orange on the market today, yet incredibly still failed to even win an HM! A huge extrovert that has the strongest stalks and the best branching and bud count in the rich oranges. **GRATITUDE** (Hager 1990), on a first-year bloom, showed great promise, and is an even deeper, richer shade of orange. Joe Ghio is doing some nice work in this color, and I finally got to see why **ESMERALDA** (1988) is so popular. It is a smaller, shorter, heavily ruffled deep orange small-tall that Joe wisely changed to TB from its original BB classification. Some of the stalks here reach 36", but most hover right about 30". A magnificent show stalk of **MONTEVIDEO** (1987) was First Runnerup at the Dallas show this year. It is more of a medium orange with large, impressive flowers. **FUN FEST** (O. Brown 1988) is another one of those that opens so late in the season that most of the public rarely gets to see it. In this early year, a grand stalk of it, entered by Perry Parrish, was a Runnerup to Best-of-Show at the Oklahoma Iris Society show in Oklahoma City. It is an unusual shade of apricot-orange, in that it has a salmon underglow and poppy red beards. Heavy ruffles add zest to the fest. Howard Shockey, the "king of the arilbreds", has produced another TB winner with **PARFAIT DELIGHT** (1988), a luscious confection of pastel apricots, creams, and pinks, with the falls slightly lighter in the center, then banded with the blended colors. The king of the garden in plant habits, with obscene, huge plants rivaling 'Holy Night' (Mohr).

**CLASSICS:** **HAYRIDE** (B. Jones 1971); **MANDARIN MOON** (Moldovan 1970); **SALMON DREAM** (Rudolph 1970).

## PINKS:

**SANDY ROSE** (O. Brown 1988) has been a sleeper. As with so many of Opal's things, it is an extremely late bloomer. Very well named, it is literally a sandy rose with broad classy form and garnished with a beard in a pleasing shade of sienna coral. The entire flower is encapsulated in a burnished toasty look, mindful of the Ghio bloodline. **BEAUTIFUL DREAMER** (Hamblen 1988) is also a late bloomer with silken pink and ivory shadings, somewhat lighter in the heart of the flower. Unobtrusive and smaller in stature, but with typically-incredible Hamblen branching. A trio of Gatty pinks is worth another review. Each is slightly different in intensity and flower form, and distinctive enough to each be worthy of a place in your garden: **FRENCH PASTRY** (1987) is a soft cotton candy pink with powdered sugar dusting in the falls. Broad and heavily ruffled. **SATIN SIREN** (1987) is a rich medium pink, a cleaner 'Triple Crown' (Dyer) with good plants that are quite resistant to leaf spot. The deepest, and my favorite, is **FEMME FATALE** (1988), a naughty presentation of hot pink – almost as deep as 'Warm Embrace' (Dyer) – with x-rated ruffling and lace on a full-formed bodice of sensuous pink. We've come a long way from 'Cherie' (Hall)!

**CLASSICS:** **PAINTED PINK** (Plough 1971); **PINK PIROUETTE** (Newhard 1970); **PRINCESS** (Gatty 1972); **WOODLAND ROSE** (O. Brown 1970).

## LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:

**DESIGNER'S RAGE** (Black 1991) is such a unique color it's hard to decide where to even put it in the review, unless you'd stick it in Potpourri! A transcendental crushed velvet in smoked mauve, creamed raspberry, diamond dusted rosy mauve .... YOU try to describe it. Don't bother to look it up in the color charts – it ain't there! This wide, shapely color gem is my favorite and the most unique of my friend, Paul Black's, innovative breeding program. A deep burnt sienna beard just adds to the captivation. With admittedly inconsistent branching and bud count, one can nonetheless take this melting pot of bloodlines and further confuse the issue with the Hamblen, Ghio, Keppel, Opal Brown, and Shoop lines. That's my plan...and a couple of other ventures not to be discussed! **DRIFTING ALONG** (O. Brown 1988) is another that's difficult to "categorize". A soft blend of gentle lilac and blue, lighter in the falls, and all diamond dusted. The light coral beards and delicate lace do not break the ambiance. **FARAWAY PLACES** (Keppel 1988) is a sultry, muted, mulled wine to rose, with suggestions of apricot across the falls that add to the mystery. Rich terra-cotta to sienna beards are an asset. It is heavily ruffled and has a strange "rolled-back" look in the falls.

**CLASSICS:** **CARO NOME** (B. Brown 1970); **FOND WISH** (E. Smith 1967); **LAURIE** (Gaulter 1966).

## DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:

A couple of new additions were most worthy, in addition to 2 nice ones reviewed last year: **GYRO** (Aitken 1989) and **MY SHADOW** (Magee 1990). **EVENING SILK** (Aitken 1990) was very popular at Paul Black's the day of the Sooner State bus tour. A rich, wide, lightly waved silky near-black with all the great stalk and plant habits of its parent, 'Superstition' (Schreiner), but with much smoother hafts and deeper intensity of color saturation. A child of the great

‘Evelyn’s Echo’ (Kegerise), **MAJESTIC INTERLUDE** (Kegerise 1989) is also a lustrous deep midnight-blue to violet-black, and an improvement over its parent, if that’s possible. Unfortunately, it is also a rather late bloomer. The bold, robust background of ‘Titan’s Glory’ (Schreiner) is most evident in **SPACE VIKING** (Hager 1989), an imposing monster-flower of smooth dark violet, held up on stallion show stalks approaching 4’ tall. Form is perhaps a bit more “finished” than its famous daddy.

**CLASSICS:** **BASIC BLACK** (Hager 1971); **NEPTUNE’S POOL** (Moldovan 1972); **SWING SHIFT** (Sexton 1972).

### **BLUES:**

**HONKY TONK BLUES** (Schreiner 1988) continues to take this part of the country by storm, being the Most Popular Iris at the Sooner State show and on the Sooner State tour this year. A rich deep blue with a subtle white wash over the falls, and ruffling so heavy that the lighter color of the underneath of the petals shows on a fully opened flower, as happens with ‘Margaret Lee’ (Taylor, LA). An exciting presentation. The Schreiner family has produced yet another fine light blue, for which they are more famous: **RAPTURE IN BLUE** (1990) is a wide blocky heavily ruffled translucent blue that shows signs of turquoise in its pigmentation. Finally got to see **DOUCE FRANCE** (Anfosso 1988). It is a major advancement in red-bearded blues. Deepest aquamarine florets have the richest red beards seen to date, screaming from the heart. All this and even a hint of lace.

**CLASSICS:** **PRAISE THE LORD** (Boushay 1972); **ROCKETTE** (O. Brown 1971); **RUSHING STREAM** (Schreiner 1971); **TEMPO** (Hinkle 1970).

### **WHITES:**

Where have I been?! **ANY SUNDAE** (Durrance 1986) stopped me in my tracks! Purest, pristine white, with shocking fire-engine red beards – the thickest, bushiest, boldest, and most intense ever. Smaller, dainty flowers all afloat with tight lace. **PERFECT PEARL** (Black 1991) is an opalescent ice-white with pearl-grey overtones and captivating designer-ruffling. Shorter and smaller in stature, with moderate-sized flowers in compliance with the diminutized stalks (30” tall). Tight ripple ruffles adorn the compact florets. **ICE CAVE** (Wright 1986) continues to be a classy blue-white ice sculpture, with translucent waves and fluting. A short-tall, with nonetheless faultless branching and bud count. Its limited recognition, even after favorable appearances at 2 national conventions, is most disheartening.

**CLASSICS:** **ANGEL CHOIR** (Schliefert 1970); **ANGEL UNAWARES** (Terrell 1970); **CARRARA MARBLE** (Schaeff 1970); **NINA’S DELIGHT** (Ghio 1964).

### **CREAMS TO YELLOWS:**

**HOLLYWOOD BLONDE** (Gatty 1989) is a large, busty blonde-yellow, gradually lightening to near-white in the center of the falls, below lemon beards. Blocky form is lightly waved and laced. As with ‘Kuniko’ (Gatty), one of the best of Joe Gatty’s recent releases, yet it too failed to receive an HM this year. **WAKEUP CALL** (Black 1989) is technically a yellow amoena, but appears as a light yellow to the eye. Shorter show stalks with branching that reminds you of its Kegerise heritage. Tightly structured, with swirling ruffles and waves.

**CLASSICS:** **CAROLINA GOLD** (Powell 1970); **ON TARGET** (Knopf 1970); **TREASURE ROOM** (Williamson 1970); **YELLOW CHIFFON** (Rudolph 1970).

### **PLICATAS:**

**KISSING CIRCLE** (Stevens 1989) is a clean, pure deep blue on white plic, reminiscent in pattern of some of the old classics such as ‘Charmed Circle’ (Keppel) or ‘Graphic Arts’ (Hager). A pleasing sight, after all the “cluttered” plics in the recent past. Moderate-sized flowers are displayed on short (30”) stalks with superb branching. Originally registered as a BB, it is a small-tall, and very graceful. **POINT MADE** (Innerst 1988) is a wild bicolor-plic, with buff-tan standards, lightly infused violet. The broad falls have a white base, but then decorated with a crazy-quilt patterning of rich deep purple, then edged in purple plicata edging. The wash, mottling, and streaking vary from flower to flower and makes for a surprise every time you visit it in the garden. **COLORWATCH** (Innerst 1987) is a burgundy on white plicata, reminiscent of the old classic ‘Port Wine’ (Schreiner), with the patterning so intense that the creamy patch in the center of the falls barely shows through. Adorned with light lace, too.

Two ‘Gigolo’ (Keppel) children from Keith Keppel were very exciting: **BEGUINE** (1989) has an amber to cream base, then patterned with dots and stippling in shades of deeper amber, rich roses, and deep salmon. A rust-orange beard just makes the color splash. **ABSTRACT ART** (1990) is smaller and more compact, with deeper rose-purple markings, wildly striated and painted on a golden-orange base. **CIRCUS JEWEL** (Nichols-Albers 1988) is a zany purple plic, directly from ‘Mystique’ (Ghio). The white ground is joyfully striped and stitched in a style reminiscent of old ‘Circus Stripes’ (Plough), but with a refined modern form. **SILHOUETTE** (Dunn 1989) is my favorite of several recent plicata releases from Bob and Mary. White ground is completely covered with an elegant wash of lavender-blue, with solid hafts and margins on the falls. **LIPSTICK LIES** (Blyth 1985) is an overlooked barely-plic, a chalky white self with a minimal number of tell-tale blue plic markings in the shoulders of the falls. Add to this a bright carrot-red beard, and you have a unique iris. Unquestionably a mecca for the hybridizer.

**CLASSICS:** **CASINO QUEEN** (Gibson 1971); **ODYSSEY** (Babson 1971); **SADDLE SHOES** (Plough 1971); **SUMMER SUNSHINE** (Gibson 1972).

### **VARIEGATAS, NEGLECTAS, AMOENAS, AND BICOLORS:**

**CRANBERRY CRUSH** (Aitken 1986) is one of the richest on the market. A tightly formed, intensely ruffled neglecta, completely underlaid with Ocean Spray cranberry. The midribs of the standards have a heavy infusion of the deep fall color. **MAGHAREE** (Blyth 1986) was planted next to ‘Neutron Dance’ (Blyth) and made a colorful contrast. A full-colored pink amoena like no other! Standards are a lavender-white, flushed rose. The broad, expansive falls are richest rose-pink, pulsating with color, then edged lighter. Bright tangerine-orange beards just add fuel to the fire. A strong competitor for ‘Neutron Dance’ is also a foreign entry: **ECHO DE FRANCE** (Anfosso 1984) is perhaps an even prettier, brighter color of full yellow in the falls. But the branching, bud count, and flower form aren’t quite as good as its Aussie cousin. Both are worthy additions to the garden.

The best variegata in recent years is **SMART ALECK** (Gatty 1988), a super-glorified version of its parent, the famous ‘Show Biz’ (Gatty). Tall and bold, and demands your attention, with old gold standards and velvet-smooth dark red falls, smooth at the hafts. A late bloomer that retains its color well in the Okie heat. Technically, **PURGATORY** (Moores 1987) could be considered a variegata. Orangish-brown standards top smooth red-brown falls, all finished with a leathery substance and a sizzling look. A bit of a finicky grower for me, but unique enough to put up with it. **MARIACHI MUSIC** (Maryott 1988) is a new bicolor/variegata that shows good promise. Standards are a solid tan and the falls a blending of reds and violets, then banded in tan. Very loud colors, and fun.

Two older bicolors are worth a review: **SWEET MUSSETTE** (Schreiner 1986) is a lovely bicolor I’ve never personally grown but think a lot of. I see other people have “discovered” it also, because it pulled down an AM this year! Soft harmony with gentle lavender-pink standards sitting atop richer rose-pink falls, with a color combo that never clashes. Outstanding branching and bud count, and great plant habits too. **SOONER SERENADE** (Shaver 1984), hybridized right here in Oklahoma, is a rich combo of claret-wine standards against cherry-black to wine falls with a distinctive banding of the standards’ color. Tell-tale haft marks belie its plicata background, around bronze beards, but are not offensive.

**CLASSICS:** **GUITAR COUNTRY** (Plough 1971); **ROAD FROM MADRID** (Peterson 1972); **SNOW CLOUD** (Schreiner 1970); **TROPICAL NIGHT** (Schreiner 1970).

### **POTPOURRI:**

The “King of Kolor”, George Shoop, continues to WOW us with dazzling, zestful color combos. **HAWAIIAN QUEEN** (1986) has deep peachy-buff standards, with hints of rose and orchid; falls are a lighter buff-salmon accented with brilliant orange-red beards. As with most of George’s things, the amount of ruffling and lace is not overstated; rather, a gentle waving on compact flowers. **ISLAND GIRL** (1985) is almost a reverse brown amoena, with deep rosy-tan standards blended lavender atop straw yellow falls, blended apricot. Again, bright tangerine beards. **HULA DANCER** (1985) has unusual colors with rosy-purple-brown standards and tannish-brown rosy falls, interrupted by bright orange beards. The growth habits from this entire bloodline are somewhat weaker than we like, but I’m mating them with more vigorous partners. The kaleidoscope of colors continues! **GOODBYE HEART** (Schreiner 1989) was one of the big surprises this year: Large flowers are a zestful bicoloring of warm peach standards and pink lemonade falls with shrimp-pink beards. Looks like two scoops of sherbet with a maraschino cherry in the middle. **VIDA** (Daling 1987) is an overlooked, colorful blend of ashes of roses and buff. The falls are several shades lighter, then embellished with a deeper band and then a golden halo at the edge of that band. Great breeding potential.

**CLASSICS:** LOUISE WATTS (Blocher 1971); PANTOMIME (Babson 1970); SABRE DANCE (O. Brown 1970).

### **SPACE AGE:**

I am convinced that the first TB white with true blue beards will come from Space Age breeding -- thank you, 'Sky Hooks' (Osborne)! DEITY (Byers 1988) is a broad, milky blue-white, with falls pure white with true blue horns protruding from blue beards. Magnificent form and substance. LOVEBIRD (Byers 1988), a 9-1-1 Award runnerup a couple of years ago, looked particularly good on an established clump this year in Blanchard. Truly diminutive proportions do not take away from the excitement of its pink plicata markings with carrot beards ending in horns. Simply charming, with excellent branching and bud count. Substance is notably better than most other pink plics, and lace adds to the daintiness. I'm hybridizing heavily with this one for BBs and, combined with SDBs, special Space Age IB plics. Another small-tall being used for smaller-flowered Space Agers is THORNBERRY (Robarts 1986), an overlooked rosy-lavender with coral-red adornments. Should be a natural with 'Soft Spoken' (Dyer, BB), but it rained on my crosses! HANDS UP (Byers 1988) is a glorified 'Sky Hooks' with cleaner yellow color – creamy falls have wild horns/spoons in violet. Nicely ruffled. I'm also sure yellows with true blue beards will appear from Space Age work – thank you, 'Sky Hooks'!

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

### **MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:**

Ken Fisher is now one of the nation's leading hybridizers of MTBs, and FROSTED VELVET (1989) has taken the country by storm. Finally, an improvement over its famous parent, 'Consummation' (Welch). Cool white standards with rich velvety-violet falls with a hairline edging of white and creamy white beards. For me, it has been a better grower than its parent. This Walther Cup winner has superb branching and bud count. The grand dame of MTBs, Mary Louise Dunderman, has another winner with CHERRY (1989). A perky, cherry-red plicata, with the standards almost a solid color. The falls have a neat plic edging of the cherry-red stitching. Completing the trio of dynamo hybridizers is Terry Varner from Ohio. I don't think he would be offended to be referred to as a protégé of Mary Louise. QUIET PLACE (1988) is a cool, simple gentian blue self with white beards and slightly lighter area in the falls. Beautiful form, and a fresh look in the garden.

**CLASSICS:** ROSEMARY'S DREAM (Dunderman 1982); WHITE CANARY (Roberts 1973).

### **BORDER BEARDED:**

ZINC PINK (Ensminger 1987) is very popular right now, winning the top AM this year. But frankly, it looks just like 'Pink Bubbles' (Hager) to me, but has inferior branching. FAUX PAS (Keppel 1990) is a nice addition to the great lineup of Keppel BB plicatas. A cute name – it has rather innocent standards in a muted peach. But then the falls explode in a fireworks display of deep roses, violets, and orchids, heavily sanding and filtering through to the base color. Typically superb proportions, with outstanding branching. The color combo in 'Miss Nellie' (Burch) is apparently very popular, but I don't particularly care for the gaudy look. Its child, CALICO CAT (Lankow 1989) is a bit more refined, but retaining the same excellent proportion and flower form of 'Miss Nellie'. Light yellow standards over lavender falls, yellow edges, and distinctive rose shoulder pads. I wish Carol had lived long enough to see her kitty rise to the top of the BB HM list this year. COPPER GLAZE (Hamblen 1986) has been a slow grower for me over the years, but it is still a fine addition to a class where true representatives are rare. Tight compact flowers are an antique gold-buff with cinnamon hafts that hint at its 'Picayune' (Keppel) lineage. The beards are a wonderful root beer to copper. Heavy substance, and tight symmetrical ruffles. Never goes out of class in height or flower size.

**CLASSICS:** EMBROIDERY (Keppel 1971); ORACLE (Ghio 1971); TANYA ELIZABETH (Wolff 1972).

### **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:**

The star in Blanchard this year as ASK ALMA (Lankow 1987). Wildly vigorous, solid plants produce multiple stalks with great branching and bud count. The flowers are very simple, but a very bright blend of coral-orange and pink with tangerine beards. Extremely popular nationwide, and the winner of a strong AM this year, second only to the great light yellow, 'Maui Moonlight' (Aitken). BROADWAY BABY (Gatty 1990) is well named, a sizzling, diminutive IB version of its parent, 'Broadway' (Keppel). Bronze to tan standards are solid with no plic markings; the falls are a warm

white, heavily banded a sensuous oxblood red. Outstanding wide form, and lightly ruffled. Another exciting plicata is **FIDDLE FADDLE** (Hager 1989), similar in color and pattern to its dwarf parent, 'Pepper Mill' (Hager): A light yellow ground plic, heavily peppered and striped in chocolate. An overlooked plicata is **BLUE CALICO** (C. Palmer 1986), a pure blue on white plic with excellent form and proportion. The banding is the bluest of the blue IB plics I've seen thusfar. **NECTAR** (Keppel 1990) is from plicata breeding also, but appears as a nectarine-yellow blend with no markings to the eye. Classy form. Bright orange beards tipped red. Two Aussies complete the category this year. They're sibs, but totally different from each other, and a lot of fun: **POSH** (Blyth 1987) is an insanely vigorous apricot-salmon blend with gorgeous deep orange beards. **STRUM** (Blyth 1987) is a yellow amoena, but with the same screaming beards. Both are sufficiently wide, with simplistic form and finish to allow the eye to concentrate on the color combos.

**CLASSICS:** **RUBY CHIMES** (A. Brown 1972); **SPACE CADET** (Moldovan 1970); **SWEETIE** (Warburton 1971).

### **STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:**

The early success of **SERENITY PRAYER** (me, 1989) has been most gratifying. I'm getting great reports from all over the country, and we're now hearing that it's a reliable repeat bloomer and rebloomer. One of Paul Black's releases from the same year is similar in background but distinctive enough from 'Serenity Prayer' that they really shouldn't be compared: **SIGH** (1989) is a magnificent work of art, with cool icy white flowers blessed with elegant soft blue beards. Needless to say, we're trying to mate the two! 'Sigh' has excellent form and substance supreme, with no other coloration to distract from the glacial effect.

A cute new 'Chubby Cheeks' kid released this year, **INKY DINKY** (Black 1991), is like a mini-version of the TB, 'Circus Stripes' (Plough), but with tight, compact dwarf form and more consistent plicata striations. A double shot of 'Chubby Cheeks' produced **MUPPET MADNESS** (Black 1991). The standards are almost completely infiltrated with a rich, bold purple from the red side. The falls have a little bit of white peeking through, but are banded in a solid red-purple, then the color eeks out onto the center of the falls, seeking the deep purple beards. This is the same cross that produced true luminatas which you'll be seeing soon. Like, right now: **TROUBADOUR'S SONG** (Black 1991) is surely the strangest of the lot, and I love it. The standards are a white base, but almost completely infused in orchid-lavender and tan, and a tan halo. The falls are basically the same pattern, but with slightly deeper colors and more of a white halo. Follow the halo up to the shoulders and beard area, and there you have it --- loooominata! Make it in the shape of 'Chubby Cheeks' and you have a wonderful addition to the rare luminatas. A couple of lemon yellows from Cleo Palmer were most impressive this year: **SENSATIONAL** (1990) is a broad, shapely blending of lemon yellow, with the color gradually lightening to near white in the midribs of the standards and in the upper part of the falls around the beards. Superb substance and light ruffling. **SPANISH EMPIRE** (1990) is a sib, very similar in color and pattern, but has even a touch of lace. Both are very strong growers.

**PUMPIN' IRON** (Black 1990) is a butch, bold color study in rich dark tones, with vibrant red-black standards over falls which hold an even deeper black cherry spot, surrounded by a glow of rich magenta purple edging. Remindful of a much-improved, modern 'Bloodspot' (Craig). No steroids here – just a good solid, disciplined bloodline. Its papa, **FORTE** (Black 1987) continues to impress me, and its smaller flowers should be a valuable tool in SDB breeding. Sharp, perky colors, with vibrant deep orchid standards and velveteen blackish-red falls, highlighted with pansy purple beards. An excellent garden subject, with outstanding plant habits it passes on to its children. One of Paul's that has been overlooked was one of my AM votes for the year: **MARY'S LAMB** (1987), smaller and petite in stature, it is a pert white with warm shoulders of creamy yellow, ruffled, and the gentle pale violet-blue beards in harmony with the mood created. This distant cousin of 'Serenity Prayer' has perfect proportions, with a mound of bloom on a vigorous plant, leaving plenty of increase for next year.

An SDB that sneaked up on me was **SPLIT DECISION** (Hobbs 1989), an unusual amoena (all too rare in SDBs, and I'm not sure why) with pure white standards hovering over cool violet-blue falls which are then edged in a fine halo of white, with cream beards. The color in the falls appears to be stroked onto the white base with an artist's brush, but the effect is a solid color nonetheless. Slender delicate stalks have 1 to 2 branches, and 2 to 4 buds. A Hager SDB that has been overlooked by the judges thusfar is **RUSTY DUSTY** (1988), a well-named, bronzy rust-brown plicata on full yellow ground, with the falls an even deeper coloring. A notably better performer and increaser than some of the brown plic SDBs released over the years. Another SDB whose name well describes its appearance is **OH JAY** (Lankow 1988), a compact colorful saffron yellow that blends into light orange (juice), marked with bold orange beards. Very vigorous, but my only complaint is that the foliage (this year) was very messy, easily leafspotting and "burning" on the edges from excess moisture. Hopefully it won't do that again.

And lastly, a nice breeding partner for Barry Blyth's blue-bearded pinks such as 'Kandi Moon' is **PINK PANTHER** (Willott 1988), a funky pale pink, warmed at the hafts with ambers shoulders, and then zipped up with a pale to light blue

beard. I think I would have saved such a fun name for the next generation, or whenever the pinks become a little more screaming, with bold indigo blue beards howling from the heart. But we get the idea anyhow. The genes are there, and it's fun tomcatting around with these color combos!

**CLASSICS:** BANBURY RUFFLES (Reath 1970); DEMON (Hager 1972); MYRA'S CHILD (Greenlee 1971); RANGERETTE (Hamblen 1971); WOW (A. Brown 1970).

### **MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED**

**SPOT OF TEA** (Black 1989) is a favorite: A warm honey brown with a dainty spot of deeper (tea) brown in the center of the falls. Magnificent proportions at the upper part of the height limits but always in class, with dainty flowers that are shapely and look like the name. **CINNAMON APPLES** (Black 1990) has small, fat little flowers with golden-tan standards (cinnamon) and smooth yummy red-brown falls (yep, apples), then a narrow edge of gold (brown sugar?). Backup bud in the terminal on the 5" stalks gives an extended bloom and a mound of color. A nice contrast between the 2 deeper-toned dwarfs would be **DAISY FRESH** (Willott 1988), a wide, warm white with yellow midribs in the standards and a spot (glow) of yellow in the falls. It is from SDB breeding, and is admittedly at the top of the MDB class, but it is a lovely fresh face with good proportions with tight, compact flowers and a well extended season of bloom in the established clumps. **CANDY FLUFF** (L. Miller 1988) is a popular little light pink, in a color where worthy additions to the class are still very few and far between. Very vigorous, with nice shorter foliage here. The flowers are lightly ruffled and have a slightly deeper pink beard.

**CLASSICS:** BUTTERCUP CHARM (A. Brown 1970); PURPLE SIDEBURNS (Kavan 1972); THREE CHERRIES (Hager 1971).

### **ARILBREDS**

Not sure where I'm going with these. I have just recently started trying to grow a handful here, after the disappointment of more than a few years in a row of losses of bloom and plants to notorious Okie late freezes, too much rain, and even scorch! Some of my old friends that bring back fond memories, such as **ESTHER, THE QUEEN** (Hunt 1968) and its child, **MARTHA MIA** (Hunt 1975) were added again, and I'm trying my hand at the finicky color-siren, **OYEZ** (C.G. White 1938). I'm now growing about a dozen, and protect them in the winter with a straw mulch (as I do with all my Louisianas and daylilies), leaving it on as late as possible in the spring to protect against a sudden unwelcomed visitor blasting in from the North.

The Shockey introductions seem to do very well here and have been more hardy than many others. And he sends out the prettiest plants you've ever seen. The star this year was **PERSIAN PADISHAH** (Shockey 1988), a riot of color on shorter stalks (18 to 20"), with large globular tapestry done in royal shades of rose and purple (falls deeper than the standards somewhat), then a bold announcement of a huge black signal holding the falls hostage. Extremely vigorous, with my only complaint being that it nearly bloomed itself out. Also commanding, but with not such intensity in color, was **SYRIAN PRINCESS** (Shockey 1988), a bit taller, with near-white standards, unmarked, and regal beige falls with an exotic heart-shaped deep brown (near black) signal implanted on the falls. **MAROON ELF** (Rich 1983) is a rampant arilbred-median in the size and height of an SDB. It is a rich maroon velvet with a silk overlay in the falls. The saturation is so deep, you can barely view the diffused black signal, almost incognito, on the falls. And I've added **LOUDMOUTH** (Rich 1970) once again to give it some company – still my favorite arilbred-median, after all these years.

### **LOUISIANAS**

It was such an important, successful year for me that a significant part of this review is being devoted to sharing what all happened here with the Louisiana irises. I can't even remember when I began growing them, but my first order was to Joe Ghio about 15 years ago, and things just haven't been the same in Blanchard ever since. Ironically, I'm in the process of adding some of those first acquisitions to my collection again, in limited quantities for historical and sentimental reasons. And there just may be some serious "backtracking" done in hybridizing too, especially with some of the Arny classics. After all these years, yet this was my first year to attempt to do any serious hybridizing with Louisianas. Two factors caused me to take the plunge: (1) The unabashed enthusiasm and joy exhibited by my friend, Farron Campbell, of Garland, Texas, for Louisianas, and the wisdom this relative "newcomer" has shared with me; and (2) the incredible success story of John Taylor's work in Dural, New South Wales, Australia.

But for now, we'll start in Lafayette, with the grand Fiftieth Anniversary celebration of the Society for Louisiana Irises (SLI), and then head back home to Oklahoma. **PRALINE FESTIVAL** (Haymon 1992) was entered in the seedling class at the show and walked away with top honors (seedling #12-84-2). It is a well-branched, double-socketed yummy confection in caramel honey to tan, with entrancing deeper texture veining shot throughout the flower. Substance supreme, with an unusual leathery texture. Beautiful indoors under artificial lights or outdoors in full sun. A welcome addition to a limited color class. Dorman's **EMPRESS JOSEPHINE** (1990) has already been reviewed as a runnerup to the L'Elegante Award, and its sib, **GRACE DUHON** (1988) is a rich near-black that continues to impress. Once decent distribution has been achieved, their popularity outside the home region will grow. Two more Haymon releases are particularly meritorious for both their show stalk branching and their qualities that make them excellent garden irises: **TERESA MARGARET** (1988) is a tall, stately pure light yellow from Arny bloodlines. All segments, including the style arms, are lightly veined in green, giving a mint fresh look to the blossoms. Impeccable substance and endurance. **MARIE DOLORES** (1988), a pure white on tall 40" stalks, is a fine tribute to its *I. giganticaerulea* heritage. Waxen blossoms are gently ruffled and contrasted with a distinct sharp orange signal, neatly positioned against the snowy backdrop. It has proven to be dependable and healthy away from home, too.

The season was supposedly an early one in south Louisiana, and those in charge of doing the worrying were doing their share, fearing there would be "nothing for the show". They had one of the largest in their 50-year history, and **EXQUISITE LADY** (Owen 1987) stole many a heart, sweeping Best of Show honors. A magnificent, alluring medium lavender-blue, with each petal haloed in an exquisite silvery white. Nothing like it, and a visionary of the wondrous things we have to look forward to in Louisianas. As a child of 'Clara Goula' and 'Mrs. Ira Nelson' (Arny), a fitting way to pay tribute to the first 50 years of Louisianas and welcome the next 50! Since I'm interested in hybridizing pinks, my eyes were drawn to **FELICIANA HILLS** (Pat O'Connor, registered in 1987, but not formally introduced yet). This is a pristine pink with average branching and bud count, but in a color we've not seen before in pink Louisianas. Good substance and carrying power. **LAURA LOUISE** (Mertzweiller-Ostheimer 1990) is one of the kids from the famous "Joe's Pots" from the SLI auctions donated by Joe Mertzweiller each spring. This is a rich pulsating super-yellow, with an underglow of orange rather than the more traditional russet. The clean color presentation is decorated with rich yellow-orange signals. One of the brightest yellows yet.

A trip to the Bois d'Arc Gardens of Ed and Rusty Ostheimer in deep south Louisiana (just outside of Houma) introduced us to the largest planting of named Louisianas in the United States. Although past peak, there was still plenty of good bloom. Far on one of the back rows of the 5-acre spread, I discovered a small clump of rare, old **LOUISIANA FASCINATION** (Arny 1963), a soft pure dawn pink, with stalks holding 3 open at once in an elegant fashion. What a relief to see that such a classic, feared extinct, still exists and is in good hands. My goal is to transmit that color to a flower with more modern form and substance. A trio from Arkansas was exceptional here: **NOBLE MOMENT** (Morgan 1987) was displayed in huge, floriferous clumps, packed with dozens of shapely blooms in a soft, true medium blue-lavender, with harmonious yellow dagger signals. A vision of good health and productivity. Shorter of stature, but not lacking in the least in personality, is **SEA KNIGHT** (Morgan 1989), a lustrous deep spectrum blue self, with absolutely no other colors present, except for a hint of an orange line signal peeking from the heart. Intense saturation of color, with significant substance to carry it out. An impressive presence of chartreuse-green makes **UPBEAT** (Rowland 1989) unique – probably the greenest Louisiana on the market. Tall and stately stalks from its parent, 'Ila Nunn' (Arny).

Back home, and where to begin, unless it would be with the oldest and then the newest. **BLACK WIDOW** (MacMillan 1953) is rather infamous for its finicky growth habits, but for me this year, it performed well and put on a magnificent display of spidery blossoms in soot black. It has renewed my interest in a modern, more vigorous spider. **MEDORA WILSON** (Granger 1972) is a marvelous, overlooked light pink, with the standards a tone lighter than the falls. It has a nice shape and very good substance for its age. It is one of the principal cultivars I'm using in my pink line. Several newer pinks were most impressive, and there appears to be 2 main approaches to improvement. The hardy, Arkansas line, mainly originating with works such as Frank Chowning's 'This I Love', has been greatly expanded, with varying degrees of color, all with tight, compact form, and generally shorter stalks. Each is extremely vigorous and a compact grower: **WAVERLY PINK** (Lineberger 1989) was the big surprise. A dainty rosy mauve-pink, with unique coloring and a small greenish-yellow signal. Lightly ruffled. From unknown parents, but surely from the Chowning bloodline. Henry Rowlan has produced 2 pristine pink color gems that were extremely popular: **PINK POETRY** (1988) is a rich medium shell pink from 'Bryce Leigh' (Chowning), with compact tidy flowers with a small yellow steeple signal. **TWIRLING BALLERINA** (1988) is from different breeding, yet is very similar in style, flower size, and height of stalk to 'Pink Poetry'. A light, airy, true shell pink, sunfast, and then decorated with the most unusual yellow star-signals on all 6 petals, but then carefully outlined in deep cardinal red like an eyeliner – a very rare phenomenon that traces all the way back to 'Lockett's Luck'. The compact clumping of these 3 varieties is a blessing, after chasing so many of the "crawlers" all over the garden, merrily mixing with their neighbors to each side! The other approach to pinks, from the tall stately large-flowered

*I. giganticaerulea* bloodlines, has produced elegant, larger, more heavily ruffled varieties. **GERRY MARSTELLAR** (Raabe 1988) is the finest example, and is covered in the Aussie review. **SCREEN GEM** (Arny 1983) is the best of a

long line of pinks from Charlie, but hasn't received the recognition it deserves: A huge, rounded true mid-pink ('Pink Taffeta' (Rudolph) pink) with a large, somewhat diffused yellow signal. The best substance ever, and a main player in my pink breeding. John Taylor has already released several non-pink introductions directly from 'Screen Gem', in a wide array of colors, and I can't wait to see what the first pink release will look like!

The blues were very blue this year in Blanchard, and are the other main area in which I intend to work. The rich 'Blue Shield' (Davis) style of spectrum blue found in **SEA KNIGHT** (Morgan 1989) was just as nice for us as it was in south Louisiana. **DELTA DOVE** (Dunn 1985) is the softest of aqua blues in a haunting shade that nearly approaches turquoise, then overlaid with an almost-eerie webbing of deeper texture veins. **BLUEBONNET SUE** (Chenoweth 1987), a child of the great 'Clara Goula', is a tastefully ruffled offering in a clear bluebird blue that truly is the color of Texas bluebonnets. Somewhat lower bud count than some of the others, but displayed on gently S-curved show stalks, opening 2 to 3 simultaneously. **ICE ANGEL** (Faggard 1991) is a new, large-flowered glacial white with captivating undertones of icy blue. A mammoth cultivar in all respects, with huge flowers and plants that measured over a foot long when I dug and replanted them this September. My favorite blue remains **BELLEVUE COQUETTE** (Bertinot 1984), an effervescent *giganticaerulea*, again from 'Clara Goula', with exquisite, translucent rippling ruffles. Tall, noble stalks carry 4 well-spaced branches and terminal, with double sockets.

Charlie Arny is probably best known for his larger, more dominating introductions such as 'Illa Nunn' or 'Clara Goula'. You'll find a recent release of his to be a pleasant surprise: **GEISHA EYES** (1990) is a petite jewel in rich blue-violet, but then has distinct, large, deep yellow spear signals irregularly imprinted on all 6 of the petals. The flower form is totally flat and circular, which makes the "eyes" even more prominent – just like they're staring at you (and following you as you walk through the garden!). Registered at 30", for me it is more of a true patio, with *I. brevicaulis* branching on thin, graceful 16" stalks, perfectly proportioned with the diminutive effect. It inherited the vigor and stamina of its mother, 'Acadian Miss'. Two other patios to intermediates held their own with the big boys this year. **CHEERRY CUP** (Morgan 1989) is one of the best, purest, brightest (indeed) cherry reds since the release of its parent, the great should've-won-the-Debaillon, 'F.A.C. McCulla' (Arny). Intense, rich color with a small yellow line signal, almost completely hidden by extended, cherry-red style arms. It's whimsical, with its white anthers peeking out from underneath the stark contrast of the red style arms. **HEAVENLY GLOW** (Morgan 1989) is unique to anything on the market. Compact, tightly constructed flowers are a magnificent blending of copper, russet, to burnt orange. It has the traditional yellow signals, but the style arms are an enchanting green (thus the glow) – the greenest saturation of anything seen in Louisianas.

At the opposite end of the totem pole are 3 that stood above the others and demanded your undivided attention: **JERI** (Bertinot 1985) is the most famous of Neil's releases to date, finishing #2 on the HMs in 1990. A sultry, glowing jet black with tiny, almost nonexistent yellow signals that do not interrupt the color scheme. It inherited its color saturation from the great 'Full Eclipse' (Hager), but has larger, more open flowers, with such fullness of form that the intensity of color is even more predominant. Slender, graceful, almost willowy stalks (like 'Full Eclipse') are deceptively strong enough to support 3, 4, and even 5 flowers open at once. Resistant to waterspotting, it makes for a grand show iris, and it is winning its share. It has pulled Best of Show honors at the SLI Show in Lafayette before, and in Arkansas this year for SLI President, Henry Rowlan. **CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE** (Dunn 1989) had not bloomed for me before, and I was shocked. One of the richest true magentas ever seen, on a flat flower with almost no ruffling – just a gentle waving to enhance its outstanding shape and substance. The color literally pulsates across the garden. One of Mary's best releases. And then there's **HURRICANE PARTY** (Haymon 1988), the king of the garden. It thinks it's a tetraploid, with lush, vigorous monster-plants in a magnificent blue-green. Husky is an understatement. The form even resembles that of a tetraploid, with thick substance reminiscent of the Mertzweiller "Professors". Bold 'Ann Chowning' signals in yellow are juxtaposed against the velvet pile in full violet. Although it is a self, I see a hint of a lighter band on the falls.

The Debaillon for me this year was a tossup between two "Deltas" from Mary Dunn. I have already praised 'Delta Dove', but the flip of the coin for my vote went to **DELTA DAWN** (1983), for many years one of my favorite offerings from Mary. Most unique, and perfectly named, with a calm, romantic blend of dawn colors of pink, apricot, honey, amber, and mauve pastels (I believe they call it "rosewood"). It is a self rather than a mottled blend, and there aren't even any texture veins to disrupt the reverent mood. Tall, strong stalks carry 4 perfectly placed and spaced branches, with double sockets. Mary had 2 other representatives in my garden that were especially noteworthy: **WINE COUNTRY** (1988) has somewhat smaller flowers in a rich, shining wine, with ruffles so deep and heavy that they were pleated. Proportionate shorter stalks (30") and somewhat close branching, but well spaced, and the flowers (for the most part) opened properly in the branch positions. **RUE ROYALE** (1986) is an unusual saffron yellow, very rare and unlike the more traditional burnished golden yellow of 'President Hedley' (Mertzweiller). Very vigorous, and although a late bloomer in the season, the color retained its saturation and didn't bleach out to a gross albino, like so many of the yellows do, unfortunately. Simple flowers with good shape and just a bit of waving and ruffling – a nice effect.

And 2 from Dorman Haymon complete the diploid portion of this review: **WAKE-UP SUSIE** (1988) was a favorite with garden visitors. For me, smaller flowered and shorter than its 40" registered height, it was a cute flat blue-lavender with

golden yellow signals. She's been getting into Lockett's Luck's make-up case, because the signals are edged in that tell-tale eyeliner in dark mascara (violet). Most distinctive against the soft colors of the falls. And the winner for the most "beat-'em-over-the-head" vigor must surely go to **GABRIEL'S LOVE** (1988). An instant clump, but also rewards you with show stalks a-plenty, with multiple flowers in a ruffled, clean light lavender, accented with brilliant gold dagger-shaped signals – which sometimes end with a fork! Reasonably compact plants are a relief, but you'll have to divide the clumps often! Share with a friend.

Ah, the tetraploids....we're finally getting somewhere. And now we've got a couple of guys helping Joe's cause, with the delicate, dangerous process of chemically converting diploids to tetraploidy. We should see major breakthroughs in the advancement of this avenue of Louisiana breeding in just a few years, with fresh, diverse bloodlines added to the established gene pool. I finally got to see the infamous **SAUTERNE** (Durio 1982) – the real one – but not at my place....My first attempt at growing this color breakthrough ultimately ended in the disheartening, maddening revelation that I had been growing a purple tet rogue – and an ugly one at that!! The real thing is a magnificent, elegant bitone effect with lavender standards and broad light yellow falls, with all segments eloquently overlaid with soft lavender texture veining. Substance supreme. It's hard to imagine that this variety has now been on the market for a decade, and that such colors could come from straight purple tet breeding. The fascination of hybridizing – you never know what's hiding in them-there genes!!

Another impressive departure of color is **SAMURAI WISH** (Chenoweth 1987), one of the only true bicolors introduced thusfar in the tetraploids, with flat, heavily substanced flowers in a colorful combo of amber standards against oxblood red falls. The contrast is pulled together with an intense saturation of red in the standards' midribs. Two Mertzweiller tets from 'Professor Ike' (Mertzweiller) represent the careful, dedicated foundation work which has been laid for our future by Joe: **PROFESSOR ELLIS** (1987) is a gigantic, full-blown, royal blue-violet, with a large, distinct greenish-yellow signal. Lightly ruffled, with the ultimate in substance and luster. Thick, strong show stalks emerge from healthy, vigorous blue-green foliage. **PROFESSOR JIM** (1987) has all the same fine attributes we now expect with tetraploids, but presented in a bold red with velvet pile, the standards only a hint lighter in intensity.

**CLASSICS:** **AMBER GODDESS** (Arny 1963); **BLUE SHIELD** (Davis 1966); **DELTA KING** (Hager 1968);  
**DENE** (Arny 1969); **G.W. HOLLEYMAN** (Holleyman 1963); **IRA S. NELSON** (Arny 1969).

## **AUSTRALIAN LOUISIANAS**

The early collectors from south Louisiana, those who were the founding fathers of the Society for Louisiana Irises some 50 years ago, would be shocked and amazed to see how far their wonders of the bayou have traveled in such a short time. Today, the popularity and acceptance of the Louisiana iris in Australia even surpasses the interest and awards in the United States. Several hybridizers Down Under are making great strides in stretching the limits of Louisianas and exploring new patterns and colors.

We had a splendid bloom season at "Bayou North" in Blanchard this year. Generous spring rains that ruined the biggest portion of the Tall Bearded season made up for the disappointment by rewarding us with exceptional bloom 3 weeks later in the Louisianas. It was the best bloom I've experienced in my 15-plus years of growing Louisianas. This article features the significant impact our counterparts Down Under have contributed to the evolution of Louisianas. Virtually every Aussie variety that bloomed will be reviewed here. The extensive review of the Taylor cultivars will be listed alphabetically.

My own exposure to Australian Louisianas is not new. In 1980, I had the privilege to introduce 2 diploids for Bob Raabe from New South Wales: **E.C. EVERINGHAM**, a full blue-violet with exceptional form and substance; and **URALBA GOLD**, an intriguing straw yellow, completely enveloped in an elaborate network of intricate violet texture webbing. Both varieties went on to win Honorable Mentions from the American Iris Society. Later in the decade, Melrose Gardens in California introduced 3 more Raabe creations, including a tetraploid. One of the most popular of Bob's recent releases via Melrose is quickly becoming one of the all-time classics in blue: **SINFONIETTA** (1987). From Raabe's 'Bethany Douglas' (a "Clyde Redmond" kid) crossed with a seedling involving 'Clara Goula' and 'Gatewood Princess' (Goula), we have a sparkling bluebird (gentian) blue in medium tones with a clearness of tone incomparable in bearded irises. Heavy scalloped ruffling is the gift of 'Clara Goula' and the virtually indestructible plant habits from a double shot of 'Clyde Redmond' (a.k.a., "The Weed"?!). **GERRY MARSTELLER** (Raabe 1988) is a voluptuous, sensuous mallow pink with artistic ruffles and pleats marking a suggestion of a lighter cream-pink at petal's edge. Superb plant habits, with strong increase all too rare in the pink class. This, with Charlie Arny's 'Screen Gem', is the focal point of my pink breeding. From a cross of 2 earlier Raabe Australian releases, 'Uralba Mist' X 'Trionfo'.

Bob has made a major contribution to tetraploids with the release of **COORABELL**, introduced by Melrose in 1988, also. I consider this the best of the dark tets on the market today, a royal violet near-black with a shimmering satin sheen and bold gold signal pattern. It possesses the best form of the lot, in that it consistently opens properly and fully, and the falls “unfurl” to open to their flat shape rather than curling and popping back up – a common occurrence in tetraploid flowers due to their extremely heavy substance. This is Mertzweiller’s ‘Professor Ike’ intensified three-fold, from ‘Professor Ike’ X ‘Magistral’, a Raabe registration from ‘Professor Ike’ selfed! Unbelievable that neither of these releases garnered enough votes this year to win an Honorable Mention!

The most successful and productive hybridizer from Australia has been John Taylor. He and his brother-in-law, Graeme Grosvenor, operate Rainbow Ridge Nursery in Dural, New South Wales, where the largest collection of Louisiana irises in the world can be found. In addition to featuring John’s Louisiana releases, Rainbow Ridge introduces and markets for other hybridizers from Australia. Some impressive work is being done, so before beginning the Taylor exposé, I want to praise 2 of the most noteworthy releases from the other folks:

**OUR PARRIS**, a 1990 offering from Craig Carroll of Baulkham Hills, New South Wales, is like nothing else on the market, and one of my very favorites of all. It is an indescribable color, with all the difficulty of producing an accurate description as Mary Dunn’s ‘Delta Dawn’. In Oklahoma, the coloring is a smooth velveteen self somewhere in the neighborhood of peach, dusty pink, buff, rosewood, tan, and mauve. Take a dab of each of those colors, put them in a blender for 5 minutes and then pour it out. Whatever the mix of all those colors becomes is as close as I can describe it – I’ve found it in no color chart. A simplified description might be a “peach ‘Valera’” (Arny). Surely an impossibility to accurately capture in color on film, and even the Rainbow Ridge catalog shot doesn’t do it justice. A first-year plant produced one 37” stalk with 4 branches plus terminal, with 4 healthy increases. The flower form is similar to the airy look of ‘Valera’ (but fuller), perfectly positioned on a graceful modified zigzag stalk with double sockets up and down, and a total of 10 buds. It opens multiple blooms simultaneously for a grand show stalk, yet has sufficient buds for 3 full cycles of well timed bloom, making it a superior garden iris. Imagine how this will perform on an established clump! The flowers open well and flatten out to expose the vibrant color to its fullest. From a complex pedigree with a proverbial melting pot in its background, including ‘Marie Caillet’ (Conger, a tall grand *I. giganticaerulea*), ‘Gypsy Moon’ (Granger, a delicate purple texture veining on yellow), and ‘Myra Arny’ (Arny, a graceful, airy pink amoena). A magnificent mix! It has already won an Australasian Award of Merit. **SOFT LAUGHTER** is also from a complex lineage involving such classics as ‘Charlie’s Michele’, hybridized by Janet Hutchinson from Pymble, New South Wales. Released by Rainbow Ridge in 1990 also, this is a warm cream (opening cream and not light yellow initially), full and broad with light ruffling and an outpouring of green and gold texture veining from the heart, extending from the signal area onto a significant amount of the falls. Cream style arms are in harmony with the ambiance of the flower. Plant habits and quality of stalks are beyond reproach. We hope to see more from these 2 talented hybridizers in the near future.

The work of John Taylor is an incredible success story. The Australasian Dykes Medal was born in the mid-1980s, and since its inception, John Taylor has proceeded to win the prestigious award in 4 of the 6 years. John has shown us just what can happen – even on the diploid level of work – if you dedicate yourself to fully exploring the possibilities that Mother Nature has to offer in a species whose native habitat is half-a-world away. He has the largest seedling patch devoted to Louisiana irises in the world – literally – blooming thousands of seedlings each year. He has several introductions annually, yet I don’t see how he is even able to narrow it down to the ones that do make the final cut for release. We exchange plants each year, and I grow nearly all his releases. I have now bloomed virtually the entire lot, and can personally testify that this group is not only worthy, their uniqueness and quality have launched diploid hybridizing of Louisianas onto a whole new plateau! We haven’t discussed if he is tackling the challenge of tetraploids. If he is, look out! John started with the best; his lines are almost exclusively the result of intensive hybridization of the bloodlines of the most famous of American hybridizers, the master Charles Arny, Jr., from Lafayette, Louisiana.

**ALL AGAZE** (Taylor 1990): Red times white equals pink, right? In Louisiana breeding, that’s not usually what happens, but this child of ‘Mighty Rich’ (Arny) X ‘Clara Goula’ is a luscious salmon pink bitone, heavily ruffled with the classical ‘Clara Goula’ form. A second-year clump produced 4 stalks at 42” with 18 increases. Each stalk had 4 well-spaced branches plus terminal and 6-8 buds. A color combination never before seen in Louisianas. The winner of the Contemporary Award, given to the Best New Iris seen (of any class), goes to **APOLLO’S SONG** (Taylor 1991). See the Awards Section of this edition of Contemporary Views. One of the strangest this year was **ART WORLD** (Taylor 1988), a hauntingly beautiful mauve pink, with the standards a shade lighter and more of a lavender influence. Then, all 6 petals have a distinct silver halo surrounding them – another totally unique color combination and one of my favorites. The falls have a small diffused sunburst signal pattern in yellow. Smaller, compact flowers reminiscent of ‘This I Love’ (Chowning), but with a gentle waving and fluting of the rounded, flat petals. Stalks were only 20” above small grassy foliage, making a compact clump. From ‘Uptown’ X ‘Helen Naish’ (Taylor).

An older release, but new to me, was **CAMMERAY** (Taylor 1987). A first-year plant produced one 36” stalk with well-spaced branching at 3 positions plus terminal and 5 increases. A superb, expanded, flat, sparkling light to medium blue

with just a suggestion of lavender undertones, especially in the style arms. The signal pattern is a tiny, exact "V" in yellow. Fresh and clean, with superior substance and lightly waved parts. From 'Bit of Blue' (Arny) X 'Clara Goula'. One of John's first releases still remains one of his most exciting: **C'EST SI BON** (1984) is an outrageous extrovert with huge flowers of spectrum violet, with the world's largest spray pattern of white filtering from the signals down almost to the very base of the falls. A fine halo of white brings out the finely picoteed edges, as if an artist had taken the shears and carefully, precisely nicked the falls all around (similar to the effect from 'Dr. Dorman', a release in the '70s from Sidney Conger). Take all this and put it on 34" stalks with 4 open at once. Kazaam! A dazzling specimen, bold but elegant in its own way. A second-year clump produced 5 stalks with 4 branches plus terminal. From a great parent, 'Freddie Boy' (Mertzweiller), crossed with an old Holleyman *I. giganticaerulea* from the '50s, 'Royal Lady'. This may be the beginning of a plicata pattern in Louisianas, as Joe Ghio discovered in his early work with Pacific Coast Natives.

Choosing the best of the new yellows for 1991 was difficult, but the nod went to **APOLLO'S SONG** for overall quality and performance. The most beautiful individual flower, though, belongs to **CLASSICAL NOTE** (Taylor 1991). A first-year planting produced one tall 36" stalk, gracefully S-curved with 3 branches plus terminal, with 7 increases remaining. It's so good to see strong stalks and vigorous plant habits in the yellows now. Here, it was a clean canary yellow, deeper than 'Apollo's Song' and richer than the Rainbow Ridge plate in their catalog – almost as deep as 'Koorawatha' (Taylor). Substance like leather, with heavier ruffling than 'Apollo's Song', and more perfectly placed on the flower than 'Koorawatha'. This outstanding, sunfast yellow will be a classic, indeed, and is the product of two Australasian Dykes Medalists, 'Koorawatha' X 'Helen Naish'. **DANZA** (Taylor 1989) was a favorite with the visitors. Modest-sized flowers on 32" stalks are like carved wax, in a warm white with a diffused pattern of green making up the signals. Tight, compact flowers are perfectly round and heavily ruffled, with such thick substance that they take 2 full days to fully open. Looks great in the bright Okie sun, but on those rare cool, cloudy days, the presence of green illuminates from the heart. The Aussies consider this one of John's best creations, and we agree. From 'Valera' X 'Helen Naish'.

Another bizarre color combination that I found intriguing was **DAWN PLANET** (Taylor 1990). Well named, it is a mysterious bitone to bicolor, with light pink standards contrasted by captivating rose-pink falls. But then the entire flower is hazed with smoke. No-no, not dirty or muddy. There's nothing like it on the market, and it kept drawing me closer. An unusual cross of an Arny blue, 'Secret Spell', with John's Dykes classic, 'Koorawatha'. Who would ever dream that, from 2 yellows ('Koorawatha' X 'Lucile Holley', Arny), you would get **DAZZLING STAR** (Taylor 1988)? Considered by Rainbow Ridge to be the top release for that year, it has already made its presence known Down Under, having already won an Australasian Award of Merit. A captivating blending of magenta and pink, then unashamedly blotched and blended with a creamy yellow. All petals are then haloed in cream. The focal point is the prominent yellow star-signals on all 6 petals. Outstanding plants produce consistent show stalks.

The pre-introductory publicity for **DURAL WHITE BUTTERFLY** (Taylor 1990) was intense, and the premiere introduction for that year went on to break all sales records for a new introduction from Rainbow Ridge. Those Aussies know a good thing when they see it – this sib to 'Apollo's Song' ('Screen Gem' X 'Helen Naish') is a tall, magnificent, large-flowered pure white. It is a blinding white, even clearer than 'Helen Naish', yet pure and pristine with its airy form and heavy ruffles on classic flat flowers. We anticipate this one to be yet another to go all the way for John Taylor. Splendid plant habits, with strong stalks approaching 4' tall, giving 4 branches held away from the stem, plus terminal and backup buds. **FINE WARRIOR** (Taylor 1991) is a strange flat, grayed orange to rust-ran that grows on you. Some would say an improved 'Valera', but they're really too different to compare. A first-year plant produced a mammoth, telephone pole stalk 40" tall with a graceful zigzag of 4 branches and terminal. The flowers are flat and round, lightly ruffled and just a hint of a halo. Each of the 6 petals had a distinct V-shaped yellow signal. It reminded me of a toned-down, masculine 'Dazzling Star'. Alas, one of the few new ones that has thusfar been a poor grower, but worth the effort. Strange bloodlines: (A blue 'Freddie Boy' (Mertzweiller) seedling X 'Grace Scott' (Arny)) X 'Pintharuka'. 'Pintharuka' is a Taylor 1989 yellow from 'Screen Gem X 'Helen Naish'! **FLIGHT OF FANTASY** (Taylor 1989) is unlike anything else I've seen from Taylor. Here it was so different from the description that I questioned whether or not Marie Caillet and I had the real thing. I've received another start of it from Australia, plus imported another from a grower in California, so we'll see next spring. For us, it bloomed a genteel white to sky blue, with butterfly texture veining throughout the flower, but intensified in the falls. The texture was an ethereal, creped look, so delicate that it looked weak of substance. Yet it endured. The large wide flowers were relaxed but never droopy. The patterning reminded me of the old barely-arilbred, 'Butterfly Wings'. We loved it! From 'Cammeray' X 'Secret Spell'.

**GLADIATOR'S GIFT** (Taylor 1991) was the winner of the 9-1-1 Award this year (see Awards section). If a prize were given for the biggest flower, the winner would be **GOOD VIBES** (Taylor 1991). A first-year plant yielded, quite simply, the largest blossoms I've ever seen on a Louisiana iris, measuring a full 8-9" across. Yet its segments are so strong structurally that they were never floppy or sloppy. The color is an uneventful violet-purple, very common to its forefathers. But each perfectly round flower is given a little pizzazz with bold, contrasting bright yellow star-signals on all 6 petals, with the falls sharply marked and the standards a bit more diffused. Petals are tightly ruffled, adorned with a most definite 1/4" band of yet deeper purple. The 36" stalks are so strong that the monster-flowers are never in jeopardy of winding up

face-down in the mulch. And they have sexy, wide, controlled zigzag branching that gives lower blossoms the opportunity to open fully and strut their stuff, too. From ‘Lucile Holley’ X ‘Dazzling Star’. The plant habits make a bold statement too, with 7 husky increases remaining on the first-year growth. The richest of all yellows is **HELIOSTAT** (Taylor 1991), a pleasant surprise, because it had much better color, heavier ruffling, and better form than the Rainbow Ridge picture. A brassy, burnished golden yellow with a deeper, diffused signal area. Remindful of ‘President Hedley’ (Mertzweiller), but with modern form, deep sensuous ruffles, and a glossy sheen that makes a flower sizzle. Totally sunfast, with 33” stalks with 4 branches (somewhat close to the stalk) and terminal. A modest increaser here so far. A cross of ‘Valera’ X ‘Koorawatha’.

**JOHN'S LUCIFER** (Taylor 1987) is a famous dark near-black from the red side that has already won an Australasian Award of Merit. It doesn’t have the sultry depth of color or the luster of Dorman Haymon’s sibs, ‘Grace Duhon’ and ‘Empress Josephine’, but it is an elegant, broad, ruffled beauty with grand, tall show stalks. From a memorable cross of ‘Ann Chowning’ (Chowning) X ‘Charles Arny III’ (Arny). **LYDIA'S LOVE** (Taylor 1991) was the first to bloom this year. From a sib to ‘Koorawatha’ crossed with ‘Lucile Holley’, it is a pure, understated pastel to light yellow self, with elegant texture veins and gentle ruffling. Superb form and substance, non-fading here. A first-year plant produced one 34” stalk, very strong, with 3 branches and terminal. Unfortunately, it has thusfar been a slow grower, with only 2 rather weak increases, reverting back to ‘Lucile Holley’, which for me never performed well. Amazingly, this is the only Taylor, directly from ‘Lucile Holley’, where this weakness has been transmitted.

**MALIBU MAGIC** (Taylor 1991) was First Runnerup to the L’Elegante Award, previously reviewed. The most magnificent of all the Taylor Louisianas was **MARGARET LEE** (Taylor 1992), First Runnerup for this year’s Pick of the Litter Award. **MIDNIGHT DRAMA** (Taylor 1991) was different, in that the flowers were a bit smaller than expected. It is a slightly bitoned velvety blue-violet with a tiny forked signal pattern in yellow and white styles heavily edged in violet. The thickly substanced petals are flat and deeply scalloped, with a lighter underside showing in the channels of the ruffling (as with ‘Margaret Lee’), giving a feeling of motion to the flower. The signals are on all 6 petals, forming a unique star pattern in the heart of the flower, even different from the other Taylor releases with a similar signal pattern array. A first-year plant produced two 37” stalks that were somewhat snaking and weak this first year. Of course this may improve on a fully acclimated, established planting. The stalks produced 3 to 4 wide branches and terminal, with 5 to 6 buds. From (‘C’est Si Bon’ X ‘Charles Arny III’) X ‘Helen Naish’. Extremely vigorous, healthy plants.

The first-year planting of **NATURAL WONDER** (Taylor 1991) produced two 34” stalks and 3 increases. The branching is wide enough to allow the 7” blossoms to open and fully expand, with 4 branches well spaced up the stalks plus terminal, with double sockets at some of the positions. The flowers are a large, flat burnished rose to dusky pink with texture veining, beautifully sculpted with elegant waving in all the parts. Green-yellow signals in a V-shape on all 6 petals form a star pattern in nice contrast against the smooth self color of the flower. From a sib to ‘Koorawatha’, crossed by an unknown daddy – even John’s accidents turn out well! **PATIENT REWARD** (Taylor 1987) is a bit older but still most competitive with the newer releases. It is a voluptuous clear medium pink from one of the great all-time crosses: ‘Ann Chowning’ X ‘Clara Goula’. The form and ruffling come from ‘Clara Goula’, and the bold yellow predominant signal pattern is the classic signature of ‘Ann Chowning’s’ children. One of the prettiest pinks, and with that kind of regal bloodline, I’m using it heavily in my pink breeding here in Oklahoma. It is closer to a true self than some like ‘All Agaze’. **PERFECT MATCH** (Taylor 1990) is a pulsating rosy magenta bitone from unknown breeding, with large flat flowers that show off bold, contrasty ‘Ann Chowning’ signals imprinted in yellow on the falls. The flowers have almost no ruffling, which makes for a nice change of pace, after all the dizzying ripples and ruffles elsewhere! Tall majestic show stalks.

**ROSEBERY** (Taylor 1988) is one of the largest whites available, an informal creamy white that opens light yellow. As the flower expands and fully develops, the flowers fade gently to the cream, retaining the texture veining. The imposing florets are a full 8” across with a crimped picotee edge, closely approaching what I would call “lace”. A first-year plant produced four 40” skyscrapers, with 4 wide branches, beautifully spaced with double sockets up and down, and up to 10 buds per stalk. Exceptionally vigorous, leaving 9 increases. The relaxed informal look in the shape is a nice change from the tight compact look of other whites. From ‘Koorawatha’ X ‘Lucile Holley’. **SAN DOMENICO** (Taylor 1987) reminded me of ‘Acadian White’ (Arny), but with a smaller spear signal with more orange present. It is a large, flat milky white with virtually no texture veining. The falls have a more oval shape and just a bit of ruffling, making for a nice diversion from the traditional form we usually see today. Well branched, with 3 wide, well-placed branches, but the stalk was not as strong as others on this first-year bloom. Unknown parentage.

The premiere Taylor release in blue is **SEA LORD** (1991). It is the ultimate (so far!) in true-blue, with the richest, most intense saturation in royal blue -- in the heritage of ‘Clyde Redmond’ (Arny). A color so pure that it would make the Tall Bearded hybridizer weep! Rainbow Ridge considers this John’s best blue to date, and I agree. Smaller flowers are absolutely round and compact, with clean yellow signals perfectly placed on each fall. A first-year plant produced one strong, thick 29” stalk with only 2 branches plus terminal, but each bloom opened one at a time, resulting in an acceptable

length of bloom season for the stalk. Lush blue-green foliage with 3 strong increases and clean, erect, healthy fans. From 'Cammeray' X 'Secret Spell', this may become one of John's all-time classics, with some of the most perfect flowers I've ever seen in a Louisiana iris. Melodiously waved and ruffled, with understated elegance and grace. **SUN DREAM** (Taylor 1987) is a sib to the famous Dykes recipient, 'Koorawatha' ('Dural Charm' (Taylor) X 'Clara Goula'), but in some ways I prefer it to its more famous sister. It is a brilliant, non-fading sunshine yellow, not as heavily ruffled, but with even better form and solid show branching. Both are different enough from each other that each should be grown and enjoyed. Very popular at the SLI show in Lafayette this spring. **SWISS CHALET** (Taylor 1987) is a very nice cold white-white that has also been overshadowed by a more famous sib, Dykes Medalist 'Helen Naish'. Its petals are more elongated than the full-figured look of many other whites but, adorned with moderate, tight ruffling, makes a different, attractive change in style of form, giving a very airy look of a dove in flight. Not as much green veining in the heart as 'Helen Naish'. From 'Charlie's Ginny' (Arny) X 'Clara Goula'.

Lighter colored halos are becoming more common now, with the best example to date being the fabulous silver halo against blue backdrop, as found in 'Exquisite Lady' (Owen). John's new **TIME KEEPER** (1991) is another contribution to the new pattern. It is a large, flat, moderately ruffled light to medium grape with a definite underfusión of pink. The standards are slightly lighter in intensity and then somewhat mottled with the deeper grape. All 6 petals then have a distinct halo of silver-white, causing the flower to glisten. A bold medium yellow V-signal is crisply marked on all 6 petals, giving a starry-eyed effect for which John is becoming so famous. Branching comes away from the stalk sufficiently to allow the moderately large flowers to unfurl properly and dazzle you. A first-year plant produced one 36" stalk with 4 increases remaining. Another great child of the cross 'Lucile Holley' X 'Dazzling Star'. **TRANQUIL STAR** (Taylor 1988) is one of John's best progressions in the advancement of pink in the Louisianas, and one of my personal favorites. A serene marshmallow pink, somewhat deeper in the falls, with a mauve underglow that gives added vitality and carrying power to the color in the garden. Crisp, reliable substance on broad, ruffled flowers. Beautiful in the landscape, but won't let you down on the show bench, either. From what is surely the most unusual cross of all times, 'C'est Si Bon' X 'Koorawatha'! Festive! A nice traveling companion to the show would be the bright **TREND SETTER** (Taylor 1988), a bravura rose-pink with large yellow signals boldly expressing themselves on the falls. Then there is an intensification of deeper rose "feathering" spreading over the expansive falls. A generous application of ruffling belies its 'Clara Goula' heritage, from 'Pam Truscott' (Arny) X 'Clara Goula'.

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## **CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 1992**

**Perry Dyer**

The weather was the main topic of the year – and the resulting bacterial soft rot (which we wound up unaffectionately referring to as "The Plague"). I lost 40-50% of the bearded garden in Blanchard; others lost upward of 80%. Thousands upon thousands of dollars' worth of stock turned to mush. We wound up digging every single plant on the place, rebuilt and sterilized the contaminated beds, left the plants out of the ground until late September, and then replanted those that had not gone ahead and rotted while out of the ground. Where the bearded irises were lacking, the Louisianas MORE than made up for. Even with a late freeze impacting some of the earliest bloom, the Louisiana bloom season was out of this world. The first-year iris bloom in the Texas gardens for the Ft. Worth convention was quite marvelous.

Contemporary Views' award winners are reviewed first (with runnersup listed in order), then TBs by general color group. 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 1990, 1991, and 1992).

### **AWARD WINNERS**

1. The **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**, given to the Best New Iris seen. The older I get and the longer I grow irises, the more I demand that sometimes-ever-elusive feature of DISTINCTIVENESS. I'm tired of "another pretty pink" or "a high quality blue reminiscent of XXX". It's got to have some kick, something to turn my head, and THEN have something underneath it to justify my extra attention. Sometimes that mystical something can't quite be put into words, but you know it's there. Irises such as 'Silverado' (Schreiner) and 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner) have it, and now the Schreiner family has released another one: **SIERRA GRANDE** (1992). Take the lustrous falls of its parent, 'Pledge Allegiance' (Schreiner), and put them beneath billowy sky blue standards, and you have the general idea. Add a flush of rich blue to the standards' midribs, then paint some of the style arms for good measure, and you have it. There are a few white

markings around the light blue beard, but not a defect. It has a billowy form like ‘Gay Parasol’ (Schreiner), but is tight and sound, with leathery substance, moderately ruffled, and even a suggestion of lace. Tall and noble, with stalk strength to endure Texas winds. It was stifling hot when we viewed it, yet the sweltering heat actually seemed to improve the finish rather than melt the flower. Well spaced, 3 branches and spur and bottom rebranch. Healthy blue-green foliage with above average increase.

**Runnersup:**

**SOCIAL EVENT** (Keppel 1991) is a rich, classy full pink self with deeper beards on a show stalk supreme. It has deep scallop-ruffles like an old favorite of mine, ‘Michelin’ (Hamblen), but with tighter form. The ruffles are then imprinted with lace; yet the flowers have no trouble opening cleanly. All in all, the finest median released by Paul Black recently, is probably **WELL SUITED** (1990, SDB). A class act in formal, full spectrum violet, with an intensified spot in the falls approaching tuxedo, precisely banded in spectrum violet. It has impeccable proportion, form, and plant habits.

**BUNNICULA** (Innerst 1991, IB) is a soft, delicate true yellow amoena with excellent wide form. It has a mink underglow texture, as if enveloped in cotton – not unlike the effect achieved with ‘Sierra Grande’, but in pastel tones.

2. The **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** is given to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen this year. This does not necessarily address the overall plant habits, but all aspects must be acceptable to merit the variety’s receiving this award: **NOBLE PLANET** (Taylor 1991) is a Louisiana that took me by surprise. It is a soft yellow, but unlike any I’ve ever seen, in that it has an icy underglow one would normally associate with whites or light blues. Deep scallop ruffles all around, placed carefully so that the broad form is never distorted. Sturdy stalks with 4 branches with some double sockets with excellent timing.

**Runnersup:**

**OBVIOUS HEIR** (Taylor 1992, LA). Just when one thinks they can’t possibly make ‘em any more beautiful, here comes another that outshines all that came before! A novice might think this was an orchid, the ruffling and rippling is so intense. A round, flat pure white with olive green diffused signals that look more like texture veining. Similar to the great ‘Acadian Miss’ (Arny) in its nature, with more compact flower size and height than other Taylor whites, and with the same candelabra show branching (3 branches) as ‘Acadian Miss’. Howard Shockey has done it again: **LOVE BLUSH** (1991) is a softly seductive medley (blend) of pastel peach and apricot flushed pink, with chalky white falls carefully banded in peach lace. The only “brilliant” thing about this pastel beauty is a bright cerise-orange beard, yet the precisely formed flowers have great carrying power in the garden. Deeply channeled ruffles are close together and precisely placed all around, giving an added feeling of motion to the flower. **MISSOURI RIVERS** (Niswonger 1990, Spuria) was a majestic clump in full bloom in the Ft. Worth Botanical Gardens. For those who live close enough, and if the Spurias and Louisianas aren’t in bloom yet for the Ft. Worth National, a special trip afterwards to see this expansive collection would be worth it. This has some of the bluest-blue tones seen yet in Spurias, with a predominate patch of clear yellow in the falls, then double-banded in white and then the blue of the standards. A clean crisp look, stunning in the garden.

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break: **SILICON PRAIRIE** (Stanek 1991). This is the first introduction from one of AIS’s fine young talents with a bright future. ‘Silicon Prairie’ is a color break, with all the other qualities to make it a good iris. The AIS Bulletin picture was fairly accurate, except that it is a prettier ensemble, with bluer standards and more green showing in the falls. From a very wide cross, the breeding potential is boundless, especially with ‘Chartreuse Ruffles’ (Rudolph) in its background. Even on a hot Texas afternoon, it retained its color contrast well. Nicely shaped, with pleasing ruffling and even a touch of lace. Very vigorous, clean plants.

**Runnersup:**

**FESTIVAL'S ACADIAN** (Haymon 1990, LA). Dorman Haymon picked up on the breeding potential for haloes he saw in ‘Charjoy’s Mike’ (Arny), and this is the first generation offspring of that work. ‘Festival’s Acadian’ is a scintillating red-purple, intricately weaved with deeper texture veins. There is a yellow halo embellishing all 6 parts. A lighter, creamy style arm just causes the eye to be drawn to the halo pattern even more. **PROFESSOR BARBARA** (Mertzweiller 1992), the first true yellow tet to be released. This leathery, wide, flat flower is a welcome change in color to the handful of choice darker tets released to date. **HELLO DARKNESS** (Schreiner 1992). Several things have really come together for the Schreiners on this one. It is quite tall (40” as a guest in Texas) but with notably thicker, stronger stalks than its predecessors. First-year stalks had 4 branches plus spur plus lower rebranch. I quit counting buds at 10, but suspect there are more, especially on established clumps. So often, dark irises blooming in this part of the country (especially those blooming in the last half of the season) burn and even curl up on the edges. Some blast in the socket and never even bother to open. Not so here. A moderately large flower, donned in soot black – not shiny-black like ‘Black Dragon’

(Schreiner) or ‘Night Ruler’ (Schreiner) – with moderate to heavy ruffling! Near-black beards. Plants are purple-based and narrower (like ‘Black Dragon’) but vigorous and not anemic. The advancements here are in branching, bud count, height, stalk strength, plus the ability to open in heat, even after rains.

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 (at least 4 years). **HURRICANE PARTY** (Haymon 1988), the KING OF LOUISIANAS! OK, perhaps I’m a bit biased – I won Best of Show with it at the first “mostly beardless” Sooner State show in Oklahoma City this year...with a stalk that was 44” tall with 4 open! Quite a sight, but even more impressive in the garden. It looks and behaves like a tet (but is diploid), with huge, flat, velvety, royal purple parts and a bold triangular bright yellow signal, courtesy of ‘Ann Chowning’ (Chowning). So much substance that, like a tet does sometimes, the falls will occasionally flip back up! Sweet potatoes for rhizomes – we dug some that weighed over 1 ½ pounds before trimming. In spite of a heavy concentration of *I. giganticaerulea* in its background (obviously!), there’s enough Arkansas blood in it to make it winter hardy Up North.

#### **Runnersup:**

I’ve usually got my ear to the ground and know what’s coming up, but I sure missed a beat on **MAUI MOONLIGHT** (Aitken 1987, IB) and didn’t get it the first couple of years it was on the market. The description is rather uneventful – a smooth light yellow self. But to grow it is a rewarding gardening experience. Perfect proportions, with wide, compactly formed flowers with just a hint of gentle waving, on 20-24” stalks that have exceptional branching, well positioned, with well-timed buds and flawless plant habits. **BROWNBERRY** (Willott 1987, BB) is another I missed initially, but should have known better, considering the high quality I was seeing from ‘Picayune’ (Keppel BB) offspring. It is a tight round cream-based plicata, precisely banded in rich chocolate all around. Ruffles a-plenty. Exceptional vigor, with proportions always true to the class. And, of course, that ‘Picayune’ (Keppel) branching and bud count. **IN TOWN** (Blyth 1988) is one of the finest of a string of lustrous neglectas from Down Under. Full and blocky, set off with stunning carrot-red beards. Show stalks, and plenty of backup buds for extended bloom. Strong plants with moderate increase. The color contrasts are bold, and then glossy sheen (with the lighter halo around the falls) sets the flower in motion.

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. To think that an iris such as **SOPHISTICATION** (Hamblen 1984) could go virtually unheralded simply confounds me. In my opinion, this is the most beautiful, most elegant work ever released in 40+ years of Melba Hamblen hybridizing. It blooms later in the season, after most of the shows have shut down and the conventions have packed up and moved on. A genteel cameo pink of moderate size and modest height, truly proportionate. The falls are more creamy, then softly banded (a true band, look closely) in the standards’ soft pink tone. Not only is it beautiful, but when you add a soft powder blue beard, you have a color break. We have yet to see what all this iris has to offer via its offspring. Graceful S-curved stalks with buds so well-timed that its bloom is extended right up to the end of the season. Hard to believe a revolutionary hybridizing program never had that one iris to go All the Way. This was “Melba’s Dykes”. Yet it never even won an Award of Merit. And now it’s too late....

#### **Runnersup:**

As it blooms here, **SCREEN GEM** (Arny 1983) is the brightest, clearest, truest pink Louisiana on the market. Broad and flat like a tet, with substance and texture never before witnessed in a color class notorious for being paper thin. Paul Black’s unpretentious **MARY’S LAMB** (1987) seems to have been overlooked in the SDB awards system. A small, compact, simple white, softly waved, then brushed with a delicate powder blue beard. In a world where the proportions are being stretched or even pushed beyond the limitations of the class (big flowers, fat foliage, thick clubby stalks), ‘Mary’s Lamb’ stays within the guidelines of the SDB class. It’s pretty and very floriferous with a mound of blooms, but it never overblooms itself into oblivion. One of the bluest true-blues in the kingdom is the Tall Bearded **LOYAL DEVOTION** (Waltermire 1982), a pure, crystalline clearwater blue displayed on an acceptable stalk with good bud count. The entire flower is diamond-dusted, which further enlivens the flower. Plant habits are beyond reproach.

6. The **CREAM OF THE CROP AWARDS** go to the 5 varieties on the Dykes Medal eligibility list that I considered the most worthy, in order: **HELLCAT** (Aitken 1983, IB) is a rich, flowing neglecta from a very famous Dykes TB parent, ‘Mystique’ (Ghio). It inherited all the good qualities – strong healthy plants; show stalks supreme; high bud count from well-timed double sockets; wide blocky form with flowers in class; excellent color saturation and contrasts between standards and falls. Year after year, no matter how adverse, wet, dry, or frozen the weather – ‘Hellcat’ comes through. My choice last year, **EXTRAVAGANT** (Hamblen 1983), didn’t make it, and it didn’t again this year. A rich burnished amethyst with sienna beards that just blooms too late in the season for its own good. **ACADIAN MISS** (Arny 1980) is still the standard to judge all white Louisianas. Compact clumps with the strength of *I. giganticaerulea* and the

rampant vigor and winter-hardiness of *I. brevicaulis*. If I could grow only one Louisiana, this would be the one. **CRYSTAL GLITTERS** (Schreiner 1985) still impresses me as the epitome of understated elegance, with its pastel blending of peach, apricot, and ivory, with diamond-dusting ("glitters") to give carrying power in the garden. And **DUSKY CHALLENGER** (Schreiner 1986), which went on to win the Dykes by a landslide. No great surprise, and I'm glad to see it win. It has a mystique and a stately manner in which it carries itself that simply cannot be denied. Just as impressive on the bench as it is in midday full sun.

7. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding seedling viewed this year. It was tough to choose this year, but the winner was easy: **RHONDA FLEMING** (Mullin 1993), seen under number 84-7X. Oh! Such elegance, such health. A brilliant cross, combining the strength, form, and vigor of the Dunn plicata lines with the grace of a laced white. The result is a soft, pastel lilac plicata on a pure crystal white base, displayed on a round full flower with moderate ruffling and light lace to give it femininity. With the exception of my favorite, most nearly-perfect iris in the whole world, 'Silverado' (Schreiner), 'Rhonda Fleming' is just the most beautiful iris I've had the privilege to view in my nearly-30 years of growing irises! Falls are wide and flaring, touching at the hafts. Formal candelabra branching, with 3 perfectly spaced branches and spur, often opening 2 or 3 at once on strong stalks that can take it. The intensity of the plicata coloration will vary from soil to soil (and state to state), and it looks different under artificial lights at the show (where it has won 2 Best Seedling awards – that I'm personally aware of), but any way you view it, it's lovely, and exciting. Ron Mullin has been "tinkering" on and off for years with iris pollen, and has produced some very nice seedlings along the way. But he's so self-critical that 1993 is the first year "the public" will be afforded the opportunity to sample his work. I'm so jealous I'd like to say "ACH! BEGINNER'S LUCK" .... But when I look at how many years he has been hybridizing, I know better.

#### **Runnersup** (and boy was it tough):

**PELE** (Aitken 1993, SDB). Any other year, had Rhonda not been around, this revolutionary color-break would have won hands-down. So this tells you just how good I think 'Rhonda Fleming' is!! 'Pele' was the most outstanding, distinctive guest in Blanchard this year. Brilliant, sizzling neon orange branded with a shocking, blatant purple spot in the falls. Then, a thick, bushy bright carrot orange beard sits atop the spot pattern. *Avant garde* and bold, but never garish or offensive. You would think, with such a color break as this, there would be something wrong with the iris, like weak stems or slow increase or narrow strappy form. WRONG! Incredibly, this iris has everything: Strong but not overly-thick stalks at 12" with 1 branch, 3 buds; perfectly round form; a pure tailored look, so as not to distract from the color array with unnecessary frills. Extremely vigorous with a good bloom ratio and gloriously thin, graceful foliage.

**GEMSTAR** (Marky Smith 1994, SDB), seen as Seedling #903A, is a true luminata, with pure shimmering spectrum violet base color enlightened in the heart with a white beard and shoulder area. Then, there is a white "dart" extending from the beard. Superb form and substance, with compact, rounded form with a hint of ruffling and smooth, rich saturation of coloring, making the luminata pattern really stand out. Plant habits, size of foliage, increase/bloom ratio, and overall proportions are outstanding. It produced 8 increases plus 2 bloom stalks this year, with 1 branch and 3 buds, well timed.

**FIRESTORM** (Marky Smith 1994, SDB), seen as Seedling #925C, is a deep chocolate plicata, with coloring almost completely covering the bright yellow base. The standards are open but held well. Flaring falls are marked with peppering and sanding, with moderate to heavy ruffling. Excellent substance and sunfast, weather-resistant. Superb plant habits, with foliage not overly thick. A first-year planting produced 6 stalks (1 branch, 3 buds) and 8 increases. The stalks time themselves so that the season of bloom is extended – as one finishes its peak bloom, the next one comes on.

### **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

#### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

Not many stood out this year, but one that showed potential on first-year bloom in Texas: **UNFORGETTABLE FIRE** (Schreiner 1991). It is a tall, well-branched oxblood red with a velvet finish. I found it to be a bit rough, and others from the Schreiners have better form, but the 40" stalks are thick enough to support large flowers, and it has good plant habits. Bill Maryott has had a succession of high-class maroons and wines, but **ALMADEN** (1990) has had the best plant habits. A lightly waved wine-red with self to bronze beards, a bit coarse in the shoulder area but not offensive. **STERLING BLAZE** (Innerst 1988) can be a slower increaser (and slow to reestablish after transplanting), but the blocky garnet to flame red flowers have superb, leathery substance that are wind and water-resistant.

**CLASSICS:** **INFERNO** (Schreiner 1975); **LA SEDNA** (Peterson 1977).

#### **BROWNS:**

A weak class – still so few worthy additions each year to review. We anxiously wait to see if **BRONZETTE STAR** (Kegerise 1992) will be as good here as it was up north. **VERISMO** (Hager 1987) was outstanding. A very satisfying shade of solid medium brown, somewhere in intensity between the copper of ‘Brass Accents’ (Schreiner) and the richness of ‘Dutch Chocolate’ (Schreiner), both of which are in its heritage. It is a self, not a blend. Quite tall, with good branching and a looser, more billowy form that never collapses. Sometimes an inconsistent grower here, but was doing well this year. Most importantly, it is sunfast here in the Okie heat. It needs to be, for sure, because it is a mid- to late-season bloomer. Watch for **Paul Black 8774**, with its golden-bronze standards and leathery caramel falls, horizontal and moderately ruffled. Deep gold beards merge the two colors. Stalks have 3 branches, often displaying 2-3 open at once.

**[NOTE:** This seedling was named **DUDE RANCH** and introduced in 2000].

**CLASSICS:** **CAROLINA HONEY** (Powell 1972); **NEON RAINBOW** (Schreiner 1971); **TUCSON** (Hager 1970).

## APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

**SOFT CARESS** (Gatty 1991) is a wonderfully named pastel jewel that looked good in all the Texas gardens – very consistent. Could be put on the “L’Elegante Award” list for this year. A delicate but sound pale to pastel peach with chiffon texture and pristine ruffling. The falls have a bit more ivory in their makeup and just a hint of an apricot band to outline its superior, blocky form. Soft coral beards. Notably strong, healthy, vigorous plants, with no signs of watery foliage, virus, or leaf spot. One of the most pleasant surprises in the 2 trips to Texas was the consistent performance of **FEMININE FIRE** (Ernst 1991), a warm pink with much more apricot in its pigmentation than shows in the Cooley’s picture. The “fire” must be the corduroy texture veining. The veining is in apricot, which is what enlivens the flower. Full and blowsy like the catalog shot, but with nicer, deeper ruffling. Makes an outstanding show-clump. **STATUS SEEKER** (Gartman 1990) is a lively designer coral, high-class with a high gloss with an undercoating of salmon that adds brilliance to the flower. Flashy, billowing ruffles and a bright coral beard. **FRINGE BENEFITS** (Hager 1988) continues to amaze me at the ease and grace such a heavily laced flower opens – consistently, no matter what the weather, never tearing or twisting, never stressed. A pastel apricot-peach to watch for is Keppel 86-27D. Standards are closed (almost conical) and falls have hafts so wide they touch, with deep pleating and ruffling and even a touch of lace. Strong stalks are 3’ tall with 3 well placed branches.

**CLASSICS:** **GEORGIA GIRL** (Sexton 1971); **GREENAN CASTLE** (Beattie 1971); **TANGERINE SUNSET** (Marsh 1972).

## PINKS:

**BUBBLE UP** (Ghio 1989) has been a most pleasant surprise, especially in terms of bud count and plant habits. An exuberant medium to deep pink with an all-too-rare underglow of salmon, capped with deep coral-pink beards. So deeply ripple-ruffled one wonders how in the world it ever opens. Big blocky flowers with a classical look that Ghio has become famous for, but the bubble ruffles are his trademark. Contrast this with the small-statured **TOOTSIE** (R. Nelson 1990), a compact, tidy apricot-pink with bright, thick bushy bright coral beards. Well proportioned, it is a small-tall at 28-30”. Actually, it comes closer to being a good Border Bearded than many BBs on the market today! **PINK BLOOMER** (Durrance 1992) inherited many features of its pod parent, ‘Love Scene’ (Rudolph), such as shorter, thick stalks, thick sheaths, modified candelabra branching (3 branches) and, most notable, coral beards most definitely tipped in blue. It has more of an apricot hue in its light pink color than the Rudolph blue-pinks. The best of several Joe Gatty pinks being guested in Ft. Worth was **FROSTING** (1993), a fully saturated, luxurious blue-pink like the Rudolph pinks of old. It has a shorter (30”) graceful S-curved stalk with 3 well spaced, wide candelabra branches. Standards are open with even heavier lace than the falls. Beautiful purple-based foliage with generous increase.

**CLASSICS:** **CARVED CAMEO** (Rudolph 1972); **CHERISHED** (Corlew 1973); **MICHELIN** (Hamblen 1973); **PINK PERSIAN** (Buckles-Niswonger 1975).

## LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:

**APLOMB** (Ghio 1992) had growth habits and increase far superior to earlier releases in this bloodline. A husky, well-shaped smoked cranberry but with a silky sheen that sets the color aglow. A few haft marks around the sienna to burnt coral beards, but not offensive. Strong, tall stalks had 2 well spaced branches with double buds in the sockets. **O.K. CORRAL** (Black 1992) is mindful in color and form of its mother, ‘Extravagant’, but with more of a pearly white in the center of the falls. The basic color is a full burnished amethyst, strongly contrasted with thickest bushy deep amber to orange beards set against the lighter heart of the falls. Fairly short and late-blooming. A muted montage of lavender-orchid tones is found in **JOYOUS MORN** (Schreiner 1992). A mauve-rose, with diamond-dusted falls a tone lighter, with apricot undertoning, honey at the hafts. Seen late in the afternoon after a hot day, and it had not faded. Small burnt orange beards not as thick as those found on ‘O.K. Corral’. Slightly ruffled and laced, with rather plain oval falls and conical standards. **TWILIGHT BLAZE** (Keppel 1992) is an unusual affair in muted lavender, contrasted with bright carrot orange beards. Standards are swirled and closed. Falls are wide and blocky with texture veining and a chiffon look, with just a hint of a deeper halo. Formal candelabra branching with 3 wide branches and double buds. **THRILLER** (Schreiner 1988) blooms about as late in the season as the best from Opal Brown or Melba Hamblen. Yet its intensification of color holds up well in the late-season heat. It is a passionate plum to cerise that glows across the garden.

**CLASSICS:** **JILBY** (Gaulter 1965); **VIOLET FAVOR** (O. Brown 1971); **WARM LAUGHTER** (Schreiner 1970).

## DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:

In the blacks, the star is now **BEFORE THE STORM** (Innerst 1989) for those who like the black patent leather look versus the soot black of 'Hello Darkness' (Schreiner). Magnificent growth habits, with strong vigorous plants that are disease resistant. Large blocky flowers are architecturally very sound and have just enough waving and ruffling to draw added attention. Similar, but with a smaller flower and more ruffling, is **NIGHT RULER** (Schreiner 1990). The sheen in the falls is lustrous, but actually there tends to be more of a two-tone effect here, in that the standards are more of a spectrum violet rather than a true black self. Beards are jet black and stunning. Much more ruffling than any other black on the market today. In the deep violets, **DAVY JONES** (Hager 1990) looked very good on first-year bloom in Texas. Its gigantic size was one of its selling points when released, and Mr. Hager didn't lie. Bombastic, and amazingly sound structurally, even though it is so huge. A deeper 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner), but not quite as deep as 'Dusky Challenger' (Schreiner). But it has the strong plant habits and outstanding branching as 'Titan's Glory'. The falls are so wide they overlap!

**PAT LOUGHREN** (Durrance 1989) is a full spectrum violet in the style of 'Silent Majesty' (Hamblen), perhaps a bit wider in the falls. Well placed heavy ruffling with excellent substance and a silken sheen. Beards are nearly black, tipped mustard only in the heart of the flower. **SILK SILHOUETTE** (Gartman 1992) looked very promising, although the form seemed a bit loose to me this year. It is quite heavily ruffled, especially on such a large flower and has silky texture and a deep, near-black beard. A rampant grower, among the strongest in the garden.

**CLASSICS:** **BLACK MARKET** (Plough 1974); **MIDNIGHT SPECIAL** (Sexton 1973); **WALTZING WIDOW** (Roach 1973).

### **BLUES:**

The shocker in Texas had to be **BLUE IT UP** (Ernst 1991), a smaller flowered rich true blue with outstanding shape and leathery substance as is found in 'Breakers' (Schreiner) or 'Sailor's Dance' (Schreiner). It was performing exceptionally in every garden viewed in Texas. **BLENHEIM ROYAL** (Schreiner 1990) was outstanding in Texas, Tulsa, and the home garden in Blanchard. A lustrous, leathery blue, reminiscent of an improved 'Sailor's Dance', with far superior form – a flatter, blocky look, with heavy, well positioned ruffling. Often opens 3 at once and has backup buds. **FLY WITH ME** (Aitken 1990) was also very nice in both Texas and Oklahoma. It is a perfectly rounded, heavily ruffled, tight medium blue with a mink overlay so intense that the flower is almost smoky (but not dirty or muddy). Superb stalks, and a healthy grower. **OCEAN PACIFIC** (Ghio 1988) was looking good in several gardens this year. A heavily ruffled ocean-blue in a full-blown, attractive style. The stalks have supreme branching, modified candelabra well placed on the stalk. Paul Black had a row of **PENCHANT** (Harding 1986) in full bloom all at once, and it's no wonder this ruffled blue from Down Under has done so well (it won the Australasian Dykes Medal, beating out all those Taylor Louisianas!). Remindful of a larger version of its parent, the timeless 'Full Tide' (O. Brown), with the same show stalks supreme. In spite of our terrible bloom season, each and every stalk looked exactly the same and they were splendid!

People have been so busy checking out the Gatty pinks that I feel his **ROYAL ELEGANCE** (1988) has been overlooked. Gigantic cornflower blue with thick substance and a nice sheen to it. The ruffling is intense, especially for such a large flower. Truly well proportioned, it makes large plants with plenty of increase. **YANKEE PRIDE** (Maryott 1989) has also been overlooked, and it blooms very late in the season here. Closest in color to 'Sapphire Hills' (Schreiner) or maybe a touch lighter like 'Tide's In' (Schreiner), it has closed, tight form and a very nice stalk. **SUPERMAN** (Maryott 1986) doesn't have quite the contrast in color between its principal color and the reddish beards as does its main competitor, 'Skyblaze' (Keppel), but nonetheless is a very nice attempt at a red-bearded blue. Big blocky form, and an attractive lightening in the heart of the flower around the beards. The beards are fat and bushy, but are more tangerine than red. **KATHLEEN KAY NELSON** (Hager 1993) was a very large flowered deep blue with a white beard and zonal patch in the heart of the flower, not quite as noticeable as some of the work being done by the Schreiners.

**CLASSICS:** **SAILOR'S DANCE** (Schreiner 1973); **SWEETWATER** (Woodside 1974); **VIRGINIA SQUIRE** (Gaulter 1973); **WATERSCAPE** (Keppel 1972).

### **WHITES:**

**PURE-AS-THE** (Innerst 1989) was the shining star here. Finally, a heavily laced white that is a finished product. Plant habits are exceptional, with vigorous, disease-resistant plants that don't "go bald" and don't have watery foliage. Elegance supreme, with nicely formed florets adorned with intricate lace. Not as heavily ruffled as some, and this may be one of the prime reasons it opens flawlessly. **MY VALENTINE** (Hager 1987) is another one of those late bloomers that has been missed. Broad expansive flowers are blocky and lightly to moderately laced, with hafts nearly touching. Yet, with the lace and the diamond-dusted chaste white, it projects femininity. The beards are a soft coral in harmony, and this year they approached pink. Outstanding formal candelabra branching and a modest grower. New for this year is **GOLDKIST**

(Black 1993), a personal favorite of mine. Actually, it's a bit difficult to describe. Chalky white base color, with a heavy intensification of golden yellow in the shoulders. There's an unusual "webbing" of purple veining around the gold beards that really makes the flowers dance. Heaviest leathery substance and bubble ruffling so deep you'd swear it had come from Santa Cruz! **Hooker Nichols 8729C** is an expansive blocky pure white with white-based beards heavily infiltrated with deep tangerine to really-red. A nice, finished look displayed on formal candelabra branching, with 3 open at once. There is just a hint of yellow deep in the heart, but doesn't distract from the red bearded white effect.

**CLASSICS: LADY MARIE** (Muhlestein 1975); **PRINCE OF PEACE** (Sexton 1980); **SKATER'S WALTZ** (D. Palmer 1970); **TUFTED CLOUD** (Schreiner 1971).

### **CREAMS TO YELLOWS:**

Several fine new ones were seen this year, but the older **SUMMER GOWN** (O. Brown 1988) was impressive all over Oklahoma. It is a strange shade of light yellow, muted, almost like a tanned undercolor, but not muddy. Show stalks supreme and (of course!) a late-season bloomer. **SUN POLKA** (Magee 1991) was tall and bright, here and in Ft. Worth. A cheerful sunny yellow with a large area of shimmering white in the center of the falls. Well proportioned, with big foliage, good branching on tall, thick stalks and huge prominent flowers, lightly swirled and ruffled.

Two very fine "reverse amoenas" in yellow, but with an overall effect of yellow – thus reviewed in this section – are: **SUNKIST FRILLS** (D. Palmer 1987) will never win major awards or ever win a Queen of Show either. Even though a slow grower and sometimes hard to establish, it is a beautiful piece of artwork from one of the best, the late Dorothy Palmer. Short of stature with modest branching and usually only 5 buds (but they time themselves well, rarely ever opening more than 1 at a time), this late-season beauty is a classic in form, substance, and finish. Heavily ruffled with crocheted lace. Brilliant deep yellow sunshine standards and cold white falls with a gorgeous, prominent banding of the standards' color. Leathery substance. I found the average bloom lasts at least a full day longer than any other in the garden. Just the opposite in nature and performance is **FIRST INTERSTATE** (Schreiner 1991), a tall, demanding extrovert with the same general color description as 'Sunkist Frills', except with more shimmering diamond-dusting than leathery substance. Flower form acceptable, but not as finished a look, and the flowers are actually a bit smallish for the height of the stalk. Bright and showy.

**NEW MEXICO SUNSHINE** (Doonan 1991) is a fine new full golden-yellow, the best new gold seen this year. It has wide form and is deeper than 'Aztec Sun' (Dyer) but just as sunfast. By the time I saw this, it was mid-afternoon on a hot Texas day. "Yours Truly" (Perry Dyer) was melting; 'New Mexico Sunshine' was not! One of the most intriguing seen was **AMBER TAMBOUR** (Ernst 1991), a pleasant surprise. With so many yellows on the market, it was fun to see a different approach so successful. A full saffron-gold or "amber" that was totally sunfast. 'Amber Tambour' was first seen at 6 p.m., and it had not faded a bit. Standards are a curious closed near-conical shape and the falls big and blocky, but makes a pleasing, unique look. Watch for **VEGAS WEEKEND** (Nichols 2000), a bold full golden yellow in coloration between that of 'Bold Gold' (Gatty) and the more yellow, older 'Vegas' (Hamblen). Tight form with moderate ruffling and no distracting white patch at the beard. Branching was a bit close, with 3 branches, but looked promising.

**CLASSICS: ARCTIC DAWN** (Olson 1971); **PROCLAMATION** (Corlew 1971); **SUN WORSHIPER** (Hager 1972); **VEGAS** (Hamblen 1971); **YELLOW RUFFLES** (Rudolph 1971).

### **PLICATAS:**

Who would have dreamed such wild and wonderful, zesty patterns and color combinations would emerge this way. The first 2 probably should have made the Pick of the Litter bunch, but we ran out of slots. They're in a class all their own anyway: **MIND READER** and **SPIRIT WORLD** (both Keppel 1994). These are sister seedlings, seen this past year under Seedling Number 86-18B ('Mind Reader') and 86-18D ('Spirit World'). Hallucinogenic true-luminatas with pattern, form, and finish never seen before in TB irises. 'Mind Reader' has deep midnight-violet standards, heavily edged in a silver (not white) halo. Falls are deep violet with a white starburst illuminating the top of the falls around the white beard. Falls are edged in white also and then have white sparks marbling and radiating downward and outward from the luminata area. Strong husky plants. The branching on both of these is stupendous – 5 to 6 branches on 'Mind Reader', with the bottom branching having rebranching, beginning only about 5" above the ground. Then up and up and up. Double sockets too (and probably triple in some positions). Having picked oneself up off the dirt, it's time to go over to its "sister", 'Spirit World'. The stalks and sockets on this one are black! Deep orchid standards with a 1/8" halo in tan-eccru. Falls are rich, deep wine-black, with white marbling shot completely through the falls from the luminata patch at the beard. Overall, it has more red in its personality than its sib. As if not enough, rather than traditional luminata-white

beards, these are shot with bright red! Here the branching starts right at ground level, rebranches, and then has 3 well up the stalk with perfect placement. You'll never be the same once you've seen them!

A very colorful, improved 'Rancho Rose' (Gibson) type was **VICTORIA ROSE** (Durrance 1992), seen in Texas under Seedling #D86-153. A rose-pink plic, the standards completely covered in smoky-rose and well held. Rather tailored falls are a lighter pink ground, then peppered, sanded, and edged in bright pansy purple, with a double belly stripe right down the center of the falls! Coral beards. Strong plants with purple-based foliage. **ACOMA** (Magee 1990) is a lovely steel-grey on white plicata, with big blocky flowers like 'Rhonda Fleming', but in a near-colorless blue (subtle and lovely). Creative, crazy mixed up bloodlines produced burnt sienna beards on this one. Very different and appealing. Unfortunately, although it has tall strong stalks that are well-branched, it only has 5 buds and when you consider it often opens multiple blooms....

The Schreiners are as famous for their blue plics as their blue selfs, and a new one shows great promise: **CLASSIC LOOK** (Schreiner 1992) was a bit inconsistent on first-year guest bloom in Texas (seen under Seedling #AA-2169-C), but was very fine at Ft. Worth Botanic Garden. Well named, a classical blue-on-white plic, with clear medium blue stitching carefully placed in a 3/8" to 1/2" band on the very edge of the standards and falls (no streaking or bleeding into the base color at all). **FILM FESTIVAL** (Keppel 1993) is the most brilliant and vivacious of the 'Gigolo' (Keppel) kids, a brighter 'Raspberry Fudge' (Keppel). Light pink base, heavily sanded and striated with neon raspberry-rose. The standards are almost completely saturated. The falls have a sensible amount of pink showing through, but are then rudely interrupted with a wonderful belly stripe right down the center! Carrot beards. Wide round falls, gently waved. Branching, again beginning right at the bottom, with 4 more plus terminal above that. Double-socketed, of course, with 3 open at once the day I saw it. **Keppel 87-21K**, one of the most hauntingly beautiful plics I've ever seen, and there's nothin' like it. A study in impressionistic pastels, with a soft apricot base gracefully dotted and peppered in steel-grey/blue! Carrot beards. We only got to see one bloom on an aborted stalk, so the overall quality was impossible to evaluate this first year, but if it comes through like the other Keppel plics, he'll have a new smash hit!

**CLASSICS:** **KONA COAST** (Plough 1973); **RONDO** (Schreiner 1973); **SEWING BEE** (Ghio 1974); **SMOKE RINGS** (Gibson 1972).

### **AMOENAS AND REVERSE AMOENAS:**

**BORN BEAUTIFUL** (Black 1992) is a tall, stately, late-blooming lilac-orchid amoena with wide graceful candelabra branching and light ruffling. This diva is encased in a smoked mother-of-pearl sheen. A neat little amoena which may or may not be introduced is **Black 90U15**, a short stubby stalk displaying tight leathery flowers in a peach version of 'Lighted Within' (Blodgett). Almost a spittin' image, and sure a child (although the parentage is "officially" unknown on it), except substitute "peach" where you would usually see and say "yellow". In spite of the same faults, we hope Paul agrees to release this one because of its distinctiveness and sheer beauty. Two reverse blue amoenas set a whole new standard in this color class, and both are worthy additions to any collection: **WINTER ADVENTURE** (Black 1992) is the best of some high-quality work Paul has been doing here. The largest flowers seen yet in this line, placed on sturdy stalks 3' tall. Rich medium blue standards, infused even more heavily in violet. Falls aren't white, but they are noticeably lighter in a rolling ocean blue, gradually easing to sky blue in the centers. Soft powder blue beards are harmonious. Gently waved and ruffled, with good plant habits. **IN REVERSE** (Gatty 1993). Deepest blue standards seen yet, closed and swirled; chalky white falls are horizontal and artfully waved. Superior show stalks, with 3 branches and spur, often opening 3 at once. This was seen in Texas as Seedling #S29-1, and the name chosen is brilliant!

**CLASSICS:** **SEA OF GALILEE** (Sexton 1974); **SNOWLIGHT** (Blyth 1973); **SURF RIDER** (Tucker 1972).

### **VARIEGATAS:**

Two from Joe Gatty continue to impress, although I have found both to be slow to establish, with minimal increase. **SMART ALECK** (1988) has almost saffron yellow standards with a burnished look, tight and virtually conical. Falls are clean hafted in a velvety dark violet-red with dark bronze beards. Extremely late-blooming. **HIGH DRAMA** (1991) has more of a glow with slightly larger flowers. Standards are more butterscotch underlaid in old gold; falls a more intense, dramatic red, tailored, and also smooth at the hafts. It doesn't bloom quite as late in the season. A comical iris with a cute name is **CALL RIPLEY'S** (Burseen 1990). Actually close to a bicolor, for the standards are somewhere between gold and salmon-orange. But then the falls are a burgundy silk, set off with intense coral beards. Large and imposing, with a few white haft marks that really don't offend.

**CLASSICS:** **SHAMAN** (DuBose 1980); **SPANISH STREET SONG** (Sexton 1974).

## NEGLECTAS:

The new standard by which to judge is **PROUD TRADITION** (Schreiner 1990), a rich, pure neglecta that has everything going for it that the high-touted ‘Best Bet’ (Schreiner 1988) lacks: Large, strong flowers, tailored and grand; tall well-branched stalks reminiscent of those produced by the great ‘Holy Night’; consistent, good bud count, well timed; and most importantly, plants that grow! **CHINESE EMPRESS** (Blyth 1988) is a well named beauty, overlooked in America thusfar. It has medium blue (or darker) standards, heavily infiltrated in indigo. Falls are a silken violet, approaching black, encased in an aura of smoke, then set off with a black beard tipped bronze. And from ‘Witch’s Wand’ (Blyth), watch for **Paul Black A68A**, his best TB seedling seen this year. A simple description would be “an improved ‘Witch’s Wand’”. A very refined, dignified dark beauty, with closed, heavily waved and fluted spectrum violet standards. Falls are a full 2 tones deeper, approaching formal black, round and ruffled. Startling sienna to carrot beards sear the darkness. Exceedingly vigorous, husky plants produce strong show stalks in a candelabra fashion with 3 branches. [NOTE: This seedling was named **TOM JOHNSON**, introduced in 1996].

**CLASSICS:** **VENERATION** (Ghio 1971); **WOODLAND SHADOWS** (Munger 1971).

## BICOLORS:

From a long line, including the famous ‘Touche’ (Hamblen), comes **FERN MAW** (Hamblen 1991). Soft pink standards sit atop lilac-lavender falls with a hint of a band and a soft sienna-coral beard. Typically-perfect Hamblen show stalks with excellent spacing, easily opening 3 at once in symmetry supreme. Lightly ruffled and laced. A notably stronger grower and increaser than some of the others from this line, such as ‘Rosabelle V’ (Hamblen) and ‘Winifred Ross’ (Hamblen). Another with greatly improved plant habits is **HONEYMOON SUITE** (Ghio 1991). A ‘Dualtone’ (O. Brown) type, with peach-pink standards, infused orchid in the midribs; pretty, clean orchid-lavender falls, with a hint of deeper orchid at the shoulders and in a band on the edges. Branching a bit close but acceptable, and opens 3 at once. Adorned with evenly-applied ruffling and lace. Like a fancy ‘Sweet Musette’ (Schreiner). **Joe Ghio 87-129W2** has sultry apricot standards contrasting luxurious falls in a magnificent changeable-taffeta color array of translucent plum, orchid, and lilac, all with texture veining. Different colors appear as the sunlight hit it and as one changes positions viewing it! Medium orange to coral beards atop falls with touching hafts. Good strong growth habits and candelabra show stalks. **LADY JULIET** (Nichols 1993). A bicolor unlike any on the market I’ve seen to date. Soft ochre-yellow standards like those of ‘Debby Rairdon’ (Kuntz); gentle elegant pastel to light orchid falls with leathery substance but a chiffon texture. There is an intensification of soft tan to chocolate in the shoulders, but not rough like haft marks, then, orchid beards lightly tipped mustard. Elegant texture veining throughout on a sizeable flower.

**CLASSICS:** **LADY DAWN** (Plough 1973); **MISTY DAWN** (Hamblen 1973); **TIMELESS BEAUTY** (Hamner 1972).

## POTPOURRI:

**DIFFERENT WORLD** (Ernst 1991) was the best of several nice new things seen in Texas from Rick Ernst. His earlier release, **AFTERNOON DELIGHT**, is grown fairly extensively in this part of the country, but this iris is far superior in every way. Most graceful, yet has huge blocky flowers, opening 3 at once on fairly short stalks with ideal branching. Superb plant habits, with clean, lush foliage. Gentle honey standards have orchid glitters in them to give life to the flower. Falls are a whipped-chiffon orchid, gradually lightening to white in the center. Honey shoulders. Amazingly sun-proof. **SIGHS AND WHISPERS** (Black 1990) won the first Premio Firenze in Italy for Paul Black in 1992. It is a pure cold icy white with a soft washing of clear blue only on the edges of the falls. Not a plicata, but rather a modern version of the popular ‘Fuji’s Mantle’ (Schreiner). Tall, willowy stalks display the moderate-sized florets with good proportion and spacing. **Black Seedling #A169C**, affectionately referred to as the “Evil Iris”, a cousin to the great dignified ‘Tom Johnson’ (Black), is a sultry concoction vaguely resembling ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiner), in that it is a deep blue, but the falls are totally engulfed in a smokescreen of smoked black rather than silvery white. Lighter blue style arms come peering from the heart, as if looking to see if “the coast is clear”. Like ‘Honky Tonk Blues’, the whole thing starts off with light blue buds, making the unveiling of the blossoms even more shocking. Heavy scalloped ruffling with leathery substance.

**CLASSICS:** **BUTTERSCOTCH TRIM** (Buckles-Niswonger 1972); **DARK RITUAL** (Hager 1972); **MARTEL** (Muhlestein 1962); **PRIDE OF IRELAND** (Noyd 1971).

## SPACE AGE:

**HELGA'S HAT** (Nichols 1990, IB) is a cold pure white, with just a touch of yellow in the shoulders. It adorns itself with long white horns. Substance supreme, and very fine plant habits. Chiseled ruffling, like carved wax. **MAGIC KINGDOM** (Byers 1989) is one of the most eloquent and pristine from Monty's work. A soft medley of sherbet colors, with the standards in peach and the falls in lilac-orchid, adorned with coral beards ending in peach horns and even sometimes flounces. The entire flower glistens with diamond-dusting. Wide form with satin ruffling. **ROCK STAR** (Byers 1991), on a first-year planting, did not bloom during regular TB season. Much to my surprise, there it was in June in full bloom. A bright traffic-stopper plicata, similar in color layout to 'Columbia the Gem' (Gibson) or one of the more vivid Keppel dazzlers from the 'Gigolo' line: Clean pink base, mischievously streaked, striped, and polka-dotted in wine, cranberry, and strawberry – all topped off with a splendid coral beard with a long coral horn protruding! Much larger flower than its dainty, charming, overlooked parent, 'Lovebird' (Byers). **STINGER** (Byers 1994) was one of the most significant hybridizing achievements bloomed this spring in the Median Spree guests: The first SDB Space Age iris. We measured it every which-way to be sure it wasn't IB instead of SDB. It fits the bill, and even blooms more with the SDBs than the IBs. A perky honey-brown on ivory plicata, mindful of its parent, 'Muchacha' (Gatty SDB), but then – right there – HORNS – PURPLE HORNS! Stalks were 12-14" tall, with 1 branch and 3 buds. Foliage is proportionately narrow. This one exhibits a double halo with the inner secondary halo in violet stitching and the outer principal band in bright tan to honey.

## MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

### MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

**ASTRA GIRL** (T. Varner 1990) is a pert, perky solid white, contrasted with a bright, prominent yellow beard. Dainty flowers in perfect proportion with the thin, graceful, well-branched stalks. **BELLA VEE** (Fisher 1991). Smooth medium yellow with a deeper yellow beard. Nicely shaped oval falls. Superb branching, with 3 branches (double-socketed), precisely placed up and down a gentle S-curved stalk. Purple-based foliage is narrow and in proportion. **DESERT STORM** (T. Varner 1991) is a cleverly-named variegata-type with sand standards and brick to blood red falls with a nicely-contrasting bold bronze beard. A nice velvet sheen pulls the colors together. My favorite MTB this year was **LADY DI**

(T. Varner 1989), a smooth, royal violet, almost a complete self, with superior form and substance. The beards are just a touch lighter. Magnificent proportions. **LADY OF MARIETTA** (T. Varner 1988) is a soft butter yellow to burnished gold, somewhat lighter than the great 'Chickee' (Dunderman), and with more creamy white in the center of the falls. In cooler weather it displays a non-offensive cast of orchid in the falls, which clears up after a day in the sun, if the temperatures warm up. The flower form is tight and compact, with horizontal falls and nicely shaped standards. The finish has a diamond-dusted texture. Superb stalks and bud count.

**OZARK EVENING** (Fisher 1991). Here is the pink tet MTB we've been waiting for. It has the clarity of color of 'Puppy Love' (Hager) – even prettier – the quality in branching and plant habits of 'Abridged Version' (Hager), and form that beats them both! 'Ozark Evening' retained its daintiness and charm, even in rich new-to-irises soil in Blanchard. **Seedling #91-10** will hopefully be a future introduction for Kenneth Fisher. [It was named **LASTING MEMORY**, a 1994 introduction.] It looked very good, not only in Blanchard, but other Median Spree gardens and in the Ft. Worth convention gardens. A tight, sound neglecta, with the standards so deep that it is nearly a blue-black self. There are just a few white "MTB" lines at the hafts around the beards that add charm rather than distract. Superb substance. In very good proportion, including the foliage.

**CLASSICS:** **BELLBOY** (Dunderman 1975); **TINSEL** (Dunderman 1973).

### BORDER BEARDED:

**ALVA** (Hickerson 1991) was the great surprise of the year in this class. Hybridized by the late Alva Hickerson from Tulsa, and introduced by his widow, his namesake has done him proud. Quality through and through. A luscious chocolate-brown on pure white plicata, with the form and knock 'em dead show stalk branching from its famous parent, the great 'Picayune' (Keppel). Slender, graceful stalks carry 3 branches, double socketed, and have 3 rounds of opening 2 or 3 at once. Color saturation is deeper than 'Picayune', and the color more brown than copper. It also opens better than its parent, yet retains that tight, compact look that is so classy. Strong, healthy plant habits. **CHAPTER** (Innerst 1989) was well within the class restrictions in "overgrown" Texas convention beds. Remindful of the beautiful small-tall, 'Sand and Sea' (B. Jones), it has softly toned tan standards atop satin smooth orchid falls, banded with the standards' color. There is almost a deeper orchid "balkana" flash below the yellow beards. Tight, blocky, compact form with good stalks and plant habits. **MAUI MAGIC** (Aitken 1991) is another fine release of the "Maui" series from Terry Aitken, a nice complement to an earlier release, the billowy surf-blue, 'Maui Surf'. This one is a diminutive version of the great 'Orbiter' (Aitken) or

‘Gyro’ (Aitken), and has a silky glow to it. Not as heavily ruffled, emphasizing the compact form. Perfectly in proportion for me in Blanchard, but I did see it blooming out of proportion in a couple of other gardens. Either way, BB or small-tall, an exciting new iris.

**MINTAKA** (Hummel 1991) was as good in the Ft. Worth convention gardens as what we saw in the Omaha convention gardens a few years ago. Palest blue with chalky white falls, lightly infused pale blue. Powder blue beards. Open, strong standards to let you see the deeper blue heart of the flower (in the style arms). Moderate to heavy ruffling. It displayed 3 branches with good spacing, double socketed. **SHRIMP BOAT** (Gatty 1992) was pushing the limits in the rich Ft. Worth convention gardens, but had a daintiness and compact look to it to verify its validity in the BB class. A different shade of shrimp pink, with exquisite coral to orange beards. Moderate ruffling, and a superb stalk. **SPITFIRE** (Hager 1992). A tight, compact flower with moderately heavy lace and ruffling. It’s like an “albino ‘Pink Bubbles’”, with a very-nearly-true pink beard. Excellent show stalks and average to decent vigor and plant habits.

One of the most fun irises in Texas was the new BB, **TINK** (Durrance 1991), colorful, with an innovative combination of colors. Standards are pink lemonade pink; falls are amber with yellow in the center (very much like a burnished ‘Tulare’ (Hamblen) in color and shape). Bright orange beards. Looked like 2 different flowers had been dissected and glued together – we’ve never seen a color combo like this before. But it works, and I’m hooked! Simple, thin stalks with 2 branches, double socketed. Beautiful purple-based foliage with the vigor and health of ‘Tulare’. Watch for this one! **Byers D162-1-B** looked like a scaled-down ‘Song of Norway’ (Luihn), with show stalks having 3 branches and spur. Domed standards and flaring falls. Two well-spaced branches on stalks that remained in class, as did the flower size. Slender foliage. **Innerst 3267-1** was also looking good in Texas, and amazingly stayed in class in both gardens viewed. A compact, ruffled and laced tangerine-orange with deep orange beards, very colorfast and showy in the hot Texas sun. Decent growth, with 2 well-spaced modified candelabra branches. [It was named **GROBSWITCHER**, introduced in 1995].

**CLASSICS:** **SEER** (Ghio 1971); **SO CHIC** (Hamner 1973); **STEPPING LITTLE** (Kuesel 1973).

### **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:**

**APOLLO’S TOUCH** (Nichols 1991). Dazzling clean yellow amoena, with pure white standards with just a touch of yellow in the midribs and brilliant yellow falls, with the intensity of color of the TB, ‘Neutron Dance’ (Blyth). Nice wide form with just a hint of ruffling. Outstanding plant habits with clean healthy blue-green foliage. **COME SEE** (Ensminger 1992) was one of the more interesting new IBs seen this year. A broadly formed pure white plicata, distinctly edged in silvery blue to steel grey, and then an intriguing indigo blue beard – never seen before in a median plicata. A vigorous grower with plenty of increase. **DARK WATERS** (Aitken 1992). Gracefully waved and ruffled deep blue-violet with contrasty bronzed-brown beards, similar to those of the older TB, ‘Intuition’ (Ghio). A very attractive look. Superb substance. Some of the best plant habits on the place, with lush but not coarse purple-based foliage that is most healthy. Exhibited the potential for being an outstanding show iris, opening multiple blossoms, yet having plenty of backup buds. **FLIRTATIOUS** (Willott 1992). Similar to the SDB, ‘Ballet Slippers’ (Willott), in its color, but has a bright orange beard for contrast, as is found in the TB, ‘Elsiemaie Nicholson’ (Corlew). **HOT SPICE** (Aitken 1989). A variegata-plicata with burnished gold to bronze standards and cream-based falls heavily stitched in an intense red, copper, and brown patterning. The color in the falls has more red in its makeup than ‘Hot Fudge’ (Hager), but not as deep in tone as Gatty’s new ‘Broadway Baby’. Remarkably sunfast in the blazing heat. It has a nice lilt to it, with horizontal falls to showcase the colorful falls.

**MASTER SLEUTH** (Nichols 1993). Standards are blue-violet with deeper midribs, marbling out to lighter blue at the edges, giving the appearance of a halo. Falls are horizontal, nicely shaped, with moderate ruffling. They are deep orchid-lavender, with a lighter edging in blue. Although technically a neglecta, the hafts show its plicata heritage but are not coarse or offensive. Light blue beards blend in nicely. **MORNING SHOW** (Ensminger 1988). A clean, cheery cherry red, with a deep brown beard that approaches black. Outstanding substance and sunfastness, with show stalks supreme. A strong grower, with the only complaint being that it bloomed a bit heavy in every garden seen. The color has excellent carrying power in the garden. **OBLIGATO** (Stahly 1988). An unusual shade of creamed orange sherbet (not neon flash like some of the new ones), then accented with a medium orange beard. Tight, compact form, and thin, graceful stalks, with 2 well-placed branches, 4 buds. Slender foliage is not too tall. Good proportions overall. **ORANGE PETALS** (Niswonger 1991). A smooth, rich orange from the great parent, ‘Marmalade Skies’ (Niswonger BB), and like its parent, shows just a hint of being bitoned, with the falls a shade deeper than the standards. Clean healthy foliage and sturdy stalks. The bud count has the potential for being very good, again inherited from ‘Marmalade Skies’.

**PINK EMPRESS** (C. Palmer 1990). A nice shade of rich medium pink. Standards open but held. Falls horizontal, nicely shaped, with undertones of apricot and cream, and then deeper ambers shoulders. Bright orange beards. Good

growth habits. **ROYAL GOSSIP** (Nichols 1993). Colorful plicata, with rich wine-purple standards, almost completely saturated. Clean white falls, also almost completely covered with wine-purple stitching (banded). Good plant habits. One of the deepest plicatas in the IBs today. **SMITTEN KITTEN** (Aitken 1991) is a pastel pink amoena with impeccable form and substance – subtle coloring rather than drab or washed out. Lush blue-green foliage. One of those that is surely difficult to capture on film – it is much prettier than its pictures. **TETON VALLEY** (C. Palmer 1992) was the best of the new IBs seen this year here. This is a blocky, refined burnished saffron gold, slightly bitoned with an even deeper beard. The hafts are so wide that they touch, yet it is architecturally sound and pleasing to the eye. The plant habits are a vision of health. Show stalk branching. The texture is a velvet pile, very rare in this color group. **TROPICAL PEACH** (Willott 1992). Solid peach standards; pinker falls blushed peach at the shoulders. A mellow coral beard. Standards are upright and well held; the falls wide but simply formed. Nice color combination.

**CLASSICS:** **SNOW GNOME** (Stuart 1974); **SWIZZLE** (Hager 1972); **VELVET GLOW** (A. Brown 1975); **VOILA** (Gatty 1973).

### **STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:**

**BALLET SLIPPERS** (Willott 1987) was one of the better “pink” SDBs. A remarkably clear pink with self beards, decent form, and superb substance. Does not overbloom, as some SDBs in this color class do. **CHEERFUL ANGEL** (Nichols 1993). Clean and pert, reminiscent of the old classic, ‘Spring Bells’ (B. Jones). Open, nicely held standards in lemon-yellow. Ivory-white falls, diamond dusted and imprinted with a small thumbprint in lemon-yellow at the shoulders surrounding the beards. Horizontal falls with moderate ruffling. **CHOCOLATE CUPCAKE** (Jeffries 1989). One of the surprises for the year. A rather tall, but smaller-flowered brown two-tone, with honey-brown standards and bright rich chocolate falls, edged  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” in the standards’ color. At the top of the class in height, with 2 well spaced branches above the bulk of the foliage, 4-5 buds. Simple oval shape with flaring falls and good substance. **ERIN NICOLE** (W. Jones—NOTE: Never registered or introduced). A high-quality median from the hybridizer who gave us ‘Michael Paul’ (SDB) and ‘Avanelle’ (IB). This is a warm ivory with creamy yellow undertones, with a bit more yellow showing at the shoulders and a hint of a band on the falls. Good presentation in form, with open, well held standards showing an inner glow of ivory styles. Horizontal falls, gently waved. Crisp substance. A smaller-flowered SDB with proportionate foliage and graceful 11” stalks. **EVENING HUSH** (Nichols 1989). Magnificent deep violet with even deeper spot around deep violet beards. Horizontal falls, so heavily substanced they sometimes bounce back up! Heavy, nicely placed ruffling, with well held standards and rounded falls. The whole flower is embossed with a silken sheen that makes the flower glow. Good plant habits. **FERN’S DELIGHT** (C. Palmer 1989). Smoky lavender-blue standards. Much deeper falls, more orchid in their makeup, then heavily marked with deep violet texture veining throughout (elegant, not coarse). Pattern mindful of an arilbred. Superb form and substance. Moderately heavy ruffling, well positioned on the flower.

**FIZZGIG** (Black 1993) is a tight little honey plicata on a cream to light yellow ground. Some of the modern plicatas are getting too big and the parts too thick. This is Paul’s answer. Compact and cuddly, making a mound of honey bloom. **GYPSY STAR** (F. Dyer 1990). Superb wide, rounded russet-bronze blend, similar in color pattern to ‘Woodling’ (Sobek), with outstanding shape and substance. Purple beards, lightly tipped bronze. Horizontal falls, moderately ruffled. Standards are closed and flushed orchid-violet. Falls edged in ochre, with bronzing over most of the petals. One of the sleepers! **NURSE NANCY** (Black 1993). Upright closed standards are presented in a pure soft gentle yellow. Falls are mindful of ‘Soft Air’ (Warburton), with a sheen like a recessive white, diamond-dusted with a hint of lemon halo. Beards are deeper yellow in the heart, white at the ends. It has a good increase/bloom ratio, with staggered bloom and secondary bloom that pops up at the end of the SDB season. Elegant, with outstanding form. **TORCHY** (Shoop 1989), a much finer variety than some of the more highly-touted ones in this color range: A glowing neon orange with even deeper, fuzzy beards. The flowers are oval shaped and give a nice airy look. Foliage is wonderfully narrow and grassy, complementing the slender, graceful stalks that carry 1 branch, 3 buds. Excellent proportions. **TWEETY BIRD** (Black 1992). A cheerful yellow to apricot sherbet, networked with a delicate overlay of deeper texture veining. Bright carrot beards. Superb substance and heavy ruffling. Foliage is shorter and narrower, making for superior proportions. **WUNDERKIND** (Hager 1990) has been overlooked thusfar. It is a pure variegata with intense deepest gold standards and rich velvety oxblood red falls with absolutely no other markings or band. A deeper version of the classic, ‘Combo’ (Hager).

Several seedlings that will (should!) be seen at the Median Spree are reviewed next. Some may be 1993 introductions and named, but at the time of this writing, they’re still under number: **Paul Black 91243B** is a brilliant, nicely shape pink plicata with a tangerine beard. The standards are almost solidly colored, and then the falls show more of a silvery plicating. Decent foliage, and does not overbloom. 1 branch, 3 buds. **Paul Black 91276B** is a midnight to spectrum violet, with even deeper, near-black brushing around the near-black beards, creating a diffused spot pattern. Standards are upright and well held; the falls horizontal. The entire flower is encased in a satin sheen. 1 branch, 2-3 buds. **Paul Black 91318A** is another one of “those strange luminatas” showing up in Paul’s patch. This one is basically like ‘Troubadour’s

Song' (Black), with ochre standards, heavily marbled and infused with deeper violet. But then the falls are a solid violet, with ochre edging and marbling. Luminata white hafts and beards. Daintier, smaller, and more compact than 'Troubadour's Song', with rich color presentation. Standards are closed, showing off the marbling. Falls are horizontal to flaring, again enhancing the impact of the luminata pattern and the marbling. 1 branch, 3 buds.

**Paul Black 91328E** is the best of Paul's pink plicatas, even more beautiful than the one mentioned above. A creamy pink ground plicata, with a touch of ivory at the bright cerise beard. It is boldly stitched and banded in brilliant rose to deep pink, with heavier stitching right at the beard. Lightly ruffled. Surely a future introduction. **Paul Black A130A** was my favorite new seedling in the Med-America median patch. Clean apricot-orange sherbet with deep orange haft venations showing its plicata heritage. Bright orange beards. Superb substance, even after our cruddy weather and late freezes. Heavily ruffled but not messy. It had heavy bloom, but good strong increase to support the floriferousness. Thin graceful foliage produced stalks with 1 branch, 3 buds. **Paul Black A151A** was a ginger on ivory plicata with a tight, "finished" look to the form. The plicata markings became deeper and more intense as you swing around the bend of the top of the falls and head for the beards. Beards were deep and rich, approaching sienna! Lightly ruffled. Foliage seemed to be a bit thick but still within acceptable boundaries. Good bloom sequence, with secondary stalks appearing later in the season, as we find with 'Nurse Nancy' (Black).

**Paul Black A161A** is a mysterious off-shoot from luminata breeding that grows on you. The basic color is a gentle, almost grayed orchid-lavender, but it is then peppered and streaked (etched?) with deeper orchid plicata lines. There is a hint of luminata showing at the orchid beards. Standards are upright, with deepening purple in the midrib. Falls are horizontal, round, and lightly waved. It has a melancholy opaque glaze to the substance, most unique. Not one of the knock-your-socks-off seedlings in the patch, yet I found myself drawn back to it every time I visited the garden, and it became one of my favorites. **Monty Byers H39-1**, a showy, multi-haloed plicata, obviously from 'Chubby Cheeks' (Black) bloodlines. A white-based plicata, with the first halo in soft blue peppering/feathering, then the outer  $\frac{1}{4}$ " a golden-yellow halo of stitching. Somewhat out of proportion (too big/too tall), but nonetheless very attractive. The beards are deep gold in the heart, changing to powder blue as it reaches the part of the fall visible to the eye. Wide and rounded, with excellent substance. **Sterling Innerst 2844-3**, a warm saffron yellow with a velvet texture. Beards are deeper, approaching orange. The mink overlay gives a different look. Lightly ruffled, with average form and substance. Standards are open and well held; falls horizontal. Excellent carrying power in the garden. **Jeffries J86-D5-RB** is a clean, different chocolate-brown self, small-flowered and shorter (just above MDB proportions). Lavender beards tipped deep gold. Superb form and substance, with good color saturation. Unfortunately, it nearly bloomed out. Very worthy, if it'll settle down. Wonder if the RB stands for "rebloom"?

**Marky Smith 920A**: Surely dubbed the busiest plant on the place. Floriferous and a weed-of-a-grower, with 10 stalks and 5 rather thick increases left over on a first-year planting. It bloomed and bloomed, and survived the late freezes very well. A beacon across the garden – it glows. Could be described as a deeper 'Lemon Rings' (Aitken), with brilliant yellow standards, then chaste white falls, glittered with diamond dusting and wide yellow shoulders and a distinctive band in the standards' lemon-yellow tones. Fat, sassy flowers open well, in spite of the hafts very nearly overlapping. Falls are horizontal to slightly flaring, showing off the neat pattern. Admittedly at the upper limits, with stalks at 14" and 1-2 branches, 3-4 buds. **Marky Smith 925B**, a full sib to 'Firestorm' (from the Pick of the Litter Awards), yet it is a luminous brassy yellow self with a fat sassy deep gold beard. Good plant habits, with foliage that is resilient, bouncing back after being frosted by the late freezes.

## MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED

**CHILD BRIDE** (L. Miller 1990) is a dainty pumila in warm ivory with light yellow infusions and a yellow beard. Rounded form on a tiny flower, a major advancement in this line. Great growth habits. **Marky Smith 925A** is another full sib to 'Firestorm', but this is a dainty, compact flower with true-MDB proportions. 6" stalks, smaller, grassy foliage with good vigor. Standards are deepest gold to russet, lightly sanded and stitched tan to copper. Rounded, horizontal falls are a lighter golden yellow, even lighter in the center, then sanded at the hafts in tan.

**CLASSICS:** APRIL BALLET (C. Palmer 1973); CURIO (Hager 1972); VELVET TOY (Dunbar 1972).

## ARILBREDS AND ARILBRED-MEDIANS

**KALIFA'S ROBE** (Hager 1990) is one of the finer releases from Ben in the past few years. A rich fuchsia-orchid, complemented with very refined, formal, huge near-black signals covering a bronzed-black beard. **SOLOMON'S GLORY** (Nichols 1987) was one of the outstanding Median Spree guests, a great arilbred-median. Clean, bright brassy yellow with no speckling or other colors to distort the principal color. Accented by a prominent, neat thumbprint in the falls in brick

red. Then, a pure solid gold beard sits right in the big-middle of the signal! Outstanding form and substance, with good clean foliage and increase. 1-2 branches on 20" stalks. Survived the late freezes with verve. **TURKISH HEART** (Shockey 1990) has a look like the famous 'Syrian Moon' (Brizendine), with clear white standards and crisp light yellow falls, then boldly bedazzled with a huge signal in reddish-brown. Magnificent substance and shape, of course – it's a Shockey!

## SPURIAS

I'm just now beginning to grow Spurias on a serious basis again, adding about 2 dozen to the collection this year. Most of these reviewed were seen in the spectacular planting at the Ft. Worth Botanical Gardens in the convention beds: **CHOCOLATE FUDGE** (Niswonger 1988) is a healthy, rich, worthy chocolate with a diffused signal patch in the falls in burnished bronze-gold. Substance supreme, and was taking the Texas heat in fine fashion. **DRESS CIRCLE** (Hager 1985) is my favorite Spuria today. Louis Scott has a knockout stalk at the Sooner State beardless show this spring that was a contender for best-in-class. Glorious blue standards atop warm yellow falls that have a double-halo of white and then a heavier band (the circle?) of the standards' blue on the very edge. The very best form with outstanding substance. Mauve isn't one of my favorite iris colors, but it looks good in Spurias. **SONORAN CABALLERO** (Wickenkamp 1989) is a dusty mauve with a smoky mysterious look to it. Very tall, and it held up well with good plant habits. **SONORAN SENORITA** (Wickenkamp 1989) had a magnificent show-stopper clump in Ft. Worth. A pure golden yellow self that simply did not burn.

**SUN SINGER** (Hager 1991) is the best of the new yellows on the market today, and there were most impressive first-year stalks of it at the Ft. Worth show, quite tall for "new bloom". Purest sunshine yellow without any other color pigmentation or even gold. No signal. Florets were beautifully ruffled and even almost laced, with branching and placement like the Queen-of-All-Times, 'Archie Owen' (Hager). **TOUCH OF LACE** (Jenkins 1991) had ivory standards, slightly deeper falls, with yellow signals. Gently laced and ruffled, with 2-3 open at once on all the stalks. A most impressive sight. Super plant habits. **WHITE SHIMMER** (Jenkins 1991) was a classic study in understated elegance. Akimbo white standards; 'Ila Crawford' (Hager) type falls (not quite as heavily ruffled, but definitely there). A dime-spot yellow signal pattern graced the center of the falls. And **ZULU CHIEF** (Jenkins 1992), still under number in the gardens as Seedling #81-3C, in deepest brown (almost approaching the black of 'Crow Wing'). Virtually no signals, with just a few brushings of gold under the claw. Good plant habits, with superior placement of buds. Absolutely no indication of virusing, a problem all-too-common in dark Spurias.

**CLASSICS:** **ARCHIE OWEN** (Hager 1970); **CROW WING** (Ferguson 1972); **DAWN CANDLE** (Ferguson 1966); **ELIXER** (Hager 1964).

## LOUISIANAS

Throughout this review, I have intentionally left out (for the most part) those varieties that have been reviewed the past couple of years in Contemporary Views. If I didn't, as "wordy" as I am, I never would get finished writing, and you would have given up reading this epistle many pages ago (if you haven't already!). So many of the Louisianas in particular (especially the Australian introductions) were emphasized the past couple of editions. I assure you, in most cases, previous selections were still mighty fine this year!

This was a great show year for the Louisiana iris. I hauled several stalks all the way to the Ponca City and Tulsa shows, in addition to entering very heavily in the first annual Sooner State Iris Society Mostly-Beardless Show in Oklahoma City. I won Bronze Medals at the Ponca City and Tulsa shows and Sweepstakes at the Oklahoma City show, almost exclusively with Louisiana entries. Here were the winners from these shows, entered by myself and other enthusiasts in Oklahoma:

**TIME KEEPER** (Taylor 1991) was First Runnerup for me at the Ponca City show. This gorgeous orchid-pink bitone has the ruffling almost as intense as 'Margaret Lee' (Taylor), not quite as boldly stated or as broad and overlapping. In some ways, it might even be prettier, and is a very good approach at "pink" in Louisianas. It has a light, airy look. **NATURAL WONDER** (Taylor 1991) was Third Runnerup for me at the same show. A strange muted dusty mauve-pink, much more "dulled" in color than 'Time Keeper', but hauntingly beautiful. It forms small star-signals in yellow on all 6 petals.

The Tulsa show was where the interest in Louisianas really became very apparent. Of the Top Five on the Queen's Court, three were Louisianas, and all three were from different exhibitors! Bravo! Dorothy Howard won a very close First Runnerup with the glamorous **BELLEVUE'S ANGELA** (Bertinot 1984), one of the great 'Clara Goula' (Arny) offspring Neil Bertinot has released. Incredible that they haven't received more attention. This one is a tall, broad, flat creamy white to pale yellow with ruffles supreme (of course!). Second Runnerup was won by me with one of my all-time favorite Taylor introductions, **MALIBU MAGIC** (1991), a soft grayed light blue with an intricate networking of deeper blue texture veining shot throughout the flower. It is shimmering – and very popular! And then Dale Satterwhite won Fourth Runnerup with a glorious, rich specimen of **SATCHMO** (Dunn 1987), a black-purple so flat you almost couldn't see it on the elevated level of the Queen's Court. A flawless flower.

Then, the next day at the big Oklahoma City show, the Dyers won with that stalk of **HURRICANE PARTY** (Haymon 1988), already mentioned in the awards section. I had been watching that stalk all week! I didn't think it was going to make it, and actually, it has so much substance that the two newest flowers (those in the middle of the stalk) had falls that kept "popping back up" – a defect at that point in the judging, but a stalk that still just could not be denied! What an iris! I also received the Second Runnerup with a graceful stalk of **MIDNIGHT DRAMA** (Taylor 1991), an ultra-rich full purple to spectrum violet from 'Helen Naish' (Taylor). It shows a lighter underneath side and light green star-signals on all 6 parts, not as boldly applied as some others. Wide and flat with rippling ruffles and a shimmering sheen. It is an average increaser, but unfortunately nearly bloomed out, a defect very rare in Taylor releases. The Fourth Runnerup was my specimen of **JAZZ BALLET** (Taylor 1989), the famous Australasian Dykes Medalist that is now becoming popular in the States also. This was the first year this full violet had acclimated and really showed off, and it produced a stunning clump full of show stalks. Heavy ruffling like Ghio's bubble-ruffling, adorned with large, bold, bright yellow signals on all 6, forming a star in the heart. Makes whopper-plants with average increase. Velvet texture.

Others at this show that were serious contenders for the Top 5 were **GLADIATOR'S GIFT** (Taylor 1991), a chocolate fudge with leathery substance, opening 3 at once with smaller, compact flowers on a show-stalk supreme; **CAMMERAY** (Taylor 1987), a shimmering 'Tide's In' (Schreiner) blue with a huge flower on an extremely tall, imposing stalk; **LINA** (Taylor 1989), the mystery-iris you love to love or love to hate – no indifference here; **SEA LORD** (Taylor 1991), the richest blue on the market with impeccable form; and **WHITE UMBRELLA** (Taylor 1991), an extroverted white with formal candelabra branching and huge flowers.

### **AMERICAN-BRED LOUISIANAS:**

The people-pleaser in the Blanchard garden was **BUBBLEGUM BALLERINA** (Haymon 1990), a colorful bitone in bubblegum pink (no other Louisiana with quite this color on the market) and light ruffling. Looked very good in Texas too, where it was just as popular. Graced with a diffused sunburst spray in the signal area in yellow and white. **KITTY D** (Haymon 1990) made its debut in Oklahoma, and although the stalks weren't up to the usual Dyer show-quality, we whacked 2 stalks and hauled them to Tulsa and Oklahoma City for the folks to see. A clean pure orchid-lilac with a distinct bright yellow signal. Extremely tough and resilient (just like the real Kitty D!). **JUST HELENE** (Mertzweiller 1991) was just eloquent, reminiscent in color pattern of the famous 'Easter Tide' (Arny) but with a heavier intensification of deep orchid texture veining sketched over the whole flower. The blooming habits are gratefully a drastic improvement over the double-Debaillon winner, which never blooms on a normal stalk, even in good years, in Oklahoma (it is always aborted, with its 2 buds blooming in the foliage!). 'Just Helene' is not as flat a look, but more of a butterfly effect. **SPANISH SUNSET** (Rowland 1987) is one I had missed along the way, seen this year at Farron Campbell's in Garland, TX. It is a tight, compact burnt orange to Spanish orange with a tiny nondescript gold line signal. Unusual color, and seemed to be holding its color well in the heat.

There is a trio of new tet released for Joe Mertzweiller via Cordon Bleu Farms in 1992. I missed the bloom in Texas of the great yellow, **PROFESSOR BARBARA**, but the other two were in full glory at Marie Caillet's. **PROFESSOR MARTA MARIE** (yep, another one named in honor of Miss Mari!) is a rich rose-pink with a yellow signal bleeding into a modified sunburst ray pattern in white. It has 3 branches, and the thick-substanced flowers open well at all positions. More refined, compact, and shorter than then darker "Professors". **PROFESSOR NEIL** is a huge, bold rosy-red, with a bit more rose showing through than the very-red 'Professor Jim' (Mertzweiller). It has a definite halo in cream, and is fully flat. Bold husky plants.

Seedlings to watch for, seen in Texas this year: **Granger FB-Self-88-8** (stands for "Freddie Boy selfed") at the Ft. Worth Botanical Garden, was stunning, even on first-year bloom. Rosy-pink standards with deeper veining appliquéd. Falls are bright deep rose-pink, a dazzling two-tone effect. The signal is a diffused chartreuse-yellow with tiger-striping of rose throughout it. Dynamite form, with standards almost remaining upright, and perfectly round falls that are somewhat cupped. Superb substance and color retention. **Mertzweiller 74-22**, a diploid that is now named **CAJUN SUNRISE**, to be introduced by Cordon Bleu Farms, San Marcos, CA, in Fall 1993: SIZZLE! KA-ZAAM! An infamous seedling with a great storyline behind it (it was nearly declare extinct once upon a time, found again, and sent to Marie Caillet's "foster home" to rescue and build up the stock in her "pond" for introduction – it worked!). Nothing like it on the market, and it will turn heads! Basically a bold brick red with a super-nova of a sunburst ray pattern in brilliant yellow exploding from the heart onto the falls. Then, a splendidous, scintillating golden-yellow edge in laced gold – like a high-priced tet daylily. *Avante garde*. Completely sunfast, and a decent grower, now that it has had a new lease on life. It displays 4 branches, formally placed and timed so that all open properly and sequentially. Ironically, later in the year, I saw a red tet daylily seedling by Jack Carpenter in his garden in Center, TX, which was the spittin' image of this Mertzweiller Louisiana iris!

Also at Marie "Nightingale" Caillet's for "therapy" and evaluation was Joe Mertzweiller's interploid seedling, **INT-DT-87-34** (named **CREOLE RHAPSODY** and introduced by Farron Campbell for Joe in 1998), from a cross-of-a tet with a dip parent – even more difficult than straight tet breeding. Joe was there when we visited Marie's, and this one made him beam. He considers this his greatest accomplishment in his 3 or 4 decades of breeding. Standards are light pink, heavily veined in rose. Tet-looking round flat falls are a true-rose, sprayed with a yellow circular sunburn ray pattern at the signal, in a perfect half-circle, as found in the tet Siberians. The rose veining is so heavy it nearly looks like a plicata in the standards, and they remain nearly upright. Falls are so wide they touch at the shoulders. And lastly, **Norris T88-AH**, a glowing midnight blue-spectrum violet tet from the hybridizer that released the great 'Mentida'. Actually the color and pizzazz is similar to 'Mentida', but in a tet version, except a deeper, pulsating blue, with silky texture and the thick substance you expect in a tet. Tattooed with brilliant 'Ann Chowning' (Chowning) yellow signals that stand out in contrast against the royal velvet pile. We hope to see this one introduced in the near future (it was named **KENTUCKY CAJUN** and introduced by Farron Campbell for Sam in 1995).

**CLASSICS:** **BAYOU COMUS** (Arny 1969); **DR. DORMAN** (Conger 1973); **MARTIN REDMOND** (Arny 1971); **MEDORA WILSON** (Granger 1972); **UPTIGHT** (Arny 1971); **BLACK WIDOW** (MacMillan 1953).

#### **AUSTRALIAN-BRED LOUISIANAS:**

As mentioned earlier, only those not previously reviewed are highlighted in this edition. The work from Down Under continues to dominate the scene, and it is simply impossible for the supply to meet the current demand in America.

**HONOURED GUEST** (Taylor 1992) is a round, ruffled velvet purple with a lighter edge. Another one of those with the fascinating buds that are light-colored – like 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner TB) – and then open to the rich royal color. Especially neat when viewing the contrast on the show bench. Yellow star-signals on all 6 petals, with a muted ivory glow in the heart in the stylearms that adds a soothing touch. Flower size is small and more compact than those like 'Jazz Ballet' (Taylor). **LASER SHOW** (Taylor 1992) was my favorite of the 1992 releases not previously bloomed in Oklahoma. A vibrant color-gem, with creamy standards heavily marbled with magenta and mauve, and falls that are a solid, darker magenta with a cream edge and lighter stylearms. The whole flower has a ruby undersheen that sends sparks a-flyin' from the flowers. Tight, compact, flat flowers. **LINA** (Taylor 1989), alluded to in the show report, is a bizarre release that has been rather controversial here. Some think it's among the most beautiful of the Aussies; others think it is muddy and down-right ugly and wouldn't have it! It is certainly a muted blend, somewhat bitoned, in soft smoky orchid-violet tones, all encased in a velvet finish with heavy, tight ruffling. But there is a definite undercasing in pink that really makes the flower unusual. All I have to say is that it must be bewitched, because you'll find yourself drawn back to it time and time again. Understated elegance.

**POSEIDON'S POOL** (Taylor 1990) was a late arrival here – we didn't import it at the same time as 'Dural White Butterfly' (Taylor), 'All Agaze' (Taylor), and some of the others from the 1990 crop. This is very popular Down Under, a tall, large medium blue about the saturation of 'Sea Lord' (Taylor), but with a nice, looser, more expanded version from the formal compact look (either way is attractive, but I personally prefer the look of 'Sea Lord'). In addition to ruffling, the petals of 'Poseidon's Pool' are serrated – very unusual and rare, usually only associated with 'Dr. Dorman' (Conger) derivatives. A vigorous grower. **QUIET HARBOUR** (Taylor 1992) has a compact look similar to 'Honoured Guest' (Taylor), saturated with more blue in its makeup than royal violet. The styles are different from other blues – white, but outlined in the principal blue color. **SEA CONSUL** (Taylor 1991) has been perhaps overshadowed by the extreme enthusiasm for 'Sea Lord', released the same year. An ethereal sky to medium blue, with a white heart and a rim on all parts. It is a weed for us, *a la* 'Clyde Redmond' (Arny). Extremely tall on rather willowy stalks that nonetheless hold up well under most conditions.

A sleeper for us was **SELENA** (Taylor 1991), a bit slow to reacclimate from the Southern to Northern Hemisphere, but a good performer now that it has settled down from the transition. It is a suave cream, with a mint glow in its texture veins in the heart. A tight compact flower with the flatness and ruffling from its father, 'Koorawatha' (Taylor). **TOP START** (Taylor 1991) is one of the few Taylor releases that has had difficulty growing. Thusfar, it has the obstinance of a 'Charles Arny III' (Arny), but so sexy and luxurious. It's worth the hassles and extra patience. Basically a pastel blue-violet bitone/amoena, but it has glistening diamond-dusting that has been rare in this color range – voluptuous in shimmering satin. Don't let the negative comments discourage you from trying it – get it and enjoy it – if you can find it available for sale anywhere!

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## **CONTEMPORARY VIEWS—1993**

**Perry Dyer**

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

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

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

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

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

### **AWARD WINNERS**

1. The **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**, given to the Best New Iris seen: **DRUM ROLL** (Hager 1992) was selected as the finest of several high-quality blues released recently by The Master. Deeply channeled, well positioned rolling ruffles give motion to the pure, rich mid-blue color. Then the whole flower has an undercurrent in violet that gives added exuberance to the ensemble. Self beards are tipped a harmonious powder blue. Outstanding show stalks with formal candelabra branching, with 4 branches plus spur and even some lower rebranching. Although it will WOW them on the

show bench, consistently opening 3 at once, it has backup buds up and down, making it a worthy garden iris, too. It also produces secondary late-season stalks that extend the period of bloom. But this added bonus does not jeopardize the healthy plant habits, leaving plenty of clean, disease resistant plants for next year. Broad florets are tightly constructed, in spite of the large size and heavy ruffling. The flower has substance supreme, and the whole flower is accentuated with diamond dusting.

#### **Runnersup:**

**EVELYN HARRIS** (McWhirter 1992) is reminiscent of a modern, healthy version of the old Dykes winner, 'Skywatch' (Benson 1964) which was one of the most beautiful but most despised Dykes winners of all times, according to the growers around here. It had an infamous reputation of being extremely slow in growth; it bloomed, on the average, every third year; and had very low bud count. 'Evelyn Harris' captures this same elegant orchid color (perhaps a touch deeper) and adds elaborate deep ruffling on a show stalk with 10 buds, opening 2 to 3 at once with well timed backup buds. Healthy, strong plant habits, with vigorous increase producing a floriferous clump. The IB, **CEE JAY** (Lankow-Aitken 1992), had received much pre-introductory ballyhoo as being the best of the 'Chubby Cheeks' (Black, SDB) kids, and the first bloom here lived up to the expectations, although it isn't firmly acclimatized to the Midwest yet. It is a broad, full violet on clean white plic, with the impeccable form and style of its famous super-parent, 'Chubby Cheeks'. The band is wide and rich, and the color contrast between the pattern and the white base is outstanding. Stalks and plant habits appear to be flawless thusfar. **SESSIONS** (Cowdery 1992) is the "sleeper" in this group, and what a pleasant surprise. It is a shimmering, full blown pale lilac, gracefully fading to diamond dusted white in the center of the falls, capped with a brilliant coral-red beard. Broad and blowsy, adorned with heavy lace. Yet the flowers have the capability to open correctly, consistently. Notably healthy plant habits with a fine show stalk, opening 3 at once. Drop-dead gorgeous!

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

#### **Runnersup:**

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

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

### Runnersup:

**TWEETY BIRD** (Black 1992), the Pick of the Litter Award winner from the 1991 review, made a smashing showing at the Median Spree, winning the In-Region Best-Introduced Award by a landslide! In its own way, as stunning as 'Pele', but with light sherbet colors in tangerine and pineapple, topped off with a bright orange beard. Fat, sassy flowers have mint texture veining and are heavily ruffled. Very vigorous plants provide a generous display of blooms with excellent sequencing. **LUCY PAYENS** (Taylor 1993, LA) is very close to a variegata in appearance, brilliant and flashy, with the flamboyance and personality of its cousin, 'Margaret Lee' (Taylor 1992). Taller, with better branching and ability to open lower blossoms. Its overall approach in color comes more from the brown side rather than the orchid side, such as 'Margaret Lee'. Creamy apricot standards are heavily marked with a red flush in the midribs. The wide, round, heavily ruffled falls are a rich purple-red. For me in Blanchard this year, the colors were more like a 2-tone brown, with the depth approaching the richness of 'Gladiator's Gift' (Taylor 1991). **PINK SAPPHIRE** (Hamblen 1992) I nearly missed. As with so many from Melba's line, it is a late bloomer, coming out after most of the crowd has gone home to rest up from the TB season's hectic pace. It is the culmination of a line of pink/blue bicolors that goes all the way back to 'Touche' (Hamblen 1969). The standards are the pinkest and clearest yet seen in this attempt, and the falls truly as close to blue as seen in this color combo. All set off with a bright raspberry beard (orange beard tipped violet). Shimmering satin finish.

4. The **SUN BELT AWARD** is given to the Best Proven Variety, i.e., one that has been on the market long enough to be thoroughly tested in the Midwest (at least 4 years): **RARE TREAT** (Schreiner 1987) is a marked improvement of its mother, 'Blue Staccato' (Gibson 1977), which was in and of itself a fine iris. Chaste purest white ground is carefully stitched in a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " band of inky blue. Slender, graceful stalks are strong enough to hold up 3 moderate-sized, lightly ruffled flowers open at once. A great show iris with stunning carrying power when left in the garden. Super-fine plant habits. Deserving of its Award of Merit in 1992.

### Runnersup:

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

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

### Runnersup:

Two from Barry Blyth have not been grown and praised adequately here in America: **PASS THE WINE** (1985) is a glorified, modern version of the great old classic, 'Camelot Rose' (Tompkins 1965), with smoky pink standards atop

velvet-smooth falls colored in a rich plum-wine. The broad, impressive flowers are topped with a brilliant tangerine-red beard. Great plant habits, producing husky well-branched stalks. **MAGHAREE** (1986) is one of the richest from the pink amoena lines. Standards are basically white, but heavily infused with an orange-pink glow in the midribs. Broad falls are a luminous peach brandy blend with an elegant, distinctive halo in white. Orange beards. It has a neon glow in its undertoning. This is one where I think a “strange” name has hurt its popularity. Neil Bertinot from Opelousas, Louisiana (just north of “mecca” – Lafayette) has produced several high quality Louisiana irises, but most, with the exception of the great black, ‘Jeri’ (1985), have gone virtually unheralded outside of Acadiana. **BELLEVUE COQUETTE** (1985) is one of my favorite varieties coming from the famous ‘Clara Goula’ (Arny 1978). It is a shimmering, deeply ruffled flaxen blue, with mysterious undertones in violet that add life to the flower. In cold, wet years, the coloration can be a bit “muddy”, but in a “normal” year, it is sheer elegance. Strong vigorous plants produce magnificent show stalks with great positioning.

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

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

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

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

## **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

**ROSSETTO** (Augusto Bianco 1995) marked the debut of a new, talented young hybridizer from Italy, winning 3<sup>rd</sup> Place out of 105 entries in this year's Premio Firenze competition in Florence, Italy. It also won Best Italian Entry and Best Red. A wide, machismo oxblood to scarlet red from breeding different from any work currently being done in America. It has superb branching and bud count like the Stevens reds, such as 'Clearfire' and 'Heat Pump', but with even thicker, stronger stalks. Double budded, with 3 branches and spur on some stalks. The thick substance presents the rich glowing red with a velvet pile. Robust blue-green foliage is an added plus. Name pending, subject to formal registration/acceptance with the AIS Registrar in 1994. Current plans are that it will be introduced to the U.S. in 1995 by Yours Truly for Mr. Bianco. Two red seedlings in Ft. Worth looked most promising: **Sutton 5-18** is a lilting full maroon-wine self, tightly constructed with swirling standards and deeply ruffled horizontal falls. The flower has even deeper texture veins throughout and a self beard tipped chocolate. **Gartman 86-20** is a bitoned red with open upright standards in medium red, atop deeper falls with a hint of a lighter halo. Frilly style arms have a heavy infusion of gold. Beards are deep bronze. The peppering of white in the shoulder area suggests it has a plicata heritage, and adds distinctiveness. [NOTE: Named **REDWOOD GROVE** and introduced in 1996.]

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

## **BROWNS:**

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

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

## **APRICOTS TO ORANGES:**

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

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

## **PINKS:**

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

ruffles) are carved into the flower for a different look. Thick as leather; were the waves tighter and closer together, the flower would surely have difficulty opening.

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

### **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **BLUES:**

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

somehow each has distinctiveness and personality of its own. This one is an ultramarine blue, wide and ruffled with a lacquer finish. Rich blue-green foliage confirms its supreme plant habits.

**CLOUD BALLET** (Fort 1990) was finally seen in an established clump, and it was impressive! Fresh flowers, especially on a cloudy day, are a cool, pale azure blue. But look out! Let the sun come out, and magic happens, right before your very eyes! The heart of both the standards and falls gracefully fades to a pure crystalline white. Then all parts retain the azure blue on the edges. Crystal chandelier! Captivating! Its only notable defect is a tendency to produce short, rather clubby stalks that lose some of the branching/flowers in the lush foliage. This one is better in a newer planting rather than a large, established clump, I believe. In addition to the Contemporary Award winner, 'Drum Roll', Ben Hager had 2 other choice blues: **CALM SEA** (1992) is similar to 'Drum Roll', but not quite as deeply saturated or infiltrated with violet undertoning. Moderate ruffling with show stalks supreme (4 to 5 branches, rebranching, and 12 buds). **BIG SKY** (1990) has similar form and stalks, but in a clearer, lighter, simpler flower with a silken sheen, with gentler ruffling.

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

### **WHITES TO NEAR-WHITES:**

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

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

### **CREAMS TO YELLOWS:**

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

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

## **PLICATAS:**

Of course, the Iris World is getting ready to be “revolutionized” with the release in 1994 of the 2 deep luminatas from Keith Keppel, ‘Spirit World’ and ‘Mind Reader’, reviewed in the Pick of the Litter Awards. Keith has some other very nice things happening in his diverse plicata lines. In general, we are starting to see stronger, more resilient and healthy, rot-resistant releases from him. It is very obvious that he is cognizant of the ongoing problem with these fancy plicatas, and is being cruelly scrupulous in his selection process. **FILM FESTIVAL** (Keppel 1993) is a bravado mauved-wine on buff plic with a stunning burnt henna beard. The standards are fluted, held upright, and are almost completely saturated in color. The falls are heavily ruffled, horizontal, and heavily banded in a deeper, purer wine, then irregularly sanded into the ivory heart. Robust, blue-green plants producing sturdy, well-branched stalks, all reminiscent of the great ‘Raspberry Fudge’ (Keppel 1989). **DISTANT ROADS** (Keppel 1991) I personally don’t care for, in the color patterns and combinations, but it is a fine iris. Shapely, domed standards are a muted ochre-olive, heavily flushed in violet. A small white patch in the center of the falls gives way to a broad plicata band in plum and violet, with peppering infiltrating the white patch, which is also dissected with a wide belly stripe. Broad flowers are shapely and moderately waved. Outstanding Keppel stalks, with 3 branches plus spur.

**POWER SURGE** (Ghio 1991), was probably the best newer fancy plicata in the Blanchard garden this year, an improvement over the zesty but low-budded **INDISCREET** (Ghio 1988). It is a gregarious plic with deep salmon to apricot ground, heavily saturated in rich magenta stitching and peppering. Much better branching than many of its contemporary ‘Gigolo’ (Keppel) kids, with thick sturdy stalks. Deep blue-green foliage appears to be healthy and rot resistant. **FLAMING SUN** (Carr 1989) was yet another “sleeper” discovered at the Ft. Worth gardens. It is a brilliant plicata from ‘Flamenco’ (Keppel), with clean solid sunshine yellow standards. Falls are heavily ruffled, horizontal, with a yellow base patch heavily sanded and stitched in brown and red. Thick deep gold beards add to the brightness. Excellent substance and sunfast. **RASPBERRY SNOW** (Sutton 1991) was most definitely a pleasant surprise. Ivory standards are almost completely covered in a clear, happy raspberry-pink. Snow white falls are carefully edged in a  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” band of raspberry, with more peppering and a “V” at the shoulders right around the bronzed sienna beards. The form is tight, with artistic, billowy ripple-ruffles.

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

## **AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, AND NEGLECTAS:**

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

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

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

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

(B. Jones 1972).

### **BICOLORS:**

**TANGO BRAVO** (Blyth 1987) was a sleeper for me; I had never seen it before. It is a zesty bi-product of pink amoena breeding, with glowing apricot standards flushed coral and falls 2 tones deeper, complemented with a bright orange beard. However, the whole flower is underlaid with a strange chartreuse underglow, giving an eerie look to the flower. Unlike anything I've ever seen in TBs. Brighter, with a rounded, full form, is **ENGLISH CHARM** (Blyth 1989), perhaps technically a peach amoena, has too much color to be formally recognized as an amoena. Standards are a warm cream, heavily pulsated with a rich apricot presence. Falls are smooth medium apricot, encircled with a distinctive  $\frac{1}{4}$ " edge in cream. The whole flower has a glow like its parent, 'Cameo Wine' (Blyth 1983). **DIFFERENT APPROACH** (Innerst 1992) is similar to its mother, 'Dualtone' (O. Brown 1977) in coloring, but with richer tones. Standards are a full pure peach, gently waved with carved wax substance. Falls are a translucent lavender-blue, again elegantly waved and waxy. There is a blending of peach in the shoulders around orange beards, pulling the 2 principal colors together. Outstanding strong, thick, well-branched stalks. The only problem observed as that the clump evaluated was blooming out. Nonetheless, so good it is "worth the risk".

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

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

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

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

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

### **SPACE AGE:**

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

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

## MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

### MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

**CAROL’S DREAM** (Dunderman 1990) is a smooth, refined light blue, paling in the center of the falls around soft yellow beards. Rounded, simple form adds a touch of class to this iris. **PETITE MONET** (Steele 1990) was a pleasant surprise – a delicate plicata from a new hybridizer from North Carolina. It is a crisp creamy white, heavily marked blue-violet in the standards. The falls have narrower stitching and peppering, more concentrated in the shoulders around light yellow beards. A child of the famous ‘Carolyn Rose’ (Dunderman 1971), with the same fine stalks and plant habits. Excellent proportions throughout. **WELCH’S REWARD** (Welch-Hall 1988) made a fine showing in Blanchard, proving its worth as a Williamson-White winner. A smart color combo, with smooth yellow standards contrasted by rich red-purple falls, carefully edged with a distinctive halo of yellow. Outstanding plant habits, and very floriferous, with good timing of the many buds.

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

### BORDER BEARDED:

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

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

seen quite this shade in any pink – not salmon, not shrimp, not even a screaming hot pink – but it is intense, and then the whole flower is set afire with an infusion of apricot in the lacinated style arms. YOW-ZA! OOMPHA! And a great name!

**ORINOCO FLOW** (Bartlett 1993), from England, has the basic colors of its mother, ‘Blue Staccato’ (Gibson 1977), but in a scaled-down version, more floriferous, and with heavier markings in the standards. The base color is pure white, and the stitching is a glowing indelible ink in indigo. It might be right on that imaginary dotted line between classes, between BB and TB, but an occasional “overflow” won’t keep me from growing this wonderful new plic. Keith Keppel may not have “invented” the amoena-plicata, but he is the one who took the pattern, refined it, and made it palatable. **PETITE BALLET** (1992) is a classy amoena-plic, with light flax blue standards with a minuscule patch of white peeking through in the midribs. Broad billowy falls show much more white in the centers, with an extremely wide (at least 1”) band in bright rich violet-blue, and a cute belly stripe extending down the center from the soft powder blue beards. The dance is in the ruffles, moderate in the closed standards, and extremely heavy and deep in the falls, which makes the plicata pattern even more lively. As with its taller cousins, outstanding stalks, with 3 to 4 branches, well spaced in spite of the shortened height of its class. **RINKY DINK** (Keppel 1993) is a diminutive version of the ‘Gigolo’ (Keppel 1984) line, mindful of a brighter “bad boy” ‘Shenanigan’ (Keppel 1985, BB) or ‘Peccadillo’ (Keppel 1983, BB). Downright decadent, if you ask me, and not even ashamed! Bright apricot/peach standards are nearly solid in color, closed, and heavily ruffled, with an infusion of muted rose sneaking in. Horizontal, lilting falls are complemented with exotic ruffling, to go with the joyful color patterning – a salmon-based plicata, almost completely covered in bright rose-plum-wine (“coronation purple” – duh!), in all different ways – sanding, stitching, peppering, mottling, streaking. A burnt brick red just sets it off! **Keith Keppel 87-60A**, seen at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden, is a haunting luminata, much more subtle than the TBs ‘Spirit World’ and ‘Mind Reader’, but nonetheless just as appealing. A muted mauve, slightly deeper in the falls, with shallow haloes in cream around both the standards and falls. Soft apricot style arms. The beard is white, heavily tipped coral, deepening as you go into the heart, sitting atop a dime spot white luminata. Creamy-pink washing bleeds through and comes to the surface amidst the mauve coloring. Tight form, gently waved so as not to disturb the impact of the luminata pattern, all presented on tidy show stalks opening 2 to 3 at once. {NOTE: This seedling was named **LOW SPIRITS**, introduced in 1994}.

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

### **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED**S:

The shining star in the “post-Median Spree” bloom was **BRIGHTEN UP** (Hager 1990), a dazzling, sizzling bright orange with screaming orange beards, thick and sassy. Notably brighter, richer, and with tighter form than the similar ‘All Right’ (Hager 1988). Totally sunfast here, and so bright you see it from clear across the garden. Now that’s “carrying power”!

**DREAM WALTZ** (Willott 1990) is totally unique from any IB on the current market. A cold pure white with a definitely presence of lace on all parts – not heavy, just a light sprinkling (heavy lace on such a small flower would look kinda silly, wouldn’t it?). The shape of the flowers is more oval than rounded, but still pleasing and acceptable. In a different style is **LADY DAY** (Lankow 1990), a warm, almost creamy white with chiffon substance and bright yellow contrasting beards. Form is extremely wide, with well held, strong, open standards to show you the warm inner glow. The verdict is still out on **LEVITY** (Aitken 1991), but was good enough to deserve mention. Similar in color and pattern to its parent, ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black 1985, SDB), but then set off with an intense, near-black beard tipped bronze. Unfortunately, the form has been inconsistent thusfar, with rather strange, almost twisted standards sometimes, but it may prove to be most worthy after it acclimates better here.

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

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

### **STANDARD DWARF BEARDED**S:

Two ‘Pepper Mill’ (Hager) type plics from Ben Hager did very well in the Median Spree gardens: **ANECDOKE** (1992) is a brilliant yellow, heavily banded in rich maroon to nearly chocolate brown. Bright, thick yellow beards add to the clarity

of color. With a pedigree that is half pink/pink plicata, there's all kinds of breeding potential here. From traditional plic breeding is **CHUM** (1991), a more muted effect overall, with a "duller" base color, stitched in a lighter toasty brown. These 2 are different, and both have high quality with excellent form. **COPPER GEM** (C. Palmer 1993) is a totally new color in dwarfs, and it is an enticing new look. Coming from Earl Roberts pink SDB breeding, with a little bit of Barry Blyth pink plic work thrown in to confuse the issue, we have a luminous coppery melon-orange, slightly deeper in the falls. The falls also have a hint of a lighter halo. Beards are red, but then tipped light blue, harking back to 'Dove Wings' (Roberts 1968). Shape is not a "finished product" – more of an elliptical oval, but not offensive. A great new color array. Another new one from Cleo was very attractive at the Sooner State Median Spree show: **EBONY EYES** (C. Palmer 1993), a suave near-black bitone, with shiny red-purple standards, then deeper falls with a jet black spot. A bright rich purple beard is very full and thick, and emphasizes the richness of color saturation. This one also has more of an oval-shaped form. **NUT RUFFLES** (Lankow-Aitken 1992) was an excellent first-year performer for me, and I won Best SDB (and First Runnerup to Queen) at the SSIS show with it. It is a captivating mahogany-chestnut to red with an even deeper (richer) spot in the falls. Outstanding form, substance, and plant habits. Extremely floriferous, but with plenty of increase remaining for next year. It appears the colors are going to be variable, with differing climate, weather conditions, and mineral content in the soil. Not necessarily a defect, but it will keep the exhibition judges on their toes. **PILGRIM'S CHOICE** (Willott 1990) is going to be one of those love it/hate it types. This is an elegant true-gray blend (nearly a self), ironically from the great black, 'Michael Paul' (W. Jones 1979). Wide, broad form with a fascinating opaque finish. More than a bit too large for the class, but still a nice addition with distinctiveness. Amazingly good carrying power in the garden in spite of the somber color. **PIXIE DELIGHT** (Fillmore 1993) is a charming, petite raspberry-pink on white plicata at the lower side of the class, in not only size and height, but even plant habits. Healthy, grassy foliage, with excellent increase. A refreshing sight, after so many in this class pushing the upper limits these days.

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

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

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

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

## ARILBREDS

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

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

have more of a rose influence in the coloring, then set off with perfectly round wine signals about the size of a nickel. Elegantly refined!

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

## LOUISIANAS

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

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

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

Once upon a time, shortly after its initial release, I had grown **MARTHA MISTRIC CLARY** (Bertinot 1983), but lost it one year when I lost some things to summer sun-scald (back in the not-so-good-old-days before I learned the fine art of using a year-round mulch on my Louisianas!). Neil had “misplaced” it in his own garden also, and I feared that this, one of the most beautiful of all Bertinot introductions, had gone the way of the dodo bird. Fortunately, Neil “found” it again,

and generously sent me a start again. When it bloomed this spring, my euphoric recall proved itself quite accurate. It is an extremely large, ruffled mauved old rose. Its large brilliant yellow signal is inherited from its parent, ‘Ann Chowning’ (Chowning 1977). Flat flowers are a different, somewhat oval shape. Elegance supreme! **PIECE DE RESISTANCE** (Dunn 1988) was originally advertised as having a glowing orange-red the color of the Tropicana rose. Indeed, this is an accurate description, with a very tiny, almost nonexistent yellow signal and compact form. Thick leathery petals are sunfast, even here in the Sun Belt, and the flowers retain their magnificent glow.

**PROFESSOR FRITCHIE** (Mertzweiller 1994) is the yellow tet that was seen at the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden as Seedling T85-41A. Joe had not planned to release this tet due to its similarity to its sib, the beautiful ‘Professor Barbara’ (1992). However, after much arm-twisting, he has agreed to release it through Cordon Bleu in Fall 1994 for these reasons: (1) It is a much stronger, more vigorous grower than Barbara – the 2-year clump in Ft. Worth must surely have had 50 increases, just loaded with bloom, with vigor so rampant it was trying to crawl out of the bed!; (2) This color is still so rare, that its release would give one more player in a limited gene pool; (3) It has proven to be more fertile than Barbara; and (4) It seems to be healthier and cold resistant than Barbara, producing extraordinary stalks. The individual flower is not quite as refined as Barbara and is a touch lighter/less intense in color. But in all other areas it is the better of the two. As with so many of the tets, the falls tend to “pop up”, especially if the nights have been cool.

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

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

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

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## **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 reminiscent 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 Kegerise 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 (haft), 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. **FONDATION 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 plant 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, mindful 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 mindful 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 BALLET** (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 than 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 #RRSMQIC-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 gested. 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 splash-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, ‘Codicil’ (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’ (Arny 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 Arny 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 reminiscent 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 mindful 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-splash” 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 BALLET** (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!

## **CONTEMPORARY VIEWS -- 1996/1997**

***Perry Dyer***

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 a 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 Views 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, CA, 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 Bearded) 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. For the first few years, 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 beard adds contrast and further enlivens the flower. This one glows (maybe even 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 holds 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** (Kerr 1994) I first discovered "hiding out" in a back row at Stockton Gardens. This is a 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 those "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 won 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 mindful 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 performer 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 mindful of the contributions we see 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 set 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  $\frac{1}{4}$ " 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 "biproducts" (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, CA. 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, 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, sounds 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 IB’s. 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, CA, 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 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 plant 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 extreme 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), seen in the hybridizer's garden when touring the Stockton vicinity. This is a classic orchid self, mindful 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 (Shockley 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 (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 white with red beards. The beards here are intense and full, and a striking contrast to the chaste pureness 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" and 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  $\frac{1}{2}$ " 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 reminiscent 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 reminiscent 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, REVERSE 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, but perhaps with a more “polished” look in its form. The falls are a bright gold, but with a noticeable presence of lemon in its 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:** DEBRENEE (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 a smooth medium violet, complimented with bright tangerine beards. Bold but not gaudy. Strong plant habits inherited from its parent, Mariachi Music (Maryott). MARCHE TURQUE (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 deep, 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 a warm white with bold deeper peach-orange shoulder prints around orange beards. Where Dawning is subtle, Tropical Magic is dramatic. **CLASSICS: ANTIQUE 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 of 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, with bright orange beards to add further contrast. Stunning, sinful, I see it and I think "naughty". 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 started 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, and 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, 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 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, entralling 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 BEARDED**: 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 compliment. 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, 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 BEARDED**: 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" 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 IB's 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 DECOR (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 from Paul 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 (Schreiner 1962); HAPPY MOOD (A. Brown 1968); JUNE PROM (A. Brown 1967); MAROON CAPER (Warburton 1964).

STANDARD DWARF BEARDED: 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 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  $\frac{1}{4}$ " 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 delightful colored stylearms). 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 SDB's 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, 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 substance. 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 SDB's, 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 MDB's 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 dedazzled 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 MDB's, 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), ½-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), ½-bred (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 plant 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 earthtone 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 signal. 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 had 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 reminiscent 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 stylearms 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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## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS -- 1998/1999

Perry Dyer

Masochism: Noun. The getting of pleasure from being hurt or humiliated. Verdict: GUILTY.

Insanity: Noun. The state of being insane; mental illness or derangement; great folly; extreme senselessness. Verdict: GUILTY.

The American Iris Society accepts an invitation from the Sooner State Iris Society to host its 1999 national convention in Oklahoma. The American Hemerocallis Society accepts an invitation from the Central Oklahoma Hemerocallis Society to host its 1999 national daylily convention, in Oklahoma City – a mere 6 weeks after the conclusion of the iris convention. Now, reread

Paragraph 1. Then, Fool: Noun. A silly person; dupe; see Perry Dyer! Perry Dyer, Contemporary Gardens, "accepts the challenge" to be a host garden for BOTH conventions! Then, the therapist says, "WHAT WERE YOU THINKING????"

As if the spring of 1999 weren't going to be chaotic and stressful enough, Mother Nature decides to put everything into perspective. May 5, 1999, from about 4:00 in the afternoon, well into the night, the "mother" of all tornadoes, now scientifically declared to have been an F-6 – and the strongest in recorded history, comes sweeping down the (Oklahoma) plains. 6:00 p.m. Home from work. Been watching the television, watching some of the best meteorologists in the world track the Storm of the Century. The power goes out. Start up the engine on the car and listen to uninterrupted coverage on a local radio station. The tornado passes only 3 miles due north of my house – and my convention garden to be on tour in 3 days. Another convention gardener, Sharon Beasley, was spared by only 1 mile, passing to the south of her house. At the point the tornado came through "our neighborhood", it was as much as a mile wide! Yet, truly miraculously, neither of our homes was damaged. The gardens were left in tact. Yet 44 souls lost their lives that evening in central Oklahoma – 7 perished only 5 miles west of my house. Quite a humbling experience. Events such as this tend to put the pettiness of our complaints into proper perspective....

This review will cover the 2 bloom seasons associated with the 1999 AIS National Convention – the first-year bloom in 1998, and then in 1999 the curtains-up of the actual event. Bloom was good, not great – certainly nothing of the quality of the near-perfect "Sooner State in '88" national convention Sooner State had hosted previously. The bloom in my garden even showed signs of freeze damage – I'm in a valley, and in a frost pocket, apparently. For I can get freezes, and freeze damage, when others in the metropolitan Oklahoma City are spared. Nonetheless, many very fine new and newer iris varieties were seen, and this review will primarily deal with those convention guest plantings seen before, during, and after the 1999 national convention.

A note regarding beardless irises and Contemporary Gardens. I moved the entire garden (irises and daylilies) from my mother's (Miss Kitty's) house in Blanchard to my new abode 5 miles north of Blanchard, in the country, in the summer of 1997. There was some pretty feverish activity that summer, getting new beds carved from 4 acres of bermuda grass and then replanting the entire garden, including a couple of hundred new guest plants for the national convention.

I love the layout of the new place, and I love the soil. However, it is very sandy creek-bottom soil. Moisture tends to go right through – as do the nutrients. The summer temperatures in 1997 and 1998 were an unfortunate precursor to yet worse summers – and intensive drought conditions – in the next two summers. But the Spurias seem to love it here. I've never grown them better.

The Louisianas? That's another story. Especially with drought conditions, it has been nearly impossible to keep the growth going with the consistency I was able to achieve at Miss Kitty's. Also, the soil will require extensive alteration, to turn what is naturally quite alkaline soil into rich, loamy, acid soil the Louisianas so love. Consequently, I have not even attempted to maintain the "cutting edge" collection of Louisianas as I did when I was President of the Society for Louisiana Irises. Once I figure out the best way to grow them, here at the new place, I'll be back!

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.

1. **CONTEMPORARY AWARD** is given to the Best New Iris seen: **RUBY ERUPTION** (Chapman 1997). This great new SDB plicata from our new Canadian friend and hybridizer, Chuck Chapman, is so excellent, and has made such an impact on me – and pretty much anyone else who has seen it -- I have chosen it over all those Tall Bearded – and all the other classifications of irises, in this review. Well named, it is an explosion of brilliant ruby red plicata markings on a rich yellow base. The markings are bold, even exotic, and thickly applied. If the impeccable form looks familiar...yep, you might know, Chubby Cheeks (Black 1985) is behind it, in this case, its daddy. Glorious vigor, strong increase, superlative bloom/increase ratio, 1 branch, 2 to 3 buds. The colors are so rich and vibrant, truly it glows across the garden, making a smashing statement. For me, although not registered as a rebloomer, I have had some "repeat bloom", coming at the end of the Tall Bearded bloom season, in a second wave of bloom. Some object to using the term "rebloomer" with this type of repetitive bloom, so I play it safe and just say "repeat bloom". Bottom line is – what a generous overall season of bloom! A star is born -- hopefully – surely!

**Runnersup:** **DIABOLIQUE** (Schreiner 1997) is an exceptionally well-named work of art "from the dark side". You think surely the Schreiners have achieved the ultimate in this color range. Then here comes yet another advancement. Heavily ruffled, with wide flaring to horizontal falls which dance in the breeze. Gorgeous blue-green foliage with above average increase. Textbook perfection in stalks, placement of branching, bud count, and sequencing of blooms. The color is beyond intense, and retains its depth and glow even in Oklahoma heat. Tends to begin its bloom right at midseason, and then extends to late in the season. This is an overall earlier season of bloom than other predecessors from this line of work, such as Swingtown (Schreiner 1996) and Thriller (Schreiner 1988). **HEAVEN'S EDGE** (Tompkins 1996) has to be the surprise of the past 2 seasons. It was sent as an "extra" with an order placed to Chet for something else. Of course, wouldn't you know, Heaven's Edge has wound up being far superior to the one I actually bought! One of the first TB's to bloom, this is a bitone-plicata, with white standards lightly stitched in light blue, atop glistening white falls boldly etched in a deep blue-violet, approaching indigo. Sensational branching, with 3 branches in modified candelabra, 8 buds. The form is wide, the ruffling is moderate, with good positioning on the flower. The clarity of colors, and the contrast between the light stitching of the standards and the intense deep stitching in the falls are its hallmark. **CROWNED HEADS** (Keppel 1997) is the latest and finest achievement in the quest for true reverse blue amoenas. The standards are a bold, royal blue, deeply saturated. No, the falls aren't white, but indeed a most complementary tone of much lighter blue. Broad flowers, lightly ruffled so as not to impede the visual impact of the contrast. Excellent increase and overall plant habits. And, again, what a great name. Just when you think all the good names were surely all used up, 20 years ago.....

2. The **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** goes to 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 the award: **CHAMPAGNE FROST** (Keppel 1997). What a banner year for "The Plicata Man". What? Not a plicata either? Neither was Crowned Heads. Proof positive, now, students, we should never peg someone with a label – even in this "age of specialization". To my eye, although I love many of them, so many of the pink or apricot-orange amoena offerings appear to have a certain "coarseness" to their texture and overall presentation. Goes with the bloodline, surely. But Champagne Frost, again, well-named, has a glisten in its make-up, indeed, as if the whole flower were "frosted". Standards are a rather "icy" blue-white, with just a suggestion of pink blush in the midribs. Then the falls are an eloquent soft (but not pale) peach, perhaps with buff undertoning which softens the effect. Heavy precise ruffling inherited from its pollen parent, Overjoyed (Gatty-Keppel 1994).

**Runnersup: CASCADING RAINBOW** (Black 1997), Border Bearded, is a tapestry of watercolors, but with the substance and endurance you expect from the work of Paul Black. Standards are a simply lovely blending of peach and salmon sherbet, with a suggestion of lilac or orchid in the midribs to strengthen the color. Then, the falls are a most unusual blending of various colors, including dusty rose (the basic color), amber, and even some peach and salmon brought down from the standards. A rather bold red-orange beard pulls the medley of colors together into a soul-soothing combo. Slender, supple, graceful stalks are inherited from its pod parent, Robusto (Black 1984), only scaled down in height to proper BB classification requirements. Flower size is also in compliance, with tight, well-structured flowers blessed with moderate ruffling. **LAMB'S SHARE** (Jameson 1997) is another jewel that just goes to show that "size isn't everything". Smaller, tidy, compact flowers are reminiscent in color to Mitch's great Lion's Share (1992), with a pale yellow base color, blending carefully into an ivory-white in the falls. While Lion's Share has an understated elegance with its gentle waving and light ruffling, Lamb's Share is more elaborate in its finish, with waxen texture and deeply channeled, chiseled ruffling. Thusfar, an average grower, but within acceptable parameters to merit high praise. Speaking of luxurious.... LOIS PARRISH (Black 1997) reminds me of a more intense, richer, modern version of the great laced classic, Grand Waltz (Schreiner 1970). Lois Parrish is a full shade deeper than Grand Waltz, in a drop-dead gorgeous medium lilac (not orchid). Heavily laced, wide flowers have absolutely no difficulty in opening, in spite of all the frills. A good strong grower, much improved over its "competition" in this color and lacing.

3. Contemporary Views' **9-1-1 AWARD** is bestowed to the New Iris that is the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break. In a world of monotony bordering on purgatory -- just like tetraploid daylilies with the lacy golden edges, once a popular (and lucrative!) fad, quickly becoming even an annoyance -- this award goes to the iris that piques the hybridizer in me (Translation: Wow! I wish I had bred that one!!!). For this year, as with the Contemporary Award, an SDB beats out the hundreds of guest plants seen at the 1999 National: **MINIDRAGON** (Marky Smith 1998). Indeed, oh wow! Unabashed love at first sight. A clump of this, amassed in bloom, looks like a Persian rug, with its rich, silken port wine. In some weather conditions, the colors approach a stunning burgundy black. Whichever your eye sees, it is drawn to the intense, deep tangerine beards. That's what beards are for, no matter what their coloration or intensity. They pull everything together, either through contrast or by blending in to the color scheme harmoniously. Shamefully vigorous (a damned weed, actually!), with generous floriferousness, well timed, with a subsidiary wave of bloom coming on just as the primary flush of bloom is coming to a close. Here, the stalks can be a bit "rangy", really pushing the top of the SDB class. But still a magnificent hybridizing achievement.

**Runnersup:** **THOR'S LIGHTNING BOLT** (Dean 1998) is a simply unbelievable addition to Space Age irises. I've seen a lot of them now. I grow many of them. And I'm a big fan. But I've never seen anything quite like this. The basic color is a simple (but intense) pure purple. In the heart of the flower, things start out fairly traditionally, with an contrasty deep orange beard. But then, look out, closer inspection reveals that the beard is weirded out – forked, and then extending into a purple horn. But, the lightning bolt comes right below the beard. The fuzzy orange beard actually transforms into this V-shape white spear-thing extending well down onto the purple falls. Absolutely revolutionary, and I can't wait to see what is waiting in the wings from work done with this unique new iris. The only complaint thusfar is in the plant habits – for me, slow to reestablish and slow to increase. However, I reserve the right to rescind this statement, once the planting is better established. **COMPADRE** (L. Miller 1998) is yet another major advancement in the dwarfs. This cute SDB, first seen in the hybridizer's garden under seedling number, is as close to a true brown amoena as I have seen, from any classification of bearded iris. Standards are a solid cream, with just a blush of violet in the midribs sometimes. Then the falls are an attractive, rich medium brown, with hints of gold underlay. Lynda Miller, as with some of our other hybridizers, such as Barry Blyth and Paul Black, is just daring enough to try just about anything in the patch. Without folks brave (and innovative) enough to experiment and cross things that many of us wouldn't/couldn't dream of, we wouldn't see the advancements in colors, color combinations, and patterns as we have today. **MIDNIGHT OIL** (Keppel 1998) – gads! Another great name! Jet black -- crude oil black. Period. Beards so deep they are all but incognito, in spite of their bushy thickness. The flowers possess a very masculine, velvet finish, and are only lightly waved (in contrast to the glossy, heavily ruffled blacks the Schreiner family tends to market). Good increase, with sensible stalks and decent branching, creating specimens which will probably never rival the likes of **Dusky Challenger** (Schreiner 1986), but are nonetheless most acceptable. Although there are many exceptional blacks on the market now, this one wins this spot in the review because of its absolute intensity and stability of color and its resistance to adverse weather elements.

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). **CEE JAY** (Lankow-Aitken 1992), I predict, will go down in iris history as one of the all-time great Intermediates – comparable in quality and importance as **Rare Edition** (Gatty 1980) was a decade ago. A classy iris from a classical cross of winners (Cook-Douglas Medalist Chubby Cheeks X Dykes Medalist Jesse's Song), we have purest white base color with perfect deepest violet plicata edging, precise in its marking and dramatic in its contrast. Flawless form, with broad, rounded, horizontal falls. It took the best each of its famous parents in its plant habits also, with abundant increase and a generous offering of bloom stalks. The IB class has quickly become one of the highest-quality classes of irises this past decade, easily rivaling any Tall Bearded on the market. And **Cee Jay** is the "best of the best".

**Runnersup:** **CELEBRATION SONG** (Schreiner 1993) is a "Renaissance Man" type of iris, in that it is of highest quality in both the garden and on the show bench. This bicolor has excellent contrast in colors without being overstated or bold or gaudy. Standards are apricot-pink. Falls are basically lavender, but have a definite influence of blue in their makeup, especially on cloudy days or in cool, wet seasons. Bright tangerine beards simply add the finishing touch. Gentle ruffling gives motion to the flower. Branching and bud count are without peer – 4 branches, always, double-socketed, always, with consistently excellent formal to modified candelabra placement of the branches on rather tall, sturdy stalks. A vision of health in its plant habits. **EPICENTER** (Ghio 1994) has proven itself to be dependable, year after year – not always a

statement that can be said of a warm plicata in central Oklahoma. Resistant to adverse weather conditions and soft rot, and it makes a respectable full fan of foliage, rather than the skimpy foliage so common in warm plicatas for so many years. Epicenter is a bold black cherry, heavily covering a salmon base ground. The standards are almost completely saturated. Excellent production, with a generous amount of bloom each year, paced well over the season. **PROGRESSIVE** **ATTITUDE** (Innerst 1992) is from reblooming lines, and is said to rebloom for many. However, with the hot summers central Oklahoma has experienced the past several years, keeping a plant in optimum condition to allow for repeat bloom is virtually impossible, without running the risk of rotting the plants! But the sheer health and quality of plant habits suggest the remontancy is definitely there. A clean white ground gives way to a steel blue to medium blue stitching, with heavier concentration on the falls. Broad, beautiful form. Superb branching and bud count. For those who are breeding for quality rebloomers, I highly recommend this as a parent.

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. **GODSEND** (Byers 1989), for overall quality, was the finest Space Age offering from the work of Monty Byers, even though others (true, very worth also) went on to win the Dykes Medal. Godsend is a crisp, clear medium pink, somewhat richer in intensity than its famous Dykes Medalist parent, Vanity (Hager 1975). Falls are somewhat lighter in the heart, allowing the eye to focus on its stunning adornment -- deep red-orange beards end with an emphatic protrusion in the form of fuzzy amethyst to violet horns. Heavy substance, beautiful wide form, ruffling, and plant habits as fine as any other Space Ager.

**Runnersup: GRAPES OF WRATH** (Durrance 1989) was first purchased for its name's Oklahoma connection (ya know, Steinback, Dust Bowl, Grapes of Wrath). But it has remained in the garden because of its dependable gardenability, carrying power of the rich deep grape coloration, and its resistance to the Oklahoma weather conditions which can often test the most resilient soul. It has a broad, full-formed figure, moderately ruffled, and the saturation remains intact throughout the life of the flower, no matter how hot the season may be. **WHITE LILACS** (Warburton 1984), IB. I'm amazed that any introduction from this matriarch median hybridizer could go unnoticed. The lack of notoriety for this classy cool white Intermediate is just unforgivable. Incredible placement of branching and sheer bud count, good growth. All the other characteristics are prime. But the calling card for White Lilacs is its elegant flower. A cold-cold icy white, heavily infused with a cool lilac throughout the flower. Heavily ruffled, carved into the flower. It glistens in the sunlight. **VICTORIAN FRILLS** (Black 1988) blooms quite late in the season, after most of the visitors have gone back home to make up their Want Lists for the year. Although quite short (around 30" here), it nonetheless displays excellent branching, well-placed over the length of the stalk. The color is a rich, expensive medium pink, leading more towards coral. Falls somewhat lighter, contrasted with tangerine-red beards. The lacing is moderately heavy over the wide parts of the flower. Yet it never has trouble opening. Strong plant habits inherited from its Kegerise breeding (Sun Blossom was the daddy).

6. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding and promising seedling personally viewed during the time period of this review. **DUDE RANCH** (Black 2000) has been a pet of mine, from the days as a seedling when Paul still lived in Oklahoma City. I guess "Dude Ranch" is a more attractive name than "Perry Dyer", but still, folks know this is "Perry's Pick"! Guess I'll have to admit that, once again, Paul has really come up with a neat name to match the personality of the iris carrying the name.....The color ensemble is unique and interesting.

Standards are basically a rich gold, but have a flush of violet in the heart, in the midribs. Falls are a caramel in primary color, blended to a hazy violet in the center. Beards are bushy in old gold. Substance is thick-thick, and the texture is quite leathery (cowboy chaps, maybe?). It survived the transplant to the Pacific Northwest just fine.

**Runnersup:** **WILD WINGS** (Keppel 1999) made its debut at the 1999 National here, and did it come in with a bang! A deep sultry neglecta, with standards dark violet and the falls black. Beards are a nice contrast in sienna to brick red. It has all the positive attributes Keith Keppel demands in his releases – strong, healthy plant habits, excellent branching, high bud count, quality flowers. The size of the flowers are more moderate than big and bold, but the falls are heavily ruffled and horizontal, allowing the flowers to “dance”. It has personality, period. If this is a sign of things to come from its pollen parent, Romantic Evening (Ghio 1996), oh my! Are we in for a treat. **GOLDEN PANTHER** (Tasco 2000) was first evaluated by me while still under seedling number (94-30-30) in the hybridizer’s garden in California. That day, Rick had several promising reselects in this general color and line of work. But this one was the best; apparently, Rick agreed, since this is the one that “made the cut”. A dazzling blending of gold and bronze, but the predominant color is the bronze overlay. Bright golden orange beards are thick and bushy. Form is outstanding, the ruffling thick and heavy. It inherited the outstanding branching and bud count from the Ghio line of oranges (Guadalajara is its mother). If Tasco remains true to the standards he has established thusfar in his selection process, I guarantee he will be considered one of the all-time great hybridizers in the American Iris Society. **CAJUN LOVE STORY** (Haymon 2000) was seen in the hybridizer’s garden on my last trip to Lafayette for the Society for Louisiana Irises spring convention (Seedling #81-92-1). Oh, what a lovely work of art! High-quality pinks, in any shade, are still a rare commodity in Louisianas. Improvement in substance and durability has been a difficult nut to crack. With Cajun Love Story, Dorman has achieved a major breakthrough in this area. The color palette is a gentle flesh pink, with hints of mauve undertoning to enliven the flower. Small, nonprotrusive signals are green to gold, and complement the color scheme. Simply presented, with gentle waving versus the elaborate ruffling of the Australian pink advancements. Do not let the delicate appearance deceive you – it is a typical Cajun – tough as nails, resilient, and dependable.

## **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

**REDS TO MAROONS:** **WALKARA** (Ames 1996) is a wonderful new addition to reds, from a virtually “unknown” hybridizer from Utah. Fortunately, it was released by the Zebra Guy, so it should get good exposure and distribution! A deep-deep red, with what appears to be a black underlay, which increases the intensity of the color saturation. Laced reds are one of the last “tough nuts to crack” in Tall Bearded irises, but Walkara exhibits more than just a suggestion of lace – it’s there. **DYNAMITE** (Schreiner 1997) is a crimson (Cardinal) red of moderate intensity, with velvet texture and leathery substance. Nice contrast with bright bushy golden beards. Beautiful blue-green foliage with good increase. **VELVET UNDERGROUND** (Lauer 1996) is a cleverly-named deep reddish-maroon with moderate ruffling. The whole flower has a fascinating “smoked” look to it to add mystery (but not muddy in the least). White to light yellow beards make good contrast. **CLASSICS:** **CALIENTE** (Luihn 1968); **CREDO** (Babson 1966); **WAR LORD** (Schreiner 1968).

**BROWNS:** Larry Lauer, California, is doing some nice work in the brown tones. His location is very similar to the year-round weather conditions of central Oklahoma, so most of his releases “feel right at home” here and do well.

**DODGE CITY** (Lauer 1995) is a bronzed tan blending of colors, with a blue-violet flash below tangerine beards to highlight the flower. It has excellent substance and endurance, and that leathery look to the texture, mindful of the finish of Dude Ranch. **INSTANT SMILES** (Burseen 1998) is a very fine golden bronze, with deeper intensification of color at the flower edges. Technically, this may be considered a blend, because in the falls there is a definite presence of burnished saffron in the center of the falls, gradually transforming to the golden-bronze primary color. Bright gold beards are harmonious. Heavily ruffled, with good endurance in adverse weather conditions. **COPATONIC** (Blyth 1994) is a mighty unusual study in varying degrees of russets, browns, and ruby brown. Technically, it could probably be considered a variegata, in that the falls are definitely darker and redder than the rest of the flower. But the overall effect is brown. Heavy ruffling in the falls is embedded in a band of the russet-brown, the color of the standards. **CLASSICS: MOLTEN EMBERS** (Schreiner 1969); **SUGAR BEAR** (Boushay 1976); **TIJUANA BRASS** (Schreiner 1967).

**APRICOTS TO ORANGES:** **VIVA MEXICO** (Maryott 1996) is another with an excellent, descriptive name, for the colors are a bright, “festive” orange, with the very heaviest ruffling possible, short of overkill to the point that the flowers won’t open. Just right, deeply channeled, and they never fail to open up for you. Reported to rebloom in more temperate climates, but here, the increase and growth habits thusfar are only average, so the extra strength required for dependable rebloom is doubtful. Still, a wonderful contribution to the oranges. **IRENE FRANCES** (Richardson 1995) was one of the quiet storms of the ’99 National here. It bloomed after most visitors had left, and that’s really too bad, for this is one classy iris! From a classical cross (Ghio’s white with golden halo, Old Flame, crossed with Schreiner’s famous Eastertime), it is registered as a coral-pink, with lighter falls and a tangerine beard. In Oklahoma, it is closer to a coral-peach. Either way, gorgeous, with sophisticated ruffling and outstanding texture in satin. **CITRUS COOLER** (Black 1997) is probably technically a blend, but the overall impact is peach with highlights. Standards have a gilt edge in gold. The base color of the falls is a butter yellow, but strongly infused with the peach of the standards and even a suggestion of lime green in the heart of the flower. No elaborate ruffling here – just a gentle waving. **APRICOT CANDY** (Terada 1996) is a spunky rich apricot from central California which has been impressive thusfar. Heavily ruffled, moderately laced purest apricot-orange, with only a suggestion of white in the heart of the flower, around the deep orange beards. “Comfort food” for the weary eye. **CLASSICS: BRIGHT BUTTERFLY** (B. Jones 1967); **GLAZED ORANGE** (Schreiner 1969); **PEACH FLOAT** (O. Brown 1973).

**PINKS:** **PRINCESS OF PINK** (Terada 1995) is another nice new offering from a relatively new hybridizer in central California. Standards are a rich solid medium pink, perhaps a tone deeper than its mother, Beverly Sills (Hager). Falls are glistening white, but then heavily saturated with the pink from the standards. Wonderful form and substance, with strong plant habits from its mother, too. While Howard Shockey made his “claim to fame” with those shocking, intense signals in his arilbreds, he should be known to Tall Bearded growers as a breeder of elegance supreme. **CRYSTAL MORN** (Shockey 1995) is this decade’s version of another Shockey beauty queen from earlier years, Crystal Dreams (1989). Standards are a shimmering light pink, blushed at the edges in soft violet. Falls are white, but encased in the coloration of the standards. Cerise to shrimp beards. Elaborate ruffling seals the deal. A slow grower, admittedly, so if you intend to order it, don’t wait until August, because there won’t be as much stock available from the dealers. Nonetheless, a dependable bloomer, each year, just not as much plant

propagation. **PINK QUARTZ** (Wood 1996) is another fine contribution from a California hybridizer who specialized in pinks. This is a rich pink, totally self, with a shimmer in its makeup, as suggested by its name. Superb plant habits, with consistent growth and good increase. **CLASSICS: CARVED ANGEL** (Rudolph 1975); **MEMPHIS DELIGHT** (Kegerise 1977); **PARTY GIRL** (Luihn 1977); **SCHIAPARELLI** (Moldovan 1972).

**LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS: FASHIONABLY LATE** (Keppel 1998) is a cleverly-named late-blooming rose-violet to old rose with deep red beards, heavily ruffled with a touch of lace. Although a season extender, it managed to make an early enough appearance at the '99 National for the folks to see. Wonderful show stalks, with 3 to 4 branches in modified to formal candelabra. **ENCHANTING TIMES** (Taylor 1995) has many fine assets, but the strongest is its husky plant habits. Big – huge – plants nonetheless produce an impressive number of increases each year. Then the stalks are right in line – tall, thick, sturdy, never disappointing. The color? A soothing deep orchid, with the centers of the standards and the falls gracefully transforming to a lighter color as the flower ages (and gets even larger), leaving a band of the initial coloring. **FASHION STATEMENT** (Gatty-Keppel 1997) is mindful in some ways of Fashionably Late, but with more lilac in its makeup and an overall lighter shade. Blooms a full 2 weeks earlier than Fashionably Late. Also a very strong plant habit with good branching and bud count. **CLASSICS: CRINKLED JOY** (Schreiner 1967); **RASPBERRY RIPPLES** (Niswonger 1969); **SYMPHONETTE** (Noyd 1969).

**DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS: BLACK FALLS** (Nebeker 1996) is another great iris from a relatively unknown Utah hybridizer, which fortunately Brad Kasperek has offered to introduce for. If you like 'em black, try this one. Definitely not a self, in that the standards are obviously a deep-deep violet. But those falls! Rich solid black, with a satin sheen instead of the velvet texture you often see in black Tall Bearded. Wonderful ruffling, decent stalks and bud count, good growth habits. I'm a big fan! **THUNDER SPIRIT** (Schreiner 1996) has been virtually unheralded thusfar. So many good representatives in this color, and most of them coming from this same hybridizer! Thunder Spirit is more of a deep-deep indigo rather than true black. But it has the same intensity, and deep ruffling, as you see in the Schreiner blacks. The only questionable characteristic so far here is that it seems to be inconsistent in its plant habits. We shall see. A duo from Keith Keppel show great advancements in red-bearded black attempts. Flip a coin. They're both fine: **LOCAL COLOR** (Keppel 1996) is technically a neglecta, with deep purple standards and deeper falls closely approaching black. The overall impact says "black", so it is reviewed in this section. Beards are a brilliant orange (the hybridizer describes as "orange vermillion"). There are a few white lines in the hafts, but not offensive. Form is simple, reasonably wide, and most acceptable. Plant habits are exceptional, with tall, bold stalks. Down the row, and not to be upstaged, is its sister, **NIGHT GAME** (Keppel 1996). Keith describes the standards as "eggplant" – very descriptive. The falls are, again, near-black, but with more of a velvet finish, whereas Local Color tends to be more glossy. Beards are a "brick orange", even more unusual than those of Local Color. The overall impression of Night Game is more somber, moody, maybe even dark and ominous. Wonderful! **CLASSICS: GRAND ALLIANCE** (Plough 1965); **MATINATA** (Schreiner 1968); **TUXEDO** (Schreiner 1965).

**BLUES:** In a "sea" of good blues, I'm limiting my comments to a trio this year: **COLOR ME BLUE** (Schreiner 1997) is set in light blue, yet still has undertoning and texture veining to give life to the flower. It is a full shade lighter than its mother, **Delta Blues** (Schreiner 1994), and at least two shades lighter than its father, **Riverboat Blues** (Schreiner 1991). Ruffling is substantial but not ridiculous. Color is soothing. **BLUE CHEER** (Lauer 1997) is a heavily ruffled medium blue, with somewhat different white showing through in the shoulders (versus "zonal" around the beard, as is common with many medium to dark blues). It is a husky-looking flower, with somewhat

leathery substance. **ELECTRIC SHOCK** (Messick 1996) is a wonderful concoction of degrees of blue which I had “missed” in its first years on the market. Ooh! The base color is white, but is heavily overlaid with electric blue, with an even heavier concentration in the standards, suggesting a reverse blue amoena. It’s “stick your finger in the socket” good! Unique, with strong flower and plant attributes to “qualify it” for high awards. **CLASSICS: CROWN STERLING** (Moldovan 1972); **MUSIC MAKER** (Waters 1963); **QUIET KINGDOM** (Boushay 1977); **ROYAL REGENCY** (Schreiner 1977).

**WHITES: ARCTIC EXPRESS** (Gatty-Keppel 1996) sets the modern standard in pure whites. Cold, shimmering, shivering ice-white, with pure white beards, with a touch of yellow in their makeup, only in the heart of the flower. Ruffles galore – aesthetically, because it is a true self, the presence of such overstated ruffling is acceptable, in that it doesn’t interfere with the color array. Stalks? It has already won Best of Show in a couple of highly-competitive Oklahoma shows. 4 branches, double-socketed, with excellent sequencing of the high bud count. **SUDS** (Burseen 1996) was a convention guest, and shows great promise as a nice addition to heavily laced whites. Rather than a self beard, it has a contrasting bright yellow beard, and yellow coloration carrying over to the hafts, similar to **Goldkist** (Black 1993), but certainly without the intensity of saturation. Fairly short, with decent stalks and branching somewhat close to the stalks (but not to the point of being defective). In my garden, it has been a weak grower so far. This is certainly not the norm for Burseen introductions, so maybe my plant of Suds was a dud??? **QUEEN OF ANGELS** (Schreiner 1995) carries on the tradition of heavily laced cold whites from the Laced Cotton line (with plicatas in the pedigree). As with some of their other releases, it has gorgeous form, with exotic heavy lace, a tint of lavender, and extremely late-blooming. Predecessors tended to be weak in growth, with even watery foliage. Queen of Angels appears to be an improvement in this area. **CLASSICS: BRIDE'S LACE** (Julander 1978); **LACY SNOWFLAKE** (Schreiner 1977); **STARTLER** (Schreiner 1978).

**CREAMS TO YELLOWS: ALPINE REGION** (Blyth 1996) has been lovely for me for several years now, but is a virtual unknown “out there”, which escapes me. Actually quite similar to Lamb's Share (Jameson), except with a somewhat larger flower. Standards are softest yellow; falls are more of a glistening white with shadings of the soft yellow standards’ color. Waxy substance, well-placed deep ruffling. **PHAETON** (Marky Smith 1997) is an intense golden yellow, pure self, with golden-orange beards. The saturation is good, with carrying power across the garden. It has impressive branching, with 3-4 branches, 10 buds. **FLORENCE FISHER** (Markham 1995) has been a pleasant surprise from a talented New England hybridizer. It is a gentle creamy white with shadings of pale yellow. Stellar plant habits from its father, Vanity (Hager), well known in cold climates for being a dependable healthy pink. **CLASSICS: GOLDEN PLUNDER** (Fay 1966); **LAUNCHING PAD** (Knopf 1967); **LIME FIZZ** (Schreiner 1969); **ROYAL GOLD** (Hamblen 1966).

**PLICATAS: FIGURE HEAD** (Tompkins 1996) was the “other extra” from Chet, received when I got Heaven's Edge. This is a totally different plicata, and in many ways just as worthy. A cream base is almost completely saturated with burgundy, deep bronze, and chestnut striations and washing in a unique, tantalizing pattern. Excellent substance, retaining the rich coloration in blazing Oklahoma sun. **TANZANIAN TANGERINE** (Kasperek 1995) is a fun, zany tangerine-based plicata, with reddish-wine stippling in the falls. Flower size is smaller, tidy, and nicely shaped. Stalks are “wow”, tall, somewhat willowy (goes well with the smaller flowers) with branches and buds galore. No color breaking here – “just” a colorful, sensational plicata! **ESTABLISHED POWERS** (Innerst 1996) is reminiscent of an improvement on Sterling’s Progressive Attitude, with pure white base color, carefully banded/stitched in almost a steel gray to light blue. Light blue

beards are heavily tipped in deep bronze, making for an interesting combination. **SCREEN PLAY** (Keppel 1996) is a bright, colorful fancy plicata, with a creamy white base with rich rosy-orchid to ruby stitching. The standards are almost solidly colored; the falls have a precise 1" band of plicating. Orange beards just set off the whole ensemble. Lovely form, with gentle ruffling on wide parts. Impressive plant habits. **SARA'S BEAUTY** (Pinegar 1996), from Utah, was a pleasant surprise in the convention guests. Basically a traditional white ground plicata, stitched in medium violet. But, within the stitching, we find a complex series of dotting which gives an eerie look to the flower. Coming from **Daredevil** (Keppel), it suggests a burnt orange beard, but is tipped with violet, and blends in with the plicating. Another impressive convention guest was from the East Coast: **MAGIC PALETTE** (Fan 1997). I think of it as a contemporary version of the great variegata-plicata, **Caramba** (Keppel), from 20 years ago. Standards are a rich sulphur yellow, with just a suggestion of plicating briefly appearing in pale violet. Then, the falls are a warm yellow, joyfully sanded and streaked in bold reds and chestnut coloring. Wonderful form, with strong, healthy plant habits you know this hybridizer will insist on in his releases. **CLASSICS: APRIL MELODY** (Gibson 1967); **BLUE PETTICOATS** (Schreiner 1965); **JOLIE** (Schreiner 1967); **WILD APACHE** (Gibson 1965).

**AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, AND NEGLECTAS: FATAL ATTRACTION** (Kerr 1996) is the new star of neglectas. Standards are medium to deep blue, with a haunting deeper infusion at the base of the midribs. Then the falls are a sensuous blue-black velvet, heavily ruffled and nearly horizontal in placement. "Sophisticated" is the best way to describe this dark beauty. The only complaint I lodge, thusfar, is its propensity to be a really slow increaser, and has a bit of difficulty in reestablishing when planting or transplanting. But then, I'm told (Miss Kitty!) that patience is a virtue (Miss Kitty!). **MIND'S EYE** (Blyth 1994) is a charming addition to the quest for true apricot amoenas. There's still some coloration in the standards' midribs in this one, but we're obviously getting there. The falls are a warm apricot, then distinctly edged in a narrow white band. Beards are a brilliant red, setting the flower afire. Wonderful form, nice texture. **TOKYO BLUES** (Terada 1995) is a beautiful blue amoena with waxy texture inherited from its mother, **Edith Wolford** (Hager). White to palest blue standards are contrasted with saturated medium blue falls, moderately ruffled with beautiful form. **VANILLA ROUGE** (Barnard 1995) is a soft peach amoena, with warm white (vanilla) standards and white-based falls heavily flushed and washed with peach (rouge). Quite short, and a more gentle presence versus the bolder look of some of its peers. **WATERWORLD** (Lauer 1996) is a shimmering light blue amoena, with pure white standards atop light blue falls with lavender undertones. Moderate to heavy ruffling gives motion to the flower. **CLASSICS: REPARTEE** (C. Smith 1968); **RIVER HAWK** (Plough 1979); **SNOWLINE** (Schreiner 1968); **VIKING ADMIRAL** (Burger 1973).

**BICOLORS AND VARIEGATAS:** A couple of releases from Down Under have been most impressive: **PAGAN MIRTH** (Blyth 1994) is technically a variegata, with smoky lavender in varying degrees of depth, shot through with strange and haunting brown influences. Falls are rich, sultry red-brown with thick velvet texture, complete with burnished bronze beards. Very early blooming, but has a good sequence of bloom to assure plenty of flowers well into midseason. **CAFÉ RISQUE** (Blyth 1996) is similar in colors, but a more festive look, versus the somber mood of Pagan Mirth. Standards are lighter, in an "iced lavender", with somewhat brighter but nonetheless intense falls in burgundy, with a thin edging of the standards' color. Also one of the first to open the Tall Bearded season. **SCHUBERTIAD** (Jameson 1997) is a lovely thing, an extension of the work Melba Hamblen explored during her hybridizing career. Standards are a smooth medium apricot. Falls are a medium lavender-violet, flushed with the apricot of the standards, with more apricot intensity in the shoulders and a flash of blue below bright orange beards. Silky texture, outstanding form and substance. One of the prettiest new bicolors on

the market. **TWO SIDED COIN** (Ernst 1996) reminds me of a more subtle version of Edith Wolford (one of its parents), with improved overall growth habits and performance. Standards are a soft, feminine light yellow. Falls are a tasteful blending of blue to lavender, with a presence of yellow in the shoulders. **CLASSICS: GLACIER SUNSET** (O. Brown 1966); **LOUDOUN LASSIE** (Crossman 1972); **MILESTONE** (Plough 1965); **ROMAN WALK** (Blyth 1978).

**POTPOURRI: LET'S BOOGIE** (Schreiner 1997) is a wild, even gaudy, carnival of bright colors, certainly different from what you normally see from the Schreiners. It's a fun, zany affair, with peach standards with some cream blended in to calm things down a bit. Then, those falls! They are a joyous red-purple, complete with cream belly stripe, smack-dab down the center, extending from bright tangerine beards. The base color is actually more of a swirl of color, with marbling and washing instead of a solid look. Outrageously wonderful branching on thick, tall stalks, with 4 branches and 10 buds. Hardy plant habits too. **OWYHEE DESERT** (Pinkston 1997) made itself known during the '99 convention, and has been popular ever since. If it needed to be "classified", I'd consider it a brown amoena, with white standards and an usual blending of rusts, russets, and browns (get it, "desert" colors?) in the falls. There's a charming white spray pattern cascading from the beards, so attractive you wouldn't dare call them haft marks. Distinctive and personable. In Oklahoma, it is considerably shorter than the registered 3', but no matter the height, you will notice it! **FLYING CARPET** (Black 1997) is perfectly named, for the colors are rich as a persian rug, and the stalks are TALL, as much as 4' in height, willowy without toppling, with exceptional branching and placement. Standards are a bright medium yellow. Then the falls are a menagerie of blended yellow, fuschia, red, purple, rose, with deeper saturation of rose at the edges. Bright yellow beards blend in with the small degree of yellow showing through in the falls. Simple form, with just a light amount of ruffling to "give flight" to the colorful flowers. I thought of marrying it up with Let's Boogie, but I don't know if I could take the results! **CLASSICS: CAMBODIA** (Babson 1966); **OLD FLAME** (Ghio 1975); **PINK 'N' MINT** (Schreiner 1979).

**COLOR BREAKERS:** So many fun things on the market now. Those working with them have been very perseverant at overcoming major defects from the early representatives, such as short clubby stalks, limited bud count, and questionable growth habits (bordering on "annoying"). Significant advancements are being made. As with Space Agers, this style of iris is quickly becoming a group which must "be dealt with", and I encourage support (i.e., VOTES) when you find worthy new representatives. Have you forgotten what yo' mama told you? Variety is the spice of life.....Speaking of spice: **SPICED TIGER** (Kasperek 1996) is a magnificent new color breaker, which is basically a variegata type in color layout. Standards are a brown sugar with yellow blended in and just a few splashes of an unusual silvery-white. But then the falls are a bold mahogany primary color, randomly streaked with the silver-white look from the standards. There is some yellow blended in, primarily at the shoulders, to smoothen out the overall impact aesthetically. Branching is fair, on rather short stalks, but the bud count is acceptable, and this is most definitely a major breakthrough. **GNUS FLASH** (Kasperek 1996) is just the opposite in stalks and plant habits. Here we have tall, rather flexuous stalks with outstanding branching and bud count, supporting moderately large flowers with light tan standards, streaked silver, atop medium to deep violet falls with random streaks and splashes of cream and silver. **AUTUMN YEARS** (Ensminger 1996) is a very sophisticated flower, with a base color in buff to old gold to bronze, then carefully marked with deep violet and garnet splashes throughout the flower. Leathery substance and sunfast. **INFERNAL FIRE** (Richardson 1994) is similar, but with richer colors and bolder, more dramatic patterning. The stripes and streaks are a deep garnet and magenta. The major breakthrough here is the branching and bud count.

Although still basically short, it carefully places four branches, rebranches, with double sockets at most positions. **VERY VARIED** (Ensminger 1993) is a true Border Bearded, and a very fine representative. Mindful of its pollen parent, the famous Batik (Ensminger), but with thinner, more graceful (BB) stalks and more compact flowers, in correct proportions to the class. Base color is a rich, royal purple, then dramatically streaked in a clear white. Very impressive!

**SPACE AGERS:** All kinds of creative, innovative work happening here. The floodgates have opened – we’re finding appendages on things never seen before! **APOLLO ONE** (Sutton 1997) is probably my favorite of recent Sutton releases. Small flowered, but the presentation has a strong impact in the garden. This is a red-purple on white plicata, with the plicating in sanding and stitching as a fancy plicata. Then, consistent horns in the color of the plicating. Straight out of Sky Hooks (Osborne), it inherited the wonderful placement of branching and fine bud count. The famous Thornbird (Byers) is and always will be controversial. One of those “love-it or hate-it” kind of irises – or one that some “love to hate”. The colors can be very coarse, but those dramatic deep violet horns popping up out of the middle are certainly unforgettable. **BONNIE DAVENPORT** (Burseen 1997), from Thornbird (pollen parent) is a much more refined offspring, with much more soothing, “cleaner” colors, with tan standards, deeper golden brown falls, and more consistent appearances of the appendages. When well grown, the horn further extends to a tan to cream spoon or flounce. A classy iris, named for a classy lady! **BUGLES AND HORNS** (Sutton 1997) is a heavily ruffled, filigreed white, with yellow beards ending in white horns and flounces. It is tall and stately, with strong stalks, well-branched. **GOLDFINGER** (Sutton 1997) is a nice advancement in gold to yellow Space Agers. Standards are a golden yellow, blended with lemon at the edges. Falls are white, but heavily edged with the color of the standards. Bright orange beards give way to horns, leading to golden-yellow flounces. **TO THE POINT** (Black 1998) is a tall, well-branched smooth lavender self, with golden beards transforming into 1” horns. Cute name, very descriptive. No silliness here – just “get to the point”. Paul says the horns will sometimes extend to flounces; for me, it hasn’t, but you simply can’t ignore those horns! Great strides have been made to stabilize the adornment factor in Space Agers, so much so that I’m very critical of any new release that exhibits the defects of old. But I have to take exception occasionally and recognize some that are just so wild and zany, they just cannot be denied! Enter **TOO MANY FLOUNCES** (Dean 1997), oh wow! Cleverly named, indeed, this thing is basically a bicolor, with rather muddy yellow standards (sorry) atop strange rose-colored falls, blushed lighter in the heart. But then the adornments. Holy cow! There is a yellow beard, but you won’t notice it. Literally stacked on top of one another is a series of rose flounces anywhere from two to six deep! I’ve never seen anything like it, and the curiosity in my hybridizer’s genes intends to use it extensively to see what-all can come from all this! Perhaps gaudy, certainly inconsistent, and, let’s be polite, “rather difficult” plant habits, the potential for hybridizing, and the sheer novelty of Too Many Flounces make it a worthy, innovative conversation piece I wouldn’t be without! Note that it is the pollen parent to one of this year’s 9-1-1 Award nominees, Thor’s Lightning Bolt. The results of just this first generation out should suggest that there are wonderful things to come from all of this!

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

**MINIATURE TALL BEARDED**: Several nice MTB’s were sent to the ’99 convention and were blooming well during the tour. You old-timers will probably remember that one of the all-time greats in MTB’s, Bumblebee Deelite (Norrick) won the Out-of-Region Cup at our last convention, in ’88, and set the stage for an explosion of popularity which has not waned, a decade later!

**MINI WABASH** (Probst 1996) is a clever dark violet amoena, with pure white standards and rich inky blue-violet falls. The falls are actually white based, heavily overlaid with the blue-violet in deep veins and washing extending from the soft yellow beards. But the overall impact is that of an amoena. **BAUBLES AND BEADS** (Miller 1997) is also well-named, from an Indiana hybridizer who is truly making her presence known in the advancement of MTB's. Pert, tiny flowers are a variegata, with clean, bright gold standards contrasted by bold red-black falls. Bright gold beards pull everything together. Wonderful, proper proportions, with excellent growth habits. **IN FASHION** (Fisher 1995) is a sophisticated offering from a Region 22 hybridizer who has devoted all his efforts to MTB's. Ken's critical eye for selection is his trademark, mindful of the work the pioneer, Mary Louise Dunderman, did with her MTB hybridizing. **In Fashion** is a royal purple to violet self, amazingly clean at the hafts. Then, bright, pure white beards give dramatic contrast. Tight, dainty proportions, with wonderful placement of branches. **MERIT** (Fisher 1996) is another fine release, so high in quality, I predict it will be grown for many years to come. Basic color is white, but the falls have a lavender spot around orange beards, then gradually transforming to a brown edging. Very difficult to describe. You're gonna have to trust me on this one! **APRICOT DROPS** (Aitken 1995) is an offspring of the revolutionary SDB, **Pele** (Aitken), and is a good example of the diversity **Pele** brings to its children. Crossed with a tetraploid MTB, **Abridged Version** (Hager), **Apricot Drops** is a charming little apricot self, with a suggestion of a deeper spot pattern in the falls, around orange beards. Stalks and thin and graceful, as they should be, and have simply incredible branching and bud count. This is truly, properly classified (not an Intermediate in any way), and a major advancement in MTB work. **ORILLA'S RING** (Witt-Aitken 1991) was a "sleeper" for me, which I finally discovered at one of the Sooner State median shows, entered by Louise Carson, our "resident specialist" in MTB's (she has shook up more than a couple of shows with her MTB entries!). Warm, soothing butter yellow in the standards. The falls are white, with butter yellow concentrations at the edges to set the base for very discreet brown plicata markings, very subtle. Form and substance without peer! A wonderful addition to the class. If you haven't "discovered" this one, it's never too late.... **CLASSICS: PAINTED ROSE** (Roberts 1965); **QUIRK** (A. Brown 1972); **SNOW FIDDLER** (Dunbar 1972).

**BORDER BEARDED:** **ROMANTIC INTERLUDE** (Varner 1997) was one of the stars at the convention, and I hope it got enough attention to make a difference. Terry Varner, from Ohio, is a protégé of Mary Louise Dunderman, and the bulk of his efforts have been an extension of her well-disciplined work with MTB's. But he does "dabble" in other areas, and **Romantic Interlude** is one of the finest, perfectly-proportioned BB's I have seen in years! Clear, clean medium yellow standards. Shimmering white falls have a distinctive, precise band of yellow. Deep yellow beards. It is ruffled, well-formed, with slender, graceful stalks with exceptional branching. Growth habits are splendid, with above average increase, and size of foliage in proper proportions for a good BB. With a very complex, innovative parentage, **Romantic Interlude** will be as important to BB advancement as **Tulare** (Hamblen) was, 30 years ago.

**GROBSWITCHER** (Innerst 1995) is a colorful addition to the class. A brilliant, screaming peachy-orange with big fuzzy deep orange beards. Heavily ruffled, with even some lace. It appears to be right at the top of the class, but thusfar has remained in class and is most worthy. **HULA HOOP** (Shoop 1995) was first seen in the Pacific Northwest. Here, it is just as colorful, or more so, with the iron and other trace elements which naturally appear in much of Oklahoma's soils. **Hula Hoop** displays its colors in a way George made famous. Standards are a scintillating lavender. Falls are a dazzling white with a distinctive "hoop" in bright yellow. Then, pow! Brilliant tangerine beards set the flower aglow! Decent branching and bud count. Plant habits? Thusfar, tends to be a slower grower (as is common, unfortunately, with many BB's), but not to the point of being a defect. **CLASSICS: BABY SHOWER** (Ghio 1967); **BOY SCOUT** (Reynolds 1968); **CRYSTAL BAY** (B. Jones 1966); **DRESDEN FRILLS** (Rudolph 1969).

**INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:** So many wonderful things on the market now, and I'm adding as many to my collection as the budget will allow! Where to start? **LONDONDERRY** (Keppel 1996) is perhaps the best from several selections made from a "ka-ching!" cross – you know, one of those gifts from The Maker where you have so many sisters worthy of release, high-quality, diverse, how do you draw the line and make the final cut? Ah, such toil. Londonderry is an eloquent blending of pastel pinks and lavender, with crystalline white in the centers of the falls. Rather than contrasting, the beards are a cool white, tipped tangerine only in the heart of the flower. Ruffles supreme with impeccable form, silky texture, and substance supreme. As understated as Londonderry is, **TANTRUM** (Keppel 1997) brings out the "wild side" in Keith's personality! "Chrome yellow" standards are marked with brown. Falls are similar, but with "louder" chocolate brown and oxblood red. A festive new plicata with all the attributes Keith demands and you expect in his work. When I see it, I think of a temperamental tenor, having a "diva" temper-tantrum because he doesn't like the tempo the conductor has chosen!

**IMPERATIVE** (Black 1997) is a scaled-down version of the neat work Paul is doing with red-bearded blacks and neglectas. Standards are a rich, deep purple. The falls are a full degree deeper, approaching black, giving an impression of a neglecta. Then, amidst it all, shocking bushy burnt orange beards. What a statement! **EMBLAZONED** (Black 1996) is a scintillating saffron plicata, with medium brown banding on both the standards and falls. The color of the standards' plicating is lighter than the falls, but there is more of it. In the falls, the band is narrow and precise. Tidy and compact, with smaller flowers and stalks at the lower limit of the class – a nice look. **LASER PRINT** (Black 1997) is an advancement Paul is working in the luminata/fancy plicata pattern in IB's. Here we have standards in white, widely banded and heavily washed in violet. Falls are also a white base, but with a deeper violet banding, and a marbling or wash over the center. Simply wonderful branching and bud count, which appears to be a strong point in this whole line of work, as all I've seen to date have these attributes. And what a clever name – Paul is good at it!

**CLOUD MISTRESS** (Blyth 1995) is one of my favorites from a large collection of innovative IB's released by Barry in the mid-90's. Here we have a glistening, frothy white with a distinctive tangerine-red beard. Reminds me of a modern version of Cheers (Hager), the first really decent red-bearded white IB. This has been a difficult area to improve upon, and Cloud Mistress is a major accomplishment. **OPALETTE** (Blyth 1993) is a pearlescent, delicate blend of cream and ivory, gently blushed with soft pink. Standards are open but usually hold well. Plant habits are exception, with serious increase each season. Then, to wake things up a bit, **HE'S A PIRATE** (Blyth 1994), certainly at the opposite end of the spectrum. From a daring cross (famous parent, pink SDB Chanted (Blyth) X the stunning Electrique (Blyth)), Barry got a sultry, naughty bitone, with deep burgundy wine standards and deeper, near-black falls with cherry underlay. Wonderful color! Superb substance to allow the flowers to retain their intensity throughout the life of the flower. **SONORAN SANDS** (Tasco 1996) is a fun new plicata from California, reminding me of a modern version from the great IB classic, Swizzle (Hager 1972). Golden yellow standards are solid, with no markings. Then, the falls are one shade lighter, smartly stitched and sanded with a rusty brown, with heavier concentration of markings at the shoulders, just like Swizzle did. Smaller flowers on rather flexuous, well-branched stalks. Works for me!

And, to conclude this section, a dynamic duo from dynamo hybridizer, Marky Smith from Yakima, Washington: **FATHOM** (1997), I have said from the first time I saw it, has "everything" my own Sass-winning blue, **Silent Strings**, lacked (of course, S.S. was introduced 20 years ago...). A clear, shimmering medium blue, about the color of Loyal Devotion (Waltermire) or Color Me Blue (Schreiner), in a total self with no undercoating to interfere. Well shaped, with proper

standards under control (S.S. standards tended to be open) and wonderful branching and bud count (S.S. was, frankly, short and stubby!). But there are similarities too; namely, rampant growth habits, dependability, and carrying power of the color in the garden. And then SAILOR (Smith 1996), a tidy neglecta-plicata, reminiscent of some of the early work Keith Keppel did in the pattern, in both the TB's and medians. Sailor has a white ground in the standards, stitched in a clear light blue. Falls have more white showing through, with bolder, thicker deep blue to violet plicata banding. Exceptional form, ruffled, with more than adequate branching and bud count. Yep, another winner! CLASSICS: ARCTIC FANCY (A. Brown 1965); DRUMMER BOY (Schreiner 1963); ORIENTAL BABY (Guenther 1964); PALE CLOUD (Keppel 1969); RASPBERRY ACRES (Greenlee 1968).

**STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:** So many to talk about, so little space left to do it in (I try to limit Contemporary Views to 16 pages). WEBMASTER (Keppel 1997) has the markings and intensity of its mother, Firestorm (Marky Smith), but in more of a wine plicata on yellow versus chocolate brown. Brown infiltration is evident, however, giving an ever richer appearance. Wonderful form, broad and rounded. For me, its sister, RINGER (Keppel 1997) is a much better grower and performer, a chocolate brown on yellow plicata, with a clearer banding in the falls than the sanding of Firestorm. Both are distinctive; both are worthy. HOODLUM (Keppel 1997) is a very nice advancement in luminatas, with deep port to violet color, washed with white in the heart of the falls, around the bronze beards. Wonderful form from its parent, Privileged Character (Black), and an overall better performer. 1 branch; consistently produces 3 buds per stalk.

BEE MUSED (Black 1997) is a clever name for a cutie from unknown parentage (get it? Perhaps a bee pod?). It is a rich medium purple self with distinctive bushy white beards in contrast. Tight, dainty flowers, heavily ruffled. Speaking of musing....MUSE (Marky Smith 1997) is another interesting child from the great and versatile Chanted (Blyth), which is going to go down in SDB history as one of the most important parents ever, I do predict. Muse is actually kind of an odd thing, with dusky mauve-pink standards and smoky peach falls. Then, as the flower ages (from about Day 2), the smoky overtones tend to disappear, leaving the principle colors which have been hiding out in the mist. When you see this, I say that good judges don't call the event "fading"; rather, I use the term "transform", for either version of the flower you see is acceptable and attractive. Through it all, we have distinctive smoked deep pink beards. Well, I missed one – just now discovering the joys of LOW LIFE (Aitken 1995), another smartly named one, in that it is a port wine-red on cream plicata, spittin' image of the great TB classic, High Life (Schreiner 1964). Sensible growth, with dependable stalks right at 12", sometimes with branch, sometimes not, 2 to 3 buds. Rich colors which hold well throughout the life of the flower.

I have been concentrating, in both the SDB's and IB's, on the work of Barry Blyth, and have amassed respectable collections in each class. Here are some of my favorite Blyth SDB's: CHANTILLY DANCER (1994), a tidy lavender-pink on creamy white plicata, with most of the plicata marks (in deeper lavender-pink) appearing in the falls. As with its daddy, it gets a bit tall, especially on the later bloomstalks in the clump, but still a lot of fun. The parent? Chanted. KISS ME QUICK (1996) is similar, but without the lavender influences. Standards and plicata edging in the falls is a pretty, light pink, very clear and crisp. As with many in this bloodline, standards are open, but generally well held. Parent? Smoky Trail (Blyth). Wait, back up. Parent of Smoky Trail? Chanted. HOTSEAT (1996) is far from subtle – or timid. Standards are a solid, rich apricot-orange; the falls a warm (creamy) white, with a distinctive plicata edging in apricot-orange. Form is *c'est magnifique*, tight and rounded, ruffled. Parent? Scion (Blyth). Wait, back up. Parent of Scion? Chanted! Celsius (1995) is a brazen, bedazzled concoction, with golden-yellow standards, somewhat softer lemon-gold falls, which are then tattooed with a

predominant deep red-brown spot pattern. Shape of falls is more oval, an attractive change of pace. To further stir things up, the beard is deep (navy) blue. Parent? Zing Me (Blyth IB, and you can sure tell it). Hey, what about the “other side”? Oh. CHANTED! Well, surely the strangest, saved for last: ROCKABYE (1993) is a confusing, wonderful mixed-up medley, with rosy colored standards, but infused with tan and brown. The falls, basically the same color, but with an imposing rosy-brown spot pattern that sure looks like the spot patterns you see in

I. pumila! The whole situation here is smoked over, but don’t get the wrong impression that it’s muddy. NOT! Zany and wonderful! Parent? CHANTED!!! Are you thoroughly annoyed by now? Have I made my point about Chanted, or are you really dense??? The diversity in its children is simply unbelievable. OK, one more (I don’t think has Chanted in its background):

IMBUE (1996) is perhaps my favorite of the lot, in spite of my apparent obsession with Chanted. Imbue is pure class, in what I refer to as a “barely-plic”. Standards are a warm gold, with just suggestions of bronze plicata markings in cooler weather. The falls are wide, ruffled, and rounded in white, with a distinctive mustard gold edge and, again, hints of brass plicata markings, especially at the shoulders. CLASSICS: ANGEL MUSIC (A. Brown 1968); BLOODSPOT (Craig 1966); BLUEBERRY MUFFINS (Warburton 1963); CIRCLETTE (Goett 1963); GREEN SPOT (Cook 1951).

## MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED

A sister-act from the Willotts, from I. pumila breeding, have been very impressive, and in spite of the temperate climate of central Oklahoma, have performed and bloomed well: INKY ELF (1996) is a tiny deep violet, with even deeper spot in the falls. Truly, the color is like indelible ink, rich, and well-preserved. WEE NOBLE (1996) is more of a royal purple, with deep standards, but falls even one tone deeper, with no apparent spot pattern. Here, it is the better overall performer of the two. PURPLE PUMA (Kasperek 1998) is a touch taller, but still within proper height for an MDB. Flower size is also in class, just a bit lighter in purple than the two Willotts, with even a hint of ruffling. Cute! And, yep, another clever name (get it? “Puma”, “pumila”...). Brad, you little devil, you. CLASSICS: DITTO (Hager 1982); GARNET ELF (Hamblen 1977).

## ARILBREDS

I finally got my hands on JONNYE'S MAGIC (Rich-Whitely 1992), so popular you’d better get your order in early for it, because most of the dealers who carry it sell out every year! From a mind-boggling complex pedigree, mindful of some of the parentage strings of the great Ben Hager. The aril veining in this jewel is more heavily concentrated on the edges of the petals – like a plicata! Whether or not, technically, it is, I could care less. It is distinctive, and impressive. Base color is white; the veining a brilliant violet. “I’ve never met a “Shockey” I didn’t like, and that includes QUEEN SHEBA (1993). It is basically a light orchid-violet, gradually transforming to an even lighter color as the flower ages (and expands its cells!). Then, ka-bamm! A bold, stunning, dramatic dark burgundy-ruby signal, predominating the recurved falls. From Germany, ANACRUSIS (Mathes 1992) is a deep-deep oxblood black, even deeper in the falls. The saturation is beyond intense; the attraction irreversible! And, from England (!), WINE AND LILAC (Wilson 1995) is a colorful addition. The “lilac” is on top, clean and clear, with even a hint of blue veining in the midribs. The “wine” comes in the form of a huge burgundy spot, dominantly positioned on perfectly recurved lilac-rose falls (deeper than the standards). Stunning! Magnificent form and weather resistance.

**NOTE:** All arilbreds reviewed this year are half-breds (OGB).

## **SPURIAS**

A trio from Jenkins have performed exceptionally well for me the past 2 seasons: **CLARA ELLEN** (1993) is perhaps my (current) favorite. Standards are a vibrant light purple (not orchid, not lavender). The falls are that rich butter yellow you find in Spurias, but then gracefully marked on the edges in the color of the standards. Heavy ruffling and crimping, and waxy substance. Flower retains its color intensity through the life of the flower. **SUNSET COLORS** (1994) is similar, but in more somber colors, with mauve undertones. There is more yellow in the falls, but in two different shades, gradually becoming deeper and more intense at the edges. Tall (at least 4') with good bud placement and a respectable length of bloom season. Mr. Jenkins is diverse in his work with Spurias, and has started to release some real cuties, with smaller, even dainty flowers, and shorter stalks. My favorite to date is **POPPED CORN** (1993) – what an incredible name – and can you believe it hadn't already been taken?! Standards are a warm creamy-white; the falls, deep buttery yellow, precisely edged in clear white. Tight, intricate ruffles galore, and stalks a full foot shorter than the norm (under 3'). Superb proportions, clever, and most worthy.

## **LOUISIANAS**

Kevin Vaughn is world-famous for his work with hostas. Now he is concentrating his efforts on daylilies and Louisiana irises. To mark his debut in this world: **BEALE STREET** (1997) is a tall, imposing medium to deep blue with heavy ruffling and flare. The broad flowers possess even heavier texture veining, giving added vitality to the flower. Superb placement of branches, with a long season of bloom. And, another clever name: **RED VELVET ELVIS** (1997) is a luxurious deep red, with (surprise!) velvet texture. The style arms and falls are so deep in saturation they closely approach black. Yet, I have to wonder if there's a "Black Velvet Elvis" waiting in the wings in Kevin's seedling patch – surely! An orange-yellow spear signal is there (from its parent, the famous Debaillon winner, Jeri (Bertinot)), but the style arms are so predominant, the signals are even partially hidden! Rich, wonderful, with impeccable plant habits and performance.

**DELTA TWILIGHT** (Dunn 1996) was a convention guest, which unfortunately bloomed after the folks had gone home. Well named, it is a moody blend of soft lilac, blue, gray, and mauve, with gently ruffled broad flowers. The whole presentation of the flower is a hauntingly beautiful mystique. From Australia, **CRUSHED ICE** (Pryor 1997) is a tall, cold icy-white, with heavy ruffling shivering in the hot Oklahoma breeze. Quite noticeable texture veining adds drama to the flower. **KITCHEN MUSIC** (Morgan 1996) is a festive affair from our friend in Arkansas. It is a variegata color pattern, with clarity of color the envy of its Tall Bearded counterparts. Standards are a clear yellow, with a hint of red stain in the midribs. Falls are a bright, joyful red, contrasted with a stunning yellow-orange steeple signal. Beautiful deep green foliage, and healthy through and through. **CLASSICS: ANN CHOWNING** (Chowning 1977); **BROWN PATCH** (Arny 1976); **CHARJOY'S MIKE** (Arny 1977); **CHARLIE'S EVANGELINE** (Arny 1976); **EOLIAN** (Arny 1969); **INEZ CONGER** (Arny 1973).

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## **CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 2000/2001**

***Perry Dyer***

This edition of Contemporary Views will cover the bloom seasons 2000 and 2001 from central Oklahoma. However, I will also mention some things I saw while judging the Premio Firenze Competition in Florence, Italy. I was honored to be asked to make a "repeat appearance" in this annual competition as a judge. Only one American judge is chosen to represent the United States on this panel each year. It was nice to renew old friendships made from my first trip to judge there – and also to see how well the Italian Iris Society's Judges Training Program has been continuing to improve.

One of the highlights from my first trip there, in the mid-90's, was to conduct an impromptu Judges Training School, right there in the garden where so much history has been made. And I was thrilled to be asked for my ideas the last time I judged there, and many of the suggestions made by me, along with Margaret Cameron Longo from Florence, have been adopted as part of their curriculum. Margaret is one of those special people, rare in this world. She is an English-woman by birth, Italian by marriage. Pure class without pretense, yet she is one tough cookie when it comes to her judging standards – and "her" trainees! She knows her irises, and she knows how to teach!

Many of those reviewed this year will still be from guest plantings from the 1999 National Convention which Oklahoma City (Sooner State Iris Society) hosted. We have "lived" with these now for awhile, and it has been interesting to see which varieties were "flashes" and which ones have truly become a vital part of the collection, impressing each bloom season.

1. The **CONTEMPORARY AWARD** is given to the Best New Iris seen (i.e., one introduced within the past 3 years of the date of this review): **NIGHT HAWK'S DREAM** (Roberts 2000) was sent to the '99 Convention and, at the time, was still under number. Merle Roberts, from Washington, is one of those "backyard hybridizers" who has been working with irises for many years. Yet there have been few introductions from him because he is so self-critical. Night Hawk's Dream is a simply splendid deep blue amoena, with clean white standards and stylearms, then dramatically contrasted in rich, luminescent medium to dark blue falls. White beards are tipped yellow, only deep in the throat. The intensity of the falls' colors is what you would normally find in neglectas; rather rare in amoenas. The richness and sophistication of this flower makes it unforgettable. You might know, from a critical breeder, the plant habits and flower production will be strong. Night Hawk's Dream is no exception. Strong, husky plants produce outstanding increase, and it is generous with its bloom, with 4 branches, 9-10 buds on strong, tough stalks.

**Runnersup: CORDOBA** (Ghio 1998) is the finest offering I have seen yet from Joe, in a high-quality line of oranges which continues to improve and impress with each passing generation. Gone for good are the flimsy stalks, crashing to the ground with the least amount of breeze, toe-in branching, and insipid growth. This is a grand rich mango orange, with an undercurrent of red in the falls which simply makes the color presentation even more intense. Fuzzy red beards. Wonderful form, substance, and sunfastness. Growth is superb, with a full fan of leaves (instead of 3 or 4 sprigs, so common in early oranges). And the stalks! Mercy! 4 branches, 10 buds, beautifully timed over the life of the flower. Shocking in the garden; quite possibly unbeatable on the show bench! **MURRAH MEMORIAL** (Bianco 1998) was hybridized by my friend from northern Italy. I was guesting it, and it was displaying its first blooms of its first-year bloom here shortly after the terrorist bombing of the federal building in downtown Oklahoma City on 4/19/95. When Murrah Memorial made the final cut, and Augusto and I mutually agreed it should be introduced, I suggested the name, in honor of the lives lost that morning, and he

agreed. Purest white, broad and full-figured, with heavy ruffling, beautifully spaced over the flower parts. It has a white beard, tipped yellow deep in the heart. The substance is thick, the texture is leathery yet has a glisten. Branching is top notch, with 3-4 beautifully spaced branches, 7-9 buds. Splendid plant habits, with outstanding growth and resistance to adverse weather conditions. I first evaluated **VIBRANT** (Black 1999) as a seedling, when Paul still lived in Oklahoma. So I've been anxiously awaiting its release. Glad it "made the cut" in the Pacific Northwest also. It is a dazzling brilliant gold self, with deeper gold to orange beards. It inherited the dependability, branching, and stellar plant habits from its mama, Good Show, a great-great orange hybridized by the late Ben Hager. Vibrant is absolutely sunfast, even in blazing Oklahoma heat. An excellent contribution to a color group which, frankly, can be difficult at times.

2. The **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** goes to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen. This doesn't necessarily address the overall plants habits, but all aspects must be acceptable to merit the variety receiving the award: **UPON A STAR** (Dickey 2001) was another convention guest, seen here under seedling number, which has now totally proven itself in this part of the country. Quite simply, the most beautiful Space Age iris I've ever seen! It has the personality and elegance of its mother, Mesmerizer (Byers), but instead of pure white, the color is a pure baby ribbon pink self. Beards are orange, ending in a 1" white horn. Although not registered as such, I've seen the horn extend out into a baby ribbon pink spoon, on occasion. The whole flower has a silken look to it, with deep ruffling from Mesmerizer and excellent, rounded form.

**Runnersup: DOUBLE BUBBLE** (Ghio 1998) is a soul-soothing azure blue with white beards. As the name suggests, it has the "trademark" Ghio bubble ruffling. Boy! Does it ever! Broad flowers, falls virtually overlapping at the hafts, with falls and standards so deeply ruffled, you wonder how the flowers will ever make it open without tearing. But they do. The flower sends a cold shiver up your spine. Only criticism I have, thusfar, is that it isn't the most robust grower in the garden. But it is acceptable, or I wouldn't let it appear in the Awards Section! **RUTH SIMMONS** (Mullin 2000) is bittersweet, named for a lovely lady from Oklahoma who was a vital member of the core group of workers for the 1999 National. She's in a planning meeting one Sunday; the next thing we hear, she has crossed over. She was a very close friend to Ron Mullin, and he has honored their friendship – and her memory – with the naming of a classy iris for her. Impeccable taste! If you knew Ruth, you knew it would have to be! The flower is a quiet soft yellow and white taffeta, with understated elegance in heavily ruffling and nearly horizontal falls. The falls are primarily white, but gently blend in with the standards' colors towards the edges. Full yellow beards bring it all together. The branching and bud count are without peer, with 4 branches, lower rebranching, and as many as 12 buds on tall, graceful but sturdy stalks. I first saw **GLACIER POINT** (Tasco 1998) in the hybridizer's garden while still under number. I was fortunate to get it as one of my 200 or so convention guests for '99, so I have been able to study it intimately. What an incredible name! Yes, it is a cold glacier-white, with chilling blue undertones. Extending from pale violet beards is a deeper violet horn. Branching is superb, a Tasco trademark, I do believe. The texture is silky smooth, with ruffling on broad flowers.

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is, in my opinion, the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break, of the varieties I have seen. I have never given this award to a Miniature Dwarf before, but then I've never bloomed a Space Age MDB before, either! From France, and a very creative English/French hybridizer, comes **PUNK** (Ransom 1998). Wow! It is a zesty deep wine-violet, much like its mother, Clay's Caper (Hager-Hamblen SDB), but with less red in its makeup. The pollen parent is a Space Age TB crossed with I. pumila, and that's where the horn and the diminutive size come from. In cooler seasons, the falls will display its I. pumila heritage by revealing a yet darker spot pattern. But look out! Arising from

the fuzzy light violet beard comes a fat hairy horn the color of the flower! Tight form, admittedly at the upper end of the MDB spectrum rather than lower. But, here, definitely an MDB in every way, including downsized but vigorous plants.

**Runnersup: ZEBRA NIGHT** (Kasperek 1998). Sure not easy making this one a "runnerup" to anything! This is the greatest breakthrough in variegated foliage irises I have seen. The variegation is consistent, with a pretty green precisely striped and interfaced in warm cream. The breakthrough is with the flower. Most variegated-foliage flowers, shall we say, "leave a lot to be desired". Like, forget the bloom and enjoy the foliage! Not so here. It is a broad, lightly ruffled deep violet self, competitive in form, finish, and style to just about any "non-variegated" contemporary. And, even the stalks have the striping! **CREOLE RHAPSODY** (Mertzweiller 1998) is another breakthrough, probably the first of its kind, to my knowledge. Joe was the pioneer in the conversion of Louisiana irises to tetraploid. Although he worked patiently with them, he also continued to do some work at the diploid level. You must call him "Daredevil Joe" (or masochist), for somewhere along the way, he got the bright idea to try to cross tets with dips. Setting pods at the tetraploid level has been difficult enough; interploidy, virtually impossible. Yet, here we have Creole Rhapsody, a true bicolor which must have been inherited from the diploid (pod) parent, Colorific (Mertzweiller), which I have always referred to as a "blue amoena". On Creole Rhapsody, the standards are basically a creamy white, but have a strong influence of wine-red and raspberry in the midribs and in texture veining throughout. Then, the falls are a broad, flat deep wine to rose red blend, contrasted starkly with predominant brilliant yellow signals. There has been debate as to "which is it" – tetraploid? Diploid? Don't know. Don't care. I just know it was a difficult breakthrough to accomplish, and it is an exciting flower! **YIPPI SKIPPY** (Black 1998) is a spunky new venture into the world of luminatas. Paul has specialized in their development, over the years, and for me, this is not only the finest, quality-wise, but also my favorite, in color, presentation, and form. This Standard Dwarf is a chipper lilac-orchid blend, with a glow of cream to yellow at the base of the standards (not the midribs) and around the yellow beards, in true luminata pattern. Yep (yip?), it glows. The falls are a degree darker than the standards, especially at the edges. Good proportions, consistently produces 1 branch, 3 buds, with outstanding plant habits. Some of the luminata releases in the dwarfs have had foliage which was perhaps a bit too "husky"; this has been corrected in this variety.

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): **CRANAPPLE** (Aitken 1995) is one of the finest Border Bearded released in the '90's. It is a rich deep cranberry-red, perhaps a tone deeper in the falls, with dark bronze beards. A very masculine flower, with more waving than ruffling. Perfect proportions, with slender stalks carrying magnificent branching (3 branches to 3 branches plus spur), 7 to 9 buds. The color is fully saturated and completely sunfast in Oklahoma. It carries clear across the garden, in spite of the depth of its coloration.

**Runnersup: ACT THREE** (Blyth 1995) has been a "sleeper"; I don't know that I've seen it in this part of the country, outside of my own garden. A child of the great Dykes Medalist, Edith Wolford (Hager), this delightful bicolor is far richer, and even more dependable here than Edith. Standards are a soft light to medium lemon with a blush of violet in the midribs. The falls are a rich blue-violet, at least 2 tones deeper than the falls of Edith. But it inherited the same beautiful form as its mother. Blooms fairly early, but late enough to dodge any of the infamous Okie late freezes, which unfortunately several of Barry's color-wonders fall victim to, because they are early-early. My only concern has been in its bloom/increase ratio. It tends to produce more increase than the number of bloomstalks you get each year. But, even if so, each flower is to be cherished. A lovely work of art! **PROTOCOL** (Keppel 1996), conversely, is at the head of its class. Many, many superior IB's on the market today, but Protocol is with the best – the top 3

or so, in my opinion. Clean, clear white standards have just a hint of yellow in the centers. Then the falls are a bold, dazzling, bright yellow (Keith calls it “dandelion yellow” – indeed!), gradually transforming somewhat to a lighter shade of yellow at the edge (not a true “band”, as we often see in amoenas). Branching, bud count, growth habits, stalk production – all are above reproach. I do not “politic”, but perhaps could this be the first median Dykes Medalist since the great BB, Brown Lasso (Buckles-Niswonger) won, 2 decades ago? **PERFECT GIFT** (Keppel 1996) is a fine addition to the pinks, a marked improvement to the quality work Joe Gatty set the stage for pinks. For me, Perfect Gift is deeper than the registered “pale pink”, a full medium pink with classic ruffling and soft orange to shrimp beards. Its greatest attributes are its magnificent form, presentation, and healthy, dependable plants habits. Of course, great branching too, on stalks moderate in height.

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. Had LOVIN' SPOONFUL (Bausch 1992) been introduced by a more “famous” median hybridizer, it would have gone on to win the Cook-Douglas Medal, hands-down. I purchased it because of my experience with other releases from Lynn, a virtually “unknown” highly-selective hybridizer from cold-cold Wisconsin, and because of its parentage. It has the great azure classic SDB, Azure Gem (Hamblen 1982) as its mother. I was not disappointed with it, when it bloomed the next year. It inherited the classical form of Azure Gem only in a cold glacier-white, right down to its pure white beards. There is tight delicate ruffling with even a modest amount of lace (STILL very rare in SDB’s). It is elegant, but it is tough as nails, and produces outstanding plants and proper amount of bloom each spring.

**Runnersup:** ZING ME (Blyth 1990), IB. If you read my emphatic, fanatic endorsement of Barry’s deep pink SDB, Chanted, in the last edition of Contemporary Views, buckle up. I’m back. Not only is this zestful IB a standout in the garden, it will go down in history as a superstar breeder. Zing Me is fertile, folks (remember the days when it was a “given” that, if it was an IB, it was 99% guaranteed to be sterile!). It is responsible for the I. pumila spot pattern stretching up into the Border Bearded class. It is also the parent of the great SDB, Death By Chocolate (Bianco 2002 – see Pick of the Litter Awards, below). Zing Me has warm, creamy-white standards with a heavy infusion of clear lemon. The falls are also creamy-white, with a distinct lemon band on the edges, but then, POW! A huge, daring deep brown spot (approaching chocolate) dominates the falls, in a circular pattern, and covering right at 2/3 the “square footage” of the falls. Beards are downright scary, in deepest brown, approaching black. Standards are open but well placed and hold well. Falls have just enough ruffling to keep the pattern busy in the breeze. It is a virtual weed in the growth department.

From England we have a beautiful, elegant, white in classic simplicity: **ELIZABETH POLDARK** (Nichol 1990) is the epitome of what a healthy garden iris should be. Although basically white, it has a presence of yellow in the heart of the flower which makes it glow. The ruffling is heavy, but you don’t get the feeling of “overkill”. Yes, great in the garden, in that it has superb branching, with a generous amount of buds with excellent sequencing. However, it should do well on the show bench too, simply because of its tough substance and placement of branches. Introduced by the Suttons in California, and used heavily by them in their lines, it is already proving itself to be a fine breeder. **MUPPET MADNESS** (Black 1991), amazingly, hasn’t received the “play” I would have expected, especially with such a cute name. This rich SDB has a white base color, but is heavily washed with red-purple, with a band on the edges in near jet-black! Beards are white, with a white glow around them. Magnificent form and substance (from Chubby Cheeks, no wonder). Dependable growth habits.

6. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding and promising seedling personally viewed during the time period of this review: **DEATH BY CHOCOLATE** (Bianco 2002) is a gloriously decadent new SDB, you just have to see to believe! Oh mercy! What a sight! Comatose! Chocolate Shock Syndrome! A very famous hybridizer once warned me (in my early days of hybridizing) to be careful with my selections when it came to earth-tone colored dwarfs – as far as garden impact, nada – they blend right into the dirt! No problem with Death By Chocolate. Standards are a rich milk chocolate. Falls are yet deeper and richer, in a bittersweet chocolate. From Zing Me, it inherited the saturation of beards, but not the spot. There is just a sliver of cream, barely showing at the edges of the falls. On a diet? Go on, indulge – after all, it's a dwarf, and a “little” goes a long way! I'll probably have to turn right around and “award” it the 9-1-1 Award next year, because this is truly a great hybridizing achievement!

**Runnersup:** **MADAM PRESIDENT** (Thurman 2001) was gested here under number for the 1999 National Convention, and I have been impressed ever since its first-year bloom here in 1998. This child of the great Bumblebee Deelite (Norrick) exhibits all the good points of its mother, including well-spaced branching on delicate, gracefully curved stalks, and a floriferousness you should expect from the class. Grace and elegance with light (canary) yellow standards, harmoniously contrasted with a clean light amethyst in the falls. What a wonderful addition to the MTB class. **DELIRIUM** (Smith 2001) is a new IB that has been privately gested here (I'm a Median Iris Society Display Garden) and is a far cry from the type of things Marky has released to date. Well named, for this is sheer insanity! Standards are a strange, moody gold, but heavily overtoned with a weird smoke cast. Then the falls, so shocking you'll swear the flower will pop right out of the sockets! The base color is primarily that of the standards. But then, in a heavy overlay (too thick to call a “wash!”), the falls are accentuated with bold dark reds and violets and russet, with yet deeper veining, and it all jaggedly blending in to the gold primary color. Bold beards just add to the decibel level, in a shocking orange to brick red. Leathery substance, broad form, with closed standards. Superb plant habits and very decent stalks. I would think it'll be a “love it or hate it” iris; but I have yet to hear a foul comment from anyone who has seen it “in the flesh”! Go, Marky! **AVALON BECKONS** (H. Nichols 2001) was seen under number here for the convention. High-quality Space Age bicolors have been slow to develop, but this is a major advancement, exhibiting health and overall “gardenable” plant habits from its mother, the great bicolor, Sweet Musette (Schreiner). Standards are a colorful blend of pink and lavender (more pink than lavender). The falls are a glowing rose-pink, accented with bright tangerine beards, ending in a dramatic violet horn. It has ruffling, lace, and a taffeta texture.

## **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

**REDS TO MAROONS:** **DRAGONHEART** (Schick 2000) is a totally different look in reds. It is half-plicata (from Gibson-Cooley's Lady Fire), which explains the networking of bright white striations around the deep black cherry beards. It has light ruffling, with the flowers in a dramatic deep glossy black-cherry. **RED RIDER** (Lauer 1998) is a brassy scarlet to brick red here with contrasty thick mustard beards. Round, tight form, with light to moderate ruffling. As with so many of Larry's releases, it grows very well here in central Oklahoma, and has excellent branching and bud count.

**PICANTE** (Ghio 1997) is more of a sassy red, an extension of the “toasted melon” wonders which Joe has released over the years. This is more of a blend, with an intoxicating blend of rose and fuchsia mixed in with the red, complete with a toasted tangerine beard. Thusfar hasn't exhibited the strong growth habits of its grandfather, Lightning Bolt (Ghio), but acceptable. **CLASSICS:** **CRACKLIN' BURGUNDY** (Schreiner 1981);

**FORT APACHE** (Schreiner 1982); **GARNET ROBE** (Schreiner 1976).

**BROWNS: WHIPPED HONEY** (Jameson 1996) still rules! In my opinion, it is the finest honey-brown which has been released to date. Well-named, it is actually a blending of honey, light gold, and a tablespoon of soft violet in the center of the falls. Then everything is whipped to a frenzy, with elaborate ruffling and intricate lace. Splendid growth and increase. To read the description of **HEARTLAND** (Kerr 1995), it may sound similar to Whipped Honey. But they are total opposites in style and presentation. Heartland is a blending of honey, light tan, with an unusual, attractive pink glow about it. The texture is leathery, with gentle ruffling rather than exotic deep billows. The focal point is the bright tangerine beard, adding nice contrast to the flower. **COPPER CYMBAL** (Mullin 1997) reminds me of a modern version of the famous Copper Classic, the copper blend which nearly won the Dykes a couple of times. Indeed, it is from Copper Classic, paired up with Ghio's famous toasted watermelon, Lady Friend, mixed in to give better stalks, higher bud count, and overall much better growth. The flower has a burnished rose glow in it, then contrasted with bold tangerine beards. Speaking of **CLASSICS: ETERNAL FLAME** (Schreiner 1967); **MALAYSIA** (Ghio 1976); **TAWNY MINK** (Schreiner 1966).

**APRICOTS TO ORANGES: CARNIVAL SUNSET** (Thurman 1997) is a tall, bold, fully-saturated deep pumpkin to bright orange, with the health and outstanding branching and bud count of its mother, the great orange, Good Show (Hager). Beards are high impact bright orange. It is broad, with light to moderate ruffling, and big ol' husky plants, ever dependable. **BIG SQUEEZE** (Black 1999) produced its maiden bloom in Paul's seedling patch when he still lived in Oklahoma City. It too, as with Carnival Sunset, is big and bold, is also a child of Good Show, just isn't quite as tall. The colors are orange juice with bright orange beards, heavily ruffled, and a fair amount of lace, too. The flowers are huge but architecturally sound. **SUNNY PEACH** (Black 1998) is a sister to Big Squeeze, but this time we have a warmer, gentler color array. Instead of the bright orange, we have a choice blending of peach, with creamy yellow undertoning, and salmon-pink, somewhat more concentrated in the falls. It too has ruffling, but doesn't have the lace. Also, it is an extremely late bloomer, a nice pick-me-up to the iris-weary eye at the end of the season! **PUMPKINFEST** (Hedgecock 1998) is a short, sassy color gem, my favorite from this relatively new hybridizer from Missouri. It is a medium pumpkin orange (but of course!), but has a noticeable, attractive white area surrounding thick orange beards. It has nice form, a respectable amount of ruffling and, although on the short side, such good carrying power in the garden you must notice it. **CLASSICS: ISLE OF CAPRI** (Spahn 1977); **NEON MAGIC** (O. Brown 1974); **SUMMER LOVE** (Greenwood 1974).

**PINKS:** Yes! We have pinks. The three reviewed this year are totally different from each other in color, style, and garden effect. **BUISSON DE ROSES** (Cayeux 1998), in hot weather, is a dazzling salmon-pink, with deeper salmon beards. In cooler weather, rose infusions come through, giving the overall appearance of a hot pink. Exciting, exuberant offering from a self-critical French hybridizer. **VALENTINE'S DAY** (Wood 1997) is the classic rich pink, in the tradition of the greats such as Pink Taffeta (Rudolph) and Pink Sleigh (Rudolph), with the intensity of color somewhere in between the two. Ruffled, a hint of lace. Tasteful tangerine-coral beards. A joyful iris for the early season. If handcuffs don't work, try begging: **DON'T LEAVE ME** (Blyth 1997) is a cool pink with a satin finish. The medium pink standards are one tone deeper than the falls, which are a shimmering light pink. Pink (not tangerine) beards add to its overall smoothness. Broad, simply ruffled, simply begging for attention. **CLASSICS: CORAL SATIN** (Hamblen 1981); **SATIN BOW** (O. Brown 1978); **SATIN GOWN** (Gatty 1978); **WARM EMBRACE** (Dyer 1980).

**LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:** Some wonderful new things at the "rich" end of the spectrum...**MOBY GRAPE** (Lauer 1998) reminds me of a more contemporary version of a personal favorite, Grapes of Wrath (Durrance, a Dark Horse runnerup in the last edition of Contemporary Views). The "Grape" is because that's what it is – a quenching deep grape (not violet, not purple) self. The "Moby" is because it's huge. The beard is fascinating, transforming from a grape-purple base, to orange, finally to white at the tips. It has an "eclectic" heritage, with all kinds of things such as the greats, Brandy (McWhirter) and Sweet Musette (Schreiner) in its genes. So the possibilities as a breeder are unbelievable. I had to travel half-way around the world to first see **COLOR GLORY** (Black 1999), which finished in the Top 5 of the judging of the 2000 Premio Firenze Competition in Florence, Italy (Paul had THREE in the Top 5 that year!). Although **Color Glory** is one of the last to bloom in American soil, it was at peak bloom in Italy, showing off with deepest rose, blended with a bit a purple, the falls a full tone lighter, then stylized with thick bushy burnt orange beards. Absolutely colorfast, and makes a stunning clump! **LENTEN PRAYER** (Schreiner 1998) is another one of those "Schreiner freebies" which wound up being one of the best offerings for that year! The color is a beetroot purple, but with more of a cranberry glow in its makeup than similar things such as Swingtown (Schreiner). Flowers are huge, but the tree-trunk stalks have the strength to hold them up. Plants are a deep blue-green, full of vigor, and husky. **CLASSICS: FABULOUS FRILLS** (Schreiner 1976); **FOOLISH PLEASURE** (Gaulter 1977); **LILAC FLAME** (Hamblen 1979).

**DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:** **BLACK BUTTE** (Schreiner 1999) is one of my favorites of the new Schreiner blacks. As with most of their releases, the black is approached from the "blue" side, rather than the "red", with deepest purple standards (which appear full black in full sun) and obsidian black falls with thick, leathery substance, ruffling, and good shape. Deep purple-black beards are harmonious. It is a "glossy" black instead of the sultry velvet finish we often see. Either touch is attractive, but it's fun to see black patent leather in the garden. **MEN IN BLACK** (Lauer 1998) is a velvet black from a totally different approach. Contrasting brassy beards are attractive, coming from the important parent, Witch's Sabbath (Maryott). Healthy plants with tons of increase. Wonderful stalks with tons of buds. **DARK PASSION** (Schreiner 1998) was guested here for the '99 convention, and thusfar, I've been surprised at its virtual lack of support in the awards system – baffles me. Yes, another fine advancement from the Schreiners in blacks. Broad flowers, gently ruffled. Branching without peer. But the intensity of the saturation is impressive, more of an ebony black, and more of a self, instead of deep purple standards and black falls you usually see. **HIGH STAKES** (Schreiner 1999) is a royal purple, with self beards and quite heavy ruffling. It was very popular here at the convention, finishing as a runnerup for the Out-of-Region Cup. It makes a most impressive clump, with good carrying power in the garden, in spite of the depth of the flowers. Magnificent branching, the best yet in this color range, with double and even some triple sockets on 4 branches plus bottom rebranch. Timing of the buds in the clump is most impressive – the clump always has a "full" look, but never cluttered or sloppy. **CLASSICS: PATENT LEATHER** (Schreiner 1971); **RAVEN'S ROOST** (Plough 1981); **TARDE** (Dunn 1979).

**BLUES: MER DU SUD** (Cayeux 1997) was one of my surprises in Italy, stumbled upon while strolling through a previous year's competition. It is a deep sea blue self, stately and rich in saturation. It has a slightly lighter blue beard, attractive in its own right. The flowers have ripple-ruffling, bold and dramatic. The finish to the flower has the lacquered look of its mother, Dusky Challenger (Schreiner), but with the excellent form and deep ruffling of its father, Pledge Allegiance (Schreiner). I was a big fan of **UNCLE CHARLIE** (Spoon 1999) in its first-year bloom in 1998 as a convention guest. Sure enough, the visitors were impressed too, as this heavily ruffled, palest lavender-blue from two of the greatest Dykes Medalists ever – Honky Tonk Blues (Schreiner) and Silverado (Schreiner). It has the classic beauty in form and ruffling of Silverado, with the "restless" subliminal hints from Honky Tonk Blues. What a magnificent clump

it makes! **ABIDING JOY** (Sutton 1997) is actually quite similar in color, but different in presentation. It is the softest seafoam blue, with more lavender in its overall makeup than Uncle Charlie. There is a blush of deeper color in the base of the standards' midribs. Registered as Midseason-Late, here it is an early bloom, and unfortunately a bit tender, for a couple of seasons it has been caught, and stunted, by late freezes. My only complaint. **CLASSICS: LAKE PLACID** (Benson 1977); **ROBBIE LEE** (Denney 1978); **SONG OF NORWAY** (Luihn 1979); **VIVIEN** (Keppel 1979).

**WHITES: CELESTIAL PURITY** (Taylor 1998) is a star just waiting to be discovered. Terrell Taylor is extremely selective for strong, healthy plant habits in his releases. In hot, arid Arizona, I suspect he has to be. Needless to say, his things have stupendous substance too. Here we have a pure white, absolutely self except for a bit of yellow in the beards. The flowers are gigantic, but with such excellent substance, the flowers hold their broad form to the very end. Stalks thick like a telephone pole, with faultless branching and generous bud count. Trust me! Try this one, if you haven't already discovered it! **DIAMOND LIL** (Lauer 1998) is an extremely late-blooming, nice attempt at a red-bearded white (we haven't seen that many good ones in that combo in recent years, have we?). The beards are not red, definitely tangerine, but nonetheless have a powerful impact against glistening (OK, I said it, diamond-dusted) cold white flowers. And even a hint of lace. Nice! **BONUS LITE** (Sutton 1998) is supposed to be a dependable rebloomer, and not just in the temperate climates. But it gets so damned hot here in central Oklahoma in the summers, I rarely have summer rebloom, and the plants are so wore out from enduring heat and drought, what energy was there for possible fall rebloom is usually (literally) dried up! Even if only a once-bloomer, this is a very attractive, warm, cozy white, with a glow of yellow in the heart and across the shoulders. **CLASSICS: BUBBLE BATH** (Ghio 1982); **HEAVEN HELPED** (Waltermire 1979); **SKIERS' DELIGHT** (Schreiner 1982).

**CREAMS TO YELLOWS: GRACE WHITTEMORE** (Richardson 1998), as with just about everything I've seen from this hybridizer from Washington, is highest quality. The color combination is nothing new (full yellow; white falls with full yellow band). But it nonetheless has distinctive-ness. Beards are a nice contrast in golden-orange. It has heavy ruffling, with a rather leathery look which reminds me of the great Dykes classic, Debby Raidon (Kuntz), but in a brighter yellow. Somewhat shorter, but with superlative placement of branching. **SMILING FACES** (Keppel 1998) was "discovered" by the Italian and me (that's Bianco with tour guide Dyer) at Keith's garden the year of the Portland Convention. We tied a string around it or something. Perhaps Augusto and I do have good taste, for that seedling went on to be introduced. The flower size is quite small, but it is a round ball of happy, with luxurious channel ruffling. Stalks are shorter, in proportion to the size of the flowers. Oh, I forgot the color – it's a warm creamy white, gloriously drooled with a pretty shade of lemon, with the falls carrying more intensity of color at the edges (almost in a band). **LANAI** (Ghio 1998), when I first saw it, reminded me of a cooler version of one of my Ghio favorites, Dawning, with a definite suggestion of mint green in its makeup. It is a light lemon, but instead of infusion in peach, as with Dawning, the other-tones here are in pink, with quite an outpouring onto the falls (but not so intense as to suggest a shoulder pattern). **CLASSICS: BICENTENNIAL** (Ghio 1976); **SOLANO** (Luihn 1974); **STARING ROLE** (D. Palmer 1973); **WEST COAST** (Knopf 1968).

**PLICATAS:** Hybridizers continue to explore the pattern and keep coming up with unique variations. On the whole, plants habits and overall dependability in the garden have improved significantly this past decade or so. **I'VE GOT RHYTHM** (Schreiner 1998) is a colorful warm plicata with flowers much smaller than we usually see from the Schreiners. Variety really is the spice of life, and I like the contrast here in this unique plicata. Standards are a rosy-purple with just a hint of the cream base peeking through. Then, the falls are a creamy-yellow ground, distinctly banded in a colorful lilac-purple and rose. Tangerine beards just set off the flower! The vigor

and increase are especially noteworthy. **CREDIBLE JUSTIFICATION** (Innerst 1995) was a convention guest here which has just gotten better and better each year. The base color is a medium buttery yellow. The stitching is a distinctive bronzed brown, very finely appliqued on broad formed flowers. Very vigorous, and a dependable performer, even in adverse conditions. **SELECT CIRCLE** (Ghio 1997) is probably the closest I've seen, to date, to being a black-on-white plicata. And the contrast is truly stunning! The stitching has an underglow of deepest plum, which actually enlivens the flower, and is tastefully presented with stitching, dotting, and stippling. **DIFFERENT DESIGN** (Sutton 1998) is a bold variegata-plicata, with golden yellow standards over white falls which are heavily stitched in a combination of deep red and brown. Exceptional form. Will probably rebloom in the more temperate climates.

Perhaps the most distinctive plicata in this year's review, in my opinion, is **HUCKLEBERRY FUDGE** (Gibson-Cooley's 1997). Certainly well-named, with standards in chocolate brown on white. Falls are the same, basically, but then the stitching has an infiltration of huckleberry (violet-blue). Unique, much prettier than the description, virtually impossible to accurately capture in pictures. **BEHIND CLOSED DOORS** (Innerst 1997) was in the 100 or so secret-coded entries in the Premio Firenze competition, where it finished with an Honorable Mention in 10<sup>th</sup> Place. A clever name, with hot pink base color, with the standards not showing any plicata markings whatsoever. In the falls, behind the scenes, is where all the action is. Tattooed on the shoulders are loud purple striping and stippling, with a few marks slipping through to the rest of the edges of the falls. Goodness! Mercy! Love it! **CLASSICS: CARAMBA** (Keppel 1975); **HIGHLAND CHIEF** (Gibson 1973); **ROSE TATTOO** (Nearpass 1976); **SHOWCASE** (Schreiner 1975).

**AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, AND NEGLECTAS:** **PACIFIC CLOUD** (Lauer 1997) is frothy light blue amoena, with pure white standards over light blue falls, with a hint of a deeper rim on the edges. The ruffling is deep and billowing, the plant habits superb. **CITRON FROMMAGE** (Rogers 1995) is a unique new yellow amoena from a talented but virtually unheralded hybridizer in Wisconsin. Standards are a cool white, with a dramatic citron yellow flush rising up through the midribs from the base. Smooth light citron yellow falls are broad and lightly ruffled. It is quite tall for a yellow amoena, and its cool presentation is soothing. **GOT THE BLUES** (Blyth 1996) is a feisty neglecta from Down Under which has truly impressed. The perfection of form, and ruffling, is inherited from its mother, the great Dykes Medalist, **Silverado** (Schreiner). Standards are a silvery-blue, then falls fully saturated in a deep blue-violet. The form is a "tight" look, and really works with the colors offered. **YES** (Blyth 1996) is a warm yellow amoena from the super-parent of Barry's, **Electrique**. Standards are purest white, one of the cleanest approaches to true yellow amoenas, because there is virtually no fall color coming through in the standards. The falls are a rather unusual honey yellow, transmitting a richness in a different manner than usually seen in yellow amoenas. Then, the "Yes!" beards – piercing deep tangerine. Against the amoena colors, it is a bold statement. **CLASSICS: DREAM ROMANCE** (Burger 1978); **PREMONITION** (Ghio 1978); **TULIP FESTIVAL** (Clough 1975).

**BICOLORS AND VARIEGATAS:** **OCELOT** (Ghio 1998) has standards in a rich medium to dark peach. The falls are a sultry maroon with an overlay with a black sheen. The sheen keeps the flower from being dark and brooding – rather, it is robust! Bright tangerine beards set fire to the flower. Wonderful, rounded form. Superb plant habits, a stronger grower here than its parent, **Romantic Evening**. **CAST A SPELL** (Blyth 1996) is cleverly named, it is an eerie bicolor, with odd deep lilac standards, smoked with mauve. Leathery falls are a deep blending of brown and garnet red, again with a smoked appearance. Rather than the tangerine beards you might expect, they are a sultry deep bronze. An early bloomer, yet seems resistant to any foul late freezes we so often encounter. My garden is in a valley, and appears to be in a frost pocket, so I'm always on the lookout for potential tenderness in the plants and development of the stalks.

Based on the name, you might think **STRATO CUMULUS** (Burseen 1997) would be another blue amoena. Well, sort of. Not really. It is from Babson's Merry Madrigal, which has the all-time great pink and blue bicolor, Touche (Hamblen) as a parent. This incognito background comes through with Strato Cumulus, in a roundabout way, with delicate creamy-yellow standards and soft greyed lavender falls. It has a warm look, with a mink texture, rather than the traditional spark. Distinctive, understated, and presented on plants which are robust and resistant to any vagaries Mother Nature may hurl its direction. Wide, flared falls are heavily ruffled. **HI CALYPSO** (Hoage 1998) is a very "masculine" variegata type, with richest gold standards over violet falls banded and infused with burnt gold, to go with the bushy burnt gold beards. Tall, aggressive, with strong, enduring stalks that withstand the Oklahoma winds. The flowers are thickly substanced with a leathery texture. I like it! **CLASSICS: HEAVENLY HARMONY** (Hamblen 1978); **LIGHTNING RIDGE** (O. Brown 1966); **SHOW BIZ** (Gatty 1980); **SWEDISH MODERN** (Babson 1976).

**POTPOURRI: DEEP DARK SECRET** (Black 1998) was a hit in the Florence competition, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> behind only the great, impressive dark classic, Diabolique (Schreiner). In studying Deep Dark Secret, even if you didn't know the parentage, you'd have to suspicion that it has a connection to Paul's great red-bearded neglecta, Tom Johnson. Yes, same bloodline, but so very different. Fairly compact flowers are a wicked, waxy deepest blue-purple with a mysterious smoke overlay that is hauntingly beautiful. You just don't see this type of texture in this color range, and the effect is stunning. The falls have a ghost of a white band, barely visible because it is embedded in heavy ruffling. Gold beards set yet a different mood, versus the tangerine or red you would have expected. Rich, deep blue-green foliage, with a generous amount of increase, ensures an impressive clump effect. **DILLY GREEN** (Robarts 1997) is an interesting attempt at a green from Evelyn Robarts from Michigan. Fairly short, with compact flowers, it is a moody concoction, with gray as the base color (don't quit reading, go on). But there are infusions of pale blue, blue-green, and even gold, all blended together in a captivating manner. Beards are a deeper blue-green, but tipped in gold. If all this sounds like something the cat threw up, you're just gonna have to trust me on this one – it is neat!

**STROZZAPRETI** (Bianco 2000) is a vivacious bicolor, which on paper sounds amazingly similar to my **TOTENTANZ** (2001). But they are from totally different lines of work, and this is where the differences come through. Perhaps translations would be appropriate, at this point. Augusto says there is no real English version for the "spirit" of his name; but the rough translation is "choke the priest". He won't tell me the story behind the name – perhaps he had a disagreement with his parish's priest? He is not in jail, so that must not be it.... The standards are a glowing garnet red, deep and luxurious. Then the falls are several tones deeper, appearing glossy black to the eye, but then boldly banded with the garnet color of the standards. FYI, Totentanz is German, translating as "Death Dances". Not meaning to be on a macabre trip – the name is a famous piano piece from Franz Liszt! **FOGBOUND** (Keppel 1998) is clever, and frankly is one of those "esoteric" things you should study with intimacy, to appreciate all the nuances of its coloring. It grows on you. Although the gray description might sound like Dilly Green, they're not even close. Fogbound has a mysterious veil of smoke (oh, OK, "fog") enveloping the whole flower, which, technically, is a reverse blue amoena! The beards hint at its background, in that they are an interesting pink and orange. The pink makes you look at the flower closer. Sure enough, amidst the fog, there are undertonings of pink. Broad, heavily ruffled flowers are displayed on tall stalks with outstanding branching and bud count. High drama through the back door, I say! **CLASSICS: PLUM DAZZLE** (Gibson 1975); **SAND AND SEA** (B. Jones 1974); **SMOKED PEARL** (Gladish 1973).

**COLOR BREAKERS:** **KING TUSH** (Kasperek 1997) is the richest pink of the Kasperek Color Breakers, approaching azalea pink to even rose tones. The silvery white streaking is similar to the BB, Baboon Bottom, but, even more predominant, are splashes and streaks in a rich ruby red. Extremely late bloomer, where so many of the Color Breakers are quite early to full midseason, so it is a nice season extender in this type. **CRIMSON TIGER** (Richardson 1996) is from the reciprocal cross of Gerald's great Infernal Fire and, although similar, the markings here are even more poignant. Buff-gold base color gives way to exotic splashes and streaks of deep crimson red, so heavy at times the base color is nearly totally absorbed. Somewhat short, and doesn't have the high bud count of Infernal Fire, but still very acceptable stalks with good branching. **BROKEN DREAMS** (Keppel 1998). Keith, Keith, what's happened to you? This is not like you! From "traditional" breeding for pinks (translation – he didn't mean to do it), we have a smooth peachy pink, broad and full figured. But then, adjust your bifocals, cream streaks running throughout the flower. Scoot over, Zebra-man and Ensminger! Keith scratches his head, sighs, and says "Oh ignorant one, you don't know your iris history". **Trivia Question:** "**What was the name of Keith Keppel's very first introduction?**" If you know the answer, you'll know why Keith chastised me (all of the conversation is fictional, though, you know). If you don't know the answer, it is given at the end of this review. Now don't cheat and fast-forward ahead....

**SPACE AGERS:** **CORPS DE BALLET** (Hager 1998) is a clear light to medium pink, blessed with artistic baby blue horns. It has a wonderful silky texture that simply adds to its elegance. Not a fragile thing, with strong plant habits and tall, strong, enduring stalks with wonderful branching. **CASUAL JOY** (Randy Moore 2000) is the first introduction from a new hybridizer in Oklahoma City, who honored me with the privilege of introducing it for him. It reminds me of a Space Age version of Song of Norway (Luihn), with perhaps a touch more lavender in its makeup. Then, instead of dark blue beards, they are replaced with contrasting medium lavender horns. Style of branching, and sheer healthiness of plant, are also mindful of the great Dykes Medalist. **DAUBER'S SURPRISE** (Sutton 1998) is a child of Sky Hooks (Osborne), but with coloring in a lavender bitone. The standards are a cool lavender; the falls two shades deeper. But then the adornment is this stunning 2" flounce, crimped and feathered all the way, as if George had the pinching shears out that morning. Heavy, deep ruffling simply add to the motion of the flower. **FLIGHT COMMANDER** (Sutton 1999) is similar, except this time a true blue amoena, with pure white standards atop shimmering blue falls. Palest yellow beards magically transform into an elaborate blue flounce, almost as "tall" as the flounce on Dauber's Surprise. The falls are nearly horizontal, and are richly ruffled, making the flounce stand virtually straight up!

A couple of median Space Agers have impressed me: **ABBEY CHANT** (Sutton 1998) is a charming yellow IB, with lighter falls approaching white at the beards. Then, zoom! Thick violet blue beards which perk up at the end and forms violet-blue horns. Stunning contrast! **CIN CIN** (Innerst 1998) is a tidy medium blue BB which pretty well looks the "spittin' image" of its father, the great small-flowered TB, Codicil (Innerst). But, replacing the deep blue beards are deep blue horns. I first saw Cin Cin here, as one of the guests for the '99 Convention. I have been impressed with its compact look and consistency in staying in class. A fine contribution to BB's – and to Space Agers. **CLASSICS: HORNED ROSYRED** (Austin 1958); **HORNED SUNSHINE** (Noyd 1968); **UNICORN** (Austin 1954).

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

**MINIATURE TALL BEARDED**: **MYSTIC GLOW** (Fisher 1995) is my personal favorite of the recent releases in this category, even though others have proven to be more popular. This is a light yellow blended tetraploid, coming basically from the lines Ben Hager pioneered. The falls are more of a cream, but then gently blend to the color of the standards. Full yellow beards are harmonious. I am very critical of tet MTB's, watching to be sure they not only meet the stringent measurements established for the class, but also to ensure the spirit of the class is there – that of tidiness, grace, delicacy, in both the flower size and form and the stalks and style of branching. Of course, it qualifies! **ASTRA LADY** (Varner 1998) is an updated version of Terry's 1990 release, Astra Girl, and was very impressive here during the '99 Convention. It is a clean, delicate pure white, with even a bit of ruffling on all parts. Then a distinctive yellow beard adds a bit of contrast to the setting. This protégé of Mary Louise Dunderman has the same high standards she lived by, in her selection process. And Astra Lady is a choice release.

**ACE** (L. Miller 1999) is a cute little plicata with a clever name. Ground color is white, the markings in deep violet. It has an attractive violet belly stripe, and the plicating is actually an intricate network of dotting, eventually giving way to deeper, more traditional stitching on the edges of the falls. The plant habits are very impressive, with good increase, dainty foliage in class, and flexuous stalks with outstanding placement of branches and high bud count. Makes for an impressive clump! Mark my word, this one is gonna be a star! **LITTLE CLOWN** (Dunderman 1993) is a colorful, joyful affair, with orange standards atop bright orange-red falls with deep orange beards. The clarity of color here is a marked improvement over many other wanna-be's in this color combination. It is a notably late bloomer, beginning its bloom well into Tall Bearded season. **WISTFUL WISTERIA** (Wulf 1998), from Nebraska, is simply lovely, dainty wisteria-lavender self, with a patch of white showing at the upper part of the falls, allowing the eye to move to golden beards. Another late bloomer, it has the substance to endure, the texture to charm. **CLASSICS: AMETHYST SUNSET** (Welch 1973); **CEDAR WAXWING** (Roberts 1974); **PANDA** (Dunderman 1975).

**BORDER BEARDED**: **CANADIAN BORDER** (Chapman 1997) is a fantastic new addition to the class, and has quickly become a favorite here. I entered in a Sooner State show one year, with three open, and won Best Median with it. And it went on to win First Runnerup to Best of Show that morning. It is a wonderful pure white self, more "chalky" than diamond-dusted for me, topped off with a dazzling red (not tangerine) beard. The flowers are compact and proper; the stalks have never exceeded the limitations of the class. It is gently ruffled, just enough to enliven the effect. Its sister, **ERAMOSA MISS** (Chapman 1998), is a pastel apricot reverse amoena, with soft apricot-pink standards, the falls a couple of shades lighter, surrounding distinctive apricot-pink beards. It has a very "soft" appearance in the garden, yet is strong and dependable.

**ORANGE POP** (Lauer 1998) is a wonderful new color gem which became very popular with the convention gardeners here. Pure, rich orange, a total self. Brilliant, bushy, bold orange beards have an even deeper saturation. Again, it has behaved itself and remained in class (or I wouldn't review it). The strong, vigorous plant habits, with generous increase each year, are most impressive. **SOPRA IL VULCANO** (Bianco 1998) is a rich study in contrasts. The translation for this dramatic bicolor is "Over the Volcano", so go with me here. The standards are a fiery blend of hot copper, rose, and even burnt orange. The falls are a rich, sultry red-wine, deep in saturation. Fiery smoky orange beards finish the mood. The flower size and height of stalk are right at the limit, but the "look" is more BB than "Small-Tall". **CLASSICS: BRIDE'S PEARLS** (A. Brown 1967); **CARNIVAL GLASS** (B. Jones 1966); **JUNIOR PROM** (Ghio 1968); **LACE VALENTINE** (Warburton 1965).

**INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:** **MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** (Baumunk 1999) is a sophisticated new rebloomer in deep violet, completely self, even to the beards. The form is exceptional, and the flowers have thick leathery substance. Superb plant habits. I predict this one will go a long way, and is a smashing success for this new hybridizer from the Denver area. **MASKED BANDIT** (Keppel 1998) is a decadent wine-chocolate plicata, heavily marked on a chrome yellow ground, even more intense at the shoulders. It is dazzling, bold, and daring, with the best of form and impeccable plant habits. **STARWOMAN** (Smith 1998) is the hallmark of IB plicatas, and quite possibly Marky's finest achievement in medians to date. Pure class! Purest white ground concedes to a distinctive plicata band in the standards and falls in a sophisticated royal purple approaching black. The form is the best from its great pod parent, Chubby Cheeks (Black). The branching is superior; the plant habits peerless.

**SINISTER DESIRE** (Black 1998) is cleverly-named, with deepest violet standards and soot black falls, with a malevolent-looking deep bronze beard, thick and solid. It is an extremely late bloomer for the class, enough so that it was still in good bloom when I judged in Italy. And speaking of Italy, you've got to see this distinctive new plicata from Augusto: **SANGONE** (Bianco 1999) is an icy white with Chubby Cheeks, again, in its lineage. The plicating is quite unique, with irregular, even sporadic markings in violet, slightly more intense in the heart of the flower. It is at the shorter end of the IB class, with more compact flowers to complement.

**BLACKCURRANT** (Smith 1999) is Marky's answer to the quest for the finest in the luminata pattern. Actually, the color is rather odd (not as odd as Delirium, granted!), in blackcurrant violet mystique, with a discreet amount of light showing through at the beards. One thing that makes this one unusual is the edges – there is a yellow wire edging, very subtle, but adds to the mood. **FROLICSOME** (Black 1999), as with Sangone, is at the lower limits of the class, and makes a nice contrast to the taller representatives in IB's. The base color in this plicata is a brilliant saffron gold. The standards have just a brushing of bronze in them. But then the falls have a broad  $\frac{1}{2}$ " plicata inner band, followed up with another gold rim at the very edges of the falls.

**POUR IT ON** (Black 1996) is a stunning fancy plicata/ luminata, from a jackpot of a cross for Paul which has produced several top-quality luminatas, all distinctive, and all worthy of release! Here we have an orchid-pink base, but the washing, marbling, and sanding is so heavy, in both the standards and the falls, that the base color is almost completely hidden. Then, the luminata part comes through with a white glow in the heart of the flower, especially around the beards. Branching and bud count are simply unbelievable, and should prove to be a hit on the show bench. **WIND SPIRIT** (Blyth 1996) has a changeable taffeta look, with the basic color a misty mauve, but then has sheets of undertoning in varying degrees of muted roses, lilacs, and violets. It literally shimmers in the sunlight. The falls even have a suggestion of a metallic blue blush mixed in. **CLASSICS: EARLY EDITION** (Keppel 1970); **RAINBOW BRIDGE** (Moldovan 1970); **ROCKET FLAME** (Greenlee 1968); **SING AGAIN** (Plough 1966); **TOWNCRIER** (Brizendine 1971).

**STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:** The surprise these past two seasons has to be **COUTURE STAR** (Ransom 1996), a French SDB plicata with a white ground, gently stitched in a pale blue, approaching steel gray! Wide wonderful form – you'd swear it had to be from Chubby Cheeks (Black), but it is not. So it could be very interesting to cross it with some of the progeny of Chubby. **ICE ETCHING** (Black 1998) is another fine offering in Paul's quest for improved dwarf luminatas. It is an icy-white base, but washed over with varying degrees of blue and medium violet. White beards are incognito, in the midst of the white luminata pattern in the heart of the flower. My only fault with it, so far, is that it can get a bit tall, yet it rewards you with 1 and sometimes even 2 branches, 3 to 4 buds, well-sequenced. It is from an incredibly complex pedigree, so the possibilities are virtually limitless. Tweety Bird (Black) is being used heavily by

many hybridizers, and I fully believe it may become as significant a parent in the development of medians as Chubby Cheeks has been! One of Tweety's children, **MARXS MAN** (Smith 1999) is a sinfully hot, NEON orange, with even deeper, big bushy beards. In cooler weather, it even has a suggestion of a spot in the falls, which disappears in warmer weather. Wonderful form, durable substance, and exceedingly vigorous. Another hit, Marky!

**JEWEL OF JAKARTA** (Vizvarie 1998) is a very unique deep violet with intense deep sea blue underlying its coat. What makes it special is its finish, a wonderful mink finish, which makes the whole flower look as though it's being viewed under a veil. The only other iris in the color range I can think of that exhibits this is the great TB classic, Blue Lustre (O. Brown 1973). Even the beards are similar, in deepest blue-violet. **CONDENSED VERSION** (Lankow-Aitken 1999) is actually a creamy yellow; however, there is such a generous amount of gentle apricot flushed throughout the flower that it appears pastel apricot to the eye. It has the classical, wide form of its great-grandparent, the timeless Cotton Blossom (B. Jones), a satin finish, and gentle ruffling. **STRUUTTING EGRET** (Kasperek 1997) reminds me somewhat of Couture Star in its makeup. Do not be deceived by the name – it is far more elegant than exotic. The stitching is a clean violet-blue, precisely marked in a narrow band of stitching. Diminutive flowers are staged on shorter stalks. My only possibly negative comment is that, here, it tends to be stingy with its bloom. Sufficient (although not rampant) increase, not enough stalks to balance the clump.

A threesome from Barry Blyth have impressed: **STATUS** (Blyth 1996) is a bright orange with substantial intensity and carrying power in the garden. Not as striking (or deep) as Marksman, but still a marvelous color gem. Tangerine-orange beards are harmonious. **STORMY CIRCLE** (Blyth 1995) is a nice attempt at a black-and-white plicata, similar in color saturation to Ghio's TB plicata, Select Circle. Bonus points go to the beards, which are tipped in tangerine. Yes, a red-bearded black plicata!!! **NEUTRINO** (Blyth 1997) is an offspring from a plicata line coming from the hot pink SDB of Barry's, Chanted. Several have been released; each was unique and worthy of introduction. Neutrino is the brightest of the bunch, a dazzling bright magenta with lavender to calm it down a bit. Bright tangerine beards are a knockout. The patterning of the stitching is precise; the color contrast between that of the stitching and the white base is crisp.

**ZERO** (Keppel 1998) is a cold white self, right down to the beards. Wide, rounded form with diamond-dusted texture. It has tended to bloom in the foliage for me, and is only an average increaser, but still a worthy new white dwarf. **GIZMO** **THE GREMLIN** (Pinegar 1999) is an early-blooming, spunky new dwarf, with rich smoky plum standards. The falls are a bizarre greenish-gold, eventually deepening to a moderate shade of brown at the edges and in the shoulders. Dazzling deep blue beards.

**SHORT POEM** (Mullin 2000) is the only median introduction from former AIS President and fellow Oklahoman, Ron Mullin, who gave me the honor of introducing it for him. It is a delicate pastel peach-pink, more peach than pink. Then, look carefully, it's hard to see – there's a halo around the falls, slightly deeper than the primary color. It's "just enough" to give added vitality to the color presentation. Lovely form and good substance. **BORDEAUX PEARL** (Niswonger 1998) is a splendid, unique addition to deep chocolate brown to red plicatas. The flowers are dainty, but the color pattern is so bold, you can't possibly miss it. The saturation is so intense in the standards, you barely see the base color. The unique, intricate patterning in the falls gives it distinctiveness. In addition to the traditional edging of the dark color, the white area in the center of the falls is striped with this same color. **CLASSICS: BLUE CANARY** (Hamblen 1967); **CHERRY GARDEN** (B. Jones 1967); **DAINTY ROYAL** (Gatty 1967); **DOVE WINGS** (Roberts 1968); **GOLDEN FAIR** (Warburton 1960).

## **MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED**

**DINKY CIRCUS** (Black 1998) is a petite violet on white plicata. The white is clean; the violet plicating is a complex spider webbing that is most charming. Wonderful plant habits, and a dependable bloomer in this relatively temperate climate. **SPARKLETTES** (Black 1998) is actually a recessive white, coming from a wild pedigree full of plicatas and the tangerine factor. It is a shimmering, “sparkling” (sorry) cold white, infused with a blush of blue and green veining. The beards hint at its pedigree, in that they are a white base, but then discreetly tipped tangerine. At the upper end of the MDB class, but still proper, with loads of increase rewarding you with an instant cushion of bloom. Quite heavily ruffled, for an MDB. **PIXIE PIRATE** (Willott 1998) is a tiny dark violet from *L. pumila* breeding, but there is no suggestion of a *pumila* spot here – just a cute dose of dark in a self. **CLASSICS:** **PENNY CANDY** (Hamblen 1977); **PETTY CASH** (Hager 1980).

## **ARILBREDS**

**SHEBA'S JEWEL** (Shockey 1994, OGB) is dramatic portrait, with white standards, then a huge ruby to maroon signal emblazoned on the white falls. Large flowers, with tall, strong stalks. **SYRIAN ROSE** (Wilson 1997, OGB+) is a colorful deep rose, with hardly any aril veining showing in the flower. Then, the recurved falls have an imposing black signal in shocking contrast to the rose. Strong stalks easily support the weight of the flowers. From Texas, **DESERT CELEBRATION** (Flanagan 1996, OGB-) is an interesting ensemble of desert colors, with the primary color being a sand to tan, but the standards in a contrasting violet. Dark brown beards blend into the desert array. **LUELLA DEE** (Wilson 1997, OGB) is my favorite of this English hybridizer's work, to date, and is so well respected that Luella Danielson (his American introducer) allowed him to name it for her. An elegant affair, with soft violet standards, even paler falls (approaching cream). The entire flower is imbued with a subtle network of violet aril veining, more noticeable in the falls. A magnificent, resilient performer. **SUE BEE** (Kammer-Stanek 2000, OGB-) is a different quarter-bred which was a convention guest under number. Basically it is a tan, but has a suggestion of a violet blaze in the falls, below impressive brown beards. From the great Esther, the Queen (Hunt), it inherited all the good qualities, including strong, tall stalks and good resistance to adverse weather conditions. **CLASSICS:** **AMETHYST ACCENT** (Kidd 1968); **BEISAN AGA** (White 1954); **BETHLEHEM STAR** (Foster 1965); **BIG BLACK BUMBLEBEE** (Danielson 1966); **CORNING** (Clark 1967); **PLUM CUTE** (Vallette 1963).

## **SPURIAS**

**MIDNIGHT RIVAL** (Johnsen 1993), for me, is a deep navy to midnight blue, so suave you may choose to ignore questionable plant habits (a painfully slow grower for me). But it has the rich blue color from Vintage Year (Niswonger) and the velvet finish and sultry intensity of color from Crow Wing (Ferguson). A tiny line signal is almost incognito amidst the dark drama. **WYOMING COWBOYS** (Wickenkamp 1994) is a bold, dashing yellow, heavily veined (and even striped) in deep brown. Tall stalks, super leathery substance all give a masculine look. Magnificent plant habits, with plentiful increase each year. **LADY BUTTERFLY** (Jenkins 1994) is a case of “elegance supreme”, with a cream confection with some butter blended in. The form is somewhat “looser” on the smaller flowers, giving a very “airy” look. But the tight, intricate ruffling, and crimping which even appears as lace, are its points of distinction. What a lovely creation! **CLASSICS:** **ANACAPA** (Walker 1964); **BARITONE** (Ferguson 1970); **CONNOISSEUR** (Hager 1969); **HIGHLINE LAVENDER** (McCown 1968); **JET SET** (Williamson 1975).

## LOUISIANAS

**FROSTED MOONBEAM** (Pryor 1997), from Australia, is a warm cream, which does not transform into a white, after being open a few hours, as many creams do. In spite of this, it indeed has a “frosted” look about it, with rolls of ruffling throughout the flower. Wonderful, wide form allows the understated elegance to come through. **SUCCESSFUL BID** (Taylor 1997), on the contrary, is shot silk in cold white, gracefully blending to a cool lemon on the edges, enveloped in sophisticated ruffled. A shorter stalk is a nice change of pace from the tall stateliness of its parent, the great Australasian Dykes Medalist, Dural White Butterfly (Taylor). **BETTER WATCH OUT** (Taylor 1997) is a clever spoof on its parent, Watch Out (Taylor), which has been very popular here. This is bigger, better, and an even bolder color, in a bitone of rich orchid-lavender with undertones of pink. Large and flat for optimum display of color. Dominating bright yellow signals are a plus. The ruffling is significant, but not as “overstated” as its other parent, the famous Margaret Lee (Taylor). The plant habits are an improvement over both parents.

**STOP AND GO** (Dunn 1996) is a mighty strange thing, and don’t let the description cause you to turn your back. This is basically a pastel, “smoked” salmon-pink with an eerie quality about it that grows on you (like Keith Keppel’s TB, Fogbound). It has a definite bitone effect, with the standards a full shade lighter than the falls. The ruffling is tight and controlled, and there is a unique crimping which appears as lace! **BAYOU BANDIT** (Weeks-Campbell 1998) is a collected

I. fulva which was collected by a member of the Society for Louisiana Irises near Baton Rouge. We referred to it, in its “pre-introductory” days, as “Chocolate Fulva”. And indeed it is. Even the “old-timers” in SLI – those that actually went into the bayous and swamps on collecting trips in the early days of the society, say they’ve never seen anything like it! It is not dull or drab, for it has a misty underglow in pink, and then the whole flower looks as though it is encased in silvery mink! Amazingly good substance, to be straight out of nature! **CLASSICS: BRYCE LEIGH** (Chowning 1977); **CLARA GOULA** (Arny 1978); **CHARJOY’S ANNE** (Arny 1977); **COLORIFIC** (Mertzweiller 1979); **MONUMENT** (Dunn 1978); **ROLL CALL** (MacMillan 1976).

**Answer to Trivia Question:** Keith Keppel’s very first introduction was called **HUMORESQUE**, introduced in 1962. It was (drum-roll) a **COLOR BREAKER!**

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## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 2002 Perry Dyer

With this edition of Contemporary Views, I’m returning to an annual review; the past 3 editions have been biennial. However, some I might have normally evaluated and included this year will have to wait until next year. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, with the Tall Bearded season right at peak, my lower back revolted, I wound up in the hospital for a couple of days, and then still couldn’t even get out of bed (much less out to the garden) for another 2 weeks. So, I missed the last half of my bloom season this year. I nonetheless managed to find plenty of things to review this year....

1. The **CONTEMPORARY AWARD** is given to the Best New Iris seen (i.e., one introduced within the past 3 years of the date of this review). For the first time ever, the Contemporary Award goes to a Miniature Dwarf: **TINGLE** (Black 2000) is a magnificent new addition to the class. It is a warm, smooth white, with just a few veins of yellow in the standards. The falls are also white, with a pert, charming clean yellow spot completely encircling light yellow beards. The form is amazing; the texture like silk. There is even a significant amount of ruffling, but not so much to ruin the petite look. Although it is wide, with the form and finish reminiscent of Tweety Bird (which is in its complex parentage), it still maintains its perkiness.

**Runnersup: DECKER** (Jameson 2001), from the great rebloomer, Tennison Ridge (Begley), is a bright white plicata, with stitching similar in color to its mother, but even bolder, with flowers with better shape, overall. The smart stitching manifests itself in the form of a band, very concise in deep mulberry leaning towards violet. The cleanliness and precise contrast between the base color and the plicating is most impressive. **LAURA BUELOW** (Roberts 2002) is a first-class blue amoena, with the standards displaying just a hint of pale blue, then the falls a smooth, quiescent medium blue. It is not as dramatic as Night Hawk’s Dream in color presentation, but wonderful in its own subtlety. Magnificent form,

coming from the great Dykes Medalist, Honky Tonk Blues, ruffled and flared and dancing in the wind. Impeccable plant habits and stalks and branching, as we have come to expect from this highly self-critical artist. **WAIT RIGHT HERE** (Vizvarie 2001) is a bold, sassy SDB, born about 5 miles from here – in the next town over (Newcastle). Just when you think you've seen it all, this rich plicata presents yet another new style from the famous Chubby Cheeks (Black) lineage. White ground, heavily stitched/banded in violet. But then, wait, there's an inner band in, what I have to describe as mulberry. That additional band gives a luminescent glow to the flower. It has impeccable form, substance, and plant habits.

2. The **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** goes to 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 the award: **QUEEN'S CIRCLE** (Kerr 2000) is truly the finest improvement I have seen to date in the difficult Emma Cook (Cook) type pattern. Crystalline white flowers, with only a wash or edging around the base of the falls (not plicata – edged). Oh lovely one! Purest, chaste white, with a narrow (but certainly noticeable!) sapphire blue edge around the falls. Instead of the traditional white or yellow beard, Fred has managed to come up with a red beard – not shockingly so, but it's there, and it really "makes" the flower. Such gorgeous form, with just enough ruffling to compliment the flare of the falls and the delicate color pattern.

**Runnersup:** ANNUITY (Kegerise 2001) was another seedling guested at our convention for which I have been anxiously awaiting the introduction. It is quite simply one drop-dead gorgeous iris! If you like ‘em pink, try this one. It is a blissful light pink, easy on the eyes, but tough and durable in the garden. Heavy chiffon ruffling has an added bonus of a generous amount of lace. It is a clear pink, with just a suggestion of a lightening at the top of the falls, allowing the eyes to adjust to a rich coral-red beard. The branching and bud count are significantly improved over your usual pink, and the plant habits are superb! I first viewed HAUT LES VOILES (Cayeux 2000) on a first-year bloom in a future competition area of the Premio Firenze garden in Florence, Italy, when I judged there in 2000. “I thought you said the competition entries were secret-coded?” Yes, but the hybridizer (Richard Cayeux from France) was one of the panel members judging the competition with me. And he certainly recognized his baby! With Haut Les Voiles, the sheer elegance of its mother, Edith Wolford (Hager), was inherited. But then, from the pollen parent, Honky Tonk Blues (Schreiner), comes a toughness and resilience that sets this new French beauty apart from the others. The standards are a clear, light lemon yellow. The falls are blue-lavender, most definitely leaning to blue – the bluest I have seen yet. Texture veining throughout the flower adds elegance. YEARLING (Marky Smith 2000) is another fine child of Tweety Bird (Black), an SDB which is apparently on a mission, for it sure is producing some incredible offspring! With Yearling we have an intensely ruffled, waxy soft blend of apricot-pink with some yellow mixed in, to mellow out the flower. Tangerine beards gently blend in to the overall picture, rather than contrast the colors. Tweety Bird form, with open, well-held standards to allow the viewer to peer down into the heart of the flower. Excellent propagation with a generous amount of stalks produced each season. Especially in cold springs, the overall color may display a “smoked” look to it, and some may object to this. I’ve seen it with, I’ve seen it without – both ways are appealing.

3. The **9-1-1 AWARD** is given to the New Iris that is, in my opinion, the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break, of the varieties I have seen. It was hard to put one above another this year, as far as impact and importance are concerned. But finally, I gave the nod to MILLENNIUM FALCON (Kasperek 2000), a choice Color Breaker of the highest quality. I would say this is the culmination of the intense dedicated work Brad has done in this style of iris, but I won’t, because I expect great, festive things from him for years to come! Even if you have snubbed Color Breakers as “freaks”, and wouldn’t dare consider “lowering your standards” to support (translation: VOTE) for one of these things, well, you’re just gonna have to get over it! Millennium Falcon has all the poise and sophistication of the best of the “non-spashers” (!), and is a complete package, with strong plant habits, consistent growth, resistance to adverse weather conditions, flowers with broad, architecturally sound form, and that all-important quality – PERSONALITY. It is basically a neglecta, with light blue standards with a touch of lavender in their makeup and elegant white streaking, and rich royal blue falls with the white streaking with a bit more intensity.

**Runnersup:** MOMENTOUS OCCASION (Sutton 2000) is a new Space Age plicata which you could just about go “ditto, ditto” from the praise of Millennium Falcon above, and really for the same reasons. Instead of a Color Breaker, however, we have a clean white ground plicata with emphatic violet-blue stitching in a narrow band on both the standards and falls (no dribbling over into the center here). Then, golden beards metamorphose into a white filament that finally gets around to making a huge spoon in white which is then (I’m serious) edged in plicata marks! Mercy! I’d say, the first of its kind. The impact of seeing those spoons, sticking up from the beard that way, and then plicated just like the rest of the flower, is something you won’t soon forget! Wonderful branching from its mother,

the great plicata, Momentum (Dunn), but on somewhat shorter stalks. When I saw the advertisement for **MARTILE ROWLAND** (Howard Bushnell 2000), my curiosity was piqued, for one of my early hybridizing goals was to produce a good golden yellow TB with a really red beard. I never got any further than Aztec Sun (Dyer 1982), with its bushy golden-orange beards. Martile Rowland has already proven itself as a major advancement in this color combination, and possesses all the fine qualities you would expect in any iris. I don't know the history behind Mr. Bushnell, other than he lives in New Jersey. But my hunch is that he is another one of those highly-selective "backyard hybridizers" who has been very cautious in what he places on the market. The clear lemon yellow has a distinctive white patch in the falls, with bold, daring orange-red beards. Sensible, decent form, with ruffling and even a fair amount of lace. Howard, if this is your first intro, congratulations on a fine debut!! **ADDED COLOR** (Kerr 2001) is another sensational new offering from our friend from just north of Sacramento. Where Queen's Circle takes your breath away with its sheer elegance, Added Color kicks you right in the butt with its dramatic strokes of color and pizzazz! Big, burly, braggadocio flowers are a golden yellow – beyond intense. The falls are the same, but then emblazoned with a thick edging in red with some deep brown blended in. Again, this is a take-off from the Emma Cook pattern – the band is a solid color, not plicata, and is precisely placed on the falls. With Added Color, the band is wide, stays put, and does not dribble over into the heart of the falls. Zowie!

4. The **SUN BELT AWARD** is awarded 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). An Intermediate, originated 40 miles from here by the late Cleo Palmer, is this year's recipient: **FROSTY ELEGANCE** (C. Palmer 1994). I am just dumbfounded that this heavily ruffled, waxy pure white wasn't "discovered" in time to make an impact in the AIS awards system. Cleo had some real winners over the years, including the Sass Medal for his beautiful blue IB, Sea Patrol, early in his hybridizing career. Frosty Elegance indeed is the epitome of grace and elegance. It has resilience and stamina, with magnificent branching and bud count.

**Runnersup:** **SNUGGLEBUG** (Schreiner 1993) is a zany, brilliant Standard Dwarf, which I "missed" the first couple of years it was on the market. Making up for lost time! It is unique and dazzling, in a deep rose-red to maroon with an even deeper, stunning spot pattern in the falls, surrounding self beards with deep richness. Oh my! It has an unbelievable "finger-in-the-socket" glow unlike anything I've seen to date in dwarfs. It is at the lower end of the SDB scale, with compact flowers and dainty foliage in proper proportion. I expect this to be a valuable parent for both SDB and MDB work. **LITTLE JOHN** (Spoon 1996) was "my pet" of the '99 National here (I think I voted for it for the Out-of-Region Cup). The name has nothing to do with the flower size or height of the stalk. It is a beautiful combination of pink and lavender, in the tradition of the great bicolor, Touche (Hamblen 1969). Standards are a clear shade of medium pink with a bit of lavender infused. Then the falls are a smooth medium lavender. Beards are tangerine. It is ruffled, laced, and the whole texture is like silk, with a magnificent sheen. It is a vision of health, from the cleanliness of the flowers to the plant habits. The finest I've seen to date in this combination of colors. **LANCER** (Shockey 1995) is one of the most dramatic of so many top-notch releases from this hybridizer. During his lifetime, Howard devoted a major chunk of his hybridizing career to the signal patterns in arilbreds, and with each successive generation, they became even more intense and predominant. Lancer is an orchid-lavender of moderate intensity, but then, emblazoned on the recurved falls, a huge black signal pattern in the shape of a lance! It is quite tall, with strong stalks to tolerate the weight of the large flowers. This half-bred (OGB) is an easy grower, the increase is excellent, and it makes a nice plant.

5. The **DARK HORSE AWARD** is bestowed 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. With the great marketing techniques and reputation from the most famous hybridizing family in the world, it is odd to see a Schreiner variety – ANY Schreiner variety -- not get the attention it deserves. Yet here we have **NORTHERN JEWEL** (Schreiner 1991), a warm, joyful creamy-white Intermediate, with a glow of yellow in the beards and at the shoulders. It has everything we look for and expect in contemporary IB's – good form, wide but not overstated; superb substance and resistance to weather conditions; absolute vigor and quantity of annual increase; well-placed branching with double-sockets at some of the positions. With 2 to 3 branches and 6 to 7 buds, it has a better bud count than some of the Tall Beardeds being released today! The texture is like chiffon, yet the durability is outstanding. In spite of the warmth in the white, it does have a sheen to it, as it suggested in the name.

**Runnersup:** **SILHOUETTE** (Dunn 1989) has long been a favorite of mine, and I have reviewed it in the past. But another mention is deserved. The late Mary Dunn was best known for her innovative work with Louisianas; however, she did contribute considerably in Tall Bearded from that little back yard garden just north of Sacramento. In my opinion, Silhouette, along with the great violet-on-white plicata, Momentum (1986) were her finest contributions in TB's. Silhouette is a genteel light blue plicata, with standards almost completely covered in the plicata coloring; then the falls with more of the white base showing through. The plicata markings are quite unusual, almost like a stain rather than contrasting, precise stitching, as found in Momentum. Think of the name and you'll see that "it works"! Tall, strong stalks have wonderful branching. The plants are robust and durable, with thick, tough fans. **DELICATE TOUCH** (Hager 1991) is from another hybridizer that, like the Schreiner family, you just cannot fathom anything being overlooked. This is another plicata, but this time with such grace and delicate stitching, you can't help but be captivated by its sheer beauty. It is a cold, clear white, adorned with a very narrow, precise banding in orchid-pink. The beards are white, versus the contrasting tangerine you would probably expect in this color. The ruffling and delicate appearance belies its bloodline, where we have the Schreiners' recessive white, Laced Cotton, in its background. And finally, yep, another plicata: **RASPBERRY SNOW** (Sutton 1991) must surely be the "alter ego" of Delicate Touch. The base color is snow white. But the stitching is stunning, dominating, and in a rich raspberry-pink, quite different from any other plicata on the market. It is healthy, rampant like a weed, with totally acceptable branching and bud count. Bright, perky, a "happy" plic!

6. The **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** goes to the most outstanding and promising seedling personally viewed during the time period of this review: **ALYSSIA'S AFTERGLOW** (Vizvarie), I believe, is the first Space Age Intermediate plicata. Violet on white Space Age plicatas have been slow to advance, so to see an IB of this quality, you have to consider it a major breakthrough. This is a smaller-flowered cutie, at the lower end of the IB class, in both size and height of stalk. Yet the branching is excellent, with 2 or 3 well-placed branches carrying 5 to 6 buds. The tight, proper form comes from its father, the great SDB, Chubby Cheeks (Black). The color of the stitching is a deep mulberry-violet, right down to blue-purple beards which then extend upward into a horn. Hybridized only 5 miles from here (Chris lives in Newcastle, Oklahoma, just north of my garden), I have had the privilege of studying it for several years now, and I have been most impressed with its consistency and dependability.

**Runnersup:** **STING ME** (B. Nichols 2003) was gested here during the '99 National Convention, as Seedling #B-12. Bonnie, wife of Hooker, is new to the hybridizing scene, but if you've ever observed her "in action", when judging irises or daylilies, you know she's one of the best, and to be a good hybridizer with a critical eye for selection is no surprise whatsoever! It was gested as a Border Bearded, but fortunately she changed it to a Tall Bearded when she registered it in 2000 because, although it does possess rather small flowers, the height is right at 3'. **Sting Me** is a dazzling golden yellow plicata, with a gregarious pattern of stitching in rich maroon-brown to chocolate, somewhat more intense at the shoulders. The "stinger" is a bold, downright scary purple horn, sticking up from the midst of all that plicata activity! Well done, Bonnie! And a great name for it! **Bianco 802** is a seedling from Augusto Bianco, Italy, being gested here. I have his permission to breed with and exhibit any of his guests, as we jointly go about evaluating them each spring, to determine which will make the final cut and go on to the level of introduction. I couldn't resist, so I cut a stalk and took it to the Oklahoma Iris Society Show this year. Yep, won Best Seedling! It is an eerie bicolor type, with a translucent glow in the falls, with changeable taffeta in lavenders, orchids, copper, amber, and perhaps even a hint of blue. This is all below a smoked lavender look in the standards. Difficult to describe, and will probably be even more difficult to accurate capture on film. I'm not sure of the parentage, at this point, but suspect it is from **Electrique** (Blyth), which is proving to be a gold mine for diversity in colors in its children. A Louisiana being gested here from Kevin Vaughn, Mississippi, rounds out this year's winners: **LEMON ZEST** is a luxurious rich lemon yellow self with deep ruffling and a satin finish. Deeper texture veins throughout the flower add to the effectiveness of the carrying power of the color in the garden. The *piece de resistance*, however, is its inner glow of shimmering green, deeper than lime green, clearer and prettier than fern green. The style arms are almost completely saturated in green. And then the signal area in the falls matches the color of the style arms.

## **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

**REDS TO MAROONS:** **VINTNER** (Smith 1996), I say, is a black with a red glow. Others (including the hybridizer) say it's red. Whichever, it has wonderful weather resistance, and is great at overcoming that annoying tendency of so many dark-flowered irises to waterspot, even after a heavy morning dew. **PAGODA PRINCE** (Taylor 2000) shows great promise for distinctiveness and personality. Very hard to describe in words, but it's like a burnished burgundy-wine, with the falls noticeably deeper in intensity here. In jolting contrast, the beards are a thick, rich burnt orange. **MALLORY KAY** (Johnson 1998) reminds me of a modern version of an old personal favorite of mine, **Minisa** (Wall 1976) in a deep maroon red, right down to the beards. Excellent plant habits, with strong increase.

**CLASSICS:** **SCARLET RIBBON** (Tompkins 1966); **TOMEKO** (Suiter 1960); **VELVET ROBE** (Schreiner 1960).

**BROWNS:** **BUFFER ZONE** (Innerst 1998) is a bright medium brown with a concentration of gold in the falls, then precisely banded in medium brown. The band is subtle, but is definitely there. The standards are closed and domed; the broad rounded falls have a nice flair. Beards are a complementary golden bronze. Excellent sun resistance, retaining its color through the life of the flower. **WIDDERSHINS** (Roberts 1999) is a festive affair, actually a blending of colors, but the overall impression is brown. Standards are a light to medium brown with a heavy rose glow. The falls are a honey-yellow blend, with a similar type band as **Buffer Zone**, but more noticeable and contrasting, rather than blending in.

Beards are bright orange. As you might expect from Merle Roberts, the plant habits are faultless, with healthy growth on average increase. **CLASSIC SUEDE** (Lauer 1999) is a cleverly-named burnished brown, with infiltrations of sienna. The texture and finish on the flower are actually a bit “rough”, but in this case, very distinctive and attractive. Flowers are huge with a moderate amount of ruffling.

**CLASSICS:** **BRASS ACCENTS** (Schreiner 1959); **MILLIONAIRE** (Brizendine 1958); **WAYWARD WIND** (Baker 1958).

**APRICOTS TO ORANGES:** **AWESOME BLOSSOM** (Black 2000) is indeed that! The flowers are mammoth, yet hold together with outstanding substance and durability. Basically a peach-pink blend, with butter and gold mixed in, especially in the falls. The effect is “orange”, for sure. Beards are a bright tangerine-orange. The plant habits are strong and husky, like its parent, **Good Show** (Hager). A smashing new addition to the class! **PIERO BARGELLINI** (Bianco 1998) is an attractive softer melon to apricot, with creamy-white standards neatly banded the color of the standards. Whipped chiffon ruffling is very pleasing. It is from reblooming bloodlines, so I’ll be curious to hear if it reblooms with consistency in the more temperate climates in America. **CHARIOTS OF FIRE** (Aitken 2000) is a tall, rich peach-pink with thick, heavy deep orange beards. The bold color, and the height of the stalks, carry the color clear across the garden. Flowers are somewhat smaller in size, compact and round.

**CLASSICS:** **CELESTIAL GLORY** (Reckamp 1961); **CHINESE CORAL** (Fay 1962); **REAL DELIGHT** (Waters 1960).

**PINKS:** **LOTUS LAND** (Keppel 1999) is a soft, subtle buff pink which you must see in person to fully appreciate. There is something about the way its presents itself which is distinctive, and most appealing. Throughout the flower is a creamy “glow” which enhances the flower. Parts are wide and ruffled, the branching most acceptable. **WINNING EDGE** (Ghio 1997) is a shocking pink. The hybridizer calls it “begonia” pink, and that’s very accurate! Vivacious color, deeply saturated. But then the falls are a clean, crisp white, with a distinctive banding in the color of the standards. Growth habits haven’t been as strong as some of its contemporaries, but still acceptable. **BALLET ROYALE** (Wood 1999) is a full medium pink without any other colors present in the base (including the absence of white in the center of the falls, which is so often the case). Beards are a brilliant tangerine to shrimp pink. Most impressive are its substance and durability, and the plants are strong and robust. **ALWAYS REMEMBER** (Mullin 2000) is a sensuous coral-pink, substantial in substance, texture, and durability – the flowers don’t “break down” in the heat, as if they had acne (if you look closely enough, you’ll see that many pinks. Tall and elegant, with a powdery texture finish rather than diamond dusting. Distinctive!

**CLASSICS:** **FASHION FLING** (Hall 1965); **LORNA LEE** (Gibson 1966); **MILADY** (Moldovan 1966); **PINK FRINGE** (Rudolph 1967).

**LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:** **DREAM EXPRESS** (Tasco 1999) is a cousin to the great **Sudden Impact**, but this time the palette is a rich, glowing plum-magenta, right down to the purple beards. Sophisticated color with deeply embedded ruffling. Huge flowers are held up proudly on tall telephone poles for stalks, with branches and branches up and down. Rich! Luxurious! **SKY KNOCKER** (Taylor 1998) is an amazing amethyst, coming from red-bearded blue breeding. Look around, there aren’t that many irises which are actually amethyst in color. The beards aren’t red, but they are a mysterious burnt orange, which adds to the personality of the flower. It too, is quite tall, but sturdy, and the flowers are

gently ruffled, wide, and charismatic. **ALAN M. TURING** (Jameson 2001) is unlike anything I've seen in Tall Bearded. Actually, what happens reminds me more of a Louisiana—the buds are light in color. Yet, a peek inside reveals something totally different is about to happen. As the flower unfurls, you'll discover a luxurious combination of richest reds and purples, with the standards showing much more red in their makeup, the falls more purple, but then edged in the reddish-purple of the standards. As the flower parts engage in their ruffling, the lighter-colored "undercarriage" becomes visible to the eye, just like many of the dark-flowered Louisianas from John Taylor. Intriguing, with a mystical cast to the ensemble, even though the colors are glowing. Extremely late bloomer – doesn't even get started until most of the TB's are completely through. A great season extender. **LAVENDER ICE** (Cantwell 1999) was hybridized right here in Oklahoma, by a long-time friend from Ponca City. This is a lovely thing. It reminds me of a soft lavender version of its parent, the great Dykes Medalist, Silverado (Schreiner). It inherited that classical broad, rounded form, precise ruffling, and waxen texture. But instead of icy blue-white, this is an icy lavender.

**CLASSICS:** **CLAUDIA RENE** (Gaulter 1963); **EVER AND EVER** (Hope 1962); **MARIE PHILLIPS** (Muhlestein 1963).

**DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:** **GHOST TRAIN** (Schreiner 2000) is a tall, large-flowered black from the purple side. Rather than somber, it is shiny with somewhat waxy texture, like its father, Hello Darkness (Schreiner). Beards blend right in, being dark purple to right at black. It produces marvelous, rich blue-green foliage, with thick fans producing strong, durable stalks with 3 to 4 branches, 8 to 10 buds. **WINNING DEBUT** (Schreiner 2000) is a deep-deep violet-purple and is a complete self in color saturation. I've overused the terms "bold" and "dramatic", but once again, the shoe fits here. Winning Debut has a bit more ruffling than Ghost Train, again with strong, dependable stalks and beautifully spaced branching. **GRAPE JELLY** (Black 2000) is well named, and just that – rich, deep grape jelly coloring. You hardly need a description beyond that. However, closely inspect the beards – instead of self beards, you'll see a wonderfully strange burnt sienna beard. Grape Jelly, like Alan M. Turing, is a very late bloomer (not quite as late as Alan!), so we have another great season extender.

**CLASSICS:** **DARK FURY** (Luihn 1962); **EDENITE** (Plough 1959); **LICORICE STICK** (Schreiner 1961).

**BLUES:** **DEVIL'S LAKE** (Schreiner 1999) is a dark navy blue, mindful of, but even more intense than, the great Rippling River (Schreiner). Instead of glistening, Devil's Lake has an eerie "mink glow" about its texture which, when added to the thick leathery substance, is unstoppable. The ruffling manifests itself more as intense waving rather than the deep ruffling of Rippling River. Deep blue-green foliage, great stalks, all the superlatives you expect from this line of breeding. **SKY AND SUN** (Spoon 1999) is distinctive and personable. Great name, for it is a soft sky blue self, but then, instead of self beards, or even light yellow or tangerine, the beards are thick, bushy bright yellow. Charming, with a lovely form and superlative plant habits. **SONG OF GRACE** (Parkhill 1999) is a heavily ruffled sky blue-white, with the color greater on the blue than the white. Broad flowers look as though the ruffling were chiseled marble. Husky, healthy plants produced well-branched stalks with excellent bud count.

**CLASSICS:** **BRAVE VIKING** (Hinkle 1962); **DENVER DAWN** (Durrance 1964); **DIPLOMAT** (Tompkins 1966); **PACIFICA** (J. Nelson 1968).

**WHITES: TOUCHED BY ANGELS** (Maryott 1997) is state of the art in ruffled whites! Absolute pureness in color, even down to the pure white beards. The ruffling is intense, but not so overdone as to be nonsense. Stalks remind of the great classic whites which would often dominate the shows, 20 years ago. The branching and plant habits are beyond accolades. A great new addition to a color group which has been neglected all too much in recent years. **ARCTIC FOX** (Wood 1998) is a worthy advancement in the difficult red-bearded whites. It is a clear white, devoid of some of the “infusions” in silver and lavender-blue you often see in this color combination. Here the beard has gotten beyond “tangerine” and appears to the eye much closer to what we would think of when we say “red beards”. Still not as bright or intense as might be desired, but the progress is definitely there! **HEAVEN** (Ghio 1998) is a cold white, with even a blue hint to its makeup, especially in cooler springs. But then, swoosh! A broad brushstroke across the top of the falls in an unforgettable coral-red, even right into the beards. Really can’t be described as the “shoulder pads” which George Shoop, in particular, made his calling card. With Heaven, the contrasting color goes the entire length of the upper falls. Growth for me has only been so-so; otherwise, I would have slid it over to the 9-1-1 Award, or the Contemporary Award, or the L’Elegante Award. I have supported it to date, for the growth, although not as robust of some other things on the market, has been within acceptable limits.

**CLASSICS:** **BRILLIANT STAR** (Hall 1961); **CHRISTMAS ANGEL** (DeForest 1960); **GOODNESS** (Babson 1962).

**CREAMS TO YELLOWS: RACHEL DRUMM** (Mullin 2000), named for a life-long friend of Ron’s from Stillwater, Oklahoma, is a bright, clear yellow, through and through, with only a small patch of creamy-white in the center of the falls. The beards provide a nice added touch in bright yellow-orange. From a high quality cross, it took the best of each – strong, sturdy, stately stalks from the great Cup Race (Buttrick), and the impeccable form and ruffling and brightness of color from Speculator (Ghio). **GOLDEN WEDDING LACE** (Sorensen 1997) is a dazzling golden yellow, heavily embellished with ruffling, thick lace, and even some crinkling. In spite of all this, it opens well with consistency, and retains its intensity of color in Oklahoma heat. **ANTIQUE LACE** (Sorensen 1999) is more subtle, in a lighter yellow, with white falls gracefully, gradually transforming into the light yellow color at the petal edges. Ruffling and lace are bountiful. **SWEETHEART RING** (Spoon 1997) is a nice advancement in yellow rebloomers. The principal color is a soft, melodious light yellow, with clear white falls banded the standards’ color. The flowers are broad and well-shaped, but with moderate ruffling and just a hint of lace. **SUNRISE SEDUCTION** (D. Miller 1998) is a fine advancement in the quest for red-bearded yellows. The color of yellow is more of a burnished or saffron yellow, very unique and appealing. The beards are red-orange, and not as dramatic as those on Martile Rowland (Bushnell), but they’re definitely there.

**CLASSICS:** **BRAVADO** (Hall 1959); **CHARMAINE** (Hamblen 1967); **DENVER MINT** (Knopf 1963); **RAINBOW GOLD** (Plough 1960).

**PLICATAS: FANCY WRAPPINGS** (Tompkins 1995) is a “fancy plicata”, with ground color in a different mustard yellow, but can barely be seen from all the busy-work the plicating is doing. Brilliant, bedazzling ruby red, chocolate, sienna, and rust colors are joyfully sanded, washed, stippled, and striped onto the flowers, with the standards almost totally saturated. All this may sound haphazard, like a Color Breaker, but this is not the case – it is all carefully overlaid in intricate patterns. **ALL FOR LOVE** (Kerr 2001) is a festive affair, with rich burgundy markings (complete with belly stripe down the center of the falls) imprinted all over a soft pink base color. It is vibrant in the garden, and promises to be a

very strong grower. **SILK BROCADE** (Keppel 1999) is amazingly similar in color, with the plicating having more deep rose showing through the burgundy. The falls have a clearer patch of white, blended somewhat with creamy pink, but then with a more evenly-applied 1" band of color. It is more heavily ruffled and even displays a suggestion of lace. The beards are a bold burnt orange. **DOUBLE DRIBBLE** (Ghio 2000) is from reblooming bloodlines, and is another fancy plicata, this time in deep blue to violet. The overlay is so predominant you almost forget it's a plicata, but there's enough white showing through to confirm. **OSTENTATIOUS** (Ghio 1998) is one of Joe's latest offerings in the bold plicatas which **Gigolo** (Keppel) started. This time, rather than a pink base color, the ground is a bright gold, then heavily plicated in a shocking rich black cherry. The pattern is so intense the standards are a solid color. It is broad, ruffled, and retains its intensity of color with aplomb. **MORNING MOOD** (Keppel 1998) is at the opposite end of the "drama scale", a smooth, understated bicolor-plicata with choice form and placement of ruffles. The standards are a gentle peach, totally saturated with no base color peeking through. The falls are a creamy white ground, with a precise rose-pink plicata edging and shrimp to red beards. Style supreme!

**CLASSICS:** **CAYENNE CAPERS** (Gibson 1961); **CHINQUAPIN** (Gibson 1960); **KARACHI** (Schreiner 1958); **RIBBON ROUND** (Tompkins 1963).

**AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, AND NEGLECTAS: HABIT** (Black 1999) is a cleverly named neglecta, with pale violet standards over intense deep purple falls approaching black, giving a nice black-and-white effect. Old gold beards provide a little bit of comic relief. The contrast in colors in "sinfully" stunning. **VISITING ROYALTY** (Ghio-Maryott 2000) has flowers which are similar to its parent, **Romantic Evening** (Ghio), but appears to be a more consistent performer. It has red-violet standards, then the falls two full shades deeper, quickly approaching black. Bright burnt orange beards are similar, but even more stunning against the plush black velvet. **FORREST WAVES** (Edelman 2000) is a moody neglecta, with standards a mysterious smoked lavender-orchid, and falls a rich purple to violet, with an eerie smoked blue cast over them. Might sound muddy or dirty – not so. Most enchanting. Wonderful, robust plant habits from its mother, **Honky Tonk Blues** (Schreiner). I'll bet this one makes a fascinating parent, with the capacity for produce a diverse array of children. **RUBAN BLEU** (Cayeux 1997) is a fun improvement in this Frenchman's quest for "red, white, and blue". Standards are pure white; the falls a rich shade of full blue. But, surrounding contrasting orange-red beards, is a bold white zonal patch, not unlike those usually found in some of the dark blue selfs. The flowers are gigantic, yet maintain their dignity by holding together in one piece.

**CLASSICS:** **BRIGHT CLOUD** (O. Brown 1961); **GLACIER GOLD** (Wills 1963); **OUT YONDER** (Wickersham 1969).

**BICOLORS AND VARIEGATAS: CAJUN COOKING** (Rogers 2000) is a rustic, distinctive bicolor. Well named, it is a hot combo of cayenne and burnt orange standards, over an unusual blend in the falls, with a concoction of mauve, amber, dulled purple, and sienna, complete with a narrow but distinctive rim of the standards' colors. Not an easy recipe to recite, and you'll just have to trust me on this one – it is wild, different, and zany. **ARABIAN STORY** (Blyth 1998) is my favorite of Barry's recent work with multicolors, this time as a variegata. The standards are a no-nonsense mustard yellow. The falls are a macho reddish-brown, leathery in substance, velvet in texture. It is lightly ruffled, and has the flair of its father, the bright yellow amoena, **Aura Light** (Blyth). Deep mustard beards are the perfect choice for the color scheme going on here. **BACK STREET AFFAIR** (Innerst 1997) is a gloriously bawdy affair, with medium yellow standards (brighter and clearer than

Arabian Story), with masculine coffee brown falls, toned down just a bit, then touched with a narrow rim of the standards' color. Brilliant gold beards simply add to the ensemble. Distinctive and personable, with what appears, thusfar, to be very strong plant habits. **VISION OF SPRING** (Annand 1999) is an odd spinoff from the yellow/blue bicolor combination such as Lilac Champagne (Hamblen), Edith Wolford (Hager), or Haut les Voiles (Cayeux). Standards are an "off-yellow" (there's "off-white", why not "off-yellow"?") atop lavender blue falls with a rim of yellow. It's difficult to describe what's different here, but there's a "chartreuse look" about it, even almost smoky.

**CLASSICS:** CHAPEAU (Babson 1971); DUTCH MASTER (O. Brown 1972); FLAMINGO LAKE (Muhlestein 1969); KAHILI (Schreiner 1961).

**POTPOURRI:** SUSPICION (Keppel 1999) is another contribution from Keith's weird streak, a sister to the equally mysterious Fogbound (1998). With Suspicion, the basic color palette is also gray, but there are strong suggestions of green and off-yellow in the mix, rather than lavender and blue. The blended effect is impossible to put into words, and you might think the flower dull, by this description. But instead, you walk by it, do a double-take, and then stand there and stare for awhile. Grows on you! **AMETHYST TRIM** (Taylor 2000), from Arizona, is a fun addition to the "colored Emma Cook" pattern, coming from the famous Gypsy Woman (Schreiner) and the boldly garish Glitz 'n' Glitter (Black). The base color is a soft, clear yellow, but then the falls are airbrushed and stained at the edges in a unique amethyst, attractive in its irregular distribution of the color. Huge flowers, lightly ruffled. I'm anxious to combine this with those of Fred Kerr. **THREE STRIKES** (Annand 1998) is another odd bicolor combination that makes you do a double-take. Basically an Edith Wolford (Hager) type, with yellow standards and the appearance of violet in the falls. Closer examination finds that the falls are actually the same color of the standards, but then dramatically streaked, right down the center, with a dominating dark violet-purple stripe. Most unique!

**CLASSICS:** FLUTED LIME (Noyd 1966); MARTEL (Muhlestein 1962); SAUCY SUE (Gibson 1968).

**COLOR BREAKERS:** ZIGGY (Keyser 2000) was hybridized by one of the grand dames of irises who has lived most of her years in Oklahoma, Virginia Matthews. She's now Keyser, and lives in Salinas, California, but we know she's still "ours". And if you know her personality, you'll swear this introduction must surely be an autobiography! The base color is a "dulled" yellow (registered as "straw" yellow). But then, step back, Bubba! WILD, ZANY streaks and splish-splashes in an insane bright violet, erratic with no rhyme or reason to the placement. Fairly short, as with many of the Color Breakers, but with wonderful branching, placement, and bud count. And just like the hybridizer, hearty and tuff! Bravo, Virginia!!! **ROSA VANITOSA** (Bianco 2000) has nothing bold or garish about its mix at all. As a matter of fact, you have to look carefully to see the soft violet color breaking on the rose-pink base color. Very understated and sophisticated. Lovely form, and again, as with Ziggy, fairly short, but again, has outstanding branching and bud count. Even the lower branches' flowers are easily seen in the clump. This was a contestant in Florence when I judged the 2000 competition, and finished in the Top 10. **GRAPE SNAKEZ** (Kasperek 1999) is one of Brad's more "festive" offerings in this style. The basic presentation is a bicolor (or perhaps even, technically, variegata), with rich tan/caramel standards atop daring, dramatic purple falls. Then the color breaking – the standards are streaked with silver, then enlivened with purple flecking (much more refined than the splish-splash effect). The falls are then boldly contrasted with white streaks and streaks in the caramel-tan color of the standards! Quite tall, with willowy stalks nonetheless sturdy enough to withstand Oklahoma winds. Light ruffling. Wonderful, vigorous plants.

**SPACE AGERS:** WHEN YOU WISH (Dickey 1998) is a sister seedling to last year's L'Elegante winner, Upon A Star (Dickery 2001), and although similar, both deserve a place on the market, with high quality and elegant presentation inherited from their mother, the Dykes Medalist Mesmerizer (Byers). When You Wish is absent the peach undertoning, leaving purest baby ribbon pink. Here, reddish beards give way to a frilly, captivating baby pink flounce. Ruffles galore, with a satin-smooth finish and wonderful form. COUNT DRACULA (Hedgecock 2000) is a respectable attempt at improvement in one of the most difficult colors in Space Age work, thusfar with the least amount of advancement – black. Deep near-black falls are a full tone darker than the dark purple standards, but the overall effect is still black. Fuzzy old gold beards transform into black horns, protruding nearly a full inch above the falls. The hafts are a bit too coarse for my taste, and the form lacks that “finished” look we have come to expect. But considering what is currently only the market in this color of Space Agers, this is welcome.

Two Space Age IB's from the Suttions in California were impressive: CANDY ROCK (2000) is a cocky blend of red and rose-purple, a very soul-soothing, vibrant color, then accented with violet-blue beards which extend into fuzzy, thick horns. The form is wide, the flowers lightly waved and ruffled. VIPER (1999) was a favorite here this year, and it won Best Space Age for me at one of our shows this year. The color is basically that same rich shade of medium pink. The falls have a lighter area around the beards, pulling the eyes in to the focal point, a wickedly wonderful violet horn, protruding upward into a point, like a spear. Colorful, zany, and much fun.

**CLASSICS:** PINK UNICORN (Austin 1960); SPOONED BLAZE (Austin 1965).

## MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

Oh, what a grand time to be a median hybridizer. A lot of hybridizers doing serious work in virtually all the classes, and as you can tell from the awards recipients, there is amazing parity, in spite of excellent distribution and marketing by some of the better-known hybridizers. “Competition” is stiff, and frankly, some very deserving varieties, even from the “pros”, are being passed over in the AIS awards system. The major “plus side” to all this is an impressive advancement in many areas in most of the classes, with new color patterns and combinations unique to medians continuing to emerge.

**MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:** LINDA LOU (Wyss 1997) is a wonderful rose-pink plicata. The ground color is white, then joyously stitched and dotted with a bright rose-pink. Historically, this color combination in MTB's has been rather “muddy”; not so here. Exceptionally floriferous, and a dependable performer. FAIRLY DANCING (Wulf 1998) is a lovely delicate violet, even lighter in the falls around soft yellow beards. The form is tight; the flowers are dainty. Beautiful, willowy branching expected of the class. WISHFUL FANCY (Morgan 1999) is a pert cutie, with standards in palest blue, then the falls violet, with bold, impressive light blue veins radiating from the heart. The appearance is that of an amoena, but the veining in the falls is its calling card. YELLOW FLIRT (Fisher 1998), is a clean bright yellow with contrasty orange beards. The clarity of color is most impressive, in that many of the diploid MTB yellows have a “burnished” look. An extremely late bloomer, a welcome season extender in the class.

**CLASSICS:** BLACK LADY (Rawdon 1979); LEMON FLIRT (Dunderman 1979); ZIPPY CHERUB (Guild 1978).

**BORDER BEARDED:** CHRISTIANA BAKER (Kerr 1999) was the star here this year. What an elegant, sophisticated work of art! The Emma Cook type pattern, with pure crystalline white contrasted with a pronounced washed edging on the falls in sapphire blue, is choice. Outstanding proportions, completely in class, with superb branching and good bud count, even on a first-year plant here. Similar to its child, Queen's Circle, but with yellow beards instead of contrasting red. TORCHED WITCH (Miller 2000) is admittedly at the top limits of the class, but the tight compact look of the flower (from Melba Hamblen's great classic, Orange Star), thinner stalks, and compact foliage confirm to me that it is appropriately classified as a BB. A most unusual color, basically a burnt orange, with the falls a full tone more intense than the standards. Fuzzy deep burnt orange beards make for a complete package. PREPPY (Vaughn 2000) is an attractive, small-flowered white ground plicata, gently stitched in lavender-blue. Definitely a BB in every way, with stalks just under 2'. Branching was a bit tight to the stalk these past two seasons, but not so as to be objectionable.

**CLASSICS:** GIRL GUIDE (Reynolds 1969); GLACIER BAY (B. Jones 1963); LITTLE MARK (Quadros 1966); PEBBLES (Tucker 1964).

**INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:** ASPIRE (Blyth 1997) is a luscious affair, with satin pink heavily flushed in a strange, wonderful lilac haze. There is a lighter area around the beards, but then give way to a unique smoked lilac flash in the midst of it all. The form is wide, the petals ruffled, but the texture is "the thing" here, a magnificent changeable taffeta appearance which, when combined with the lilac infusions, make it totally unique. As elegant as Aspire is, BEDEVIL (Blyth 1998) is just the opposite. A bold, daring bicolor (well named!), with odd pink standards over intense burgundy falls, contrasted with a stunning burnt orange/tangerine beard. Tall (for the class) with an additional branch to complement the height of the stalk. Some get your attention with their subtle elegance; Bedevil screams at you, and demands attention.

**ALL ABUZZ** (Black 2000) is an extension of the washed fancy work Paul is doing in IB's, and as with the other offerings, it is unique and worthy of release. The base color is an unusual pearl gray, but then yields to a wash in burgundy red to purple, transforming to a solid band at the edges of the petals. A true luminata, with a lightshine of white emerging from the white beards. Indefatigable branching, with 3 branches, some positions double-socketed, with magnificent timing of the blooms. INFINITY RING (Black 2000) is from Paul's "ka-ching!" cross (the luminata SDB, Privileged Character, by Keppel's TB amoena-plicata, Polar Seas) which has produced a stable of choice variations on the luminata/fancy plicata patterns. Here we have a white base color, with the standards almost completely washed in violet, the falls a clean center, contrasted with a precise 1" plicata band in violet.

The color "mauve" often gets a bad rap, for so many described as such have been dulled in color, or a "dirty rose". Not so with MISS MAUVE (Tasco 2000). An intoxicating mauve-rose, the flowers enlivened with deeper texture veins. Contrasting, clean coral-pink beards contribute to the carrying power of the flower. Wonderful form, with flowers possessing that wonderful "changeable taffeta" appearance which add such elegance to the flower's presentation. PRETTY PRINCESS (Tasco 2000) is a sister to Miss Mauve, and very similar in style of quality of plant habits. But instead of mauve, replace with a rich salmon-pink, with an infusion of violet in the base of the standards. Again, a bright coral-pink beard complements.

**CLASSICS:** AZURE ECHO (Durrance 1970); DANDELION (Warburton 1973); GAY WINGS (O. Brown 1974); HEARTSTRINGS (Moldovan 1970); SNOW CHERRIES (Greenlee 1968).

**STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:** **ELECTRIC ELF** (Blyth 1998) is a magnificent, exotic affair, with a full pink self, gloriously contrasted with a thick, shocking electric blue beard. Coming from the pink plicata, **Bee's Knees** (a child of Chanted), the flushing of blue comes through, and a chevron of electric blue below the beards pulls the eye right to them (as if you needed the help!). Wonderful!! **HAUNTS ME** (Blyth 1997) is just as dramatic in its own way, but in a moody, sultry, deep concoction of colors. Standards are medium lavender, but enveloped in a strange gray sheen. Falls have a predominant burgundy-plum spot pattern, then edged in the color of the standards. Velvet texture, good sunfast color, and a unique color array which is enchanting. **TRAJECTORY** (Black 1997) is a dark luminata in an oily deep violet-purple, with a candle of white at the beard and surrounding it, in sharp contrast to the intensity and richness of the base color. It comes from the great progenitor in black luminatas, **Black Star** (Warburton) which, although a breakthrough when first released, was quite difficult to grow (and sustain!). Combined with Paul's ever-increasingly complex luminata line, the growth habits have been corrected.

Two new ones from Paul emphasize the work he is doing to get the flower size in SDB's more compact. Paul has been carefully selecting for smaller flowers in some of his work, and we are now seeing the fruits of his critical eye in this area. **HONEY BUNNY** (Black 2001) is a peach-pink glaciata, from Software (Hager 1990), with a warm glow of honey and butter blended into the falls. Beards are tangerine, tipped white. Tight, cute, smaller flowers with that sheen you would expect from a glaciata. **SOFT GLOW** (Black 2001) is similar in style, with smaller flowers on somewhat taller stalks (but still with good proportion), from totally different breeding. Here the standards are a soft, elegant pastel salmon-pink, atop warm white falls with a narrow banding in the color of the standards. Nice, gentle ruffling completes the ensemble.

**BRIGHT CHILD** (Keppel 1999) is also a glaciata, but this time in a clear, crisp chrome yellow. It truly glows, and again has that beautiful sparkle you see in glaciatas. Thick beards are a deeper yellow, but add to the overall intensity of the color presentation, versus suggesting contrast. It has been an average increaser for me. **PRIMROSE LANE** (E. Jones 2000) is a color gem in bright, happy primrose yellow, contrasted with a cute bright orange beard. Flower parts are broad but not coarse; the substance exceptional, with good carrying power of the color and resistance to the sun. **LOVE UNLIMITED** (Tasco 2000) is similar in presentation, but from totally different bloodlines. Here the yellow is a different shade, in canary, with tangerine beards not so predominant as the thick orange beards of Primrose Lane. Quite heavily ruffled, with wonderful form and a "mink" texture to the finish. For me, it over-bloomed the first year, but seemed to settle down with better increase/bloom ratio this year.

**NEUTRON** (Johnson 2001) is the first SDB release from Tom Johnson. This young hybridizer, who apprenticed with me during his "student days" working on his AIS judgeship, possesses a natural talent for evaluating irises, and I'm so pleased to see that his critical eye for selection is extended to his own work! **Neutron** is a heavily ruffled medium violet, with the falls a tone darker than the standards. Beards are white, tipped light violet, and make a nice contrast. It has the tight, compact look – and pizzazz – from its father, Tweety Bird, but in dark tones. Immense breeding potential here. Substance supreme, with a glossy look to the texture.

**CLASSICS:** **BLUE MOSS** (B. Jones 1967); **EASTER HOLIDAY** (Durrance 1961); **EYE SHADOW** (Roberts 1964); **ORANGE CAPER** (Warburton 1964); **SUNNY HEART** (A. Brown 1964).

## **MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED**

**SELF EVIDENT** (Hager 1996) is pure white with a sharp clean deep blue spot covering most of the falls. The purity of colors is most impressive, and all characteristics are in proper proportion for the class. It makes a beautiful mound of bloom. **WISE** (Johnson 2001) is a sister to the SDB, Neutron, but smaller, even more compact, and shorter, truly in class for an MDB. It has a similar look, including a contrasting bushy white beard, but the saturation of color is even more intense, in a deep, full violet-purple. It is quite heavily ruffled, also, which sometimes is not necessarily desirable in a Miniature Dwarf, but here the ruffling is so tight and precise, it works. **AFRICAN WINE** (Kasperek 1999) is a wine bitone, with the standards a wine-red and the falls more of a crimson blended in with the wine color. Burnt gold beards pull the two styles of color together in harmony. Tight, cute form, with proper foliage habits and good increase.

**CLASSICS: CREME DE CACAO** (Sindt 1970); **FLIRTY EYES** (E. Roberts 1973).

## **ARILBREDS**

**CONCERTO GROSSO** (Mathes 1998, OGB) has color saturation is beyond intense, in a deep-deep oxblood red with an overlay of black varnish. There is a true black signal covering a significant area in the center of the falls. Sooty, yet glossy, and enchanting iris. Another from this German hybridizer, **HEIMDALL** (Mathes 1995, OGB) is another dramatic study in deep color, this time a somber blue-violet, with a black signal blending into the canvas. It is quite tall, with stalks strong enough to withstand our Oklahoma winds.

A quarter-bred from Sharon McAllister was the most impressive new (to me) arilbred in the garden this year: **AS IS** (1998, OGB-) gives the appearance of a variegata, with sedate buff standards over golden-brown falls, blended with rust and enlivened with a burgundy area around the beards, which suggests a signal. The flower has just enough recurve to show its aril heritage, and the colors are exotic and fully saturated. It has a wonderful leathery substance that is very resistant to rain and wind.

**WINDRIDER** (Wilson 1994), in spite of its tall, sturdy stalks and huge flowers, makes a most elegant statement. Standards are a genteel pale blue, accented with deeper blue veining. The falls are a soft violet, with a bit of slightly deeper veining, then boldly accented with a dramatic, imposing maroon signal. This was my first year to bloom **AURORA'S VEIL** (Vossen 1992), and it was most impressive. Standards are a soft, lovely lilac. Falls are “arilbred buff”, but contrasted with an exotic, huge maroon-black signal, formed in the shape of a lance!

**CLASSICS: ADDIS ABABA** (Clark 1966); **DRESDEN GOLD** (Foster 1975); **ELMOHR** (Loomis-Long 1942); **KALIFA GULNARE** (White 1955); **LOUDMOUTH** (Rich 1970); **NINEVEH** (Keppel 1966).

## SPURIAS

**STELLA IRENE** (Jenkins 1995) is a tall, dramatic deep navy blue to purple, with the falls even darker (approaching black) with just a hint of a yellow signal. Substance is like leather, and the intensely saturated flowers retain their color in the hot Oklahoma weather. It has been a somewhat troublesome grower for me, slow to increase, and rather difficult to reestablish. But it is so stunning, it's worth any extra effort. **POPPED CORN** (Jenkins 1993) is a cutie, with a mighty clever name! A nice alternative to the traditional tall stately Spurias, it is less than 3' tall and has proportionately smaller flowers with tight, intense ruffling. The color is a creamy white, with a large patch of butter yellow in the falls, precisely edged in creamy white. Waxy substance, with flowers with a wonderful, open airy look. **FALCON'S BROTHER** (Jenkins 1997) has rich brown shades, contrasted with bright yellow falls, narrowly edged in the chocolate brown. Exceptional vigor, with a generous amount of increase every year. **LAVENDER WAVES** (Jenkins 1996) is well named, for instead of the ripple-ruffles we often see in modern Spurias, it is gently waved. A smooth, soothing light lavender is accented with a dominant yellow signal area in the falls. Lovely, with understated elegance.

**CLASSICS:** **BELISE** (Simonet 1967); **DRIFTWOOD** (Nies-Walker 1957); **RUFFLED CANARY** (McCown 1970); **SPRING ISLAND** (Ferguson 1971); **WOODWIND** (Hager 1968).

## LOUISIANAS

**GREAT WHITE HOPE** (Haymon 2000) is a cleverly named new offering. It is a tall, imposing deep violet-black with a lustrous finish. The saturation is dramatic, and the sheer size of the flowers, and the height of the stalks (over 4' tall) demands your attention. Branching is out of this world, with magnificent placement at four positions. **LAFAYETTE HONEY** (Haymon 2000) is a yummy, leathery honey-tan, with substance supreme and heavy ruffling (not all that common in this color range in Louisianas). Superlative branching and bud count. A wonderful addition to a very limited color class.

**DARK LOVER** (Taylor 1998) is my favorite of all the dark-toned Taylor releases. Deepest violet, approaching black, impressive. But what makes it unique is a stunning, full gold band (not rim) on all six petal parts. It has a smaller flower than most from this hybridizer, and proportionately, isn't as tall. But this is one of the impressive releases ever from the "Wizard of Aussie", John Taylor. **LEMON SORBET** (Pryor 1997) is a delicious soft lemon yellow, lightly ruffled and even somewhat creped – rather unique for Louisianas. It has deceptively strong substance, and the gentle ruffling has been a refreshing change of pace from the elaborate, sophisticated ruffling in many contemporary yellow and white Louisianas.

**CLASSICS:** **BIT OF BLUE** (Arny 1975); **CHARLES ARNY III** (Arny 1976); **EASTER TIDE** (Arny 1979); **GOLD RESERVE** (Chowning 1977); **IONE** (Arny 1976); **SAM REDBURN** (Granger 1978).

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## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS - 2003/2004

Perry Dyer

This combined review includes both the Fresno AIS National Convention and the Portland Median Convention in 2004. This year's edition will have a greater number of medians reviewed, for there were several fine ones doing their thing in Fresno. Then, in Portland, we had bountiful bloom and a thoughtful convention planning committee which actually allotted sufficient time in each garden for me to take extensive notes!

## AWARD WINNERS

1. **CONTEMPORARY AWARD** -- to the Best New Iris seen (one introduced within the past 3 years of the date of this review): **PURPLE RITZ** (Lesley Painter 2003) is a smashing debut for this conscientious new hybridizer from California. It is a huge pure purple, not violet, not approaching black - purple - a color amazingly quite rare today in Tall Bearded irises. It has heavy ruffling, symmetrically positioned throughout the flower, but not so heavy as to contradict the regal affect it gives. It produces tall, thick, husky well-branched stalks, with 3-4 branches, double-socketed, a quality extended to it from both its parents, 'Indigo

Princess' (Schreiner) and Dykes Medalist 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner). Without fail, it has outstanding growth habits with huge healthy fans and exceptional vigor.

**Runnersup:**

**AMONG FRIENDS** (Varner 2002) is among the best of many fine advancements being made in diploid Miniature Tall Bearded, and is my current favorite. Standards are pure white, domed and well shaped. Horizontal falls are a rich deep indigo blue-violet with a light halo in white. It is smooth at the hafts, a major advancement in the class. The form is also a major step forward, wide and rounded, but not so wide as to foil the grace that is a must in MTB's. Stalks are textbook - thin, with a graceful S-curve, branching perfectly positioned on the stalk, double sockets to ensure an extended season of bloom. Foliage remains in proportion, thin and shorter so as not to interfere with the flowers. It makes a stunning impact on the show bench, even more so in the garden.

**BOLD ENCOUNTER** (Black 2003) is a welcome contribution to variegatas, deep and suave in its character. Standards are deepest gold, approaching brown, closed and ruffled. Falls are an intense mahogany red, flaring, with moderate to heavy ruffling. Thick beards are a deep gold, in harmony with the color of the standards. Rich it is - in colder weather, actually, it is perhaps a bit too deep. But in warm, drier seasons, it is without peer. The entire flower has a velveteen sheen which enlivens the mood and contributes to the carrying power of the colors in the garden. Branching is outstanding, 3-4 branches in modified candelabra style.

**FREEDOM SONG** (Schreiner 2003) was on my "watch list" after seeing the positive comments from Joe Ghio upon its introduction. The Schreiner family has produced a legacy of choice violet-on-white plicatas over the years. This one carries on that tradition with a high-quality pure white plicata, finely, precisely stitched in full violet. The King of Clean, with impressive ruffling that is deep, but not so deep as to cause the eye to lose focus on the effect of the plicata pattern. Wonderful branching, and although the stalks tend to be on the slender side, have no problem sustaining 3 flowers open at once.

**DANCING BUNNIES** (Black 2002) is one of those flowers that leaves a warm, fuzzy feeling inside, a big hearty sigh. This SDB has medium yellow standards and pearly white falls edged in the standards' color, complemented with a harmonious soft violet beard. The yellow has a mysterious greenish glow which enlivens the flower. Wonderful wide form, softly ruffled and waved. But it is the texture that makes it special - a waxen finish. Outstanding plant habits and bloom ratio - a complete package.

**2. L'ELEGANTE AWARD** -- to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen: **KITTY KAY** (Keppel 2002), in my opinion, is the most beautiful, luscious pink - ever. Beauty is subjective, but this special iris has it all. It is a pure medium to azalea pink, with no lightening in the heart of the falls, which is so common with pinks. The beards add vitality in a deep coral-pink. It carries extravagant ruffling and a plentiful amount of lace. Branching is beautiful, and it times the release of its flowers to perfection. Plant vigor and increase is adequate - there are more vigorous pinks with better increase (such as Keith's 'Happenstance'), but growth is OK. The flower is as beautiful and memorable as its namesake.

**Runnersup:**

**FANCY STUFF** (O.Brown-McCrae 2001) reminds me of a modern version of my very first introduction to purchase, back when I was but a Sophomore in high school, 'Bubbling Springs' (O. Brown 1971). I sat through many a piano lesson, teaching my way to extra income to support my iris addiction! Laced blues have been a tough nut to crack, and 'Bubbling Springs' wound up being less than desirable in the growth and plant health department (and impossible to hybridize with - I assure you, I tried!). 'Fancy Stuff' comes a long way in correcting this deficiency. This diamond-dusted softest lavender-blue is wide, with exceptional substance to help hold the flower together. The falls gradually soften in the center to an icy white, matching the white beards. As with 'Kitty Kay', in spite of a generous amount of lace, the flowers have no trouble whatsoever in opening properly, never twisting or tearing.

**FIRST WAVE** (Tasco 2003) is an intensely, deeply ruffled rich aquamarine blue, the falls lightening ever so slightly in the heart. It inherited splendid plant habits from its mother, 'Sudden Impact' (Tasco) and the abundance of ruffling of the overlooked 'Rippling River' (Schreiner). It is a glossier version of 'Sea Power' (Keppel), with similar style of deepest ruffling. My only wish would be that it were a little bit taller and the branches placed a bit further away from the stalk (although they do not impede the flowers' ability to open). I do believe I shot it in every garden in which it was blooming in Fresno!

**CRYSTAL GAZER** (Keppel 2002) is one of a fine series of beauties from the super parent, 'Fogbound' (Keppel). Here we have a genteel blue-orchid in the standards, the falls a tone lighter in lilac-blue, gradually transforming to a silvery-white in the heart of the falls. Beards are a soothing lilac-pink and add to the elegance. Heavily ruffled, it also has a modest degree of lace on all parts. The form and finish are very artistic, a beauty like a cut jewel. Not just a pretty face - it possesses impeccable branching and bud count, and the healthiest of plant habits.

**ELYSIUM** (M. Smith 2003) is an eloquent peach glaciata from Keith Keppel's TB glaciata, 'Answered Prayers'. It makes for a great antidote to get the blood pressure under control again after seeing Marky's evocative IB, 'Delirium'. The color on 'Elysium', as with most glaciatas, is pure and crystalline, a soft shade of peach, with the falls a suggestion of a tone lighter, gradually diminishing in color to a cream in the heart of the flower. Understated elegance, but with such fine attributes in form, substance, and plant habits that you cannot ignore its impact in the garden.

**3. 9-1-1 AWARD** -- to the New Iris that is, in my opinion, the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break. 3 of 5 slots this year go to medians! With the winner being -- **CAT'S EYE** (Black 2002). Even though it was released the same year as its eagerly-awaited compadre, 'Puddy Tat' (Black, SDB), this zinger will hold its own. The base color is a glowing rose, tempered just a bit with an influence of mauve to the make-up. Then, ka-ching! A huge pulsating ruby red spot pattern dominates the falls. It is the child of one of my favorites, 'Snugglebug' (Schreiner), but it is a better garden plant. Mid-America's catalog shot/website picture of 'Cat's Eye' is quite accurate, yet you have to see it in the flesh to appreciate and experience the full impact of the luminosity of the effect it has. Not recommended for those who suffer from paranoia - you'll swear those eyes are following you all over the garden!

Runnersup:

**SYMPHONY OF LIGHT** (Meininger 2003) is a major breakthrough in Space Age irises, the best of its kind in this ‘Touche’ (Hamblen) color pattern of pink and blue. The entire flower is very pastel and elegant, with the one standout feature (pardon the pun) is an orange beard which ends in long lavender-blue horns, sometimes becoming spoons. Standards are softest pink with undertones of pale peach; the falls start out as lavender-blue, with a fine peach-pink halo, but as the flower fully expands and ages, the color in the center of the falls gracefully transforms to near-white, making the presence of the horns even more noticeable. It has been considerably taller than its registered 30”, with strong stalks with superb branching and spacing. Excellent plant habits with good increase and dependable bloom.

**CHOCOLATE MOOSE** (Kasperek 2003) is the best and most unique of the newer Kasperek color breakers, a breakthrough in coloring. It is a rich chocolate base color, joyfully and recklessly streaked in white and some gold. The form is broad, with only slight ruffling, so as not to interfere with the business of the color breaking. Large flowers, intensity of color, and admirable plant habits inherited from its parent, ‘Nigerian Raspberry’ (Kasperek), make it special. And my very favorite zoo name of all times! So clever!

**CRAFTED** (Dunderman-Varner 2001) is a quaint, compact old-rose on creamy white plicata, with the exceptional stalks (3-4 branches), bud count, form, and clarity of color inherited from its parent, the famous ‘Rosemary’s Dream’ (Dunderman). Although the color of the plicating is a more muted version of ‘Rosemary’s Dream’, the application of the edging is a more distinctive plicata marking. We are very fortunate that Terry Varner (and his critical eye for quality) has been charged with the selection and release of the late Mary Louise Dunderman’s final creations.

**GREASED LIGHTNING** (Chapman 2001, SDB) is a zany, raucous affair, a misfit offspring from luminata breeding. Beyond description, but let’s try: Basically, the standards are a stone-washed violet, gradually transforming into a moody green to antique golden-yellow at the edges. The falls are similar, but with a greater degree of irregularity and intensity in the transformation at the edges. Dark yellow beards slip in under the radar and belie the luminata lineage. OK, perhaps all that sounds gross, but trust me, “it works”, and Chuck couldn’t have picked a better name.

**4. SUN BELT AWARD** -- 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): **STARWOMAN** (M. Smith 1998, IB) is the epitome of class and poise, the template of what we like to see in a modern IB. This deep violet on white plicata approaches black in its intensity of color, with the standards almost completely saturated. The base color of the falls (a pearly white) is a bold contrast to the intensity of the plicating. The form is wide, a testament to its ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black, SDB) heritage, the falls horizontal, the flowers with a generous amount of ruffling which sets the flowers to dance. Peerless stalk production, tall enough to permit 2 to 3 branches, bud count sufficient to ensure a long season of bloom. It looks great in the garden, but is also smashing on the show bench (a specimen was First Runnerup at a recent show in Oklahoma City, with 3 beautifully spaced blossoms open). Its catapult to the top of the awards and popularity polls is no fluke - it is an iris of highest quality and style.

Runnersup:

**GARNET STORM DANCER** (Pryor 1997) was one of Heather’s first introductions, and is on the fast track to becoming a classic. Heavy ruffles in deepest, sultry garnet red are its hallmark. Flowers are smaller, compact, tight, and with impeccable form. The whole flower is embellished with a high gloss with makes the flower glow across the garden. Shorter stalks are in harmony with the smaller flower size, and have a perfect S-curve to allow each branch to fully develop properly and the blossoms to open without interference. It truly is a masterpiece, and has proven itself in all parts of the country.

**FOREVER BLUE** (Chapman 1997) would be a worthy competitor even if it were a “oncer”, but this hearty SDB has the constitution to produce dependable rebloom even in Zone 4 gardens. It is a clean, pert light blue, with hints of violet infusions in its makeup, contrasted with a distinctive medium to deep blue-violet beard, big and fuzzy. It has the vigor and rampant increase to sustain the energy required to rebloom; in milder zones, it is reported to be virtually an everbloomer.

**BODY AND SOUL** (Stahly 1999) wasn’t widely grown in this part of the country, initially, but has more than made up for lost time. It is a tasteful blend, with the primary color being light to medium apricot. Then, interspersed throughout the flower (standards and falls), we have varying degrees of yellow, pink, and orange, capped with a bright orange beard. It produces beautiful stalks with consistency, no matter what the weather conditions throw at it. Plant habits are strong and hearty, as you can expect from this northern hybridizer.

**CANDY APPLE CLASSIC** (Maryott 1999) is a color jewel in true candy apple red, bright and glowing. Technically, perhaps, it is a blend, in that it has undertones of various other shades of red, such as mahogany and ruby, and even a violet flash at times below deep bronze to chocolate beards. The form is wide and classic, with moderate ruffling, flowers produced are strong, well-branched stalks. Foliage is an attractive deep blue-green, a sure sign of health in irises.

5. **DARK HORSE AWARD** -- to the variety introduced within the past 10 years or so that has been overlooked by AIS judges and deserved higher awards: **BOOMERANG** (Maryott 1992) is a temperate climate rebloomer which is an eloquent contrast in bicolors, with light apricot standards and lilac-lavender falls, blended with apricot in the shoulders and a deeper peach beard. The whole flower looks as though it were made from silk. That this iris was totally ignored by AIS judges at the time of its release is simply unbelievable.

#### Runnersup:

**ONE LITTLE PINKIE** (Durrance 1992) is a voluptuous, tasty rich coral-pink BB with red-tangerine beards. The intensity and application of color is impressive, with substance thick and texture quite leathery, ensuring the color impact stays in tact through the life of the flower. Tight, compact flowers in proper proportion, moderately ruffled. Plant size and stalk height are also within the criteria of the class. Increase is average, but certainly not the sulking and temperamental habits which unfortunately, to this day, still plague many BB's

**MAUVELOUS** (Byers 1988) was a hearty Space Age TB which perhaps was overshadowed by its more famous seedling patch mates such as ‘Thornbird’, ‘Conjuration’, and ‘Godsend’ (Byers). It is a rich, widely formed mauve pink, with more mauve concentrated in the standards. Big thick husky plants produce tall, strong show stalks. A quality iris, and its name a clever play on words.

**EMILIE DOLGE** (Spoon 1995) is an elegant reverse yellow amoena, with lemon yellow standards atop glistening white falls which gradually blend in to the lemon yellow color of the standards. As with ‘Boomerang’, the texture appears to be made of silk, shimmering in the sunlight. Plant habits are strong, with dependable bloom year after year. This was one of the Spoons’ first introductions, and even to this day, remains one of their finest.

**WITH CASTANETS** (Ritchie 1991) is a clean, bright, joyous affair - a medium yellow amoena, with purest white standards atop clear sunshiny yellow falls. This SDB is a consistent bloomer, year after year, and is resilient and resistant to the vagaries of the mood swings of Mother Nature in the early spring. Exceptional plant habits, with clean foliage producing stalks with 1 branch, 2 to 3 buds.

**6. PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** -- to the most outstanding and promising seedling viewed this season: **EXPERIMENT** (Black 2005) was seen at the Portland Median Convention as Seedling #J386B. It is the crowning achievement of a long-standing goal to produce an advancement in blue-bearded yellows, carrying on the tradition of 'Blueberry Muffins' (Warburton) and 'Canary Isle' (Hamblen). We have a rich burnished golden yellow with a strong influence of willow green present throughout the flower. Falls are then accented with huge, thick, deep indigo-blue to violet beards, solid through and through with no other "junk" on them to ruin the effect. Impeccable form is tight and rounded, with closed standards one tone deeper than the falls, then wide, round falls, horizontal, with just the right amount of ruffling and waving. Stalks throughout the clump consistently carry 1 well-placed branch, 3 buds total in perfect sequencing. Plant habits are strong and robust. Predecessors in this color combination would tend to overbloom; not so with 'Experiment' - the increase/bloom ratio is faultless.

**Runnersup:**

**L97-7** (Lesley Painter) was the hit of the Fresno convention in the Seedling Department, garnering such praise as to win a High Commendation (HC) with the greatest number of votes (by a landslide). My notes, from several gardens, kept saying, "There's that orange again!" Consistent and intense in its coloring, it is a large, moderately ruffled rich orange (they call it spanish orange) with incredible carrying power in the garden - you can see it a block away (well, almost). There is a slight softening of color in the center of the falls, allowing the eye to focus on brilliant orange beards, which simply add to the pizzazz of the flower. From the mega-branched 'Quito' (Ghio) it too carries 4 branches, double sockets, in formal candelabra style. Unlike its parent, however, the stalks are thicker and hold up better, even if multiple flowers are open. It is quite simply the finest orange on the market today. [UPDATE: This seedling has been named **BRILLIANCE**, introduced in 2005.]

"**ELAINE BOURQUE**" (Haymon future), is a much-awaited Louisiana from this Lafayette hybridizer with the strictest of standards. It won Best Seedling at the 2003 Society for Louisiana Irises (SLI) convention in Lafayette. When I first saw it, I was speechless (a major accomplishment, as those of you who know me could attest). It reminds me of the classic Japanese iris, 'Frilled Enchantment' (Marx), with cold white boldly banded on all parts in the most glorious rose-pink imaginable. Well formed with wavy ruffles throughout. There is absolutely nothing like it on the market, and it will take the iris world by storm when it is released to commerce.

Several SDB plicatas from Barbara Schmieder, Massachusetts, were receiving a lot of attention at the Portland Median Convention. General consensus was that the best was **97-AR-6**. It is a tight, rounded honey plicata with an intense concentration of chocolate in the shoulders - a cute, different look to SDB plicatas. It is at the upper end of the class in height, which is fortunate, because the slender stalks produce 2 branches, totaling 5 buds per stalk. [UPDATE: This has been named **BANDED TIGER**, a 2006 introduction.]

**98-252-2** (Ron De La Motte), is a prettier, much healthier and more vigorous 'Feature Attraction' (Schreiner) type, with closed standards and wide well-formed falls, all adorned with a heavy amount of lace. Yet the flowers didn't twist or tear when opening. The hybridizer was one of the tour hosts for the Fresno convention, and this seedling was among the best of all seen in any of the gardens. [UPDATE: This has been named **MADDIE DE**, a 2007 introduction.]

## TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP

### REDS TO MAROONS:

The new reds coming from Joe Ghio are fascinating, intriguing, and each has its own unique character, full of distinctiveness. CURRENT EVENTS (Ghio 2004) is a blackcurrant red with bronzed beards. The form is wide, and there is a fair amount of ruffling. The coloration is a totally different look than what we find in the Schreiner line of reds, attractive and charming. ENNOBLE (Ghio 1999), a parent of 'Current Events', approaches its red from the black-cerise tones, with more of a brick red beard versus bronze. It has an intense glossy finish, whereas 'Current Events' has more of a velveteen texture.

CRANBERRY SAUCE (Black 2002) is a glowing cranberry to claret wine with bright yellow beards. What adds interest to the flower is a bizarre but beautiful overlay in black which intensifies rather than muddies the color. Its pollen parent, the famous 'Tom Johnson' (Black) passed on its superlative branching to this child. Pretty blue-green foliage. OASIS RED (Chadwick-White 2001) was a pleasant surprise, from Idaho hybridizers new to me. It is a most unusual shade of burnished rose-red, a bit rough at the hafts but not offensive. Adding to its character are thick root beer colored beards. It has nice wide form, even sporting some ruffling and lace. Colorfastness is suspect; it did bleach out in some gardens. But when it's right, it is fascinating. It carried just average stalks, and it appeared to be a slow grower in some gardens. Nonetheless, a very interesting variety.

CLASSICS: BRIGADOON (Tompkins 1955); CAMPFIRE GLOW (Whiting 1947); FRONTIER MARSHALL (Schreiner 1965).

### BROWNS:

CHOCOLATE CHESS (Moores 2002) is an intriguing entry in this category, a mysterious soft brown, blended with beige, with the falls a tone deeper than the standards. It does this interesting "transformation" of color as the flower ages, very pleasing and artistic. (If you've ever attended one of my judges training schools, you'll know the difference between transforming and fading - fading is a negative connotation directly associated with substandard substance.) CHOCOLATE ECSTASY (Schick 2001) has been totally overlooked. Maybe folks just don't like brown irises, but this is rich and luscious, maintaining its intensity of color even in warmer weather (sunfast). It does exhibit a velvet texture instead of a glossy look, such as found in the SDB, 'Death By Chocolate' (Bianco), so this curtails the overall carrying power of the color in the garden somewhat. RUSTLE OF SPRING (Grosvenor 1999) is a fascinating blend of varying degrees of brown, mixed with copper, deep tan, and even a burnished rose. Burnt orange beards are thick and bold, complementing the color array. It is a broad, blowzy type of flower, with standards closed and ruffled, even showing some lace, the falls heavily, deeply ruffled.

CLASSICS: CALDRON (Schreiner 1957); FLAME AND SAND (Carlson 1968); MALACCA STRAITS (D. Johnson 1964).

### APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

CRACKLING CALDERA (Aitken 2003) is a rich, vibrant apricot-orange, with an influence of yellow to warm the effect. Standards are a solid orange. Then, the falls are apricot in the majority, with a distinctive band of the orange along the edges. It is topped off with thick deep orange beards. Nice form, with horizontal falls and an interesting style of ruffling, gently waving from the shoulders and all the way around. SHANNY ORANGE (Grumbine 2001) was a "sleeper" for me, and is one of the most heavily laced oranges I've seen. It carries intense, pure saturation which retained its substance and color in the heat. It reminded me of a brighter version of the first really good laced orange, 'Orange Star' (Hamblen). Standards are open and well held, heavily ruffled with moderate lace, the falls are well shaped, the same shade of orange, with heavier lace. Even the style arms are blessed with lace. Stalks are a bit short, but with formal candelabra branching, perhaps a bit too wide, in that the bottom branch comes up a bit too far but doesn't impede the balance of the stalk.

CLASSICS: ORANGE CHARIOT (Fay 1964); PALOMINO (Hall 1952); TAHITI SUNRISE (Ernst 1963).

### PINKS:

**KIND WORD** (Keppel 2000) is a wide, ruffled buff pink with contrasting orange beards. The color is such that, on some days, it could be considered in with the apricots. It has a quiet elegance about it, with a waxy substance that adds sophistication. **TENDER MERCY** (Kerr 2000) is a satin pink, a touch lighter in the falls, with shrimp beards. Form and style are its strongest attributes, inheriting the magnificent form and ruffling of the great English iris, 'Elizabeth Poldark' (Nichol). It also picked up the healthy plant habits of its parent, always a positive in the quest for improved pinks.

**H.C. STETSON** (Stetson 2003) is from a new hybridizer in Denver, and could easily have been in the running for the L'Elegante Award. It is the palest pink imaginable - you have to do a double-take to be sure, yes, it really is pink. Keeping with the mood, the beards are palest blue, tipped pale pink. The whole flower is heavily ruffled and moderately laced. It doesn't have the extreme width of 'Kitty Kay' or 'Kind Word' (Keppel), but nonetheless pleasing in shape. Stalks on a first-year bloom "required assistance" - I'll be watching it to see if the strength improves on an established clump. Similar, **LACY DAY** (Ernst 2000) is the softest baby pink with deep, heavy lace all over. The beards are a deeper pink and are harmonious. As with 'H.C. Stetson', the form is not as wide and rounded as some of its contemporaries, but is architecturally sound and very attractive, with more compact size and a nice flair to the falls. Very delicate in appearance, but with more than adequate substance to sustain.

CLASSICS: CHANTILLY (Hall 1943); MARY RANDALL (Fay 1951); MUSIC HALL (Hamblen 1967); PINK BALLET (Rudolph 1969).

### LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:

**DESIGNER LABEL** (Ghio 2003) is a large-flowered pinkish orchid blend in the tradition of the famous 'Entourage' (Ghio) but with much more clarity of color. Falls gradually lighten in the center of the falls, below tangerine beards. Tall strong stalks frequently open multiple blossoms. **SOCIAL GRACES** (Keppel 2000) is a heavily ruffled laced study in blended orchid, lavender, pink, and rose, accented with a harmonious tangerine-red beard. The substance is substantial, allowing the flower to retain its intensity through the life of the flower. **NO DOUBT** (Lauer 2004) is a smooth light lavender with some blue in its makeup. It is quite heavily ruffled, and the ruffles are well-placed on the flower, giving the whole flower a feeling of motion. The clarity of color makes the flower refreshing.

**MIAH JANE** (Parkhill 2001) is a lovely shade of orchid-lavender, in the tradition of the old Larry Gaulter classics, with elegant ruffling and clarity of color. Stalks are impressive - somebody is going to hit Show Day just right and win it all. I have been very impressed with the overall quality of all the things I have seen released from this Kentucky hybridizer who is new to me. He seems to specialize in overall "gardenability" of his irises, an attribute we all should be striving for more often. **PERFECT TOUCH** (Tasco 2001) is another fine introduction from a very talented newer hybridizer from California. It is a deep violet rendition of its lavender parent, 'Sudden Impact' (Tasco), with heavy ruffling and superb branching and plant habits. It also retained the beautiful satin texture of its parent.

CLASSICS: CASHMERE (Fay 1959); GRAPE FESTIVAL (Gaulter 1969); ORCHID BROCADE (Rudolph 1965); STERLING SILVER (Moldovan 1963).

## **DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:**

**BLACK PHANTOM** (Maryott 2001) is going to wind up in the Dark Horse Award category in a few years if it doesn't start getting some attention! It is a fully formed, heavily ruffled jet black with the look of patent leather. Tall stately stalks carry the evocative flowers to maximum exposure. Plant habits are outstanding, producing lush blue-green foliage. **WORLD WITHOUT END** (Hager-DuBose 2000) is the best of the last releases from the Melrose seedling patch of the late Ben Hager. It is an outstanding rich deep violet, with some white coming through at the beards, with impeccable form and deep ruffles. Strong plants are husky and huge, with big thick stalks holding up very large (huge) blooms.

**FADE TO BLACK** (Schreiner 2002) continues a high-quality line of blacks from the Schreiners, a fully-saturated black with self beards. Tall stalks are without peer - frequently carries 4 branches with multiple buds. The substance is thick, the ruffling extensive, the carrying power of the color in the garden significant. Beautiful deep blue-green foliage. **MIDNIGHT CAPER** (Rogers 1999) was blooming well in several Fresno gardens and was consistently outstanding, one of the most pleasant surprises of the whole convention. This hardy black, bred in cold, tough Wisconsin, has beautiful individual flowers, deep, intense, with good color saturation in soot black. Branching overall is acceptable, although a few stalks appeared to have its bottom branch a bit too close to the stalk. If this is as high quality in my home garden, it could be a future Dark Horse winner. Too bad it hasn't been more widely grown.

The advancement in reblooming irises is been greatly appreciated. **MARTY RICHARDS** (Richards 2005), seen under number in Fresno as Seedling #6005-RE, is an improvement over its famous, high-quality reblooming parent, 'Feedback' (Hager), with even more refined form and slightly more ruffling. It is a full violet, a tone deeper in the falls. Was registered and named for the hybridizer's wife, so you know he too must believe it is special. Another impressive registered rebloomer which was performing spectacularly in several gardens during the Fresno Convention was **RECURRING GLORY** (Sutton 2002), an even more intense full violet self from the blue side. It has wide, rounded form with billowing ruffles. Stately stalks were well-branched, consistent, with double sockets at all positions.

**CLASSICS:** **BLACK DIAMOND** (Schreiner 1951); **NIGHT SONG** (Luihn 1965); **SABLE NIGHT** (Cook 1950); **SWAHILI** (Plough 1965).

## **BLUES:**

With a thousand (or two) blues on the market, you would think every conceivable combination, look, and style would have been explored by now. But with 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner) on the scene, even more creative combinations and colors are now possible. **TOKATEE FALLS** (Schreiner 2000) is a vibrant bluebird blue, wide and rounded. The whole flower is set in motion with a blending of softer blue, approaching white, in addition to deeper blue shadows, all with a generous degree of ruffling. Very artistic, but frustratingly difficult to describe in words or to capture in a picture. **ABOVE THE CLOUDS** (Schreiner 2001) is a glorious azure blue with billowing ruffles like those of 'Altruist' (Schreiner), fluffy and an airy look about them. Incredibly stalks, 3 branches plus lower rebranching, double to triple socketed. The whole flower is silver dusted, shimmering in the sunlight.

**PURE SAPPHIRE** (Parkhill 2002) is just that, purest sapphire blue, with no other color to disturb the effect. Moderately ruffled, with utmost clarity of color. Beautiful plant habits makes for a complete package. **WALKING ON AIR** (Black 2001) is a deep violet-blue, with the falls deeper than the standards. Then, embedded in heavy, tight ruffling, you find where the color has transformed itself into a ghostly lighter edging on all body parts, the name befitting the character of the flower. The flower is smaller and well-disciplined. Deep blue-green foliage, purple-based, adds to the aura of the iris.

**CLASSICS:** **BLUE CHARMER** (Rudolph 1972); **BUBBLING SPRINGS** (O. Brown 1971); **GREAT LAKES** (Cousins 1938); **HIGH ABOVE** (DeForest 1961).

## WHITES to CREAMS:

**DEVONSHIRE CREAM** (Sutton 2000) is an exquisitely ruffled warm cream, my favorite in this color, with the presence of yellow ever so slightly in the hafts of the falls, well coordinated with the yellow beards. It is of highest quality, as it should be, coming from the great English variety, 'Elizabeth Poldark', an update of a very fine flower in and of itself. In some gardens, the branching was a bit high and close to the stalk, but not to the point of being defective. And I swear, at the Fresno Convention, it looked like it was trying to sport horns - I guess from hanging out in the vicinity of all those Sutton Space Age introductions! **TOO BELOW ZERO** (D. Miller 2004) is a tall, imposing cold white with the form, substance, and texture of its parent, 'Silverado' (Schreiner), but much taller than the registered height of 35". One clump in a Fresno Convention garden had a stalk with 4 open, and would have 5 open the next day. Plenty of backup buds to make it a good garden iris also.

**SUNLIT CREST** (Mullin 2002) is a well-named masterpiece in warm white with glistening gilt edging in gold, irregularly infused in the flower. The heaviest concentration is in the shoulders. It carries heavy lace embedding the gold glitter, coming from its famous laced parent, 'Laced Cotton' (Schreiner). In addition to the lace, it shows unusual crinkled ruffling which is most attractive. **VATICAN FLAG** (Willott 2005) is a soothing warm white with a ¼" halo of diffused halo of yellow and yellow shoulders and beards. It is similar to the Dykes Medalist 'Bride's Halo' (Mohr), except the halo is more subtle, and rather than a diamond-dusted texture, it is presented in chiffon. Magnificent stalks, with 3 branches plus spur in candelabra branching. Its ruffling is significant, nearly as deep as its parent, 'Rippling River' (Schreiner). A choice new Tall Bearded from a dedicated hybridizing couple from Ohio who have devoted most of their hybridizing efforts over the years with dwarfs and medians.

**CLASSICS:** CANDLEFLAME (Hall 1961); TRANQUILITY (Fay 1950); WHITE TAFFETA (Rudolph 1966).

## YELLOWS:

**ITALIAN ICE** (Cadd 2001) is a translucent, icy pale lemon, combining satin texture in the standards with more of a chiffon look in the falls, all pulled together very tastefully. Gently ruffled. Flower quality is sometimes inconsistent, but not to the point that it should be rejected. Extremely tall stalks are well branched but sometimes may need some supporting during adverse weather (such as never-ending strong winds, sweeping down the plains, in Oklahoma!). Coming from Space Age breeding, it will sometimes project the suggestion of a horn, but this is the exception to the norm. **PICASSO MOON** (Schreiner 2000) is a full canary yellow self, right down to the beards, with wonderful carrying power of its color in the garden. The flowers are huge - maybe too big to keep it all together, with only average form. Stalks sometimes appeared to be thin, yet they managed to hold everything up. Everything is super-sized - the plants are big and thick, and there is plentiful increase and good color in the foliage.

**PIONEER WOMAN** (Black 2002) is one I had missed. No, not just another nice yellow and white combo. The flowers are huge, with bright sunshine yellow standards (with some white blended in), and then purest white falls, clean, with a distinctive ½" to ¾" band of even more intense yellow. The balance is size between standards and falls is much better than the catalog picture suggests. **SUN FUN** (T. Johnson 2002) is similar in color and style, with less white showing in the falls - the falls look more yellow with a white patch in the heart, below deep yellow beards. The flowers glisten in the sun, glow in cloudy weather. The stalks are incredible, from the great parent, 'Goldkist' (Black), easily and consistently producing 4 branches.

**CLASSICS:** ELSA SASS (Sass 1939); MAY MELODY (Hamblen 1965); TRULY YOURS (Fay 1949); ULTRAPOISE (Noyd 1962).

## PLICATAS:

**CONTEMPORARY ART** (Black 2000) is a nice advancement in the quest for red-bearded blue plicatas, inheriting its burnt orange beard from ‘Daredevil’ (Keppel). It is a clean, wide white, precisely stitched in a band of deep blue-violet. The finishing touch is a distinctive violet chevron immediately below the beards. The beard sets the flower aglow. **FEELINGS** (Ghio 2002) is one of the prettier additions to the luminata class. The base color, and the color which comes through at the beards, in the heart of the flower, is a soft pink, instead of your usual white or light yellow. The patterning is a marbled, airbrushed look in rich cherry red, topped with tangerine-red beards.

Two fancy plicatas from Keith Keppel are vivacious and worthy additions to anyone’s plicata collection.

**DRAMA QUEEN** (Keppel 2003) is a rich wine emblazoned over a buff-yellow base. Standards are nearly solidly saturated, the falls an exotic combination of sanding, marbling, streaking, and stitching covering virtually the entire surface, with a deeper concentration the closer to the edge you get. Its parent, **TANGLED WEB** (Keppel 1999) is similar in makeup, but done more in rich shades of brown and copper. Each has the type of branching you can depend on from the King of Plicatas.

**INSIDE TRACK** (Keppel 2002) and **STORM TRACK** (Keppel 2001) are similar, from related bloodlines in the quest for a true black plicata. IT’s stitching isn’t quite as deep or intense, nor the band quite as wide, as ST. ST has violet-black stitching, almost completely saturated in the standards, the falls carrying a band of stitching right about  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” in thickness, perhaps even wider. It also sports a black dart right below the beard. Flip a coin. Both are fine, so it’s a matter of personal preference. I prefer ‘Storm Track’.

**CLASSICS:** **BLUE SHIMMER** (Sass 1941); **GAY TRACERY** (Gibson 1965); **GIGI** (Schreiner 1971); **MEMPHIS MISS** (Schortman 1957); **RADIANT APOGEE** (Gibson 1966).

## AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, AND NEGLECTAS:

**CAMEO KISS** (J. Painter 2003) is the first introduction from John Painter, the husband of the hybridizer of this year’s Contemporary Award winner, ‘Purple Ritz’, Lesley Painter. An unusual amoena, with its richness of color coming from its variegata parent, ‘Peking Summer’ (Schreiner), with warm ivory standards over deep pink falls which carry an ivory halo. Beards are deep tangerine, tipped deeper tangerine and purple in the heart of the flower. It often exhibits a strange and mysterious cocoa haze over the flower, more effective in warmer weather, somewhat muddy in cooler temperatures. The stalks are impressively taller and better branched than your usual pink amoena. **RARE FIND** (Ghio 2003) is similar, but more orange in the falls, and from a different approach. Standards are a thick creamy white with some salmon in the midribs and veining. The falls are a rich coral-orange but occasionally have strange, interesting purple specks (freckles?) mixed throughout them. They have a lighter band of coral and then orange beards. The substance is thick and waxy, with a nice leathery look to the flower. Average stalks and plants habits.

**COULEE BREEZE** (Roberts 2003) I am tempted to place in the new “Emma Cook Pattern” category of Contemporary Views (see below), because of the manner it distributes its color in the falls. Basically a blue amoena, with palest blue standards (close enough to white to categorize as amoena, in my opinion) with medium blue falls with varying degrees of depth of color, as if airbrushed, eventually deepening to what could almost be classified as a band. Stalks are shorter, but the iris compensates by producing nearly horizontal falls, for maximum viewing exposure.

**NEHALEM BAY** (Schreiner 2002) is a quality new neglecta, with light blue standards and rich medium to deep blue falls with a nonobtrusive yellow beard. The form is broad, with flowers with gentle to moderate ruffling. Substance is outstanding. Stalks are thick, tall, and well branched.

PICKLEDILLY (L. Painter 2004) is an unusual approach to attempt to create a green amoena. Some have commented that they don't care for the coloring, but I like it and find it fascinating. The standards are white with a smoked look to them. The falls are a valiant attempt at mint green mixed in with the primary yellow color, mixed with some ecru, but also with a smoked overlay like the standards (which I suppose is what some find objectionable). It produces good stalks, with 3 branches plus spur plus lower rebranching sometimes. It grows on you! A clever name, too!

CLASSICS: AMIGO (Williamson 1934); BRIGHT HERALD (Wills 1964); CLOUD CAPERS (Schreiner 1966).

### BICOLORS AND VARIEGATAS:

ALPINE LACE (Kerr 2001) is a heavily laced bicolor in the style of 'Touche' (Hamblen), with pink standards flushed blue and lavender-blue falls, somewhat deeper at the edges. It is topped off with a tangerine-red to coral beard. Stalks were a bit short and squat, but the flower glows - it glistens with diamond dusting! Lace in this color combination is rare. AMIABLE (Ghio 2002) is a softer version of 'Mandela' (Ghio), with wider form and a chiffon texture. It has soft to medium pink standards and lavender pink falls with a tangerine beard. Growth was notable a vast improvement over similar things from similar bloodlines. In a garden in Wichita, Kansas, it had the best branching of all the clumps in the garden, carrying 4 beautifully spaced branches with well-timed buds. BUT BEAUTIFUL (Blyth 1999) is a larger, broader rendition of 'Electrique' (Blyth), with light blue standards over blended falls in tan, coffee, and burnished rose, with a burnt orange beard which contrasts nicely against the fall colors. The colors are oddly beautiful, making for an excellent accent piece in the garden. It is an extremely early bloomer, one of the few TB's which was in full bloom at the Portland Median Convention.

SKY KING RETURNS (Lauer 2003) is a diamond-dusted yellow/lavender bicolor in the style of 'Edith Wolford' (Hager), which is in its background. It has tightly formed, moderate sized flowers, with a pleasing degree of moderate ruffling. Average stalks carried 2 branches plus spur. If this temperate-climate rebloomer goes on to rebloom in the colder zones, it will be a nice advancement in rebloomers.

SHEER FANTASY (Lauer 2001) is a pretty color combo, with rose-pink standards which gently transfix into lavender falls infused with pink. Thick brick orange beards pull the colors together. Very artistic, with mostly good stalks to support the beauty. SOTTO VOCE (Hager-DuBose 2000) reminds me of 'Chasing Rainbows' (Hager) in color presentation, but with softer, perhaps clearer colors, with not so dramatic, gentler ruffling. Standards are light pink with lavender influences. Falls are more lilac than the orchid of 'Chasing Rainbows' and have a most definite suggestion of blue underlaying the color. Beards are also lilac, orange in the heart of the flower.

A trio of bicolors from Mid-America Garden deserves mention. Each is unique and distinctive in its own style. BLUSH OF COLOR (Black 2003) is cleverly named, with white standards flushed pale lilac and orchid, and then lavender-orchid falls, slightly deeper at the edges, mixed in with gently waved ruffling. The "blush" is an intensification of orchid, approaching rose, in the very center of the falls, almost in the style of the I. balkana introductions several years ago from Joe Ghio, such as 'Lineup'. Very distinctive, but in a soft way.

KIND HEARTED (T. Johnson 2002) is one of the most unusual bicolors on the market. Not just another pink/lavender combo, the entire flower has a glorious "mink" finish overlaid which shroud the flower in mystery. The "opaque" look is a nice change of pace from the typical diamond dusting you usually see in this color combination. Burnt orange beards are the finishing touch. PORTFOLIO (T. Johnson 2003) continues the tradition of bicolors begun by Melba Hamblen, a modern version of its parent, the great (but overlooked) 'Enchanting' (Hamblen). It is the total opposite end of the spectrum, in no way subtle. Standards are mauve-orchid. The falls are harmonious in a deep rich fuchsia-orchid, complete with burnt orange/red beards. Look closely and you'll find a fine edging of deepest rose, more evident in full sun. It is tall and grand (stalks right at 4' tall on established plantings), carrying outstanding branching. If you want to take it to the show, you had better hope for an early season - it is a late bloomer, as was 'Enchanting'.

**IDOL** (Ghio 1999) is a smashing, bold bicolor whose color screams across the garden. Standards are rich orange with a golden undertone. Falls are brilliant claret wine, full, smooth at the hafts, and contrasted with burnt orange beards. It produces very nicely-branched stalks, and has strong, consistent plant habits.

**NAPLES** (T. Johnson 2001) is similar, but coming from plicata breeding, with the colorful ‘Film Festival’ (Keppel) being the pod parent. Standards are medium buff-apricot, intensely flushed violet in the base of the midribs. Falls are a luxurious lustrous violet with cherry undertones, complete with an interesting narrow band of deep pink on the edges and bright orange beards. WOW stalks - it will dazzle ‘em on the show bench!

**MASTERY** (Blyth 2001) is a smart looking variegata with medium chestnut brown standards and deep red-brown falls with a distinctive band of the standards’ color. Deep gold beards are in harmony. It carries a velvet texture which adds to the suave look of the flower. **SERGEANT PRESTON** (Chapman 2000) is an unusually colored variegata, with deep tan (not brown) standards over rich, lustrous violet-purple falls with a distinct, precise band,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” to  $\frac{3}{8}$ ” wide, in brown. Purple beards. The closest thing in color might be the bicolor ‘Jurassic Park’ (Lauer), but with more harmonious colors, better form, and much better substance.

**CLASSICS:** **ACCENT** (Buss 1953); **CAMELOT WINE** (Powell 1972), **LOUD MUSIC** (Muhlestein 1971); **MELODRAMA** (Cook 1956).

**EMMA COOK PATTERN:** With this edition of Contemporary Views, I have added a new color category to separately review the fine work being done by several hybridizers currently in the resurgence in popularity of the pattern first seen in the variety ‘Emma Cook’ (Cook 1959). That is, light colored standards carry the same color, or a contrasting pastel color, into the falls, but then there is an intensification of color at the edges of the falls, not as a plicata pattern, but rather a band, stain, or wash, sometimes very narrow and discreet, sometimes wide and bold.

**BOLD VISION** (Kerr 2000) is from the same hybridizer which gave us another Emma Cook type, ‘Queen’s Circle’, but the pattern is the only thing that is similar. Color combination, instead, is rich yellow standards and falls, then precisely banded in bold brown-red. Yellow beards blend in to the base color. A nice advancement over an earlier Emma Cook type introduction from Fred, ‘Dear Jean’, with richer color and more elegant banding. It is finally receiving the recognition it deserves. The fact that **PERFECT UNION** (Schreiner 2001) has received virtually no attention (and certainly no AIS awards) is baffling. This moderately sized, tightly formed flower is a glistening white with a distinct band in orchid-blue in the falls and yellow beards. Stalk after stalk is outstanding, inheriting its beautiful spacing and consistency from its pollen parent, ‘Conjuration’ (Byers).

**FUTURISTE** (Cayeux 2002), from France, is a pure white with an intense wide border in the falls of bold indigo blue to violet. White beards tipped yellow blend into the primary coloring. The Emma Cook border is presented in a irregular, “bleeding” manner, very captivating and creative. Just the opposite in effect is **LA MEIJE** (Cayeux 2001), a glistening white with banding in baby blue so soft and subtle you may have to adjust the bifocals to capture the edge, almost a blush. Broad rounded form with elegant ruffling. The beards are contrasting in orange, like a flicker of fire in the midst.

### **POTPOURRI:**

**RIDE THE TIGER** (Lauer 2002) is so mixed up I didn’t know where to put it, so I threw it in the pot(pourri). The bottom line is that it is a very nice attempt at a green with deep blue beards! The color, upon close inspection, is a soft yellow ecru, with infusions of lavender and silvery-white. The beards are deep lavender, having the appearance of blue, especially on overcast days. It has excellent plant habits, vigorous and robust, with pleasing stalks with 3 branches.

**BRAVE FACE** (Ghio 2002) was one of the surprises of the Fresno Convention for me. I love it. It is basically a bicolor, with pink standards and rich magenta, rose, and violet blended falls. But then, a splendid pink sunburst pattern explodes from the red beards, so artistic and dramatic they could never be confused with old-fashioned haft marks. It is a child of one of Joe's most famous recent introductions, 'Starring', and inherited many of its fine traits. **ORIGINAL ART** (Ghio 2003) is a gregarious medley of colors, with the standards and falls a bright sherbet orange, and the falls heavily edged in varying degrees of electric violet, airbrushing towards the orange in the heart of the flower under thick bright orange beards. The whole flower is shot with neon. Very impressive, and you definitely cannot miss it! Stunning!

OK, you cross two oranges and what do you get, duh, orange, right? Not so this time. **PLEASANT SURPRISE** (Hager-Cooley's 2001) has rich plum-violet standards contrasted with deep brown falls, interrupted with thick, bushed bright tangerine beards. A unique coloring which holds well throughout the life of the flower, refusing to burn or wash out. Form is wide and simple, with light ruffling. Stalks carry 4 branches, double and even triple socketed, well space, with good staggering of bloom sequence. **TAUGHT BY MASTERS** (Ernst 2002) is a dark top, with violet-purple standards, lighter in the midrib, and then falls in creamy peach, slightly deeper at the shoulders, and sporting tangerine-orange beards. What makes this one different from others are the market is its chiffon texture (instead of satiny) and finish, elegantly waved versus ruffled. The overall form gives a "looser" appearance than most of the dark-tops, but very attractive.

**CLASSICS:** **COLOR CARNIVAL** (DeForest 1949); **HOLD THAT TIGER** (Lauck 1958); **ROYAL TAPESTRY** (Schreiner 1964).

### **COLOR BREAKERS:**

**Medians:** **AMUSING** (Black 2004) is a wide, lightly ruffled apricot-orange SDB with random grape-purple flecks (measles?) all over, with a heavier concentration around hot thick deep orange beards. There might be some debate as to whether this is really a color breaker. I place it in this category because the amount of flecking is variable, as is the intensity of color of the foreign color. **RASPBERRY SILK** (Spoon 2000) is a well-proportioned BB, with the color breaking clean and artistic in raspberry and cranberry streaks on pink lemonade, brighter and prettier than most of the others currently on the market. Stalks were well branched, with 2-3 branches. Nicely formed flowers. Most respectable plant habits, with proportionately thinner foliage but healthy and of good increase. It remained in class in all features in several gardens, including a couple of convention gardens where everything was a bit too "pumped up".

A trio of BB's from Brad Kasperek were noteworthy. **ANACONDA LOVE** (Kasperek 1999) has intensity and clarity of color in the striations which are bolder and more spectacular than most of the others. A light pink base color in the standards is generous splashed with violet. Then the falls are almost like an inversion of the standards, with red-violet base color, more heavily washed, splashed, streaked, and striated with silvery white and pink. A notable improvement in the growth department also. Its primary fault is, although the stalks are usually within the height specifications for a BB, the flower size is sometimes too large. **CONGO BONGO** (Kasperek 2001) is one of my favorites, although it has proven to be very inconsistent in its coloring from one garden to another, impacted by cultural conditions, temperatures, and the amount of moisture sustained during bloom season. When it's right, it is stunning. Deep golden-bronze standards have no color breaking. Then, in contrast, deep chocolate to brick red falls have predominant yellow streaking throughout. It is a different look, and very attractive. It has graceful S-curved stalks with 2 branches. **EMU ZING** (Kasperek 1997), to me, is an updated version of the famous/infamous 'Baboon Bottom' (Kasperek), and at least the name is certainly less controversial! The tone of pink in the base is perhaps a bit deeper, and clearer, with brighter ruby and pink striations taking turns all up and down the flower, with more activity occurring in the falls. It has a tighter, more compact look to the flower than B.B., with similar plant habits.

**Tall Bearded**: On down the row at the zoo, Brad had several other TB color breakers which merit a mention here too. Three sister seedlings from the cross 'Nigerian Raspberry' (Kasperek) by 'Isn't This Something' (Ensminger) made the final cut for introduction; all are unique, all are worthy. LACY LYNX (Kasperek 2002) is a light to medium pink with deeper splashes of violet and lighter streaking in pale pink, white, and silver. It is the first color breaker I am aware of with a significant amount of lace. Personally, I don't care for the look of lace on color breakers, but it is different and distinctive. Growth habits are especially good, coming from two of the best growers in color breakers. SQUID SQUIRT (Kasperek 2002) has a deeper pink base color and without the lace. The squid is content to display just the darker violet streaking throughout the flower, without the lighter streaking found in its lacy sis.

**SALAMANDER SAL** (Kasperek 2002) is a much softer version of the dynamic duo above, a soft salmon-pink with discreet streaks in silvery-white. Bright medium orange flowers add a touch of pizzazz to the effect. From 'Nigerian Raspberry', it also displays some lace, but not as heavily applied as 'Lacy Lynx'. And then MAGDALENA LOUISA (Kasperek 2003) is probably the most sophisticated of the Kasperek releases, and the one he chose to name for his mother. It is a medium pink with artistic streaking in silvery-white, with the best form and presentation of the lot. No screeching zoo critters with this one, just understated elegance and simplicity.

And last but not least, JUMPIN JACK FLASH (J. Painter 2004) is an exciting new color breaker in the style of 'Batik' (Ensminger), with white streaks and splashes against glossy deep pansy violet. The flowers are large and wide. A check of the parentage reveals the intense color saturation - the pollen parent is a Keith Keppel seedling from his black plicata line. Grow habits were quite strong, with husky plants with moderate increase, a blessed respite from the finicky nature of some of its predecessors.

**CLASSICS:** DOODLE STRUDEL (Ensminger 1977); HUMORESQUE (Keppel 1962).

### **SPACE AGERS:**

**Medians:** CONCERTINA (G. Sutton 2000, IB) is a subtle blending of pink and rose from the SDB super-parent, 'Chanted'. Contrasty orange beard give way to an exotic dark violet-blue horn. In my garden, the form appeared a bit loose and the substance suspect. It tends to be consistently tall and "rangy", a trait not uncommon in 'Chanted' children. But it is nonetheless an attractive Space Age median.

BERMUDA TRIANGLE (Cadd 2000) does exceed the BB class limits, frequently, with flowers too large and the stalks and foliage a bit too tall. However, I have also seen it when it maintained proper restrictions. All this put aside, it is an exciting, innovative iris. Standards are richest gold, flushed violet in the midribs. Falls start out with the same base color of gold, but then transform the a dazzling array of varying degrees of lavender to violet, represented as a flash in the center, then bleeding out towards the edges. Violet horns aren't the largest, but they are definitely there, and with consistency. CRYSTAL NUGGET (Cadd 2002), also a BB, is a pet favorite of mine, and has been consistently in class in at least 3 states where I have observed it. Tight, compact, heavy ruffled flowers are a diamond-dusted blend of warm white and creamy yellow, producing with consistent a short fuzzy horn in deeper yellow. Stalks are just incredible, more slender and graceful as a good BB stalk should be, with branching and bud count that just won't quit. A complete package.

**Tall Bearded**: I continue to be amazed at the clever names these hybridizers keep coming up with for their new Space Agers. HOOK (T. Johnson 2001) is the most clever of all. It is a simply colored, unassuming plum self with just a bit of chocolate in the shoulders. But then, gold beards end in a white hook, not a horn, not a spoon, not a flounce. It turns up like the end of a crochet needle, and does it every time! Killer stalks with the most incredible placement of branches, often opening multiple blossoms. Show junkies, rejoice!

ANNOUNCEMENT (Black 2002) is a favorite, a vivacious bicolor with pink standards, lavender falls, and huge flounces so heavily ruffled they almost look like extra standards instead. It has a satin finish that is most appealing. It will occasionally throw a distorted bloom, coming out of the lower branches, but this is the exception, not the norm. The falls are horizontal, with the flounces rising from the base. HONK YOUR HORN (Black 2001) is a giant, with tall, Paul Bunyan stalks, well built, with huge flowers that look like a 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner) - a parent - with bold deep blue horns. The graduation of tones from the deepness of

the centers of the petals to the silvery-white edging is even more dramatic than its parent. Whopper plants are in proportion with the flower size and stalk height.

**AIRFORCE ONE** (Sutton 2002) was impressive in several gardens at the Fresno Convention, including the home garden. It has pale blue standards with deeper wisteria blue falls, completed with wisteria blue flounces shooting straight up from the falls, which are consistent and well-developed. Technically I suppose it would be a bitone, but the impression was that of a blue amoena. Quite tall, with thick, strong stalks, with branching that was consistently good to outstanding in several convention gardens. **FIMBRIATED SPACE** (Sutton 1999) is an unusual manifestation of the Space Age appendages, a pure white with beards that either develop into flounces or feathered, irregular (fimbriated) spoons. Form is very simple, standards are open but hold up acceptably, allowing the viewer to get a better look at the artistic display of appendages. Stalks are quite good, although the bottom branch sometimes comes up a bit too high on the stalk. **HEARTBREAK HOTEL** (Sutton 1998) was the most consistent of several Sutton Space Age releases at the Fresno Convention, looking exceptional in several gardens. Clean, complementary colors, with standards a salmon-pink, the falls a deep lavender, contrasted with red beards which produce impressive horns which come about nearly an inch from the falls. It is more refined and richer in color than its parent, 'Sweet Musette' (Schreiner), picking up the quality traits of its mother, including outstanding plant habits and faithfully consistent show stalks, well spaced with 2 to 3 branches plus spur.

**HOLY FIRE** (Sutton 2000) is a nice advancement in red-bearded white Space Agers. There just aren't many on the market yet. It is a pure white with decent form, with only a touch of yellow in the shoulders. Bold contrast occurs with bright red beards which eventually give way to white horns. Stalk strength may be suspect; however, I haven't evaluated it yet on a fully established clump. **MIDNIGHT THUNDER** (Sutton 2001) is also an advancement in Space Age blacks, another color for which progress has been virtually nonexistent, until now. A deep near-black from the blue side, it has purple horns rising from the falls. The consistency of production of appendages carried through to the last blooms on the stalk, a trait not all Space Agers possess. And of note, the falls are smooth at the hafts, the primary advancement of this variety. It has the lustrous, silken finish of its parent, 'Hello Darkness' (Schreiner). Its one major fault is the weakness of the stalks. Although well-branched, they are willowy and have trouble staying up. I'll stake it - and cross it with a black that does have stronger stalks.

**SUNSET POINT** (Sutton 2002) is orange, with the falls a tone lighter than the standards, then edged in the primary depth of color. Thick orange beards carry small but consistent horns. It has wide form, but with ruffling in the falls somewhat uneven. Wonderful stalks carry 3 branches plus bottom rebranching, with excellent timing of buds. **TROPICAL DELIGHT** (Sutton 2002), from 'Heartbreak Hotel' (Sutton) is a colorful bicolor, with amber-pink blended standards and medium lavender falls. Tangerine beards produce an exotic deeper lavender-violet spoon. It was starting a second wave of bloom stalks, as the primary stalks were coming to an end, greatly extending the season of bloom for the variety.

**BENEATH MY WINGS** (Meininger 2005) is a supremely elegant blue amoena, with purest white standards flushed ever so slightly with a soft greyed blue in the midribs. The falls have a lavender undertone to them, and then a distinct edging in near-white. Appendages are fully developed in lavender-blue, either as spoons or even flounces. The stalks carry formal candelabra branching, but in some gardens only carried 2 branches - needed 1 more branch and 2 more buds. **JUMP FOR JOY** (Hager 1999) is similar to another pink Space Ager from Ben Hager, 'Corps de Ballet', but with more peach in its makeup. Beards are more tangerine than contrasting violet, and tend to produce horns instead of flounces. 'Jump For Joy' produces stalks at a more sensible height, with branching not so erratic.

**TRILLION** (Bessette 2000) was a deeper, richer color than I was expecting, and brought back memories of the variegata, 'Gala Madrid' (Peterson), except adorned with horns. Golden yellow standards, ruby red falls with some infusions of orchid. It has wide form with good color saturation which held up well in the heat. Magnificent stalks, with 3 branches, double socketed, with good timing of the buds. Decent growth habits.

**COMET CONNIE** (Burseen 2003) is an oddly beautiful affair, basically a warm white (approaching ivory) with a subtle lavender flush in only the falls. Orange beards transform into long, extravagant lavender spoons. In some gardens, it had smaller flowers and shorter stalks - might've made a good Border Bearded. But don't tell Tom Burseen that - he is a die-hard **TB** fan! **KINGDOM COME** (Burseen 2002) is an attractive reverse yellow amoena, with burnished yellow standards (not muddy) over taffeta-textured white falls with a distinctive band in the color of the standards, more golden yellow in the hafts. Gold beards turn into well-

developed gold spoons. Pleasing, heavy ruffling. IN A HEARTBEAT (Christopherson 2002) is colored in the style of the Progenitor of Space Age irises, 'Sky Hooks' (Osborne), but with brighter, cleaner colors. It has light yellow standards, a bit lighter in the falls with deeper yellow shoulders. Yellow beards yield to purple horns with proceed to form yellow flounces. Stalks are tall -- much taller than the registered 3' - and like its parent, 'Triple Whammy' (Hager) may on occasion appreciate a little help from your friendly bamboo stake.

CLASSICS: HORNED FLARE (Austin 1963), MIZ LIB (Osborne 1974), SPOONED LACE (Austin 1963).

## MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

### MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

In general, the MTB's in my garden have appeared, as a class, more susceptible to damage from extended periods of heat and drought, as we experienced in central Oklahoma the past 3 summers. Some varieties went dormant and never "came back" when the autumn rains commenced, while other plants started rebounding from the punishing heat and dryness. For fear of bacterial soft rot, in the past, I have rarely watered my bearded irises during these periods. I have come to the conclusion that MTB's, more than any other class, perhaps, must be sustained, and judiciously watered, if I want to see a good representation of bloom the next season.

Many considered the 1993 Median Convention in Oklahoma City ("Median Spree in '93") as Marky Smith's "coming out party", with the debut of her quality SDB's, 'Firestorm' and 'Gemstar'. The same can be said for Stephanie Markham and her MTB work as seen in both the Fresno National and Portland Median Conventions in 2004. When all the votes had been counted at the Portland Convention, her varieties had captured Best MTB and both runnersup!

DAEMON IMP (Markham 2004) is a suave new dark beauty of intense color saturation, with dark violet standards and black velvet falls with distinctive white striations radiating from the hafts. (When I think they are a distraction, I call them haft marks; when they add character, I call them striations!) Stalks were inconsistent, with some with good branching and bud count. Foliage was perfect, smaller in height and thinner in nature, as a good MTB should. The whole clump had excellent proportions.

DANCING LILACS (Markham 2002) consistently displayed magnificent clumps, floriferous, with excellent branching, but with placement of stalks within the clump so as not to interfere with each other. It presents itself in soft orchid-lilac, with white falls widely edged in the standards' color (thus the name). Flowers are very dainty and compact, and there are plenty of them. THINK SPRING (Markham 2003) is classic simplicity, nicely shaped flowers in orchid-lavender with an underglow of pink. It produces beautiful stalks, with the proper height and thickness. Its clarity of color is its calling card.

**LARRY'S GIRL** (Markham 2002), First Runnerup in Portland, not only looked good there, but was in full bloom in several gardens in Fresno. It is a soft blue-lavender plicata on a white base, with the plicating displayed with sanding, dots, and then stitching on the edges. Tight, tidy flowers. It inherited the impeccable stalk production, branching, and plant habits of its highest caliber parents, 'Astra Girl' (Varner) and 'Rosemary's Dream' (Dunderman). It consistently carried 3 branches, double socketed, with beautiful spacing. **SKY TRACERY** (Markham 2003) is similar in style to 'Larry's Girl', but with more blue in its composition without the lavender, and with ever better form and finish. It is a tight, sophisticated, neat plicata pattern in soft blue, with stitching and sanding. Form is notably better than your usual diploid MTB. It was an extremely heavy bloomer in some gardens, but compensates by producing more than its share of increases each year. Pure class. In my opinion, this is probably the best of the lot, of the MTB's from Stephanie reviewed this year.

**BEN A FACTOR** (R. Miller 2000), bred by Lynda Miller's husband, Roger, is a wonderful new addition to the limited playing field of tetraploid MTB's. An unusual, attractive color combination, new to tet MTB's: Standards are lemon yellow, which continues into the style arms. Then, falls are contrasted with a remarkably clean orchid-pink, somewhat muted in tones but still a nice contrast. Where MTB tets tend to "act up" on a hybridizer (usually the year of introduction, but of course), having two sets of critical eyes in the family has helped ensure that this one is in class, and worthy. **RAVE REVIEW** (Craig 1992) is an outstanding advancement in tet MTB's, from *I. aphylla* breeding, giving us a new color to work with, in an orchid-rose with bright pink to tangerine beards. Form is most acceptable, and substance is outstanding. The clarity of color is the key here. Its child, **SCANDALOUS** (Craig 2001) is a clean shade of bright but deep lavender, contrasted with bright tangerine beards. The color effect is different and less rose than its parent. It has nice proportions, and within the MTB requirements of the class. **NIGHT SPIRIT** (Craig 2002) is a favorite, again from *I. aphylla* breeding, but this time in a solid deep violet, approaching black. It carries a lustrous finish, nice form, and outstanding substance. The branching is memorable.

**PETIT LION** (Baumunk 2001) was actually registered and introduced as a species, an *I. variegata* coming from SIGNA seed, but I'm reviewing it in this class. The basic color ensemble is light yellow standards atop white falls. But in the standards you'll find dotting and striations of purple. In the falls, the same style, but with much more intensity and deeper color in the veining. Charming! **BACH TOCCATA** (Baumunk 2005) is a cute new one, carrying the broken patterning of the old historic, 'Kaleidoscope'. Standards are light yellow, mostly solid in color. Then pale yellow falls have a broken plicata patterning in maroon throughout, each fall on each flower varying. Looking forward to seeing the sister, 'Bach Fugue' also, with a white base color instead of yellow. They will make nice companions.

**STEFFIE** (Fisher 1993) has somehow missed previous Contemporary Views reviews (I keep a database, and rarely ever critique a variety more than once, unless it should go on to win one of Contemporary Views' awards). High quality and personality - two things you're assured of when Ken Fisher makes the final cut. Here we have a clear white, with the falls boldly spritzed with an intense violet/indigo blue spray pattern spewing from the cream beard. Impeccable plant habits, with tidy foliage, then proper thin, willowy stalks with sensational branching placement and bud count. **MASLON** (Spoon 2002) has bright yellow standards over red-violet falls with a hairline rim in white. The color seems to vary considerably with weather conditions, with the falls being much more violet in the Pacific Northwest, so different I initially didn't even recognize it. In warmer weather, it is a bright, cheerful color array, with exceptional vigor and good bloom/increase ratio in established clumps. Branching was inconsistent in several gardens, including here in Oklahoma, but it can produce a very nice stalk. **MISSUS BEE** (Bunnell 2003) is a nice send-off as the first introduction from this new hybridizer from Indiana. It has lilac-lavender standards over bright rose-red falls with a network on much deeper veining extending downward from bright yellow beards. The pattern is cute rather than offensive. And it is a bloomin' fool, pretty much at the top of the class, giving room for the placement of 3-4 branches up and down the stalk. It makes a stunning clump, with exceptional vigor and floriferousness.

**CHEESE AND WINE** (Dunderman-Varner 2003) is a rich, maroon-wine self, smooth at the hafts, with bright golden yellow beards approaching orange. It has beautiful rounded form and a velvet finish. Branching was somewhat inconsistent but acceptable, double socketed. Foliage was lean and graceful, in class. **CHERRY BERRY** (Willott 2003) is similar to ‘Cheese and Wine’, but has a clearer cherry red color and bright orange beards. The form wasn’t quite as rounded as ‘Cheese and Wine’, but still acceptable. It produced excellent stalks.

**CLASSICS:** **AGATE PASS** (Witt 1978); **LOUISE HOPPER** (Hager 1980, Tet), **NAVY WINGS** (Guild 1981).

### **BORDER BEARDED:**

**BORDER CONTROL** (Johnson 2000) was Thomas’ first release on the iris market, and sets the standard for quality which I knew, having tutored him during his AIS apprenticeship, he would demand of his work. Standards are white, enlivened with infusions of blue. The falls are a harmonious medium violet-blue, with soft, unobtrusive yellow beards. Wonderful form, gently ruffled, and consistently in class. Rather than the diamond-dusting you might expect with a blue amoena, it is endowed with a leathery substance that gives a whole new look to the iris. **TOUCH OF FROST** (L. Markham 2000) was very impressive at the Portland Convention, a white approached from the icy side, with suggestions of mint green infused to give an even fresher look. The flower size is in class, with fairly simply formed flowers with sufficient width. The stalks are in class, with magnificent branching (3 branches plus spur) perfectly placed in modified candelabra style on the stalk. Foliage was healthy, in class, and with acceptable vigor. It was just starting to bloom in Portland, and displayed the promise of making a beautiful clump. Another impressive BB which I just “discovered” in Portland was **SPY** (Craig ’99), a magnificent display of a well-defined band of blue-violet stitching on white plicata, with tight, tidy form and deep ruffles all over. This is one, like ‘Touch of Frost’, which is going to take many piles of horse manure to push out of class - it is solidly locked in at BB. It too carries 3 branches with beautiful placement on the stalk. Bright and clean - and in class!

**COLOR MY WORLD** (Black 2000) had its maiden bloom while Paul still lived in Oklahoma, and I’m pleased that it survived and went on to be introduced. A simple description would be a “modern ‘Color Carnival’ (DeForest 1949)”. But for those of you too young to know what that means: Bubble gum to salmon color, flushed orchid. The falls are slightly lighter, then irreverently striped and washed in orchid-violet, with the salmon finally winning out at the edge of the falls. Bright orange-red beards pull the colors of this raucous affair together. Gloriously gaudy! **GO FOR BOLD** (Black 2001) is another which, as a seedling, survived the trials and tribulation of gardening in central Oklahoma. The standards are a simple clean light to medium yellow. There ends any hint of tradition. The falls start with a white base, but only showing through as a “zonal” of sorts around bright yellow beards. Then add a chaotic splashing and streaking of bold violet over the rest of the falls, irregularly bleeding into the white. If anyone walks by this one unaffected, they’re either color blind or too heavily medicated! Here’s screamin’ at ya!

**DEAR DIARY** (Black 2002) is a very classy reverse yellow amoena in the style of the great classic Dykes Medalist, ‘Debby Rairdon’ (Kuntz) with medium yellow standards and white falls with a distinct ¼ band in the yellow of the standards, along with yellow beards to fit right in. It is a wonderful leathery texture to go with its impeccable substance and carrying power. Deep waxy ruffles also have a bit of lace mixed in. I have seen it go beyond the BB classification in stalk height and flower size, but then I have seen some convention gardens so over-fertilized to the point that SDB’s looked like small-flowered Tall Bearded! You must keep all this in perspective when evaluating BB’s, in particular.

Two BB’s from Sutton are among my current favorites. Both were under serious consideration for the L’Elegante Award category. **LACY DOLL** (Sutton 2001) is a ruffled and heavily laced sparkling lavender blue with a yellow beard tipped tangerine. The flower size is correct, and the form is tight and rounded, reminding me of my own BB from a few (several) years ago, ‘Soft Spoken’ (Dyer 1980), but in the shade of blue of the classic TB, ‘Charisma’ (Blocher). The lace is intense and evenly distributed throughout the flower. **PRINCESS BRIDE** (Sutton 2000) is a creamy white confection with soft creamy yellow blended in, amidst the voluptuous ruffles. A child of the great English TB, ‘Elizabeth Poldark’ (Nichol), it inherited its superb plant habits, vigor, and magnificent branching, with 3 branches, often opening 3 at once, with sufficient backup buds to extend its life if the grower can’t bear to cut it and take it to the show.

TWILIGHT PASSAGE (T. Aitken 1998) is well named, a mysterious combination of orchid and pink, but the whole flower looks as though it encased in smoke, moody and most appealing. Bright tangerine beards snaps you back into reality. In the 2 gardens and at the 1 show where I observed it this year, it appeared to be consistent in its stalk height and flower size. An average grower and increaser, but certainly not anemic or suspect. INDIGO DOLL (Lankow-Aitken 1997) is a compact jewel which I somehow missed in its first years of release. A sultry neglecta, with light blue standards atop the richest indigo blue falls, contrasted dramatically with a bold bushy red beard. CLASSIC NAVY (Lankow-Aitken 1999) is a good representation of the critical standards Carol Lankow had in the evaluation of her creations. Indeed, it is a classic navy blue, lustrous and deep with absolutely no other color present. It has tight, rounded form, flawless, with deep rippling for ruffles. Stalks are in class and well branched, with 3 to 4 branches a common occurrence. I am of the opinion that this is one of those rare BB's which will truly stay in class, no matter how carried away the gardener gets with the fertilizer!

I finally got to see LITTLE MARY SUNSHINE (E. Roderick 1990) and can understand and appreciate the wellspring of support it has garnered in recent years. What a cutie! A clean pert light yellow, appearing to be more of a lemon yellow to me. Falls are a diamond-dusted pure white with the yellow blended in at the shoulders and on the edges. Superb stalks, with 2 and sometimes 3 well-spaced branches distanced properly up the stalk. Makes a tidy, clean clump. COUNTRY LACE (F. Kerr 1998) is an unusual shade of copper (the hybridizer describes it as reddish-brown), set off with tangerine beards. The kicker is a generous dose of ruffling and even lace. I've seen it right at the top of the class, perhaps occasionally exceeding it in height, but still a worthy and fun BB.

DESIGN IN CANTALOUPE (D. Niswonger 2001) is a continuation in Dave's quest for a pure orange amoena. Clean white standards have but a brushstroke of pink in the midribs. Falls are a lovely shade of cantaloupe orange, showing a suggestion of a white wire rim around them. Elegantly ruffled, tidy and in class, with a satin sheen that sets it apart from others in this style. WAITING FOR OCTOBER (Lauer 2003) is a nicely ruffled permission orange amoena, with a fair amount of yellow blended in. Flower size appeared to be in class; however, the stalks, although reasonably thin, often got too tall - way too tall. Nonetheless, a pretty flower with excellent color saturation and contrast between the standards and falls. A nice advancement in rebloomers.

CLASSICS: MAYNARD (Knopf 1969); MOLTEN GLASS (Marsh 1969); PUPPET SHOW (Moldovan 1969); SHIRLEY SPURR (Gatty 1967).

### INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:

END ZONE (Stahly 2002) - zowie! -- lived up to its advanced billing in every way, and has quickly become one of my favorite IB's today. It is a luxurious deepest red-black colored similar to the classic TB, 'Credo' (Babson), and then even deeper in the falls, with nearly jet-black beards. A vibrant color display. Its glossy texture permits it to have outstanding carrying power in the garden. Stalks carried 2 branches, 5 buds. BANSHEE (M. Smith 2005) is a deep red-black bitone, with the falls approaching full black, offset with thick brilliant burnt orange beards. It has 'Minidragon' (M. Smith, SDB) in its background and you can sure tell it. The colors are deep and rich, with the contrast between the beards and the principal colors very stunning. A row of it, lined out at Aitkens', awaiting introduction, was memorable.

SOFTLY (Tasco 2003) made an impressive show at the Portland Median Convention, with clump strength bloom in more than one garden. A sister to the famous 'Miss Mauve' (Tasco 2000, which won Best IB at this convention), it is a softer version, more in taffeta pink tones infused with light mauve, instead of the deeper, richer mauve coloring of 'Miss Mauve'. It has the same outstanding show stalks (3 branches, often opening 2 at once) and inherited excellent plant habits from its parent, 'Chanted' (Blyth, SDB). PINK COTTON CANDY (D. Niswonger 2000) is a fun, cotton candy pink, also from 'Chanted'. Beards are tangerine based, but have a distinctive blue in the upper part. This blue continues under the beard in a blue chevron. Has all the vigor and dependability of 'Chanted'. GALWAY (Keppel 1997) is a pleasant medley of colors in pastels, from pink in the standards, flushed orchid in the midribs, to a smooth, silky blending of peach (the primary color), pink, soft yellow, and a dab of orchid mixed in. Plentiful ruffling sets the flower in motion. Prerequisites to making the cut with this hybridizer: The plant habits are outstanding, vigorous, with plenty of increase and generous stalk production, sturdy stalks with proper placement of branches, and good bud count.

IN A FLASH (Black 2001) is another product of the 'Tom Johnson' (Black, TB) breeding in IB's. It is a dark purple self, with an underglow of red that adds distinction. In the falls, the intensity of the color decreases somewhat towards the edges, suggesting a halo effect. Contrast supreme with bright carrot beards. Form is more of the cookie cutter, neat, round look I disavowed above (!). Each of these introductions from 'Tom Johnson' (Black) breeding has picked up the incredible branching and bud count of its TB parent. It has an especially long season of bloom, lasting well into peak TB season. DEVIL MAY CARE (Black 2000) continues a line of bold, distinctive dark IB's which Paul has released recently. This late-blooming addition to the median garden is a strange soot-black, then blasted with a shocking thick orange beard, like embers aglow. Drama! The texture is from velvet, versus the shellac of what you usually see in dark ones - this just intensifies the soot effect. 'Devil May Care' doesn't have the wide rounded body parts we have grown accustomed to. However, don't know about you, but I threw away the cookie cutter years ago. My beardless training has taught me that many forms and styles are acceptable, if they are architecturally sound and pleasing to the eye. This one qualifies.

CITIZEN'S BAND (Keppel 2001) is a cute two-tone plicata, with blue standards with just a bit of white peeking through, followed by clear white falls precisely banded in royal violet. Yes, another child of the great 'Chubby Cheeks' (Black), this time as the daddy. For any plicata, but especially a violet-blue on white IB plicata, to make it to the introductions page of the Plicata King, it must be special. The distinctiveness and personality of this one are its strongest assets. Its one fault is that it has a propensity for throwing extra petals, usually 4 falls. So if you're getting ready to cut that gorgeous show stalk for the show this weekend, count its body parts first! REDONDO (Keppel 2000) is a rich plicata in wine on warm white, in the style of the great classic TB, 'High Life' (Schreiner), with a bit more brown in the stitching. Typical with any of Keith's releases, the form is outstanding, the plant habits healthy - a very good garden iris.

RUBY SLIPPERS (Keppel 2002) is a dazzling ruby red, slighter deeper in the falls, with even deeper, thick, bushy beards. It produces wonderful stalks, with 3 branches, double socketed. The flower color is richly saturated, it has good form, although it will sometimes have a slight twist in it, not so much as to be a distraction from the overall shape. The beards are stunning. SANGRIA (Keppel 2003), a sister to 'Ruby Slippers', approaches red from the burgundy side, with falls more nearly black, and a beard which is deep bronze instead of red-orange beards. The whole appears to be covered in a haze of black smoke, very intriguing and sultry.

KAHUNA (M. Smith 2002), in Fresno, had begun a whole new second wave of bloomstalks, with the primary stalks, occurring during the usual IB season, finished. An unusual offspring also with 'Minidragon' is its background, it wound up being an odd russet infiltrated with chestnut brown, lighter in the falls and then producing the suggestion of a mahogany spot pattern and shoulders even deeper than the standards. Brownish-orange beards to bright gold beards are added to the mix. OBLIVION (M. Smith 2003) is a shocking black luminata, with a glimmer of light in the heart of the flower surviving an intense study in jet black. Rich texture with a reverberating finish. The form is wide and rounded, going all the way back to the classic form passed on by the great 'Chubby Cheeks' (Black, SDB). And of course, excellent branching and bud count.

CLASSICS: APACHE WARRIOR (A. Brown 1972); BLESSED AGAIN (Jones 1976); BOY WONDER (Ghio 1977); FANTASY WORLD (O. Brown 1975).

## STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:

**ATTACK CAT** (Black 2004) is a nice variation on the traditional violet-on-white plicata pattern in SDB's. White standards are boldly stitched in deepest violet, complete with a belly stripe running up the midrib. Falls are a stark, cold white, finely stitched in the lower portions of the falls, gradually intensifying in degree and depth of color the closer you get to the shoulders. It's the style arms, though, that shoot the flower into orbit - solid rich violet, approaching black! Duck! **BALLISTIC** (Black 2002) is a riotous affair, an exotic burgundy-brown on yellow plicata, with much more burgundy in its makeup than the brown. The degree of yellow coming through in the standards adds to the intensity of the color presentation (whereas many plicatas today are almost totally saturated in the standards with the color of the stitching). To complete the package, how about a bold, burgundy belly stripe, unashamed, right down the middle of the falls! Outstanding plant habits, inherited from a long line of careful selection in Paul's 'Chubby Cheeks' and luminata bloodlines.

**DINKY DOODLE** (Black 2001), after reviewing the above, seems introverted, but in its own way makes just as powerful a statement in the median garden. It is a dainty white plicata, with flower size and height at the lower end of the class, with a reserved amount of violet stitching tattooed around the beards and outward. Tight rounded flowers with just enough ruffling, but not so much as to spoil the presentation of the pattern. **WILD HAIR** (Black 1999) is an odd progeny of a very complex luminata gene pool Paul has developed over the years. Very late blooming in the season, it is a deep black from the red side, with pearlescent orchid peering from the heart of the flower, reminding you that it is a luminata. Flowers have tended to be a bit large, but it does have taller stalks (at the top range of the class) which helps compensate.

**BABY SOFT** (Black 2004) is a pastel affair with light pink standards, somewhat flushed with mauve. Falls are considerably lighter, a baby pink, with a hint of a rim in the depth of color of the standards, and even slightly deeper yet in the shoulders. Baby blue beards complete the story. Decent, wide form with light ruffling. **CANDLE** (Black 2002) is a magnificent cream with infusions of yellow, mostly concentrated in the standards. The yellow is more intense in Oklahoma than in the Pacific Northwest. The form is simply impeccable, with wide falls with gentle ruffling. What sets this apart is its texture - certainly well named, it has a waxen texture throughout the flower, giving a very sophisticated look.

**BOAST** (Black 2002) makes a stunning clump. Standards are full yellow, open and well held. Horizontal falls are a very masculine medium brown (not red), with a yellow edge, yellow beards, and then a yellow chevron right below the beard. Holds its color well. **BRIGHT NOTE** (Black 2004) is a pert medium yellow, a total self, with distinctive medium blue beards. It is reminiscent of a modern version of 'Stockholm' (Warburton), slightly deeper all over. It is nothing like the Pick of the Litter winner, 'Experiment', and looks like a "calmed-down" version in more gentle presentation of colors. Broad form only lightly waved, a nice change from all the ruffles and frills. **POOKIE** (Black 2003) is a comedic blend of colors, with the standards an odd olive green, then blue falls with a mother-of-pearl glow to them, rudely interrupted with shocking, deep indigo blue beards, thick and imposing. It has tight rounded form, making tidy, compact clumps. **ZAP** (Black 2004) is a red-violet self with a velvet pile, starkly contrasted with a screaming, thick, bushy, deep yellow beard. They jump out at you! Plant habits bear watching; it appears to be a less rampant grower than some of the Mid-America releases.

Marky Smith has a trio of newer releases which exhibit the innovative work she is doing with orange plicatas in the SDB's. **HELMAN** (M. Smith 2002) is a lovely thing, a perky orange based plicata with a red-orange beard. Standards are almost solid in color, with just a suggestion of plicata markings in the base of the midribs. Falls are more of a cream, then edged in orange plicata markings, deepening to brownish plicata veining in the shoulders. It sends up a secondary wave of bloomstalks as the season progresses. Early stalks tend to be in the foliage, a defect which corrects itself with later bloomstalks. **INFANTA** (M. Smith 2003) is from associated breeding but manifests itself as a dainty orange glaciata, with glowing soft orange tints and a white beards. And then the most recent offering, **PILOT** (M. Smith 2004) is an extension of the orange plicata look of its parent, 'Helmsman', considerably deeper in overall color, with an odd smoked overlay, and less brown plicating showing through, mostly as light stitching and dotting in the heart of the flower. Deep thick orange beards add to the excitement.

**CIRCUS DRAGON** (B. Jones 2002) is an exciting color array with bright red-orange beards against a bright canary yellow. The falls carry an even deep tint of yellow in the heart of the flower (suggesting a spot

pattern), then lighten at the edges of the falls. The saturation is intense, the beards brilliant. Displays 1 branch, 3 buds. Growth rate is a bit slow, which throws off the bloom/increase ratio somewhat, in that it tends to bloom heavier than it should, for the amount of plants it produces. MURPHY'S LAW (B. Jones 2004) is a unique color combination. Difficult to describe, but basically has pale blue-white standards and then citron falls with a most definite appearance of green, all topped off with bright tangerine beards. An unusual, appealing color combination. Has excellent form and a nice sheen to the texture. Average growth habits.

COY MISTRESS (Baumunk 2005) is a broad, heavily ruffled plicata in purest white with a heavy band of the softest baby blue to silver plicating possible. To be so pastel, the diamond dusting dares you to overlook it! It shimmers in the sunlight. Tight, compact flowers, with stalks carrying 1 branch, 3 buds. At the opposite end of the spectrum, DEVIL BABY (Keppel 2005), seen at the Portland Median Convention under Seedling #98-42A, is a stunning jet black approached from the red side. It has a suave velvet pile which makes the coloring even more intense. It is as deeply saturated as 'Panther' (M. Smith), but 'Panther' approaches its darkness from the blue side. It has nice plant habits with a good bloom/increase ratio. Stalks carry the traditional 1 branch, 3 buds, well-timed.

IMPEACHED (Keppel 2000) is an orange child of Tweety Bird (Black 1992) with a totally different look than the oranges I've released from Tweety. It is a soft peachy-orange, somewhat infused with salmon, which is more predominant in cooler, wetter weather. It has the tight 'Tweety Bird' ruffling and wonderful form. It's hard to imagine, but NAVY RUFFLES (T. Johnson 2002) is also a child of 'Tweety Bird'. It is a stark, dark blue-purple, contrasted with distinct, thick white beards. Copious amount of ruffling, as the name suggests. I had envisioned in my mind's eye more of a navy blue than the purple, and perhaps it will be in other soils and weather conditions. Nonetheless, a wonderful addition to the darker color range in SDB's. TRUE NAVY (B. Jones 2001) is similar in color, except more of a blue than the violet-blue of 'Navy Ruffles'. A total self of navy blue, right down to the beards. Comes from a more traditional approach, inheriting the smoothness of color and the ruffling of its father, 'Bay Ruffles' (Warburton).

MAPLE MADNESS (Chapman 2000) is a unique color, truly shades of maple with orange undertoning and texture veining. Contrasting deep violet beards add a nice touch. Needs full sunlight to fully appreciate the rich coloring. Inherited its strong plant habits from its father, 'Chanted' (Blyth). ULTIMATE (T. Johnson 2003) is well named, because it surely is the epitome of the stunning yellow/red color combinations in the tradition of 'Jazzamatazz' (Blyth) and 'Radioactive' (Dyer). Bold, brilliant yellow standards are in stark contrast to richest full mahogany-red falls, adorned with a precise 3/8" band of the brilliant yellow of the standards. It screams at you from across the garden!

CLASSICS: GRACE NOTE (Hamblen 1965); JUST SO (Benson 1965); TWICE BLESSED (Dennis 1966); VELVET CAPER (Warburton 1964); VELVET TOUCH (Dennis 1966).

### ARILBREDS

I continue to praise the trailblazing Jonnye Rich did with arilbred-medians, and her 'Loudmouth' (1970) continues to be the standard of what is to be expected in a good arilbred-median. OTHMANI (Rich 1985) is a spectacular jet black, with only an undercurrent of red filtering through in the standards. The texture shines like a raven's wing. There are absolutely no other colors present, no veining, and just a suggestion of an even deeper black signal below deepest purple beards. It is intermediate in its height and flower size. OMAR'S STITCHERY (Boswell 2000, OGB) is another arilbred-median winner from Carl Boswell. At IB height and size of flower, it has softest lavender (approaching white) standards, delicately stitched in violet. The falls are more nearly white, then heavily etched in a delicate, deeper violet plicata pattern. It has outstanding vigor and health for a ½-bred. It reminds me of a scaled down version of 'Jonnye's Magic' (Rich-Whitely), with more delicate veining.

BYZANTINE ART (Baumunk 2001, OGB) is a dazzling carnival of colors with outstanding plant habits, healthy even in the cooler, damper climate of the Pacific Northwest. Standards are a smooth rich lavender with no other colors present. Then the falls are tan with a huge, bold signal pattern in glowing dark red. What makes it captivating is the color of the signal then begin bleeding outward, towards the edge of the falls. Tall and imposing, with strong stalks supporting large flowers. CHOCOLATE MINT (Tasco 1998, OGB) is also becoming well known for its health and adaptability in varying climates. Standards are light lavender, fading

even lighter as the flower ages. The falls are an unusual blending of chartreuse, buff, and tan, with an evocative deep brown (chocolate) signal. As with 'Byzantine Art', it is tall and strong, this time carrying 2 branches, very impressive for a half-bred.

A stalk of **SPIRIT OF CALEB** (McGrath 2002, OGB) in the Sutton Garden sent me into orbit. I don't believe I have ever witnessed a half-bred with 3 flowers open at once on a stalk! Well spaced at that. Obviously, it has very favorable branching and bud count. Pure white standards sit atop brilliant yellow falls which lighten at the edges. Then the falls sport huge deep brown signals, very imposing and evocative. The color appeared to be bleaching a bit in the heat of central California, but that won't keep me from acquiring and growing it. And of course, it will open 3 at once for me 3 days after the show! The magnificent stalks were not just an anomaly - a week later, in Portland, stalks there also carried 2 branches.

**WALKER ROSS** (Ross-Chapman 1998, OGB-) is a wonderful quarter-bred from Canada which reminds me of a modern version of the great 'Engraved' (Craig). The base color is cool white, but then has spokes of violet radiating from the centers of the standards and falls, out to the edges. The patterning covers the entire flower, instead of mimicking a plicata pattern, as 'Jonnye's Magic' (Rich-Whitely) does. This is from 'Spinning Wheel' (Nearpass), and it picked up the health and vigor of this classic TB.

**CLASSICS:** **BLACK JOPPA** (White 1954), **ENGRAVED** (Craig 1953), **JALLAH EFFENDI** (White 1952), **LADY MOHR** (Salbach 1943), **NELSON OF HILLY** (White 1941), **OYEZ** (White 1938).

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## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS - 2005/2006 Perry Dyer

This edition of Contemporary Views includes evaluations from the 2005 AIS National Convention in St. Louis, the 2006 Convention in Portland, Oregon, in addition to a review of some of the first-year bloom in convention gardens on tour for the 2007 Oklahoma City National Convention and bloom from my own garden too, of course. We were given a golden opportunity to observe irises in peak performance from near-perfect weather conditions (St. Louis) to cold, clammy overcast conditions (Portland and central Oklahoma).

### AWARD WINNERS

1. **CONTEMPORARY AWARD** -- to the Best New Iris seen (one introduced within the past 3 years of the date of this review): **ALL NIGHT LONG** (Duncan 2005) is a smashing new lacquer black, a child of the famous 'Hollywood Nights' (Duncan), and in my opinion, an improvement by light years. Gone are the striations at the hafts. The form is a more "finished" look, and the texture is glossy and luxurious. Ruffling is heavy and well positioned throughout the flower. Standards appear a touch smaller than the falls, yet the form is still a very attractive look, distinctive. Foliage is a beautiful deep blue-green, clean with excellent increase. The stalks and branching display the high-quality Schreiner bloodline of its pollen parent. Simply stunning on the show bench.

### Runnersup:

**PANTHER** (M. Smith 2004) is the most significant black SDB introduction since the release of 'Michael Paul' (W. Jones 1979). In many ways, it is very similar to 'All Night Long', scaled down to SDB size. Dramatic ruffling is juxtaposed against glossy patent leather petals, with the only contrast in color a blue-violet beard. An average grower which makes clean, disease-resistant plants. Stalks have 1 branch with 3 well-timed buds. A clump in full bloom in the garden is evocative.

**RAINY RIVER** (L. Painter 2005) is an intensely saturated flower, the best neglecta on the market, with medium blue standards atop inky blue-violet falls, polished off with a pleasing degree of ruffling throughout the flower and a beautiful sheen. The colors are sharp, there is excellent contrast in colors between the standards and falls, and the falls are mercifully devoid of annoying haft marks which have plagued so many of its predecessors. This talented new hybridizer from the Napa Valley of California has a keen eye for a quality iris and is obviously very discriminating in determining what makes the final cut from her seedling patch.

**BE MY BABY** (Black 2004) is a choice BB, a sinfully delicious shade of creamy pink with a chiffon texture that adds elegance to the flower. Deep, voluptuous, wavy ruffles on the compact flowers make the heart sing! Its finest feature, however, are the show stalks it consistently produces, easily carrying 4 branches and often some lower rebranching, adding up to a bud count of as much as 10 to 12 buds. Seeing multiple open blossoms (easily 3 and sometimes 4 at a time) is nothing unusual for this iris, with thin, graceful stalks that “give” in the breeze but never falter.

**ESCALATOR UP** (Richardson 2005) is an eloquent addition to the Emma Cook pattern, with huge flowers composed of softest pale yellow standards, creamy falls washed in blue, more intensified at the edges. Reminded me of a prettier ‘Stairway to Heaven’ (Lauer), with more color and clean contrast between the standards and falls. The substance is outstanding, with an impressive leathery texture. Stalks are thick and strong, carrying 3 branches, double sockets, with well-timed bloom sequence. Plants are husky and healthy with above average increase.

2. **L'ELEGANTE AWARD** -- to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen: **HYPNOTIC MELODY** (Innerst 2003) is quite simply one of the beautiful irises I have ever seen, and the denial of its due recognition in the AIS Awards System thusfar is puzzling and disturbing. A most difficult color to describe, it is a blending of pastels in creamy pewter with undertoning of pink and even subtle green. The ruffling is exquisite, deep and dramatic, yet never impedes its ability to open its flowers properly, fully, and without tearing or twisting. The substance is thick with texture as if carved from wax. Its healthy plant habits and exceptional stalks come from its pod parent, ‘Silverado’ (Schreiner).

#### Runnersup:

**ROYAL STERLING** (Keppel 2005) is well named, a masterpiece in sterling silver to palest lilac, with wide, magnificent form embellished with intense ruffling and a degree of lace. The shimmering flowers are notably larger than most other ‘Fogbound’ (Keppel) offspring, carried on tall stately show stalks with consistently exceptional branching.

**KONA WAVES** (Annand 2005) is a bicolor with yellow standards and violet-blue falls, in the tradition of Dykes Medalist ‘Edith Wolford’ (Hager), but not from EW breeding (instead, from another Dykes Medal winner from Schreiner, ‘Honky Tonk Blues’). A shorter TB, it has ripple ruffles which belie its name, deep and dramatic. The tones are moody, even somber in cooler weather, unique, a welcome addition to this limited color class. It was a lighter color overall in Missouri, but most attractive either way.

**CLOUDS OF GLORY** (Richardson 2005) is a genteel blue and white blend, in the style of ‘Cloud Ballet’ (Fort), but bigger, taller, and with improved plant habits. It makes a refreshing clump, a shimmering icy white heavily infused with crystalline sky blue throughout the flower. Branching appeared to be a bit close to the stalks, yet all the lower flowers opened properly.

**GENTLE KISS** (Christopherson 2004) is a sensuous blending of pastels in apricot, peach, buff, yellow and even rose-pink. To my eye, the overall effect is softest apricot, one of the most beautiful ever produced, graced with tight ruffling all the way around, standards and falls.

3. **9-1-1 AWARD** -- to the New Iris that is, in my opinion, the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break: **BLUEBEARD'S GHOST** (Black 2006) is the most important SDB release since the introduction of ‘Pele’ (Aitken 1993), and is the culmination of a quest of over 20 years for the elusive blue-bearded white. It is purest cold white, accented with startling deep indigo blue beards - no other colors present. The only suggestion of any other color is the subtle green veining which appears in cooler weather, which contributes

to the freshness of the flower. Plant habits are flawless, floriferous but with a good bloom/increase ratio. Patience and perseverance pay off, especially if you have talent, intuition, and vision.

**Runnersup:**

**REDROCK PRINCESS** (Witt 2006), an MTB, was the most impressive seedling seen (in any class) at the St. Louis Convention in 2005. It has medium brown standards, closed and ruffled. Rounded brick red falls have deeper veins at the base of the falls and pleasing white striations around gold beards. It consistently produced slender, flexuous stalks with 3 branches, with foliage proportionate to the dainty flowers. The colors are rich, the form exceptional, and the overall garden effect memorable.

**SOLAR FIRE** (Tasco 2003) is the best variegata Space Age iris released to date, possessing the modern form, smoothness of haft, and overall sophistication others have lacked. It has deep golden bronze standards, approximately the color of its pollen parent, 'Golden Panther' (Tasco), infused even deeper in the midribs. Falls are a very masculine oxblood red, with golden beards ending consistently in oxblood flounces. Magnificent show stalks for the show fanatic, with plenty of buds on those stalks for those gardeners who can't bear to cut them for the show!

Exceptional deep pink Space Agers have been as equally difficult to develop. **SPIRITS RISING** (L. Miller 2006), viewed as a first-year planting in the Will Rogers Garden Convention Garden for the upcoming 2007 AIS National Convention in Oklahoma City, was most impressive. Azalea pink flowers are fully saturated, with no other colors to adulterate the effect. Thick fuzzy deep pink beards end in horns which pop straight up to the sky.

**PARISIAN DAWN** (Keppel 2006), to me, is the most voluptuous and eloquent of many fine Emma Cook pattern irises on the market now. This sophisticated beauty has soft creamy apricot standards and falls, with the falls yielding to a well defined but subtle mauve-pink edge. Slightly deeper apricot texture veining over the falls add to the vitality of the flower. Thick orange-scarlet beards are like a maraschino cherry atop your favorite dessert. The standards are heavily ruffled but remain closed; the falls are so wide they touch at the hafts, with extravagant ruffling gracing the contrasted edging.

4. **SUN BELT AWARD** -- 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): **HEARTSTRING STRUMMER** (Ben Johnson 2001) has all the attributes one demands when considering an iris for the upper echelon of awards in the AIS Awards System. This sparkling, elegant blue amoena is imposing, in spite of its softer colors. Tall and stately, inheriting the height and magnificent branching of its Dykes Medalist parent, 'Conjuration' (Byers). Looking out over an expansive garden setting at the Smith-Giffin Garden on the Fresno Convention tour, it was literally head and shoulders above the crowd, majestic and strong. Plant habits are outstanding, without exception, and I gave it scrupulous critique in gardens here in Oklahoma, in Missouri (where, in its home region, it won the President's Cup at the St. Louis Convention), the hot, dry climate of central California, to the cold damp conditions of the Pacific Northwest. The refreshing colors are clear as the sky, the ruffling of the nearly-horizontal falls give the flowers permission to dance in the breeze. A clump of this masterpiece lifts the spirits. This new hybridizer from Springfield, MO should be proud--he has a jewel!

**Runnersup:** I continue to be impressed with **GOLDEN PANTHER** (Tasco 2000), back to the first time I saw it as a reselect at Superstition. It receives A+ ratings in every category - branching is consistent, with strong stalks displaying well-spaced modified candelabra branching; plants are healthy and vigorous with excellent increase; form is impeccable, rounded with a finished look to its ruffling. The true test, especially for this color range, is its sun-resistance. It never burns, even in the hot dry climate of Oklahoma or central California. It retains its clarity of color even in a wet spring, a significant accomplishment in this color class, when this type of weather conditions tend to "muddy up" the picture. It has been consistent in every part of the country it has appeared, a true testament to its worthiness for consideration of the Dykes Medal.

**SPOUTING HORN** (L. Johnson 2001) has displayed consistent high quality in all parts of the country, including my garden here in central Oklahoma. It is a deeper version of its pollen parent, 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner), a deep sea blue to violet, lightening at the edges as its parent does. Pulsating ruffles are deep, rippling throughout the flower. Tall and noble, it has magnificent show stalk branching on strong stems with 4 branches, stalks often opening 3 at once, with plenty of backup buds to ensure a proper length of season. Plants are a gorgeous deep blue green, disease-resistant, and vigorous, producing stunning clumps in the garden.

**DANDY CANDY** (Ernst 2001), in my opinion, is the finest iris this Oregon hybridizer has released to date. A confectionery delight in a rich dark-top, with medium purple standards and luscious bright peach falls, deeper at the shoulders around rich tangerine-orange beards. What you can't see in a varietal description is its magnificent texture, the falls displayed with a changeable silk effect with infiltration of the standards' color blended into the falls. It has been exceptional in every part of the country, with worthy mention of its plant habits and great stalks.

**VIENNA WALTZ** (Keppel 2000) is a luxurious presentation in rose-orchid with slightly deeper texture veins, then softened with an underglow of cream. A pleasing coral-pink beard completes the picture. Although a full sister to the highly awarded-pink, 'Happenstance' (Keppel), it has a totally different look, with both heavy ruffling and lace, but with the same quality plant habits and stalk production.

5. **DARK HORSE AWARD** -- to the variety introduced within the past 10 years or so that has been overlooked by AIS judges and deserved higher awards. **PURE AS GOLD** (Maryott 1993) reminds me of my own creation,

'Aztec Sun' (1982), with intense saturation of color and sun-resistance, refusing to burn even on the hottest of days. This variety is even deeper, more golden than full yellow. It is also a reliable rebloomer in many zones. A great iris all around.

Runnersup:

**WIND SPIRIT** (Blyth 1996) is an IB from Down Under that, had it been a part of the AIS Awards System, surely would have gone far. It is a delicate mauve-orchid, a tone deeper in the falls, with vibrant tangerine beards. What sets this beauty apart from others is what happens in the falls - it is electrified with infusions of metallic blue and violet, undertones in rose-pink, all brought together like shot silk or changeable taffeta. It literally glows in the garden, and makes a soul-soothing clump.

**O'SO PRETTY** (Evelyn Kegerise 1993) is a special lilac amoena, with white standards flushed pale lilac, medium lilac falls, transforming to near-white in the heart of the flower, gradually intensifying as you come to the edge of the falls. White beards are tipped lilac and do not distract from the overall effect. The texture is diamond-dusted, and it has an effervescence in its nature which is easy on the eyes.

**JENNIFER REBECCA** (Zurbrigg 1985) is a great, dependable rebloomer in old rose, with the standards a couple of tones lighter than the falls, then completed with a coral-shrimp beard. It has modern, wide form which many rebloomers from that genre lacked, thick substance to sustain the flowers, and an underglow that gives carrying power to the flower, clear across the garden.

**AZURE ICICLE** (Hamner 1993) was barely noticed when it was first released. With the resurgence in popularity of the Emma Cook pattern, some hybridizers (namely, Fred Kerr for one) have "backed up" and used this variety in their work. Well named, it is a crystalline work of art in glistening white, complemented with a tasteful band of azure blue in the falls.

6. **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** -- to the most outstanding and promising seedling personally viewed this season: **KING OF LIGHT** (Baumunk 2007) is a perfect name for this grand new iris. The finest of many special seedlings viewed during the Portland National Convention, in every garden it shined in richest full gold with a unique copper (versus burnished) glow. In spite of less than desirable weather conditions, with rain and cold temperatures, this star maintained its composure and refused to go muddy. Magnificent stalks have 3 branches perfectly spaced, consistent throughout every clump, every stalk. Flawless plant habits with healthy foliage and very desirable vigor. It also sports an excellent bloom/increase ratio. The substance is thick, the texture leathery, the color projecting carrying power clear across the garden. I predict it will really be a dazzler in warmer, drier climates.

Runnersup:

**T125B (Thomas Johnson)**: Look and say "ooh-la-la!". This is a heavily laced full orchid-lavender in the color of 'Feature Attraction' (Schreiner), even frillier and in a prettier shade of color. It has broad, horizontal falls. Flowers open properly, even with cool weather and heavy lace. Its great advancement, though, is in the plant habits - its growth and increase is about 10 times better than FA, with husky, tough, disease-resistant foliage! It produced magnificent stalks, with 3 branches in formal candelabra fashion.

**AM-99/0415-1 (Anton Mego)** is a wonderful, funky new bicolor fancy plicata Space Ager! Standards are solid medium yellow. Falls are horizontal in marbled red on white, mindful of a more colorful 'Aardvark Lark' (Black). Then, gold beards end in outlandish red flounces! Exotic, unique.

**AM-99/0417-1 (Anton Mego)** is my favorite of many fine, creative seedlings guested by this talented Slovakian hybridizer. It is a mysterious, downright spooky 'Jungle Shadows' (Sass-Graham) type of blend, with shocking dark violet (near-black) beards ending in horns sticking straight up in the air! The positioning in the flower of varying degrees of colors such as grey, gunmetal, slate, violet, and black is done in a series of shadows, eventually lightening at the flower edges in the style of 'Walking on Air' (Black). Stalks in the Mid-America Garden at the Portland Convention had 4 branches plus spur plus lower rebranching. Rich blue-green foliage with a heavy concentration of purple at the base just adds to the Twilight Zone effect of the plant.

**0108 (Kanarowski):** The finest of several promising seedlings from this new hybridizer. It was impressive at both the St. Louis and Portland Conventions, receiving one of my HC votes this season against some stiff competition! It is a gorgeous compact blue amoena with bubble ruffling and even a suggestion of lace, unique for a blue amoena. Stalks were exceptional, with 4 branches, double socketed, consistently displayed in modified candelabra fashion.

### **WATCH PARTY:**

I'm always hesitant to describe seedlings still under number in the primary sections of Contemporary Views, because I believe that few people follow these reviews so closely as to go back and see if any I have recognized go on to be introduced. But, with so many great seedlings seen these past two years, I don't think it's fair to limit the review to only 5 finalists for the Pick of the Litter. All of the following are Tall Bearded, unless otherwise indicated.

**D27-A (Ben Johnson):** Advancement in laced yellows has been slow to come by. This is a heavily laced medium sunshine yellow with deep yellow beards, reminiscent of 'Ritzy' (Hager-Cooley's) but with even heavier lace. Flowers open without twisting, even in cold wet weather. Standards retained their shape when others didn't. Strong stalks carry 2 to 3 branches. Good growth habits. A significant accomplishment in laced yellows.

**T137A (Thomas Johnson):** Similar to Pick of the Litter runnerup, T125B, in character and make-up, this seedling is a heavily laced lighter sky blue with white beards. Reminiscent of 'Charisma' (Blocher) except the application of color, including around the beards, is smoother. Style of branching is similar also, with a very formal look to the stalks. Perhaps not quite as vigorous as T125B, but still most acceptable. I hope both are introduced, because T137A is actually my favorite of the two.

**02-92A (Keith Keppel):** My favorite reselect in the hybridizer's home garden in Salem. From (Inside Track X Spice Lord), we have a dazzling, rich plicata, displayed with solid wine standards, pure white falls with a distinct  $\frac{3}{4}$ " band in wine, then just a hint of yellow in the base color closer to the heart of the flower. Seriously ruffled. Magnificent stalks, strong, carrying 4 branches. Superb plant habits.

**98-42A (Stephanie Markham):** Was the best of several very promising MTB's from this gifted young hybridizer. It reminded me of 'Among Friends' (Varner), a neglecta with lightest blue (nearly white) standards, rich violet-blue falls with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " edge of the standards' color. Excellent branching, small dainty foliage.

**Anton Mego** is one of the rising stars in iris hybridizing. This European hybridizer (from Slovakia) is doing some of the most innovative work - anywhere - and his guests at the conventions have been most impressive. In addition to the two seedlings which made the Top 5 list for the Pick of the Litter Award, the following were also of merit:

**AM-96/0121-13 (Mego):** A full blue amoena with contrasting beards. White standards have an unusual filigree in blue. Falls are contrasted with bold, fully saturated violet-blue, deepening at the edges, then topped off with bright red to burnt orange beards. Falls are heavily ruffled and horizontal. Decent stalks, consistently producing 3 branches. It has good growth habits. A complete package, very exciting, and definitely an improvement in red-bearded blue amoenas.

**AM-99/0387-1 (Mego):** Is reminiscent of the classic 'Planned Treasure' (Burger) with clean pink standards and complementary orchid-lavender falls, but accented with coral horns. Thin, somewhat willowy stalks suggest that 'Conjuration' (Byers) is in its background, and were leaning a bit at the Theissen Garden at the St. Louis Convention.

**AM-99/0393-02 (Mego):** This one is a modern 'Color Carnival' (DeForest 1949) done in apricot, with dazzling, clever patterning in the falls. Excellent plants produce stalks with 4 branches and lower rebranching. The only American hybridizer even close to doing similar work might be Paul Black from Oregon.

**00-181A (Merle Roberts):** Impressive at both the St. Louis (2005) and Portland (2006) Conventions, it is a white in the Emma Cook pattern, with the banding in the falls in blue. Whereas the Kerr "Emma Cooks" (e.g., Queen's Circle, Sapphire Halo, etc.) are crystalline, cold whites, this seedling is fitted with a leathery texture in a warm white. Either way, both types are attractive in their own right.

**V-350 (Terry Varner, MTB):** Was one of two very impressive blues seen at both the Fresno and St. Louis conventions. The other, 'Lady Tara' (Seedling R-303) is a darker blue, V-350 is suave medium blue. As with 'Lady Tara', the branching and bud count are spectacular - 4 branches, 10-12 buds. It is distinctive enough from 'Lady Tara' to be worthy of introduction also.

**Z01-33-1 (Mike Zuraw, MTB):** Very impressive, from a new hybridizer from New England. A clean smooth lilac-orchid amoena with excellent form and clarity of color. It carried 3 branches, double-socketed, with stalks the correct thickness and height for the class. Several excellent MTB seedlings were observed these past 2 seasons; this one is as fine as any of the others.

### **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

#### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

**CANNED HEAT** (Lauer 2003) is a full oxblood to crimson red with deep bronze beards, smooth at the hafts. It has thick leathery substance and proved itself to be sun-resistant in both Fresno and here in central Oklahoma. Flower size is considerably larger than its great pod parent, 'Warrior King' (Schreiner). Branching has been somewhat inconsistent but can produce a nice stalk. Superb plant habits, with healthy deep green foliage. **CODE RED** (Aitken 2003) is a unique shade of red, similar to that of the classic 'Lady Friend' (Ghio) but a more lively color. The hybridizer describes it as a "cranberry red". For me, that doesn't accurately describe it - but when I try to come up with a more descriptive color, I can't do any better! Thick bright beards contribute to its excellent carrying power in the garden. Average growth. Branching is good, with 3 branches plus spur. Its unique color draws you back to it for just one more look.

**POWER WOMAN** (Mogensen R. 2003) was one of my favorite seedlings in Portland. From 'Swingtown' (Schreiner) by 'Romantic Evening' (Ghio), it is a large-flowered, rich glowing metallic plum claret wine with near-black beards. It had heavy substance and an electric texture which shot volts of its color clear across the garden. The hybridizer died just this past season; I hope arrangements have been made to release this scintillating new iris.

**TRIAL BY FIRE** (Ghio 2006) is the latest offering in a line of innovative breeding by Joe for the almighty elusive red, and this is the finest to date. A sensuous deep cauldron red is accentuated with deep ruffling and yes, finally, true lace. The color saturation is consistent, evenly applied, with the standards just a suggestion of a tone deeper than the falls. Discreet deep gold-brown beards do not disturb the presentation. Growth habits are notably strong. Stalks on a first-year planting appeared somewhat slender, but held up well in adverse weather conditions with 3 well-spaced branches. **WEEKEND UPDATE** (Black 2005) is far more spectacular than what Paul was able to capture in the catalog shot for this. It is a deep fuchsia-cranberry self, rich like 'Cranberry Ice' (Schreiner), deeper than 'Nora Eileen' (Richardson). Show stalks are tall, with 3 modified candelabra branches. Gorgeous deep green foliage with rampant increase.

**CLASSICS:** **BURGUNDY CHERRY** (Ghio 1978), **HELL'S FIRE** (S. Roberts 1976), **MR. MAJESTIC** (Schmelzer 1976).

#### **APRICOTS TO ORANGES:**

**ABBONDANZA** (Ghio 2003) is an artful medley of colors, with varying shades of mango apricot, gold, yellow, and flushes of pink. The overall effect is apricot. Well formed blossoms are heavily ruffled. It is extremely tall, perhaps too tall for Oklahoma, with 4 branches and as many as 10-12 buds per stalk. Once it opens 3 and 4 at once, in windy Oklahoma, you may have to stake it. To quote a friend on a bus trip at this year's convention, "That's why God invented bamboo stakes!".....

**FINE PORCELAIN** (Black 2005) is one of Paul's best newer TB introductions, and is reminiscent in form and style of a previous introduction of his, 'Porcelain Ballet'. It is even prettier than the catalog shot, with softer tones of peach-apricot blended into warm ivory. Waxy substance enhances the heavy ruffling throughout the flower. Stalks are (fortunately) somewhat taller than 'Porcelain Ballet', with 3 branches beautifully spaced. It had an impressive bloom/increase ratio in the clump. **TROPICAL PASSION** (T. Johnson 2005) is actually a blending of colors, with rich coral pink heavily overlaid with varying shades of apricot, giving a mango effect from a distance. Much prettier than the catalog picture, with more vivacious coloring. Smaller flowers are nicely rounded and ruffled, with excellent substance. Quite tall stalks have 4 branches plus lower rebranching. Vigorous plant habits with beautiful, healthy foliage.

**CLASSICS:** MISSION SUNSET (Reckamp 1963), PALISADES (Plough 1964), WENATCHEE VALLEY (Noyd 1965).

### **PINKS:**

**AT FIRST BLUSH** (Kerr 2006) is a pretty thing in the softest blush pink imaginable, just a hint deeper in the shoulders. Soft pink beards, nearly white at the ends. Beautiful rounded form with gentle ruffling. It produced decent stalks with 3 branches. Growth appeared to be average, but acceptable. **BRIDAL PARTY** (T. Johnson 2006) is a gorgeous new cameo pink infused with softest apricot in the midribs of the standards, slightly deeper apricot in the falls' shoulders and beards. It is adorned with gentle ruffling and lace. Magnificent stalks carry 3 wide formal candelabra branches. Flowers held up admirably after a significant rain the night before. **SUGAR COATED** (Schreiner 2006) was a pleasant surprise, a soft pastel pink with undertones of blue in the cool weather of the Pacific Northwest. Beards are a delicate blue mixed with pink, subtle rather than provocative. It possesses the form and coloration which reminded me of one of my favorites in this style of pink, 'Shirley M' (Kegerise) with an unusual glazed or pearlescent texture. It has superb growth habits and outstanding stalks, carrying 3 well-spaced modified candelabra branches.

**CANDY CLOUDS** (Blyth 2002) was a pleasant surprise, a sleeper for me. It is a lilting deep, yummy, coral pink with fascinating purple markings in the shoulders. Stalks are tall and willowy, carrying smaller flowers in a similar fashion as some of Paul Black's releases. The falls, nearly horizontal, are pleasantly ruffled and waved. Anxious to get this one to breed with. **IN LOVE AGAIN** (Keppel 2004) is one of several nice recent pink introductions from Keith. This one is a rich orient pink, more luxurious with deeper ruffling than the similar 'Happenstance' (Keppel), but with the same dependable plant habits. It opens properly without twisting, as some similar pinks do. A good show iris too - I won Best of Show with it in Oklahoma City in 2006 with three open.

**CLASSICS:** FIFTY GRAND (Gaskill 1970), FLAMINGO FLING (Hamblen 1972), MLLE. MODISTE (Benson 1972), PRETTY PLEASE (Tompkins 1972).

### **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

The impact 'Fogbound' (Keppel) is already having as a breeder is profound, with high-quality releases coming from several hybridizers. **BELGIAN PRINCESS** (T. Johnson 2005) is a "dark top", with medium orchid-blue standards, flushed deeper in the midribs. The falls are lighter, with hints of pink and lilac in a glistening, diamond-dusted effect, complemented with strong coral-shrimp beards. The form is tight and sophisticated, with heavy ruffling and a touch of lace on medium-sized flowers. Plant habits are without fault, and the stalks possess the branching you can expect from the work of Thomas Johnson, in this case 3 well-spaced branches in modified candelabra style. Very similar, and also from 'Fogbound' breeding, is **DANCE RECITAL** (Keppel 2005). The contrast between standards and falls is not quite so intense; the flower is somewhat larger and a bit more airy in nature, more from the blue side rather than orchid. It too has contrasting red beards. Both are most worthy and high-quality.

**CAMEO APPEARANCE** (Black 2006) has a totally different look from the others and is exceptionally tall. Cleverly named, it is an unusual cameo pink overlaid in greyed-pewter, giving a mysterious pearlescent look to the flower. Standards are flushed blue-violet at the base of the midribs, creating the appearance of a dark top type. Muted pink beards add to the enchanting color array. The entire flower is encased in light ruffling and embroidered lace, a masterpiece in understated elegance. **IMAGERY** (T. Johnson 2006) is a self in

lavender, with a lighter area in the upper part of the falls around the tangerine beards tipped blue. It carries outstanding stalks, taller than others of this type, with 3 branches. But its most impressive feature was the positioning of the flowers within the clump, floriferous with superb placement. Foliage is unusual, swirling, but healthy in appearance.

With an impeccable pedigree (Keppel introductions ‘Vienna Waltz’ by ‘Fogbound’), PARIS FASHION (Keppel 2003) is a palatable pale pink to lilac, deeply ruffled and laced, and complemented with a slightly deeper pink beard. Opens well without twisting, in spite of the intense dose of luxury on the edges. Outstanding branching, with superior plant habits. VENETIAN GLASS (Keppel 2003) is simply elegant beyond belief, a crystalline masterpiece in palest orchid, infused with a hint of pale pink, and then transforming even lighter in the heart of the falls. Heavy deep ruffling in wax and a touch of lace complete the picture. Branching is flawless, winning Best of Show (with 3 open) at an intensely competitive Tulsa show which I was privileged to participate in judging a couple of years ago.

**MYTHOLOGY** (T. Johnson 2003) is one of my favorite TB’s from this newer hybridizer from the Pacific Northwest. Well named, it is a gloriously strange, exotic concoction of moody slate blue and violet, transforming to a lighter grey at the very edge of the falls, in the style of ‘Walking on Air’ (Black). The beard is a jolt of deepest indigo (truly approaching soot black). In the tradition of its overlooked pod parent, ‘Traitor’ (Jameson), it is smaller-flowered and simple (so as not to distract from the color presentation) on moderately short stalks. Purple based foliage adds to the magic of the clump.

**CLASSICS:** ALLURA (O. Brown 1970), GATEWAY (Spence 1972), ORCHID WINGS (Hamblen 1970), SAN LEANDRO (Gaulter 1968).

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

**DARK HOLLOW** (Davis 2005) is a wonderful, unique presentation of color, a deeper version of ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiner) with darker, moody undertones. The somber color transforms to a hazy halo in silvery-grey on both the standards and falls. It has nice form with light to moderate ruffling interacting with the halo. With good distribution and effective marketing practices, it’s hard to image a Schreiner release ever be “overlooked”, but with FULL IMPACT (Schreiner 2001), this is exactly what we have. It is mindful of a luminata in pattern, a dark violet self with a prominent white zonal pattern around white beards. There is also a flush of white in the midribs of the standards. Tall stately stalks show off the dramatic flowers.

**PARKRIDGE CHALLENGER** (Parkhill 1999) is a tough, sturdy deepest violet, a child of the famous Dykes Medalist, ‘Dusky Challenger’. It inherited all the good qualities of DC, and has even better form. Had I discovered it earlier, it probably would have made the Sun Belt Award list, because it is a vision of health, a report card with highest marks in all categories. This hybridizer from Knoxville, TN should be proud to see his creation perform so well in so many parts of the country. TAHITIAN PEARL (Larry Johnson 2003) is one of my favorite newer blacks, a lustrous study in patent leather black with remarkable resistance to adverse weather conditions. It is very smoothly staged, with waved petals versus the heavy ruffling we are seeing in many of its contemporaries. Typical of this talented hybridizer from the Pacific Northwest, its plant habits are flawless. WARRANTY (Thomas Johnson 2004), on first-year bloom, looked promising, with deepest violet standards approaching black, and then jet black falls and self beards. The falls have a velvet pile which adds to the richness of color. Shorter than described in its registration, I look forward to seeing this with better height and improved branching in an established clump.

**SWEET MEI** (Fan 2000) is one that I have somehow missed over the years. It is totally unique, a strange and wonderful metallic violet with a gunmetal glow and brown-mahogany shoulders (not haft marks) and gold beards. But then, there is an overlay of a mink finish to the entire flower, making it hauntingly beautiful. Wide rounded form with touching hafts and tight ruffling. THAT CERTAIN SOMETHING (Crump, Registered 2001, to my knowledge has not been introduced to date) is a gorgeous, mysterious smoked violet-grape with smooth chocolate hafts and a hint of a brown halo on the falls. Deep bronze beards. It is ruffled, with heaviest substance. Excellent plant habits, with superior stalks with 4 branches plus rebranching. Very original, and hauntingly beautiful.

**CLASSICS:** BLACK BART (Schmelzer 1969), DRESS SUIT (Spence 1968), NIGHTSIDE (Schreiner 1967), ROYAL HERITAGE (Luihn 1968).

## BLUES:

**ABIQUA FALLS** (Schreiner 2003) extends a tradition of highest quality blues going back 50 years by the Schreiner family. A tall, heavily ruffled and fluted sapphire blue self, it has quite large flowers, but stalks appear to have the strength to sustain themselves in an upright position (without bamboo), a trait which cannot be shared with some of its predecessors over the years. It displays undertones of azure blue which add freshness to the flower. **LACED CREDENTIALS** (T. Johnson 2007) is a cleverly-named upcoming introduction that is far more attractive than the 2006 catalog could capture. A heavily laced 'Charisma' type in laced blue, contrasted with bright old gold (not yellow) beards. The lace has an expensive look and is evenly applied. It has superb modified candelabra branching, well spaced with good timing of the buds. Fantastic plant habits.

**NOBLE STATURE** (Hilton 2006) is an impressive first offering from a new East Coast hybridizer (New Jersey), seen at the St. Louis Convention under Seedling #HIL00-1-1. This diamond-dusted, palest blue could be categorized as a white with cold infusions of blue. Stalks are tall and stately, the flowers large, rounded, and pleasantly ruffled. It inherited the best features from both of its Dykes Medalist parents, 'Song of Norway' (Luihn) and 'Silverado' (Schreiner), with husky plants producing impressive clumps. Good red-bearded blues are, unfortunately, still a woefully limited class, but a nice advancement comes from France: **PRINCESS CAROLINE DE MONACO** (Cayeux 1998) is a clear light blue with contrasting fuzzy tangerine-orange to red beards. A child of one of the best red-bearded blues of all time, 'Skyblaze' (Keppel), it is a softer blue, gently lightening towards the center of the falls, which further accentuates the beards.

**CLASSICS:** **DISCOVERY BAY** (O. Brown 1970), **ELOQUENT** (Ghio 1970), **MARTINIQUE** (B. Jones 1970), **TIPPERARY** (Hamblen 1972).

## WHITES to CREAMS:

A trio of pure laced whites receive positive marks. This is a difficult area to produce acceptable garden subjects, in that they are notorious for being finicky and temperamental. All three listed here are the exception, and are breakthroughs in the development of laced whites. **ALABASTER PRINCESS** (Landgraf 2005) is a German creation, a laced alabaster white with wonderful form, the laced flowers opening well in the cold, damp weather conditions. Stalks have 3 branches in formal candelabra style. Excellent plant habits, forming an elegant clump effect. A pleasant surprise - hope it is made available in the United States. **DIAMOND BRACELET** (Schreiner 2004) is a lovely thing, glistening, sparkling purest cold white, quite heavily laced. In spite of the generous dosage of lace, the flowers have no trouble opening and do not tear. Beard is also primarily white, tipped yellow only deep in the heart of the flower. The form is broad. Big plants produce an average amount of increase (better than many laced whites). My only reservation is in the branching. The clump viewed in Portland had strange, inconsistent branching, with weak stalks which required staking after a moderate rain. **ROYAL BIRTH** (Royal 2003) is a large white flower with a presence of yellow in the shoulders. From one of my all-time favorite whites, the laced 'Ann Blocher' (Blocher), it carries a modest amount of ruffling and lace with nicely shaped flowers of good substance. It has a very clean look to it. A clever name for the first offering from this Kentucky hybridizer.

The quest for good red-bearded whites has been nearly as painful. Again, to find one with healthy plant habits and vigorous increase is unfortunately still the exception to the rule, in most cases. **CASTING CROWNS** (Van Liere 2006) is one of the first introductions from an enthusiastic new hybridizer from Denver. It was nearly finished blooming in Cooley's, but the remaining individual flowers still looked good and had withstood the adverse elements respectfully. Remindful of 'Old Flame' (Ghio), it is a chalky white with a hairline halo in gold, contrasted with medium apricot-red beards. It showed evidence that it had grown and bloomed well, most stalks producing 3 branches. **KALI JULIA** (Innerst 2000) was a pleasant surprise, a welcome addition to red-bearded whites. It is a chaste, purest white, diamond-dusted and glistening, with full deep red beards. It has a nice shape and notably excellent plant habits.

**BLANKET OF SNOW** (T. Johnson 2006) is a tall, imposing pure white with nice contrasting yellow beards and a hint of yellow in the shoulders. It has broad, rounded form. But what sets this white apart from the rest are its magnificent plant habits and killer stalks - 4 to 5 branches, sometimes with lower rebranching, opening

multiple blossom for the iris show aficionado and plenty of backup beds to sustain its season of bloom for the stalks in the clump you left in the garden. **BRIDAL ICING** (T. Johnson 2003) could easily place in the L'Elegante category. From the choice 'Goldkist' (Black), its color staging is similar, a pure white with golden shoulders and beards. Stalks are magnificent, another 'Goldkist' quality which it generously passes on to its children. The "plus" in this variety is the finely crafted application of tight lace, diamond-dusted texture, and a celebratory narrow gilt edge in gold. **COUNTRY DAWN** (T. Johnson 2003) is a sister to 'Bridal Icing', but it presents itself in a totally different venue. Thick tall stalks with 4 branches display large flowers in a rich cream with warm yellow infusions in a leathery look rather than diamond dusting, a generous helping of ruffling instead of lace. As to be expected from this talented young hybridizer, the plant habits are impeccable.

**PORCELAIN ANGEL** (Schreiner 2003) has thick, leathery alabaster petals, wide and sustained, the branching quite fine, and very acceptable, healthy plant habits. There is a hint of blue in the standards, giving the flower an icy effect. Branching was inconsistent from one garden to the next (including in the home garden), but at the Ludi Garden it sported tall strong stalks with 3 branches.

**CLASSICS:** AFTER ALL (Hall 1967), CHERRY JUBILEE (Wood 1969), MADEIRA BELLE (Quadros 1970).

### **YELLOWS:**

**RITZY** (Hager-Cooley's 2004) is a major advancement in laced yellows, a style notoriously difficult for opening properly without tearing, and for retaining color in hot, dry conditions. Similar, but in a lighter (medium) yellow, and cleaner and prettier than 'Amarillo Frills' (Hager-Cooley's), 'Ritzy' retains its form far more successfully, especially in adverse weather conditions, and has taller, stronger stalks with 3 branches in modified candelabra. **COUNTY CORK** (Schreiner 2007) is a most innovative color, a burnished golden yellow with a definite influence of willow green in the heart of the flower. The overall effect, especially from a distance, is about as green as any TB I've seen. I hope it retains this intriguing color in our warmer, drier climate. Flower size is proper, the form wide and rounded but not exaggerated. It has 3 branches, a bit close to the stalk, often opening 2 to 3 at once. Excellent growth habits. Looking forward to seeing this again in future years.

**LAST HALO** (Niswonger 2002) refers to its bloom season, not the last offering of a halo-type iris from Dave. It is a brilliant burst of full yellow, deeper and thicker in the halo from its parent, the great 'Halo in Yellow' (Niswonger). The prominent white in the falls draws the eye to the richness of the yellow coloration. True to form, it was just beginning its bloom cycle when viewed at the St. Louis convention. It also proved itself in colder, wet weather, still glowing at the Portland convention. Similar in color pattern is **PURE AND SIMPLE** (Maryott-Ghio 2004), with the yellow one shade lighter and the contrast between the yellow and white not so bold. It has excellent form and pleasing ruffling, typical of the work this talented hybridizer was known for. Substance is thick and leathery, permitting the flower to retain its color in adverse conditions.

**CLASSICS:** BLUSHING LEMON (Boushay 1973), LUSCIOUS LEMON (Innes 1970), MY DESIRE (Sexton 1972), TROPIC SUN (Hamblen 1970).

### **PLICATAS:**

**BLACKBERRY TEASE** (T. Johnson 2004) is an inebriating new plicata approaching black. Standards are almost 100% saturated in rich blackberry-violet, the falls a clear white, then artistically edged and sanded in the standards' color, the impromptu plicating bleeding towards the heart of the falls. It has notably better branching and bud count than many other black plicata attempts. **GALLERY** (T. Johnson 2005) is a joyful new plic, with palest pink base standards almost completely saturated in warm wine-mulberry. White falls have a precise  $\frac{1}{2}$ " band in mulberry to cranberry stitching, pert and clean. Even in cold weather, it maintains excellent delineation of color between the base color and the plicata stitching. Stalks are tall, rather slender, and graceful, with magnificent branching up and down the stalk, giving every flower optimal exposure. Plants are a vision of health.

**CELESTIAL EXPLOSION** (Tasco 2004) is a sophisticated improvement over its celebrity parent, Dykes Medalist 'Splashacata' (Tasco). Standards are almost solidly drenched in violet; white falls are extremely heavily peppered in a deeper violet, concentrating with a suggestion of an even deeper band on the rims. The form

is more “polished”, the peppering deeper, and has notably better substance. It retained the healthy plant habits of ‘Splashacata’, so we have a complete package. JERILEE (Nebeker 2004) has been on my “Watch For” list ever since introduction, and I finally got to see it in the Ludi Garden during the Portland Convention. It is a white ground plicata with bright plum-purple stitching. What sets it apart from the pack is its ruffling and heavy lace, a rare feature in this color of plicata. It had decent growth and stalks with 2 branches plus spur. CHIEF JOHN JOLLY (Parkhill 2003) is a welcomed advancement in bicolor-plicatas, much in the style of ‘Tennessee Woman’ and others from Innerst. Standards are a buff-tan with just a few markings in violet. Falls are warm white with a distinct edge in violet and then spoke pattern radiating from the beard, mindful of ‘Spinning Wheel’ (Nearpass). The colors are cleaner and appears to have significantly better substance than most in this category.

MUSICIAN (Keppel 2004) is a cleverly-named bicolor plicata which looks like a “grown-up” rendition of Keith’s SDB, ‘Music’. Standards are solidly colored in a rich pink. Light peach falls are precisely banded in orchid and raspberry stitching. Colors are clean, with a crisp pattern. It was a bit short, but positioned its branching to where all flowers were able to open properly. TELEPATHY (Keppel 2003) is a nice advancement in luminatas, done in a blended lavender-orchid and blue, white in the heart of the flower. I find many of our modern luminatas to lack clarity of color and carrying power in the garden. This variety corrects this fault, and is very refreshing to the eye.

CLASSICS: HEY LOOKIE (W. Brown 1970), KISS (Knocke 1971), MAD MAID (Gibson 1966), MOD MODE (Gibson 1970).

#### AMOENAS, REVERSE AMOENAS, BITONES, and NEGLECTAS:

BRUSSELS (T. Johnson 2004) is a lovely affair, with medium blue standards (not as deep in Oklahoma as it shows in the catalog picture) atop soft pale blue falls which have an intriguing chalky appearance. There are several fine reverse blue amoenas on the market today, but this one is different. And rather than deep ruffling, the flowers are gently waved, a nice change of pace. The four stars, though, go to its branching - show stalks supreme, often opening 3 to 4 simultaneously, a show fanatic’s dream iris!

CHATEAU D’AUVERS (Cayeux 2004) is a significant advancement in the quest for orange amoenas. It is a choice apricot amoena, with copper infusions in the falls which richen the effect. Contrast between standards and falls is good. It has notably better plant habits than many of its predecessors in this color pattern. It is also taller than the norm in this pattern, with 3 branches. COFFEE WHISPERS (Blyth 1999) is a serious attempt at a coffee brown amoena, with warm white standards and light brownish falls with deep coffee texture veins radiating from the shoulders. Strong stalks carry 3 branches. Some may not care for the coloration - I find it fascinating. KIWI CHEESECAKE (Niswonger 1998) is a nice attempt at that ever-elusive green amoena, mindful of ‘Pickledilly’ (Painter) but perhaps more elegant in its make-up. Subtle orange beards help bring out the green tones. As might be expected, this color combo is highly susceptible to variations in climate, and needs the sun to smoothen out the colors.

SUGAR CREEK BLUES (B. Nicodemus 2005) is a clearly colored blue amoena in the tradition of ‘Dover Beach’ (Nearpass), with pure white standards and smooth light to medium blue falls. The flower size is moderate in size, the nearly horizontal falls are sufficiently wide, simple, with rolling waves, and are displayed on well-branched stalks, beautifully spaced and timed within the clump. The overall effect is that of freshness, elegant in its simplicity, and impeccable plant habits. PEACETIME (L. Blyth 2001) was a pleasant surprise - don’t know how I missed this one in previous years. From pink breeding, it is a delicately-colored silvery lavender bitone (nearly an amoena, as the standards are very pale), with the falls one or two shades deeper than the standards. Although the flowers are huge, they possess a translucent texture, with deeper texture veining in the falls, which gives a feeling of calm repose. Strong stalks carry four branches. SENIOR MOMENT (Richardson 2006), first seen in St. Louis as Seedling #94-10-1, is a huge orchid amoena with soft red beards, held grandly on tall, strong stalks with superior branching. Plant habits were also particularly impressive.

Really high-quality **neglectas** are still, unfortunately, all too rare, but a couple were exceptional at the Portland Convention and in Oklahoma. EVENING DRAMA (Black 2004) is a one of the better offspring of ‘Romantic Evening’ (Ghio), with light violet standards contrasted by violet-black falls with a velvet finish and satin sheen. Beards are somber burnt orange. Branching has been a bit inconsistent, but does often produce

acceptable stalks. A very dignified look, well named. FABULOUS ONE (R. Nicodemus 2006), the first introduction from the husband of Missouri hybridizer, Barbara Nicodemus, made its debut at the Portland Convention. Even though the convention booklet (again) wasn't updated properly, the garden tags did get updated and people figured it out, rewarding it with first runnerup to the Out-of-Region Cup! A luxurious, sensuous deep, deep neglecta, with medium to deep blue-violet standards and inky black velvet falls. It reminded me of a neglecta from Oklahoma, made famous (winning the President's Cup) at the 1980 Tulsa Convention, 'Twist of Fate' (Cleo Palmer), but with larger flowers and wider, more modern form. Somewhat shorter, rather clubby stalks carried 3 branches a bit close to the stalks but we had the proof in the clump that all the flowers could open properly. Average increase with beautiful purple-based foliage. ROYAL TOGS (L. Miller 2006) was my "pick of the litter" (Seedling #11503A) in a row of high-quality reselects being considered for introduction by Lynda, seen in May 2005 when I was guest speaker and judges training clinician for the Region 6 Spring Convention in Indianapolis. From the great 'Wild Wings' (Keppel), it has orchid standards, with undertoning in pink and a flush of violet-purple in the base of the midribs. Falls are a plush deep purple with an overlay of black velvet, contributing to the dramatic contrast of colors between the standards and falls. A fuzzy burnt orange beard seals the deal. Heavily ruffled, with nearly horizontal falls.

**CLASSICS:** BREAKING DAWN (Schreiner 1971), RAIN COUNTRY (Plough 1979), VERNAL FALLS (Roe 1971).

#### **BICOLORS AND VARIEGATAS:**

There was a long dry spell in bicolors of yellow and lavender in the style of 'Edith Wolford' (Hager) or 'Lilac Champagne' (Hamblen), but now there are several of merit on the market, with varying degrees of depth of color and style. BRIGHT NEW DAY (F. Rogers 2003) is an attractive medley of colors in yellow, violet-blue, and white -- a prettier, more refined 'Seakist' (Schreiner). The standards are white, but flushed in the midribs and at the base in yellow. The falls are violet-blue with a prominent white patch in the heart amidst bright yellow beards. CARTER SPRING (Carter 2006) is a fresh bicolor in yellow and lavender from one of the youngest hybridizers in the country, Ryan Carter from Virginia (introduced via Winterberry Gardens, Don and Ginny Spoon, Cross Junction, VA). The yellow standards have a flush of violet up the midribs. The falls have varying degrees of lavender, with the deepest tones in the heart of the falls like 'Disco Eclipse' (T. Johnson), edged in a soft greyed-tan. It has decent stalks and good plant habits.

GYPSY ANGEL (Baumunk N/I) was seen in two convention gardens in Portland, and was impressive in both. It is a modern version of the great classic, 'Lilac Champagne', with clear soft yellow standards and hazy, translucent lavender falls, with a hint of a deeper halo on the falls. Very tall, with outstanding branching (4 branches), and superb plants habits with vigorous increase. NEW AGE DAWNING (Richardson 2006), seen in St. Louis under Seedling #92-22-2, is a softer, gentler version of its mother, 'Edith Wolford' (Hager), with creamy soft yellow standards and cream falls overlaid in palest blue, gradually increasing in intensity as you approach the edge of the falls (almost to the point of calling it an Emma Cook pattern). Beards are harmonious in soft yellow. It has a waxy look to the texture with the husky plants and strong well-branched stalks that are a trademark of this discriminating hybridizer. Impressive enough to earn one of my HC votes in 2005 after the St. Louis Convention. PIXIE DUST (Schreiner 2001) is the most pastel of the group, and unfortunately didn't receive the distribution - or the attention - of most Schreiner releases. Clear pastel yellow standards gently yield to translucent lilac-orchid falls, all body parts diamond-dusted (well-named!). It is a simple, tasteful shape, with gentle ruffling.

**FRENCH CAN-CAN** (Cayeux 2002) is the most colorful of the modern Touche (Hamblen) types, with rich pink standards contrasted with clean orchid-lavender falls and brilliant shrimp-coral beards. Form isn't as "finished" as some of its contemporaries, but nonetheless acceptable. Fantastic stalks are taller than registered, carrying 4 branches with consistency. **ITALIAN VELVET** (Keppel 2006), in both Oklahoma and in the hybridizer's home garden in Oregon, was the most impressive of many fine 'Romantic Evening' (Ghio) types on the market now. Ironically, it is not from 'Romantic Evening', but rather from Blyth bloodlines. Deep pansy violet standards harmonize with plush, seductive black-burgundy falls, totally devoid of any suggestion of a haft mark. The velvet finish dared the rain to waterspot the flower - the water just beaded off! Stalks carry 3 well spaced candelabra branches.

Several variegata types are making a name for themselves. **MAN ABOUT TOWN** (Blyth 1998) is a macho number with buff-tan standards and earth-brown blended falls. The falls are also flushed with rose. Never fear, it retains its colors well, even in hot dry weather conditions. **DECADENCE** (Blyth 2004) is well-named, with a devilishly inviting combination of golden-apricot standards atop tapestry falls with varying degrees of depth in burgundy, wine, bronze, and mahogany, with edging the color of the standards, encapsulated in deep ruffles and lace. It held its own in cold, wet weather in both Oklahoma and Portland, retaining richness of color and with sufficient substance to keep itself together, when others in similar color combinations fell apart.

**INDULGENCE** (Blyth 2004) is a more colorful, bolder version of its parent, 'Mastery' (Blyth), with more golden-yellow standards instead of bronze, and falls in burgundy-mahogany instead of chestnut brown. A distinctive buff edge on the falls, along with a small light yellow sunburst pattern at the beards, add character to the flower. It also had a more sophisticated, rounded look to the form than 'Mastery'.

**EXPLICIT** (Ghio 2005) is similar in color pattern, with clean golden-yellow standards against velvet wine-black falls with a more prominent gold sunburst zonal pattern exploding at the golden beards. Decent stalks carried 2 branches on first-year bloom.

**PRAGUE** (T. Johnson 2005) continues the color combination of its parent, 'Naples' (T. Johnson), with deeper, more intense saturation of color. Standards are a medium peach, infused a reddish-plum in the midribs. Falls are a dark burgundy with velvet pile, with just a hint of a mauve rim on the edges. Burnt orange beards add to the pizzazz. Branching will have to be evaluated another year, in that in nearly every garden in Portland this spring, the stalks were somewhat aborted. If it has inherited the branching of 'Naples', this won't be a problem. **UPPER HAND** (Ghio 2005) was seen on first-year bloom in Will Rogers Garden in Oklahoma City, one of the 2007 tour gardens. A departure from the type of work Joe has been releasing in recent years, this is a rich variegata, mindful of the overlooked 'Mariachi Music' (Maryott). It is late-blooming, with rich golden-bronze standards, flushed pansy in the midribs. Falls are a vibrant magenta-violet, deepening to mahogany tones in the shoulders.

**CLASSICS:** **CAIRO LYRIC** (Peterson 1973), **GYPSY PRINCE** (Hamblen 1974), **LOVE IS** (Varner 1973), **VISIONARY** (Ghio 1973).

#### **EMMA COOK PATTERN:**

**CLOUDBASE** (M. Roberts 2006) was seen in St. Louis under number, and received one of my HC votes that year as Seedling #01-141A. Similar to some of the Kerr things (see below), but from a totally different pedigree. Standards and falls are purest white, the billowing falls with a wide border in sky to medium blue. Coming from this very self-critical hybridizer from eastern Washington, you can expect it to have quality plant habits and strong stalks with well-placed branches - prerequisites to bearing the Merle Roberts name.

**FRUITSATION** (Jedlicka 2006) is the first introduction from the Jedlicka family from western Nebraska, and is very impressive. It has soft peach-pink standards, style arms, and falls, with a lavender-orchid wash at the edges of the falls. The falls also have a patch of white immediately surrounding bright shrimp beards. It has thin, graceful stalks like its parent, 'Conjuration' (Byers), but not as tall and willowy. The texture is leathery rather than the diamond-dusted finish traditionally seen in 'Conjuration' kids. **EDGE OF EDEN** (Ed Roberts 2003) is literally directly from 'Emma Cook' (Cook), crossed with the great pink and lavender bitone, 'Planned Treasure' (Burger). It is very simply presented with soft pink standards and falls, gently transforming to a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " edge of bluish lavender, with tangerine beards. That this variety hasn't received more attention totally baffles the brain.

A trio from France are most worthy, each highly distinctive and most tasteful. ELEGANT (Cayeux 2005) is a pure white with the glistening of a quartz crystal, the falls banded in  $\frac{1}{4}$ " soft lavender-blue. A subtle shrimp-red beard adds a flicker of color. Standards are open but hold well, the falls horizontal, rounded, and adorned in rippling ruffles. Stalks held 3 branches in modified candelabra style, with the only fault to be found was that the bottom branch occasionally came up a bit too far. FABULEUX (Cayeux 2003) is indeed a fabulous creation. Remindful of 'Aurelie' in style (but without the horns), it has cold white standards contrasted by intense indigo blue edging against pure white falls, artfully irregular, as much as an inch deep, appearing to be airbrushed on the inner parts. White beards blend discreetly into the base color. Although the branching tends to be a bit close to the stalk, the flowers still open properly, and it can produce show stalks with 4 well spaced branches. POESIE (Cayeux 2003) is a child of Dykes Medalist 'Celebration Song' (Schreiner) which, instead of a bicolor, manifests itself in the Emma Cook pattern. Standards are a light rose-pink. Falls are white with a precise, narrow edge in amethyst rose rather than lavender or orchid. Red beards add to the combo. Clear, elegant coloring. Form is simple with compact, smaller-sized flowers and nearly horizontal falls. The branching is exceptional, a trait inherited from 'Celebration Song'.

RESTLESS HEART (Keppel 2006) is very similar in style and form to 'Parisian Dawn' (Keppel), but displayed in cold crystal chandelier white with the same precise Emma Cook banding in the falls, this time in sparkling blue. White beards, heavily tipped carrot to red, provide the finishing touch. It carries moderate ruffling, as with 'Parisian Dawn', very evenly applied. Plant health and increase are acceptable, producing stalks with respectable branching. On the other hand, JAZZ BAND (Keppel 2006) is a colorful, rowdy affair, with orange standards and falls, contrasted with a bold band (anywhere from  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to a full inch) in close-to-gaudy wine-red. Deep orange beards are bedazzling. Nice stalks, with 3 well-spaced branches. Average to fully acceptable plant habits. Similar, although a bit softer on the eye, and from totally different lines of breeding, is MARCHING BAND (Ghio 2006). The base color is light to medium apricot to orange, with a narrower, more precise band on the falls in rich orchid-violet. It is much more vibrant than the Bay Views catalog shot. Stalks are tall and strong, with 3 branches in modified candelabra style.

QUEEN'S CONSORT (Kerr 2004) is a child of its famous parent, 'Queen's Circle' (Kerr), and both were looking fine at the St. Louis Convention ('Queen's Circle' went on to win the Out-of-Region Cup, and 'Queen's Consort' first runnerup!). They do look similar, but the primary difference is in the way the blue edging is displayed - on Queen's Consort, rather than the precision edging of its parent, it "bleeds" the blue coloring nearly an inch towards the heart of the falls. Flip a coin - both are very lovely, artistic, and tasteful. My personal favorite from this group is SAPPHIRE HALO (Kerr 2003), a sib to 'Queen's Consort', but with the precise, thin edge of 'Queen's Circle', staged in a deep sapphire blue. The white primary color is chaste and diamond-dusted, making the halo on the falls even more shimmering in its effect.

### POTPOURRI:

BLUSHING CLOUDS (Blyth 2001) is a fascinating blend of gold gilt, pastel pink, lilac, and lavender blended into a base color of glistening white, virtually impossible to accurately describe. It has the characteristics of changeable silk, in that the flowers' features will vary with the temperature, weather conditions, even cloud cover (and good luck on the show bench, you show judges). Perhaps the only things not subtle about this beautiful work of art would be the bright tangerine beards and the dizzying rhapsody of deep ruffling. STOP FLIRTING (Blyth 2002) is a sly one, equipped with a most unusual blending of greyed taupe, offset with a flash of violet in the falls below burnt orange beards. It has the wide form and elaborate ruffling of its super-parent, 'Louisa's Song' (Blyth). This is one of those mystery irises, hauntingly beautiful, which simply can't be described in text or captured accurately on film (or even digitally). Beware of those which appear shy and innocent - they're the ones that are addictive! SWEET GEISHA (Blyth 2004) is another coquette which has understated elegance. An unusual "milky" lavender, possessing an "opaque" texture, similar to the Taylor Louisiana, 'Art World' that has the opposite effect normally expected from the viewer - you are drawn to the flower. To contrast this veil of mystery is an intricate networking of violet veins, forming a crescent in the upper part of the falls, surrounding white beards tipped lavender. Totally unique - captivating, nothing like it on the market.

DISCO ECLIPSE (T. Johnson 2003) is my favorite TB release from this hybridizer. It is a unique bicolor, with yellow standards and clean orchid-lavender falls. What makes it unique is a deeper violet flash, bleeding in

the heart of the falls, mindful of the pattern I. balkana produced for Joe Ghio and a few other hybridizers, 25 years ago. Beards are mustard gold. The falls also have a rim in mustard which pulls the contrasted colors together. Stalks consistently carry 3 branches, and seeing them with 3 open at once is not uncommon. **BOLD EXPRESSION** (Ernst 2003) is the best of several “dark top” types released in recent years by Cooley’s. Rich purple standards overshadow peachy-pink falls with bright orange beards. Two things pull the colors together in harmony and add distinctiveness to the flower: First, the style arms are peach (from the falls) with a hairline edging of purple (from the standards). Second, the falls transform ever so slightly into an edging in a more subdued purple of the standards.

**HALO IN NUTMEG** (Niswonger ’05) is of the same character as its parent, ‘Halo in Rosewood’, but richer, with more nutmeg/brown to old rose in its makeup. The white falls, banded in nutmeg, also have a flash of light violet just below the beard, which further enlivens the flower. **MISTRESS OF CAMELOT** (Baumunk 2004) is like a richer, prettier, deeper ‘Easter Lace’ (Byers). It has rounded form, decorated with heavy lace all over. Horizontal falls add a lilt to the flower. Thick stalks have superb placement of their branches. Not the style of color, with a blending of orchid, tan, and yellow, to have good carrying power in the garden; yet this one overcomes that problem. **SHADOW WARRIOR** (Kerr 2002) is a gloriously strange concoction of blended blue-violet, heavily edged in straw yellow. The depth of the edge is variable, which enhances the attractiveness of the variety. A very descriptive name, and unforgettable once you have seen a specimen on the show bench under artificial lights.

And then there was **NEANDERTHAL** (Worel 2003), a cleverly-named, huge subject in the strangest coloring of grey-willow green-tan. While you’re at it, add a savage thick purple - near black - beard. Broad with plain edging (c’mom, now, do you really want to see a cave man in ruffles??!). Fortunately, it has husky plants and thick strong stalks to hold everything in an upright position. Love it or hate it, it has its own special way of saying “come hither”....

**CLASSICS:** **COSMOPOLITAN** (Hamblen 1972), **LUCKY NUMBER** (Noyd 1970), **RARE WINE** (Nelson 1970).

### **COLOR BREAKERS:**

This year, we begin this group with two medians: **CLASH** (Black 2003) is one of the first true color-breaker SDB’s to be introduced. A base color varying from pink to orange-peach is tattooed with deep rose, wine, and purple blotches and streaks, more intense in the falls. There’s nothing like it on the market. Subtle it is not - try gaudy. I like gaudy. **JOYFUL JOY** (Spoon 2001), a BB, was perfectly in class in both gardens viewed at the St. Louis convention. I believe it has been overlooked, because it is very distinctive from the other color breaker BB’s on the market today. Its base color is a clean baby ribbon pink, devoid of the mauve undertoning common in this color range of color breakers. The splashing occurs in an artistic random pattern of crisp violet and then some secondary markings in more gentle lavender. A fresh shrimp-pink to orange beard pulls it all together. Superb, graceful branching and healthy plant habits (both especially fine for a color breaker) are inherited from its father, the great ‘Little John’ (Spoon).

Looking for a conversation piece for your garden? **ELIMINATOR** (Hedgecock 2004) fits the bill. Violet-blue base color is erratically streaked and splashed in white. Wait. Look again. By golly, there are flounces rising from the beards! Even the appendages carry the colorbreaking, white on violet. The form is simple but acceptable. It has adequate branching on somewhat thin stalks, and has good plants with good increase. A lot of fun, and most definitely unique! Now, if that’s too “subtle” for you, try **MESSY JESSI** (Burseen 2004), ironically released the same year, down in Texas. This crazy concoction has light orchid standards, heavily splash-splashed in medium and deep violet. Falls are actually a white base, but you can barely see it, because of a riotous array of violet, rose, and ruby red splashes, splotches, and streaks, all topped off with a red beards ending in purple horns, finally transforming into flounces. I’m serious. You have to see it to believe it. Usually I’m “tolerant” of, and even get a kick out of Tom’s zany, off-the-wall names. I just hope the negative connotation suggested in this one doesn’t hurt its distribution and presence in the AIS awards system.

I first saw **OASIS PATCHES** (Chadwick-White 2002) in the MOBOT Garden in St. Louis, and it was a pleasant surprise. This vivacious color breaker is arrayed in candy pink, joyfully splashed and streaked in deep ruby red and violet. Orange beards add to the celebration of color. The form is broad and modern, the plant

habits impressive and healthy. Stalks are reasonably substantial (not so with many color breakers) with 2 branches plus spur. All things considered, I feel this is the best color breaker currently on the market.

PEEKABOO ZEBU (Kasperek 2005) is a bright and bold color breaker, with rich cranberry streaks over deep pink lemonade base color. It has the best color saturation and presentation of any from Brad I've seen so far, in this color array. In the Portland Convention garden where evaluated, the stalks were a bit wimpy and the foliage only so-so; nonetheless, impressive enough for another look, and hopefully improvement in these areas.

### **VARIEGATED FOLIAGE:**

So little work is being done in this area that I rarely have the opportunity to include them in Contemporary Views. This year, three varieties are the exception. VERDICT (T. Johnson 2004) is a major breakthrough in flower quality. It is a lovely orchid self with wide form, good substance, and carries ruffling and even a touch of lace. Variegating in the foliage is dependable and very artistic. ZEBRA BLUEZ (Kasperek 2004) is a medium blue with decently-modern looking form and substance with even a suggestion of ruffling. A moderate increaser, it is very consistent with its creamy streaking of foliage. One stalk in a clump at Cooley's was nearly albino! ZEBRA JAM (Kasperek 2003) is a very pleasing shade of old rose with burnt orange beards. Respectable form with some ruffling and lace. Great plant habits, both in California and Missouri, with good increase and consistent variegating of foliage.

### **SPACE AGERS:**

TICKLE THE IVORIES (Blyth 2002) is the only median to be reviewed this year. It is a warm ivory with some infusions in the hafts and standards' midribs with butter yellow. This is contrasted with medium blue beards which end consistently in horns. Quite similar to the SDB, 'Serenity Prayer' (Dyer) but taller and with horns. It is very vigorous, but the only fault I find so far is that it is an extremely heavy bloomer.

AURELIE (Cayeux 2003) has chaste diamond-dusted white standards with a hairline edge in crystalline blue. The falls are in an Emma Cook pattern, with white in the heart of the flower, then heavily saturated with a 2" wash (and then band) of richest glowing violet. Red beards give way to discreet, smaller white horns. The falls have a flare to them which really accentuates the horns. It has the magnificent spacing of its branches from its pollen parent, 'Conjuration' (Byers), but not quite as tall and thicker and stronger. Truly at the opposite end of the spectrum, TOILE DE JOUY (Cayeux 2005) is a late-blooming bicolor, with light to medium salmon-pink standards, paler pink falls with a mauve-lavender Emma Cook edging, then distinctive red beards ending in horns. It has smaller flowers with horizontal falls, an attractive, elegant look on the tall, graceful stalks which easily carry up to 4 branches.

BARBARA'S LACE (Sutton 2003) is a clean satin pink with deep coral beards ending in horns. Opens well in spite of heavy lace. Growth habits were suspect, and stalks may be weak with questionable branching. However, the flowers were impressive enough to reserve another look with the hopes that both improve.

JUST FOR KICKS (Black 2005) is a heavily ruffled reverse blue amoena, with lighter blue falls exhibiting an icy effect. It consistent produces cute fuzzy upturned violet-blue horns. First-year bloom in the 2007 Oklahoma Convention gardens was actually even more impressive than it was in its home garden during the Portland Convention. Nearly horizontal falls intensify the liveliness of the flowers.

PURPLE PEOPLE EATER (Cadd 2003) - oh WOW what a great name for a Space Ager! Darn, wish I had thought of it (and had had a seedling to give the name to!). A rich, deep true purple (not violet), deeper than 'Thriller' (Schreiner), reasonably smooth at the hafts, with distinctive deep purple horns sticking straight up - 1" high! It has simple form, with sufficient width to the falls, just lightly waved, so that the eye can focus on those amazing appendages. Excellent stalks, tall and strong. Impressive plant habits, with deep green foliage and good increase.

DRAGON FLIGHT (B. Nichols 2003) is a vivacious chocolate on yellow plicata, with precise stitching on the F, then topped off with a chocolate to plum horn. The stalks are rather slender (but sturdy) and elegant, producing as many as 4 branches and rebranching when well established, often opening multiple blooms. Produces its appendages very consistently. Space Agers in this color of plicata are rare, and this is the best to date. COWBOY IN BLACK (Hedgecock 2005) is a contribution to a color class of Space Agers which is still

also very limited in quality. This tall, husky, well-branched black has excellent color saturation and consistent horns. Form is very simple with light waving - no ruffled rhinestone cowboy here! We'll just have none uh that, now!

Two orange Space Agers from the King of Zing, Tom Burseen, were impressive, and unique from each other. NUCLEAR NANCY (Burseen 2004) is an unusual soft apricot/mango sherbet with an unusual lime or mint influence in the heart of the flower which adds a glow to the flower and aids the carrying power of the flower. Horizontal falls have self-colored flounces which pop straight up in the air. Nicely formed blossoms, wider and overall the best of the duo. The stalks appeared somewhat thin but held everything up well under adverse weather conditions. SEEUN IS BELEEVUN (Burseen 2004) didn't make much of an impression on me with first-year bloom in the Oklahoma Convention gardens, but more than made up for it in Portland. A delectable confection in softest apricot with a satin sheen to its texture. Then, to add spunk, there is an airbrushing of maroon-violet in the shoulders (not haft marks), quite unique. Opens well, even in cold weather, in spite of heavy ruffling and a dash of lace. The horns, self-colored, looked "feathered" in some of the gardens, a very fascinating look. Excellent plant habits, healthy with plenty of increase and a good bloom/increase ratio. Most stalks carried 3 branches.

SEEING STARS (Christopherson 2005) was first seen as a seedling at the Fresno Convention listed as a BB. Fortunately the hybridizer adjusted the classification to a Tall Bearded before introduction, because its flower size is too large for a BB. Nonetheless, the flowers are smaller than the usual TB, displayed on proportionately shorter stalks (28-30"). It appears to me like a Space Age version of 'Daredevil' (Keppel) with cornflower to royal blue stitching on white, then orange-red beards often expanding to flounched appendages. There are few blue plicata Space Agers, and this one is very fine. SWEET EMOTIONS (Christopherson 2003) was a stunning clump at MOBOT in St. Louis. A simply-formed, unusual shade of vibrant deep pink, it threw bold horns with consistency throughout the planting. Its most impressive traits, however, were its beautiful lush foliage with terrific increase, and outstanding stalks carrying four branches. I rarely take the time (have the time) to stop in the middle of a convention garden to actually count buds, but I did with this one - 11 to 15 buds on every stalk in the clump, many with 3 open at once!

CLASSICS: LAVENDER PETTICOAT (Osborne 1975), MISS VENUS (Zurbrigg 1975), SPACE DRAGON (Osborne 1974).

## MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

### MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

There are so many fine offerings from fellow Region 22 hybridizer, Ken Fisher (Arkansas), they are being reviewed together this year. If I fail to mention it on each one, this hybridizer will ensure that the branching of his releases will be a cut above in quality, the foliage will be graceful and "under control", the flowers distinctive, well formed, and properly sized within the strict dimensions dictated by the class, and worthy of a place in your garden. His self-critical evaluation of his seedlings is mindful of the same high standards of another great MTB hybridizer, the late Mary Louise Dunderman.

AH YES (Fisher 2002) is perhaps the least known of recent releases, but was most impressive. It is a violet bitone, with the falls 2 tones deeper than the standards. Gold beards. It is nearly completely devoid of haft marks, rare for a diploid MTB. Excellent form. It has very good foliage, smaller, tidy, and compact. OZARK MAID (Fisher 2003) is a compact medium violet (the falls one tone deeper) with white showing through in the midribs of the standards and the upper half of the horizontal falls. Look closely at the yellow beards - as with some other MTB's, they appear to be seriously thinking about producing horns! Quality stalks with excellent branching and bud count (3 branches, double socketed). PERFORMER (Fisher 2003) is a unique shade of blue, leaning towards steel-grey or even gunmetal, with carefully positioned, well disciplined veining radiating out from an understated white base color. Beards are small, yellow, and discreet. Although it is at the lower end of the spectrum for MTB height, it concisely positions 3 branches in perfect placement, double-socketed, thin and graceful. To be so subtle, it leaves quite an impression. In the cooler, damper weather of the Portland convention, it was perhaps even prettier, retaining its high quality attributes. Well named, it is truly a performer - with consistency. But, indeed the star this year at the Portland Convention was SAILOR'S DREAM (Fisher 2004), which wound up winning the Franklin Cook Cup for Best Out-of-Region iris

at convention - a rare feat at national conventions where Tall Bearded dominate. Perfect clumps in every garden gusted. The color is a vibrant, pure full to deep blue self, absolutely smooth at the hafts. Beards have only a hint of brown in them. It consistently produced perfect stalks, with 3 branches, the bottom one coming up out of the foliage. Foliage was compact, in compliance with the strict requirements of the class, in harmony with its tidy flowers and graceful stalks.

Ken has also done work in tetraploid MTB's, and in my opinion, SPRING BLUSH (Fisher 2002) is the best to date. With Hager's 'Abridged Version', 'New Idea', 'New Wave', and 'Puppy Love' in its pedigree, it is a smooth light to medium peach self with orange beards influenced with pink. Beautiful modern form and superb substance testifies to its bloodline. Stalks are thin and graceful, in class, with decent branching and bud count.

**JAZZY DECOR** (Witt), registered in 2003, but not introduced yet, as of the date of this writing. It is a dazzling array with clean full yellow standards atop a medley of brick-red and brown embellished with white striping in the falls. The colors are pulled together with yellow hafts, golden beards, and a narrow edging on the falls in gold. Tight, quite tiny, cute flowers, with stalks proportionately at the lower end of the MTB spectrum. PEEBEE AND JAY (Schmieder 2006) is a cleverly-named new MTB from New England in a presentation of colors new to diploid MTB's. The standards are peanut butter brown. The violet-orchid falls (the jelly) have a gold beard. Was seen in the 2005 St. Louis Convention gardens under Seedling Number 98-BP-1.

I have but three words to describe MYSTIC CRYSTAL (Markham 2005): Cute, cute, CUTE! A darling, petite crystalline white complemented with full yellow beards. First seen at the Portland Median Convention in 2004, still under number, it took center stage in St. Louis, with fantastic stalks, high bud count, and nice spacing of its 3-4 branches, doing so without crowding or being lost in the foliage. Plants and stalk thickness/height are in excellent proportion with the smaller, dainty flowers. At the same conventions, LADY TARA (Varner 2006) was also seen under number (Seedling #R303). It is a rich full blue, approximately the depth of tone as 'Sailor's Dream', but has a different appearance in its form and is more at the upper limits of the class. It carries up to 4 branches, double socketed, on slender, graceful stalks.

**RAYOS ADENTRO** (Carol Morgan, R. 2004) is a mystery iris to me, from a new hybridizer from Michigan I am unfamiliar with. It was outstanding both in St. Louis and in Portland, with intense dark red standards and falls with an unusual overlay of black. The falls are then punctuated with bold white stripes running up and down the upper half of the falls, radiating out from yellow beards. What makes this unique is a lacquered, waxy texture, the likes of which I don't believe I have ever witnessed before in diploid MTB's. I will certainly be contacting the hybridizer this winter to get more details, including when it is to be scheduled for introduction. Z Z ZANZIBAR (Kasperek 2005), registered as a species, is an MTB-type with clean white standards and base color of the falls. Then the falls are mischievously striped up and down in a neat-o deep violet tone (near black). The flowers are tidy and petite with cute form. It is a good grower and produces very nice stalks.

We are still in dire need of quality **tetraploid MTB's**. Slowly but surely, some patient hybridizers are making headway. EASY (Craig 2005) was almost finished blooming in the Collier Garden at the Portland Convention, but showed signs of great promise. A simple, clean medium yellow with wonderful branching coming from its l. aphylla bloodlines. Stalks were thin and graceful, in character with the class. LUCY DOODLE (Nearpass-Chesapeake and Potomac Iris Society 2003) is a pert variegata, with golden yellow standards, ruby red falls, and a bright golden yellow beard. What's missing in this tet MTB are those annoying haft marks too common with the diploids. The form is contemporary and reasonably wide and rounded, but still retains the characteristics of a quality MTB. Tidy growth habits. It carries its 3 branches a bit close to the stalk, but still acceptable.

**CLASSICS:** DAPPLED PONY (Witt 1981), FUN AND FANCY (Guild 1980), GUMDROPS (Hager 1982, Tet).

### **BORDER BEARDED:**

**CUT ABOVE** (Aitken 2005) is my favorite of a group of sibs from a "ka-ching!" (gold mine) cross for Terry, all BB's, and all with superlative quality. Standards are a bronze to chestnut brown. Horizontal falls are white

in the heart, then heavily edged in a pleasing mustard-bronze. Thick bold tangerine beards jazz up the scene. It has tight, proper form, with closed standards and horizontal falls which exhibit deeper texture veining, which adds to the sophistication of the flower. LOVE POWER (Aitken 2006), a sib, couldn't be more different in its color. It is a clear, cool light orchid self with deeper texture veins and a coral-red beard. Other than the color, it carries the same fine qualities as 'Cut Above', including wonderful show stalks with excellent spacing and plenty of buds.

KEEPER (Craig 2003) was a pleasant surprise, a plicata similar to another high-quality BB from the Craigs, 'Spy', but in a softer, pretty cornflower blue with precise, heavy ruffling. Nice form, standards open but held well. Foliage is in proper proportion, shorter and graceful, as are the stalk height (with 3 well spaced branches) and flower size. Very vigorous. MOONTIME (Craig 2005) is an interesting study in warm white with an unusual green glow in the heart of the flower. It has plentiful ruffling and an attractive chiffon texture. The color was a bit muddy in the cold wet Portland Convention gardens, but I anticipate it "cleaning up" and being ever more attractive in a warmer, drier bloom season.

MORNING TWILIGHT (Keppel 2005) has a very eerie color, a muted and smoked mauve-orchid with an unusual smoked pink beard that adds to the intrigue. Flowers, stalk height, and foliage are in proper proportion for a BB. Simple stalks are adequately branched with 2 branches plus spur. The effect grows on you - you keep coming back to it in the garden. YOUNG PRINCE (F. Rogers 2003) is a charming smoky grape luminata with the color of the heart of the flower being a subtle buff-salmon. Stalks are thin, almost too thin, in class, as is the size of the flowers. Plant habits were notably good, considering many luminatas can be finicky. The glow of the luminata gives life to the flower, with good carrying power in the garden, more vivacious than most luminatas.

CLASSICS: CHILD'S PLAY (Ghio 1972), JOHN'S JOY (Ensminger 1972), LITTLE SUSIE (Quadros 1970), MEXICALI (Keppel 1970).

#### INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:

CAYENNE (M. Smith 2006) carries the style of color of the SDB, 'Minidragon' (M. Smith) in the IB class. It has improved form over its SDB parent with standards that behave themselves. The best (and most recent) of a trio of IB's from this line of work. The red hot chili pepper flowers are richly saturated, with stunning contrasting beards in brick red to burnished orange. It produces 3 branches with beautiful spacing.

DRAGONMASTER (M. Smith 2004) is more the color combination of 'Minidragon', with deep red standards against black-red falls and more of a brighter red beard. It has a velvet pile in the falls which intensifies the color impact. It doesn't have quite the "finished" look as 'Cayenne', but is still most acceptable. From the same color range, JUMP START (Keppel 2002) has coloring similar to 'Ruby Slippers' (Keppel), more of a wine bicolor, with deep wine standards and deeper burgundy-wine falls. Branching can be a bit inconsistent, but it can produce some fine bloomstalks.

FLYING CIRCUS (Keppel 2004) is a raucous affair, a bicolor plicata with solid light salmon-peach standards and white-based falls, boldly banded in red-violet and rose stitching. It is going to be a great show iris, with incredible branching, stalks consistently opening multiple blossoms. Backup buds are staggered properly, providing an acceptable length of bloom, like a good IB should. SPICED PEACHES (Black 2004) is also a bicolor plicata, but presents itself on a different stage. Bold peach-orange standards are nearly solid in color. Falls are a buff-pink to apricot base, then irregular sanded (spiced) in varying degrees of grape, sienna, and orange. It will give 'Flying Circus' a run for its money on the show bench also, with magnificent branching. JERSEY CREAM (Keppel 2002), from luminata breeding, is a warm creamy-white glaciata, with just a few hairs of the beards showing yellow deep in the heart of the flower. A lovely creation. Branching can be a bit inconsistent at times, but I have seen it sport show stalks with 3 branches with multiple blossoms open.

CLASSICS: LOOKIN' GOOD (Hager 1979), MARTY (W. Jones 1978), OKLAHOMA BANDIT (Nichols 1980), VERSE (Gatty 1979).

#### STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:

**ATTENDANT** (T. Johnson 2004) is a mahogany-red on yellow plicata in the fashion of ‘Firestorm’ (M. Smith), but with even heavier saturation of the plicata coloring. Form is faultless, very classy but in a masculine way. **CHEEKY KID** (Schmieder 2006) was first seen while still under number (#97-CA-1) at the “Medians Galore in 2004” in Portland. It is a wide, rounded plicata, with form in the tradition of ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black), laid out in a ‘Tea Apron’ (El Dorado) style -- pure white with an intensification of deep violet appearing solidly in the style arms and gently stitched only in the shoulder area of the falls. Clean and pert, a new plicata with worlds of character. A cutie pie. From Italy, **POLLICINO** (Bianco 2004) is similar, but with more plicata markings surrounding all petals instead of only in the shoulders of the falls. It too has that classic look in its form from ‘Chubby Cheeks’.

**SURROUNDED** (Black 2005) is an impressive new plicata, a vivid violet-blue plicata, with only a patch of white showing through in the heart of the falls, just in time to show off its contrasting red beards. There have been a few attempts at this color combination over the years, to tease us; with ‘Surrounded’, we have arrived! **FREEZE FRAME** (Black 2004) is a cold white, boldly and precisely banded in deepest violet, truly approaching black. Just an inkling of white shows through in the midribs of the standards. It has impeccable form and thick, tough substance. Just the opposite in style, **HALF MOON** (Black 2003) is cleverly named, in that the standards exhibit the heavier saturation, then the falls are white with a heavy concentration of violet at the shoulders, then purposefully, gradually decreasing in degree of stitching as you travel down the falls. Fascinating!

**HOMESPUN HONEY** (Walker 2006) is a warm honey plic, with amber-russet striations and speckling at the shoulders and around the beards. It inherited its wide, round, ruffled form from ‘Chubby Cheeks’, and possesses a nice glow which transmits carrying power to the flower. **RED TOP HAT** (Walker 2006) is an unusual creation; if you look closely, and know what you’re looking at, you’ll see that it has plicatas in its pedigree. If the wide, rounded form looks familiar, yep, it has ‘Chubby Cheeks’ as a grandparent. Somewhere in all that red, there is an underlying base color of cream to yellow. But the standards are almost completely saturated with a charming shade of wine red, and then the falls have marbled/ washed type of fancy plicating, giving ever more character to the flower. And then **INVISIBLE** (Black 2004) is a pure white glaciata which exhibits absolutely no other color in the flower. As with most glaciatas, the color is exceptionally pure, its beautiful rounded form glistening in the sunlight.

**ARTFUL TRADITION** (B. Jones 2006) is a white with a bold deep blue spot pattern occupying half the falls, similar in style to the great classic, ‘Boo’ (Markham), but is then accentuated with a bright red beard sitting amidst the blue spot pattern. There are even some suggestions of green peering out of the shoulder area. **MIKEY LIKES IT** (Aitken 2003) is somewhat similar, with white standards, but the falls are almost completely covered in deep blue to grape, and then sport a distinct, fine band of white. Beards are deep yellow, sometimes appearing to be carrying tangerine tones. **FIESTA FLAME** (Aitken 2004) is a deeper version of its grandparent, ‘Pele’ (Aitken) with rich orange emblazoned with a stunning red spot pattern covering nearly the entire falls, capped with a dazzling deep orange beard. The form is an improvement over ‘Pele’, and it has much better substance and even a fair amount of ruffling.

Major advancements in oranges and their derivatives continue to be made. **FIRE EATER** (M. Smith 2005) is the next step in the evolution of orange SDB’s, an update of the Cook-Douglas Medalist, ‘Marksman’ (M. Smith), tighter and more compact. It is every bit as bright in color, fully saturated, with flower form that is a bit more refined. **LOST ART** (Black 2005) is a golden-yellow with just a suggestion of a deeper spot in the falls, interrupted with the biggest, boldest, fuzziest bright orange beards imaginable. Standards are decidedly open, but hold their own, allowing the viewer to look down and get the full impact of those dazzling beards. **PHOTON** (M. Smith 2005) has magnificent color, an improved, refined ‘Circus Dragon’ (B. Jones) with richer colors, smoother finish, better form, and more ruffling. It is bright yellow (without the gold influences as found in ‘Lost Art’), also possessing howling thick deep orange beards. Intense drama!

Truly at the opposite end of the emotional spectrum, you find **SHALLOWS** (M. Smith 2006), a fascinating sequencing of colors like I’ve never seen before in an SDB. Standards give the impression of opalescent soft green. Falls are a translucent blending of pewter, true grey, and then infused slightly with the color of the standards. Standards are domed and ruffled; falls are horizontal with a significant degree of ruffling, giving motion to the effect. You have to see it to fully appreciate it.

CLASSICS: FINE PRINT (Keppel 1968), GINGERBREAD MAN (B. Jones 1969), LADY (Warburton 1969), PEANUTS (Hager 1969), RED HEART (A. Brown 1967).

### MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED

A trio of colorful dwarfs from similar breeding make up this year's review. FISSION CHIPS (Keppel 2004) must surely glow in the dark! The neon orange is much brighter, prettier, and more exciting than what could be captured in the catalog. Flower size is in class, and the stalks and foliage are tidy and in proportion. It has an amazing amount of ruffling for such a small package, yet it pulls it off splendidly. SUN DABS (Aitken 2002) has excellent color presentation with orange beards against the dainty bright yellow flowers. Form is wide and rounded, but get out the tape measure, it does indeed meet the size qualifications. TINY TITAN (Aitken 2002) is similar, but done in orange with deeper orange, bushy beards. Both have the correct flower size for an MDB, with dainty, narrow foliage in character with the class.

CLASSICS: FUZZY (Westfall 1971), GAY SUNSHINE (Sindt 1973).

### ARILBREDS

ABSOLOM'S TREACHERY (McGrath 1998, OGB) is intoxicating and brooding with domed deep spectrum violet standards dominating over somewhat lighter rose-violet falls following up with signals the depth of color of the standards. The whole flower possesses an intriguing smoked overlay, adding to the impact of the seductive colors. BETTY McPHERSON (Rice 2001, OGB) has nearly solid white standards with only a suggestion of tiny veining. Then the falls have a much greater intensification of the deep veining, shooting out from the heart of the flower in a spray pattern. Perhaps similar in nature to 'Jonnye's Magic' (Rich-Whately), but not with so much of the appearance of a plicata pattern.

EASTERN BLUSH (Ransom 2002, RB/MED), from France, is from regelia blood, typically difficult to describe in words. Technically it is an arilbred-median, with the median Faux Pas (Keppel BB) as the pollen parent. The primary color is mauve shading into a soft ochre-yellow, slightly deeper in the falls, intensifying to an old gold edging, more predominant in the falls. The regelia bloodline announces itself with an artistic flash of violet below a lighter area in the upper part of the falls, bleeding out from a small blue beard. OMAR'S GOLD (Boswell 1995, OGB-) is quite probably the best and most important of many fine arilbred-medians which Carl has produced over the past 20 years, and is certainly the most dependable, acclimating beautifully in all parts of the country. It has domed warm yellow standards, complemented with burnished old gold falls, transforming somewhat to a lighter tone at the edges, and then a black signal embracing gold beards. It is IB in height and flower size. Faultless plant habits, excellent bloom/increase ratio, and is stunning in a clump.

MAGIC DREAM (Flanagan 2001) was love at first sight for me, and has become one of my favorite arilbreds. Medium violet standards are solid in color. The falls mimic the color, but are then blended with varying degrees of tan and rich mahogany tones, a brown version of its parent, 'Tornado Warning'. An imposing rounded jet black signal dominates the eye - you can't help but stare at it! PINK SERAPH (Shockey 2001) is a major advancement in the quest for truly pink arilbreds. The globular standards are a soft lavender-pink, flushed a bit deeper in the base of the midribs. Rounded falls are a lush rose-pink, a couple of shades deeper than the intensity of the standards, adorned with much deeper rose-purple signals surrounding gold beards. The substance and resistance to fading is decent, highly commendable for this color range. SURPASSING YELLOW (Mathes 2001, OGB) is amazing, in that it has a deep maroon-wine, 'Concerto Grosso', as a parent. The only place this type of color comes through in this flower is in a large, daring dark mahogany signal dominating the falls. Otherwise, the flower is an intense yellow (not gold), sunfast, with some of the best saturation in arilbreds.

CLASSICS: IMAM SALAH (White 1956), JABAL KERAK (White 1955), KALIFA BALTIS (White 1955), KALIFA KABUL (White 1956), TATAI PASHA (White, 1955), VOLUNTEER FIREMAN (Cline-Durrance 1957).

### LOUISIANAS

BROAD DAYLIGHT (Dunn-Ghio 2002) is a neon yellow, the most intense yellow on the block, virtually devoid of a signal and 100% sunfast, blessed with a serious amount of ruffling. It has a leathery substance inherited

from its parent, 'Gladiator's Gift'. Excellent branching and a good strong plant. **GOOD HEAVENS** (Dunn 1997) is an interesting mauve-lavender with an opaque look, similar to that of 'Art World' (Taylor). It is a total self, nearly devoid of the presence of a signal. Branching is a little tight, with 3 branches. Average to good growth habits. When I first saw **ENVIABLE** (Faith 2002), I thought it was a tetraploid, because of its thick substance and wide body parts. It reminds me of 'Easter Tide' (Arny) with its blue standards and yellow falls. The colors are more subtle, especially the blue part, but texture veining truly enhances the flower, and the petals are flatter and more rounded.

**COOL NITE** (Morgan 2001) is a dramatic bitone, with moderately dark blue-violet standards and deeper midnight blue falls with only a hint of a yellow line signal. As with many of Richard's creations, it is shorter and proportionately smaller-flowered. It exhibits the luster its parent, 'Sea Knight' was famous for. **GINGER PUNCH** (Morgan 1999) is a unique, pleasing ginger-honey with a yellow signal. Smaller, compact flowers are displayed on shorter stalks with 3 branches with beautiful spacing. Average growth habits. This was my first year to see **NIGHT THUNDER** (Morgan 2000), and what a treat was in store for me! Rich lustrous black from the red side. Form and style of bold yellow signal mindful of 'Ann Chowning' (Chowning). The substance is notable - it held up in the acid rain of the Pacific Northwest with no damage. A velvet pile makes the color of the falls even more intense.

**TRANSIT** (Taylor 1999) continues a tradition of high-quality heavily ruffled yellows for which this Australian hybridizer is famous. The color is soft and gentle, but the stalks are tall and stately, not to be overlooked. Magnificent branching, with bud count sufficient to guarantee a pleasant length of bloom cycle. John is also known for his choice dark varieties. **UNDERCOVER** (Taylor 1999) in a pure deep violet, with the intensity of color of its mother, 'Bout Midnight' (Dunn) and the tight, disciplined ruffling of its father, 'Rachel's Request' (Taylor). Suave and sophisticated.

**CAPTAIN GATES** (Pryor 1998) is a deep sea blue, mindful of its parent, 'Sea Lord' (Taylor), but with taller stalks and much improved branching. Clean, bold deep yellow signals provide a nice contrast. It has a luster which is surely the envy of its Tall Bearded contemporaries. **PEACHES IN WINE** (Pryor 1998), winner of the 2006 Debaillon Medal, was a worthy choice. This ruffled masterpiece is well named, for it has rich peach standards laying on wide, flat falls of burgundy wine, completed with a fine halo of peach embedded in the ruffling. The coloration of the standards varies, but this is one of the traits that makes it so appealing. **WIZARD OF AUSSIE** (Pryor 2000), named by Heather to honor her friend and fellow hybridizer, John Taylor, is clever and fascinating, with red standards with yellow color breaking, then deep red falls with a dazzling yellow sunburst pattern radiating from the signal area.

**CLASSICS: C'EST MAGNIFIQUE** (Dunn 1980), **CHARLIE'S TRESS** (Arny 1977), **E.C. EVERINGHAM** (Raabe 1980), **UPTIGHT CREAM WHITE** (Arny 1978).

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## **CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 2007/2008**

**Perry Dyer**

This edition of Contemporary Views includes evaluations from the 2007 AIS National Convention here in Oklahoma City; the Median Iris Society's Prairie Gold Convention, hosted by the Lincoln (Nebraska) Iris Society, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Median Iris Society; the 2008 AIS National Convention in Austin; the 2008 Aril Trek in Albuquerque; and the Region 4 Spring Meeting in Winchester, VA, where I was guest speaker and judges training clinician. A considerable amount of notes were taken in some of the main gardens in the weeks prior to the week of the OKC convention, so you will find many reviewed which probably weren't even seen during the convention.

### **AWARD WINNERS**

1. **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**—to the Best New Iris seen (one introduced within the past 3 years of the date of this review): **NOBLE STATURE** (George Hilton 2006) is a divine new offering from a new hybridizer from New Jersey. From a simple, classical cross of two Dykes Medalists, ‘Song of Norway’ (Luihn) X ‘Silverado’ (Schreiner), this new silvery-white holds its own with its contemporaries. It has the large, full form of ‘Silverado’ with more of an icy look to its nature with shimmering blue undertones. Deep well-positioned ruffles abound throughout the flower, and it possesses toughness and resiliency in its substance. As you should expect from such a royal lineage, indeed it has superlative ‘Song of Norway’ branching, tall and stately, with 3-4 branches. The thick strong stalks never waiver from the weight of 3 huge blossoms opening simultaneously, a common sight in this variety. Not just another white – it has flawless plant qualities and a very sophisticated flower.

**Runnersup:**

**SATURN** (T. Johnson 2005), unfortunately, peaked the weekend before the Oklahoma City convention, with a “Cup Clump” in spectacular bloom at the garden at the State Capitol. Nonetheless, it still was giving a fine show on tour day, and looked good in other area gardens also. Suave and sophisticated, it is a rich black-cherry bitone, a full shade deeper in the falls. Yet another outstanding child of the great parent, ‘Romantic Evening’ (Ghio), and the burnt orange beards belie its lineage. From its other parent, ‘Naples’ (one of Thomas’ first introductions, and a great one in its own right), ‘Saturn’ inherited impeccable branching and placement on its moderate height stalks. The sequencing of its buds is especially impressive, ensuring an outstanding season of bloom. Its velvet pile and its resistance to waterspotting are especially meritorious. **REFINER’S FIRE** (McGrath 2007, OGB) was the star of the Albuquerque Aril/Median Trek, and received my vote for Favorite Arilbred. This rich, deep half-bred reminds me of a more modern, larger, more globular version of its great parent, ‘Babylonian Fires’ (Rich-Whitely). The base color is rich deep orchid-lavender, with the falls taken hostage with a huge, dazzling burgundy-red signal patch. A closer look reveals a delicate but intricate network of bronze, even approaching orange, veining, which is further enhanced as the color of the style arms. This adds the warmth of a fire opal to the color array, and gives great carrying power across the garden. Big and bold, with typical globular onco shape. Retains its rich colors even in the high-elevation, dry climate of central New Mexico.

Any iris that could survive the devastating – indeed tragic – late freeze of Nebraska deserves to be noted. But for a variety to perform admirably in all three gardens in which it was guested was truly miraculous. **ABSOLUTE JOY** (Aitken 2006) carried riotous colors with bravura, with bright pink standards and falls, then the falls appliquéd with a screaming rich fuchsia spot pattern in the center, made even more dramatic with intensified veining within the spot. Bright, deep, thick pink beards complete the color array. Obviously from the ‘Pele’ (Aitken) lineage, it has a cleaner color presentation, wider, better developed form, and improved substance. The horizontal falls also have a gentle amount of waving to add to the lilt of the flower. In spite of the freeze, stalks consistently carried 1 branch and 2 buds, with nice, thin ‘Pele’-type foliage, a touch tall at times but graceful and pleasing. Imagine how impressive it will be in a “normal” season.

**MIDNIGHT VIGIL** (Stahly 2005) was one of the great surprises for me at the OKC Convention, and frankly, I was disappointed it didn’t receive more ballyhoo. Rico suave! It is a totally different style of black than found in the popular Schreiner blacks, and even different from previous, excellent offerings in black from this hybridizer. Flowers are quite large, fully saturated in jet black, even in the standards (where you might usually expect deep-deep violet instead of black). Superlative ratings in all the important categories: Excellent velvet texture and thick substance; tall stalks holding up multiple blossoms with 3 branches plus spur; impressive growth habits, with deep green foliage making a stunning clump, with a superb bloom/ increase ratio.

2. **L'ELEGANTE AWARD**—to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen: **CHRISTMAS PRESENT** (Ghio 2007) simply captivated me at the Austin Convention. Described by the hybridizer as a blue-orchid, reminiscent of the historic work in this color of the famed pioneer, Orville Fay, to my eye it was a crystalline pure lilac, a surprisingly rare color in modern irises. It literally shimmered in the sunlight. Beautiful wide form embellished with sculpted, sophisticated ruffling throughout. Stalks carried 3 branches in modified candelabra with perfect spacing over the stalk. Growth was acceptable, but appeared to be suspect in blooming too heavily – further evaluation required to be sure. It reminds me in style of the plethora of dark-tops from the ‘Fogbound’ (Keppel) line on the market today; yet I find its total self presentation to be refreshing.

**Runnersup:**

**FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES** (Ghio 2007) is a drop-dead gorgeous pure white with leathery substance yet an eloquent satin texture. I never grow weary with the offerings Mr. Ghio’s bubble-ruffling line of work produces, and with this variety, we have the ultimate in deep, dramatic ruffling and fluting that is well positioned and consistent throughout the flower. A massive clump (translation – GOOD GROWER) in full bloom at the master planting in OKC at the national convention was memorable. Branching was a bit close to the stalk, but may have been an asset, in that there were so many stalks with multiple blossoms open, yet they all opened properly and did not interfere with each other. **BELLE DE**

**PROVENCE** (Baumunk 2006) is a delicious debutante in soft peach-apricot. The standards have a slight flush of pink in the midribs. The falls are warm white, slightly melded with warm butter yellow, then banded with the primary hues, deeply embedded in tight, sophisticated, intense ruffling. Medium orange beards allow the eye to focus and appreciate the subtle gradations of color. The master planting in OKC produced a huge clump with thick, healthy foliage, with good spacing of stalks throughout. Nicely branched stalks carried 3 branches, double-socketed. Don't let the delicate appearance fool you – substance is substantial; the flowers hold up well to varying climate conditions.

**ANGELIC WHISPERS** (A. Hahn 2006) is just gorgeous, a heavily laced cold white with just a suggestion of a blush of lilac in the heart of the flower. Form is wide and sophisticated. The flowers have heavy substance, yet, in spite of the intensity of ruffling and lace, do not tear their blooms as they open. Very late blooming (had just started blooming the second day of the OKC national convention), with magnificent formal candelabra branching, 3 branches, mostly double-socketed. It is an average increaser with notably impressive plant habits – many laced whites have foliage with a weak “watery” look about them – not so here. **PICTURE BOOK** (Ghio 2007) was magnificent on first-year bloom at the Will Rogers Garden in OKC in 2006. A continuation in a legacy of glorious pinks from this master, the growth habits were notably far superior than many of its predecessors. A luxurious shade of purest medium satin pink, with the intensity and depth of color of the great Dykes Medalist, ‘Pink Taffeta’ (Rudolph), with ruffling and lace so deeply embedded you would swear it would have difficulty in opening. Even in the cool spring of 2006 here, each flower opened without even a suggestion of tearing or twisting. Wonderful branching and double sockets were a nice extension of plants full of stamina.

3. **9-1-1 AWARD**—to the New Iris that is, in my opinion, the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break: **COUNTY CORK** (Schreiner 2007) was reviewed last year after an impressive appearance at the Portland National Convention. I made special note to keep an eye out for it in Oklahoma to see if the unique coloring held in a different climate. I was so enamored that I have elevated it to “winner”! This ethereal yellow is a wonderful advancement in the quest for green irises. The intriguing lime green haze, so prominent in the cool weather of the Pacific Northwest, carried over to central Oklahoma, observed both on a cloudy day and in full sun. It is a complete package, in that the growth habits are superior, and the stalks are consistently well branched. Where so many previous green attempts have been “muddy”, this new iris is captivating and appealing in the garden.

#### **Runnersup:**

**OASIS LORNA** (Chadwick 2005) is another superb color breaker from this recently deceased Idaho hybridizer. It reminded me of the quality of Keith's ‘Oasis Patches’, with perhaps even more decorative streaking and splotching. Instead of purple-on-pink as found in its father, ‘Isn't This Something’ (Ensminger) and ‘Oasis Patches’, the base color here is a rich burgundy wine then streaked in a fireworks display of white and silver. It reminded me of a glorified ‘Bewilderbeast’ (Kasperek) with cleaner, brighter coloration. As with many color breakers, the stalks are a bit short; however, it also has shorter foliage, so the overall proportion is intact. With broad form and respectable substance, certainly an advancement in the cause. **OSSEO** (Worel 2007) was a pleasant surprise, and is a respectable advancement in the ever-elusive attempt at producing a blue-bearded yellow. Large, simply formed flowers have creamy light yellow standards, the falls a warm white with an undercurrent of the standards' color, then capped with an impressive, quite clean light to medium blue beard. So often the offspring from this type of breeding produce muddy flowers and less than palatable memories. Not so here – a fresh, inviting color ensemble. The hybridizer must surely be partial to it also, in that he named it for his home town in Minnesota. Jack's dedicated, concentrated work with blue beards is really starting to pay off – a nice addition to any garden.

Laced blues are still rare, especially in the fuller tones. **CAPE PERPETUA** (Schreiner 2006) is a nice advancement, combining the sophisticated lacing of ‘Queen of Angels’ (Schreiner) with their well-established blue line (‘Captain's Joy’). Take the depth of blue found in ‘Captain's Joy’ and add a significant degree of lace. Substance appears to be a bit thin, subject to further evaluation – it did hold up acceptably in rather challenging weather conditions.

**PRIME POWER** (Tasco 2006) is a nice advancement in full oranges, especially in the areas of plant habits and overall flower production. A moderate sized flower with moderate to heavy lace, yet the flowers open well without tearing or twisting. It is fully sunfast, with good substance that held up well after rains. It carries 3 branches, with the bottom branch coming up out of the foliage. Exemplary plant habits, healthy and vigorous. The saturation is intense – you can see it from clear across the garden.

4. **SUN BELT AWARD**—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): **SUN POWER** (T. Johnson 2004) was blooming well in all 3 gardens in which it was guested in OKC, but was (past tense) especially stunning in the Stahl Garden – the week before convention. As (bad) luck would have it, some critter of the chewing kind (cutworms?) got into the clump, literally the night before tour day and ruined what was unquestionably a “Cup Clump”! This heavily ruffled full yellow is a beacon that can be seen clear across the garden. It doesn't say “come hither” to you – it shouts “get over here!” Plant habits are

peerless with rich blue-green foliage. It inherited its magnificent branching and bud count from the great parent, ‘Goldkist’ (Black). It has been consistently superb every year since its first-year bloom in 2005 and has never failed to perform. Thomas has introduced several high-quality yellows this past decade. Unfortunately, most have received very little ballyhoo – and this is the best of the bunch.

**Runnersup:**

**JONNYE'S MAGIC** (Rich-Whitely 1992, OGB) continues to impress me, and remains one of my all-time favorite arilbreds. Rounded, globular flowers in silvery-white are finely, artistically veined in deep violet, with the color intensifying the closer to the edges of the petals. The visual impact is that of a plicata, and is most unique in the class. Substance is substantial, allowing the expansive flowers to retain their shape through the life of the flower. Stalks are tall and strong, usually producing 1 branch, 3-4 buds. Its ability to endure any of the quirks of Mother Nature makes it consistent in performance, year after year. **HOOK** (T. Johnson 2001) was one of the first introductions from Thomas Johnson, and set the standard for the high quality of work we would see from him. ‘Hook’ is a simple full-toned mulled wine to plum blend. The “hook” is literally a hook on this innovative Space Ager. With consistency, a white appendage extends up discreetly from thinner gold beards like the end of a crochet needle. It has tall willowy stalks in the tradition of its father, ‘Conjuration’ (Byers) with magnificent branching. A vision of health in the growth department, dependable year after year.

I have been impressed with **LADY OF LEONESS** (Spoon 2000) since the last national convention hosted in Oklahoma City – in 1999 by the former Sooner State Iris Society, when it was guested as a kissing cousin (reciprocal cross) to the Cook Cup Winner that year, ‘Uncle Charlie’ (Spoon 1999). Both irises are classics, coming from classic parents, Dykes Medalists ‘Silverado’(Schreiner) and ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiner). Granted, these two are similar, presented in soft, eloquent lavender-blue with lovely waving and ruffling. ‘Lady of Leoness’ is my preference of the two, but this is just a matter of personal taste. To my eye, it is just a touch smaller in size, and structurally more sound and slightly bluer than ‘Uncle Charlie’. As you would expect from such choice parents, the plant habits are flawless, the branching and bud count perfection. **TICKETY BOO** (Niswonger 2001, SDB) has arisen from the pack to be one of the best examples of medians with contrasting beards. It has wonderful color in soft fawn to mauve pink hue, then accented with screaming, dazzling deep indigo blue beards, approaching purple to nearly black! Form is wide and sufficiently “finished” in appearance. It possesses wonderful growth habits and consistency in performance, even in the adverse conditions from Nebraska after a devastating freeze. Wonderfully obscene, cute and clever; it leaves quite an impact!

5. **DARK HORSE AWARD**—to the variety introduced within the past 10 years or so that has been overlooked by AIS judges and deserved higher awards: **CITOYEN** (Anfosso 1989) I only discovered, myself, in recent years, and an impressive clump of it in the McGrath Garden at the Albuquerque Aril/Median Trek sealed the deal for me. An esoteric affair, with the base color an unusual shade of orange, toned down with beige. Then, bleeding at the edge of the falls is a diffused band of raspberry, almost in the style of an ‘Emma Cook’ pattern. Nothing like it on the market, with quality features inherited from its mother, the great Australasian Dykes Medalist, ‘Sostenique’ (Blyth). Yes, Pete grows other irises besides arils, and in spite of all those aril types in full bloom on tour day, I found myself sneaking back over to the side of the house for another glimpse of this magnificent French iris.

**Runnersup:**

**PEWTER TREASURE** (Durrance 1994) was seen in the Stout Garden in OKC again this season, and brought back memories of just how impressive this iris is. Perfectly named, it is a pewter grey with deeper texture veins that add vitality to the flower. It has a translucent sheen that makes the flower glisten in the sunlight. Most “grey” irises are rather drab in the garden – not so with this one. A charming companion would be **SUNNY BUBBLES** (Maryott 1993), yet another fine Maryott variety that was unforgivably overlooked by AIS judges. A bright sunshine yellow, only slightly lighter in the heart of the falls, just below bright yellow beards. A beautiful study in iris ruffling, they are deep and frothy, perfectly positioned throughout the flower. **SPITFIRE** (Hager 1992, BB) was one of Ben’s finest BBs, yet received very little “play” from the judges. A pure glistening white with bright tangerine beards. It came from a fine lineage, including the equally overlooked ‘Bride’s Lace’ (Julander) and ‘Beverly Sills’ (Hager). It has respectable growth habits, whereas many red-bearded whites fail the test. And **FINE DÉCOR** (C. Palmer 1994, IB), another fine median from a largely unheralded Oklahoma hybridizer. Introduced the same year as the best IB Cleo ever produced (and one of the greatest IBs of all times), ‘Frosty Elegance’, ‘Fine Décor’ is warmer, in soft yellow, creamy warm white in the falls, then banded in the yellow of the standards. Form is impeccable, wide and rounded, with a wonderful chiffon texture. Plant habits are faultless.

6. **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD**—to the most outstanding and promising seedling personally viewed this season: **PD.CbS.10.01** (Hugh Stout) was, hands-down, the star seedling of the OKC Convention, wowing conventioneers

with a huge clump in the master planting at OSU. It was one of only a handful of seedlings that garnered a High Commendation (HC) vote in 2007. It is a light, airy blue-orchid amoena of moderate size, with color slightly more intensified at the edges of the falls in the style of an 'Emma Cook' pattern. A tangerine beard provides contrast, and is the "star" in the night sky. Completely encapsulated with ruffling, and its airy effect is heightened with nearly horizontal falls, setting the flowers to dance in the breeze, reminding me of the grace and ambiance of the great 'Heartstring Strummer' (B. Johnson). Graceful stalks are in the style of 'Conjuration' (Byers), but it is actually from another Dykes Medalist, 'Celebration Song' (Schreiner), which produces a mighty fine show stalk itself. It has now been named **POLESTAR**, and is scheduled for introduction in 2009 by Rockytop Gardens (Phil Williams, Tennessee). "Local boy done good!" -- created by a talented new hybridizer from right here in Oklahoma City who is also an outstanding AIS judge.

#### **Runnersup:**

Yet another seedling from the work of Slovakian breeder, **Anton Mego**, has found its way into this review, and received another one of my HC votes in the TB class in 2007: **AM-01/0641-1** is a splendid bicolor with apricot standards with an orchid flush in the midribs. That color of orchid becomes the primary color of the falls, with entrancing mauve undertones and a bright, joyous orange beard. Wonderful leathery texture and good substance allowed the flowers to endure a typical brisk Oklahoma wind. Stalks are tall and straight, with somewhat inconsistent branching, but mostly OK, with 2 to 3 branches. The color ensemble reminded me of the classic beauties from Opal Brown, or perhaps the early work of Paul Black. In all three convention gardens in which it was guested, the growth habits were excellent, with good bloom/increase ratio. **Lynn Markham #97-7B3** was showing off in all three gardens in which it was guested in Oklahoma City. Clever lady -- she has picked a perfect name for this seedling: **POLISHED BRONZE**, introduced in 2008 by Terry Aitken (Salmon Creek Garden). This innovative new iris is a dazzling display of rustic golden bronze with deeper, even glossy copper-brown airbrushing. It has rather unusual form, not the wide and rounded cookie-cutter sameness as our poor brainwashed eyes are accustomed to. The flowers are gently waved in harmony with the intensified coloring -- never seen anything quite like it. In Oklahoma, it was only moderate in height, with ramrod straight stalks strong and sensible. The branches are actually quite close to the stalk, yet each flower at each position opened properly in all three gardens -- in one, a couple of stalks had 3 open at once, and had plenty of backup buds for the next week. Good growth, with an appropriate bloom/ increase ratio.

**RACHEL JULIA** (Francelle Edwards, a new hybridizer from Glendale, AZ) was the best seedling viewed during the Austin Convention. Registered in 2006, it is scheduled for introduction by Kary Iris Gardens (Scottsdale, AZ) in 2009. It is a lovely, refreshing bicolor, with clean light to medium yellow standards; the falls a tapestry of colors in orchid and tones of red and brown, then banded distinctly in tan-brown. Although from the super-parent, 'Conjuration' (Byers) it doesn't produce a Space Age appendage -- just a bright yellow beard to complement the color array. Moderately ruffled and laced. Great stalks. Many in this color combination are soft on substance -- not so with this new variety. The flowers hold their color well through the life of the flower. **Bob Annand #89-7C** is a yellow/lavender bicolor in the tradition of 'Stairway to Heaven' (Lauer), but with a more moderate-sized flower and prettier, clearer color presentation. In spite of its subtle coloring, a huge clump in full bloom at the State Capitol Garden in Oklahoma City drew a lot of attention, winning it an HC, one of very few awarded this season. Strong stalks were tall and somewhat willowy, yet they gave gently in the breeze, allowing for an airy feeling. Branching was consistent and excellent throughout the clump. Plant habits were perfection, with a textbook bloom/increase ratio. Now named **CAPITOL DEBUT**, a 2008 introduction.

#### **WATCH PARTY:**

I'm always hesitant to describe seedlings still under number in the primary sections of Contemporary Views, because I believe that few people follow these reviews so closely as to go back and see if any I have recognized as seedlings go on to be introduced. But, with so many great seedlings seen these past two years, I don't think it's fair to limit the review to only five finalists for the Pick of the Litter.

#### **Tall Bearded:**

**AM-01/0861-5** (Anton Mego) is an intriguing, unusual shade of brown, totally different from the American bloodlines such as Ghio's browns. What is fascinating is that, as the flower ages, the chestnut brown transforms to a totally different shade and texture -- NOT fading -- transforming. Stalks were a bit thinner, in formal candelabra style, but held up well in the breeze, with 3 branches, mostly double socketed. Good growth habits. I hope he introduces this one, just so I can watch the judges squirm when time to judge it at the show! **Doug Kanarowski 0180** was one of a very limited number of impressive seedlings at the Austin convention. This unusual mauved-violet reminds me of a prettier, cleaner version of the fine 'Endearing Charm' (Painter), with similar bronze colored shoulder pads. Horizontal falls are heavily ruffled and literally touch at the hafts. It carries a nice satin texture and complementary bronze beards. Tall, strong stalks with modified candelabra branching with good placement.

**Leroy Meininger 01-KDxCC** (named **CHILL FACTOR**, a 2008 introduction) is a choice Space Age in pastel peach sherbet, whiter in the falls, then with darker peach shoulders and a hint of a halo around the falls. Deep apricot beards end consistently in white flounces. Very elegant. Tall stalks (40") often opened multiple large blossoms, but did a commendable job of remaining upright. It produced a huge clump, with rampant growth like 'Capricious Candles' (Meininger), but doesn't overbloom as 'Capricious Candles' tends to do. Texture is soft chiffon and although the substance might appear to be less than desirable – not so – it held up superbly after a moderate rain. Another impressive Space Ager was **BEWITCHING HOUR** (Helsley, Registered 2005), an intriguing dark one from a different approach to dark breeding. Although from 'Thornbird' (Byers), it is a deep wine-black, almost self in appearance except for a slight spray pattern of white around the beards which transform into stunning wine-red horns, consistent in their application. This was impressive in more than one garden at the Austin Convention.

### **Medians:**

Good breeding goes beyond the iris patch – like mother like daughter. Stephanie, daughter of Lynn, also produced a seedling which is a repeater in this review, also making the "Watch Party" list in the 2005/2006 edition of Contemporary Views: **Stephanie Markham #98-42A**, now named **BIT O' ROYALTY**, also being introduced in 2008 by Aitken, impressed me at the Portland Convention and again in 2007 in Oklahoma City. This diploid MTB is a smaller, more compact 'Among Friends' (Varner) type, just as clean and colorful, just as exciting. Standards are clear white, pure and chaste, atop royal purple falls with a distinctive halo in white. It has incredible branching, with 3 branches, rebranching, and double sockets. Two SDB seedlings guested in Nebraska were impressive, and wound up being "guinea pigs" in an informative, impromptu judges training session conducted by Terry Aitken in the White Garden. **00-101-5** (Lee Walker) was beautiful and classy, reminding me of some of the early Paul Black things that were so nice. Warm cream with infusions of green in the standards. Falls carried a subtle small yellow-green spot around the beards. Heavy substance with beautiful waxy texture. Flowers were broad with moderate to heavy ruffling. A complete package. Perhaps nothing new in color, yet I found it to be very distinctive in its own discreet way, and the waxy texture captivating. Another from this talented, relatively newer hybridizer from Oregon was **MC02-2-6** (Lee Walker). It is unique – nothing like it on the current market. It appears to be a luminata, or at least from luminata breeding. Standards are soft apricot-pink. The base color of the falls is the same, but then heavily overlaid with a delicate, attractive orchid-lavender wash/airbrushing. Bright shrimp-coral beards. Nicely formed, wide and simple. I would buy either of the seedlings in a heartbeat.

### **UPDATES:**

With this edition of Contemporary Views, I will now provide updates to seedlings previously reviewed in earlier editions of Contemporary Views.

#### **2005/2006 Issue:**

**POWER WOMAN** (Neil Mogensen) was introduced in 2008 by Snowpeak Iris Garden.

**RAYOS ADENTRO** (Carroll Morgan MTB) was introduced in 2007 by the Willott's.

**THAT CERTAIN SOMETHING** (Griff Crump) was introduced in 2008 by Winterberry Gardens.

**Thomas Johnson T12B** became **SUPER MODEL**, a 2007 introduction by Mid-America Gardens.

**Thomas Johnson T137A** became **ICE CAPADES**, a 2008 introduction by Mid-America Gardens.

**Stephanie Markham 98-42A** (MTB) became **BIT O' ROYALTY**, a 2008 introduction by Aitken Salmon Creek Gardens.

**Merle Roberts 00-181A** became **WADE RILEY**, a 2007 introduction by Rockytop Gardens.

**Terry Varner V-350** (MTB) became **DESERVING ATTENTION**, a 2007 introduction by Hermit Medlars Walk.

#### **2003/2004 Issue:**

**ELAINE BOURQUE** (Dorman Haymon LA) was introduced in 2008 by Iris City Gardens.

**Ron de la Motte 98-252-2** became **MADDIE DE**, introduced in 2007 by de la Motte.

**Lesley Painter L97-7** became **BRILLIANCE**, a 2005 introduction by Napa Country Iris Garden.

**Barbara Schmieder 97-AR-6** (SDB) became **BANDED TIGER**, a 2006 introduction by Hermit Medlars Walk.

### **TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP**

#### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

The innovative line of red breeding which Joe Ghio is working has opened up new vistas in the quest for red. **HOUSE AFIRE** (Ghio 2003) is a rich velvety deep red, the "fire" being an attractive violet flash below deep old gold beards. It has

outstanding form with moderate ruffling and even a bit of lace. In Oklahoma it has been a slow increaser, but produces pretty fans with deep green coloring. **RED SKIES** (Ghio 2007) is a more masculine mahogany red, showcased with a bold blue blaze in the center of the falls. Difficult to evaluate in Austin, it looks promising, and we will keep an eye out for it in the future. The rich luster contributed to the discerning effect.

**FORTUNATE SON** (Schreiner 2006) caught me off guard. A simply formed, rather plain garnet red. Do a double take. Behold, a nice attempt at a deep blue beard, blending into the deep tones of the flower rather than contrasting. Think back. Nope, nothing like it on the market. With that complex pedigree, I wonder where “the beard” came from. I bought it to breed with – not sure what I’m gonna do with it, but I’ll think of something! **WISE WISH** (Spoon 2003) is an unusual number, difficult to describe. Basically a wine-maroon, the falls a full tone deeper than the standards, producing a bit of a bitone effect. The tangerine beards have a fireworks display of white spray shooting from them, covering the upper half of the falls, suggesting there is plicata in its ancestry. The whole flower has an unusual overlay of smoke haze, adding intrigue to the effect. Ruffled, flared falls even have a touch of lace on well-established clumps. The color was even better here in Oklahoma the year after convention.

**CLASSICS:** **BRIMSTONE** (Tompkins 1971); **NATCHEZ TRACE** (Wills 1964); **THE RED DOUGLAS** (Sass 1937).

### **APRICOTS TO ORANGES:**

**PRETTY BUBBLES** (Ghio 2005) is another Ghio beauty, this time in soft, pastel peach-apricot with a blush deeper in the shoulders. In spite of having voluptuous deep chiffon ruffling, the flowers didn’t tear when opening, and standards hold their shape well. In several gardens in Oklahoma, it was only an average grower and increaser, and tended to be stingy with its bloom (not enough stalks for the amount of increase). Wide branching with respectable bud count, but stalk strength was also suspect. Yet, it’s just too beautiful and elegant to be denied! **SANTA WAS HERE** (Niswonger 2005) is a clever, more subtle spinoff from its famous parent, ‘Santa’ (Shoop), displayed in palest apricot with slightly deeper ‘Santa’ shoulders in peach. Standards were too short and squat, throwing off the balance of the flower somewhat, yet retained their shape well. Initially I thought the substance may be weak, but the flowers held up admirably after adverse weather in central Oklahoma. Bud count and branching was fair, with 2 branches plus spur with decent spacing. A pretty flower with chiffon texture, nicer than it was in Portland in previous years. **SUN CIRQUE** (Cadd 2004) is an unusual concoction of colors, and difficult to describe. Although it is short, with somewhat clubby stalks and only average growth, I found myself being drawn back to it again and again. It is basically a blend, with the primary color being orange infused pink. Falls are somewhat lighter, and more creamy in appearance, adorned with a gilt edge on the falls in gold and slightly darker peach in the shoulders around deep orange beards. A wonderful color gem.

**CLASSICS:** **DAWNBREAKER** (Noyd 1970); **KIMBERLINA** (Sexton 1970); **TOP FLIGHT** (Hall 1953).

### **BROWNS:**

**ADOBE CAMPFIRE** (H. Nichols 2002) was seen in several gardens here during the national convention, and although I found the quality inconsistent from one garden to another, it looked quite nice in at least one. It is a solid burnished brown with a satisfying mink glow for texture. Lightly ruffled on flowers which have modest but adequate form. In Austin, it wasn’t quite as nice, but still worthy of mention. Some stalks had inconsistent branching, with some branches toeing-in. It had waterspotted considerably after a rain, not all that uncommon for browns with velvet texture. Could be an interesting parent, in that a sib is an oxblood red. **BAMBOO SHADOWS** (Keppel 2006) left me cold in the Portland Convention gardens – and in the home garden – last year, with “dead”, dull color, so much so that I didn’t understand the logic for it making the final cut for introduction. Imagine my surprise when it began blooming here in Oklahoma, with more exciting coloring. It is an odd blending of bamboo brown with more intense chestnut saturation in the shoulder area and a suggestion of an orchid flush blended in just below the old gold beards. Wonderful stalks hold 3 well spaced branches in modified candelabra style, and established clumps produced a second wave of stalks as the first setting was completing its cycle, ensuring an exceptionally long season of bloom. Excellent, rampant growth. A love-hate type of iris – some won’t care for it. But if you want something different in your garden, try this conversation piece. **VALENTINO** (J. Painter 2008), at the Natural Gardener Garden in Austin, was very impressive. A large chestnut brown, reminiscent of ‘Rustler’ (Keppel) in style but smoother at the hafts and more of a self than bitone. Held its color well, even under adverse weather conditions (didn’t waterspot after a significant rain the night before). Brilliant thick old gold beards are a nice contrast against the chestnut brown. Decent stalks, with good plant habits.

**CLASSICS:** **BURNING DESIRE** (Hamner 1970); **MAPLEDOWN** (Neubert 1971); **RUSTICANA** (Schreiner 1961).

## **PINKS:**

**AUGUSTINE** (Schick 2005) was a pleasant surprise at the OKC convention, and the more I saw it, the more I liked it. Richest coral-pink, slightly deeper at the shoulders, accented with rich orange beards. It produced fantastic, thick stalks with 4 branches, double-socketed, in modified candelabra style. It also possesses excellent plant habits, a claim not all rich pinks can make. In Austin, the growth was average and appeared to bloom fairly heavily. However, plant habits tended to be inconsistent on many varieties at this convention. **BIRTHDAY GIRL** (Keppel 2005) was as high in quality in central Oklahoma as it was in Oregon in the hybridizer's garden. It is a rich coral-pink with thick bushy deep reddish-orange beards. In cooler weather, the impression is more peach than pink – either way, the color saturation is intoxicating. Stalks with moderate height are respectably branched, and the succession of blooms within the clump is well adjusted. Substance is thick; the saturation consistent, retaining their richness of color even in warmer weather and full sun. **ROBIN'S TEA** (Worel 2003) is mindful of the great Hamblen classic, 'Sophistication', and indeed, this soft satin pink with blue beards is a grandchild of it. It has nice clear color and held up well throughout the season, through variations in temperature and moisture content. The beard is deep blue, but then tipped tangerine, giving a raspberry effect. Similar, but deeper and more dramatic, is **TROUBLE** (Worel 2006), dressed in medium pink with a mysterious smoky haze that adds to its allure. Beards are a deeper blue than 'Robin's Tea', and have a fascinating blue chevron right below them. At the bottom of the class in flower size and stalk height, the hybridizer was nonetheless correct in his reclassification of this variety from Border Bearded to Tall Bearded.

**CLASSICS: CHERIE** (Hall 1948); **FRINGED TAFFETA** (Rudolph 1975); **PINK PUSSYCAT** (Tompkins 1969); **PRETTY NANCY** (Hamblen 1974).

## **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

**ADOREGON** (Keppel 2004) is another classic beauty in a line of breeding from 'Fogbound' (Keppel). There are several on the market now; most are high in quality and have distinctiveness. This one is a genteel lilac to orchid-blue, with the falls one tone lighter in silver, making for, technically, a "dark top". The base of the beards is white, changing to lilac, and finally heavily tipped in a beautiful shrimp pink. Ruffling is extreme and dramatic. To my eye, the standards are noticeably smaller than the falls, yet it makes a distinctive, artistic look. **DESERT MESA** (Richardson 2006) just might be the largest flower I have seen in TBs. If you like 'em big, put this astounding one on your Want List. The color is nothing new – a medium to dark violet, somewhat lighter in the heart of the falls, but it does transmit an unusual haze which adds intrigue to the display. The size surely is due to a double dose of 'Dusky Challenger' (Schreiner) in its background. What is impressive is that it retains its shape well through the life of the flower and has strong, husky stalks to sufficiently support all that extra weight. **ENDEARING CHARM** (L. Painter 2003) is amazingly similar in its color presentation, in that it too possesses a dusky overlay throughout the flower, but the flower size is more "traditional" and carries a substantial amount of ruffling. What makes this variety unique is charming shoulder pads in deeply saturated golden-bronze. During the life of the flower, it gradually transforms itself (I didn't say "fades") into a different, somewhat lighter shade, very captivating. It has good, healthy plant habits and produces stalks with 3 double-socketed branches.

Although I grow nearly all the introductions which Superstition releases each year, I have somehow missed **SPRING FANTASY** (Tasco 2002) in previous years. What a delight! Huge, moderately ruffled flowers are displayed in a glowing, magnetic magenta, intense and fully saturated. Flowers transform (not fade – if you've taken one of my judges training schools, you know the difference....) to a slightly lighter tone by the third day – both colors are attractive. Big husky plant habits from its great parent, 'Sudden Impact' (Tasco). Another color gem I am just now discovering is **SECONDHAND ROSE** (G. Spoon 2004), a quality rebloomer in good old-fashioned (pretty) old rose.

It was outstanding in every garden in which it was guested in Austin, and then again in the home garden in Virginia. The flower is enlivened with darker texture veins. Orange beards are also attractive, especially when put against this color. Form is wide, simple, and pleasing to the eye.

**CLASSICS: AMETHYST FLAME** (Schreiner 1958); **LILAC MIST** (Luihn 1969); **VIOLET HARMONY** (Lowry 1948).

## **DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:**

**SHADOWS OF NIGHT** (Tasco 2006), with 'Picture Book' (Ghio), was the best of the lot at the Will Rogers Convention Garden in Oklahoma City on first-year bloom in 2006. On an established clump in the master planting at OSU in 2007, it was smashing, with quality on the caliber of previous Contemporary Award winner, 'All Night Long' (Duncan). Deepest debonair violet, approaching black (especially in the falls and beards), with a lacquer finish even more intense than its parent, 'Paint it Black' (Schreiner). Totally devoid of any noisy haft markings. Tall, bold, with superb branching, bud count, and beautiful blue-green foliage inherited from 'Paint it Black'. Formidable ruffling everywhere, and

impressively resistant to waterspotting. **TUXEDO JUNCTION** (Pinegar 2005) was a pleasant surprise. Deepest wine-maroon – appearing very nearly black to the eye. Look closely – there is a black spot pattern infused into the top half of the falls – very subtle but definitely there. Deep bronze beards are tipped black, adding harmony to the ensemble. Sufficiently wide but simple form, with just a wisp of ruffling throughout. Beautiful graceful stalks with 3 branches plus spur plus rebranching and double sockets. Good plant habits, too.

**VOLTAIRE'S CLOAK** (B. Nicodemus 2005) was the best of a series of very fine blacks recently released by this talented, relatively newer hybridizer from southwest Missouri. It is a dignified violet-black from the blue side, a nice advancement on its famous parent, ‘Hello Darkness’ (Schreiner). Unfortunately for the OKC conventioneers, it was extremely early (one of the first TBs to bloom in the season) and was nearly completely finished blooming at convention. Yet the flowers retained their form and excellent color saturation, right down to the last blossoms on the stalks. Stalks were tall, staying upright through a wide range of weather conditions, although they looked willowy with very wide branching. **YOSEMITE NIGHTS** (G. Sutton 2004) is a heavily ruffled, deepest velvet black with self beards. It has well branched and spaced stalks, although, occasionally, with opening 3 at once, had trouble staying upright with that many open. Beautiful healthy purple-based foliage. In some gardens, the bloom/increase ratio was somewhat off – needed a few more stalks in the established clumps for optimal balance. In Austin, these traits improved, with even better branching and bud count, with 4 branches plus rebranching.

**CLASSICS:** **BLACK ONYX** (Schreiner 1958); **NOBLEMAN** (Babson 1970); **OPENING NIGHT** (Gibson 1970).

### **BLUES:**

**ABSOLUTE TREASURE** (Tasco 2006) was the best newer TB in my garden in 2008, blooming in a well-established 2-year clump. Not just another blue, this shimmering, heavily ruffled light blue makes its impact with its impeccable plant habits and superlative branching, carrying 4 branches and rebranching, double-socketed, on tall, majestic stalks. It was also very impressive in Austin; unfortunately, it was unmarked (as were several other convention guests in one particular garden), and many conventioneers weren’t able to make the connection. Well named, it is truly a treasure of perfection in absolute blue. **JOYFULNESS** (Willott 2006) is a transcendental shade of dusky blue with mauve undertones and a suggestion of a mauve halo on the falls. Shoulders are nearly mustard in color, but not as intensified as ‘Endearing Charm’ (Painter). Not muddy at all. Huge flowers have magnificent form, rounded and ruffled with a hint of lace. Wide, formal candelabra branching with 3 branches on husky show stalks, strong and stately. Thick clean foliage with strong increase. It’s one of those that makes you backtrack in the row, stand there for a minute and try to decide if you like it or not. I must confess – it grows on you! **RAGING TIDE** (Keppel 2007) has huge flowers with deep billowing ruffling in the style of its parent, Dykes Medalist ‘Sea Power’ (Keppel), but with lighter edges on the falls like ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiner) or ‘Rite of Spring’ (Hager), both of which are in its lineage. Great, strong stalks carry 3 well-spaced branches. Husky, healthy plant habits. In one garden, the saturation was much lighter overall, resembling ‘Olympiad’ (Ghio) in a light to medium blue with a deeper intensification in the heart of the falls.

**CLASSICS:** **BLUE RHYTHM** (Whiting 1945); **ELEANOR'S PRIDE** (Watkins 1956); **HELEN McGREGOR** (Graves 1946); **SEASIDE** (O. Brown 1967).

### **WHITES TO CREAMS:**

**ANGEL MY LOVE** (A. Hahn 2006) is a sib to L’Elegante Award Runnerup, ‘Angelic Whispers’ (A. Hahn), and is every bit as gorgeous. They are similar, except ‘Angel My Love’ has more color – a blush lilac with diamond dusting, while ‘Angelic Whispers’ is nearly pure crystalline white. Both are very late blooming, and were just starting their bloom cycle during the week of convention. The form is wide with ruffling and heavy lace. It has formal candelabra branching with good spacing. It is only a fair increaser and may be a bit of a heavy bloomer. The sister, overall, has the better plant habits, which was the final factor in deciding to place it in the awards category of this review. I have been observing and loving **CHRISTMAS ICE** (Schick 2004) for a couple of years but was hesitant to review it because of its disheartening, notably weak growth habits. It is a compact, delicate cold white with magnificent tangerine beards strongly influenced with rich pink. It is graced with heavy, elegant lace, yet showed no evidence of having difficulty in opening. Shorter, simpler stalks are in proportion to the size of the flowers. Increase is minimally acceptable, and the foliage not the prettiest in the garden. But be patient, for it will treat you to one simply gorgeous flower. **IRISH CREAM** (G. Sutton 2005) is technically a blend, the base color in creamy, silvery white. Deep, voluptuous ruffles even have a hint of lace embedded. The ripples are infused with undertones of pale lavender and even a presence of mint green. The form is impeccable, from its grandfather, ‘Silverado’ (Schreiner), and the whole flower is encased in heavy wax. Not the type of flower that will dazzle you, but you will keep coming back to it for its classic elegance and sheer beauty.

**MOONLIT CRYSTAL** (Willott 2006) is a well-named, mysterious jewel. Crystalline white standards have a haze reminiscent of some of the late Rudolph classics, this time complete with a slight gold halo. Falls carry even more diamond dusting in their texture, with a more predominant gold halo and deep yellow beards. Wide formal candelabra branching is well placed on thick, strong stalks. A husky, healthy grower. **PEACE PRAYER** (T. Johnson 2005) is a large flowered, big blocky warm white with an intense glow of warm butter yellow throughout the heart of the flower, not just on the shoulders of the falls. It has wonderful formal candelabra branching reminiscent of ‘Goldkist’ (Black) with a healthy, vigorous plant. The entire flower is embraced with soft chiffon ruffling that brings a quiet elegance to the ensemble. **SATIN CHARM** (Parkhill 2003) is yet another high-quality offering from a most discriminating hybridizer from Tennessee whose work, for the most part, sadly, has been overlooked by AIS judges. This is a tall stately white with just a hint of yellow in the shoulders and beards. Perhaps nothing new in color, but still very nice, with beautiful form and undeniable grace. Formal candelabra branching on strong stalks, with 3 branches, double-socketed. Well named, it has an elegant satin texture.

**CLASSICS:** **FROST AND FLAME** (Hall 1957); **HIGH SIERRA** (Gaulter 1967); **POWDER SNOW** (Schreiner 1970).

### **YELLOWS:**

**ELEGANT DANCER** (Valenzuela 2007), at first glance, appeared to be a somewhat muddy yellow. Yet I kept being drawn back to it. Upon closer inspection, I decided it was a very nice attempt at green, reminding me of ‘Country Cork’ (Schreiner) in style. Simple, understated form with decent shape and nice ruffling. Worthy of another look in the future. **MATERIAL GIRL** (T. Johnson 2005) is technically a reverse yellow amoena, with yellow standards over white falls with a yellow band. However, the visual impact is yellow. A refreshing combination of colors, with standards a clear soul-soothing lemon yellow, the falls pristine white with deeper yellow intensified in the hafts and a lemon edge. The form is wide and classical, complete with light ruffling and heavy lacing around all petals. Stalks are tall and well-branched. The plant habits are minimally acceptable – a slow increaser but with husky plants. The entire flower is shot with diamond-dusting, adding immensely to its carrying power in the garden. Similar in pattern, but worlds apart in style, was **SIERRA DOWNTOWN** (Scott 2003), one of the sleepers of the Austin Convention. A bright sunshine yellow, with white and lemon yellow falls heavily banded in yellow in the tradition of the great ‘Joyce Terry’ (Muhlestein) of yesteryear. It was misnamed in a huge, floriferous clump at the San Marcos Garden, but just as impressive, and correctly marked, at the Natural Gardener. Beautiful form, with heavy ruffling and light lace. Flowers had excellent substance and sun-resistance. The flowers showed signs of a small hook or horn, and fairly consistently. However, it is not registered as a Space Ager.

**CLASSICS:** **BRIGHTSIDE** (Schreiner 1961); **MISS ILLINI** (Varner 1966); **OLA KALA** (Sass 1942); **SILENCE** (Tompkins 1966).

### **PLICATAS:**

**COUNTY OF KENT** (Baumunk 2005) is a fancy plicata from luminata breeding, but done so with soft brushstrokes in pastels. Base color is a pale-pale pink with airbrushing and speckling in deeper pink and lavender on the edges, transforming to deeper etch-a-sketching in the shoulders of the falls. Form is simple, rather plain, but reasonably wide. Moderate sized flowers on shorter stalks. **DOUBLE STITCH** (G. Sutton 2005) bloomed very early in the master planting at OSU, but was in good bloom during convention in another garden. It is a clean amethyst-violet on white plicata from the Hager reblooming plicata bloodlines. Perhaps nothing new, but made the cut to be included in this review because of its pert, distinctive stitching, nice form, and its abundance of bloom. Stalk sequence was staggered to extend its bloom cycle, carrying quality bloom into midseason. **RENEWAL** (G. Sutton 2004) was another pleasant surprise in the OKC convention gardens, and even better the year after convention. From reblooming bloodlines, it is not just another plic – the color combination and pattern are most attractive. Standards are an unusual greenish-yellow with some plicata markings in violet. The falls have a white ground, then distinctly banded  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in rich violet stitching. Then, around the bronze beard, you find a distinctive spoke pattern of violet, the focal point of the flower. Wonderful vigorous growth, as any good rebloomer must possess.

**OREO** (Keppel 2004) was a show-stopper in Oklahoma, and much taller with a somewhat higher bud count than advertised by the hybridizer upon introduction. Well named, a startling contrast of near black stitching on pure white base. Flowers were considerably larger than seen in its home state of Oregon. The standards are nearly completely saturated, making the name even more apropos. **SHANE ALLEN** (C. Hahn 2006) was a nice *déjà vu* to the style of bitone-plicatas Keith Keppel made famous in his early plicata work. Standards have light blue plicating, almost solidly saturated. The falls are a bright violet-blue on clean white ground, complete with a cute belly stripe right down the middle. Bronze

beards. It is somewhat short but has good stalks in modified candelabra and produced a good season of bloom with its well-timed buds. Made a very showy clump with its clean colors and healthy foliage.

**CLASSICS:** BELLE MEADE (Wills 1950); CURTAIN CALL (Schreiner 1967); GIBSON GIRL (Gibson 1946); MINNIE COLQUITT (Sass 1942).

## **AMOENAS, BITONES, and NEGLECTAS:**

The contribution of ‘Romantic Evening’ (Ghio) as a parent continues to impress. **BY DESIGN** (Kerr 2005) has blue-white standards over velvet, luscious wine falls with a tint of blue and a discreet, lighter halo, contrasted with rich burnt tangerine beards. A few white lines for haft marks are unobtrusive, but rather, allow the viewer to concentrate the focus on the beards. Flowers are large and well-formed, with nearly horizontal falls. Stalks carried 2 branches plus spur, a bit close to the stalks, but the lower blossoms opened OK. **CREATIVE VISION** (Kerr 2005) is similar, with the standards more oyster in color without the blue. Falls are an even more intense depth of velvet wine-red with brighter brick red beards instead of the burnt orange look. Color saturation was richer and more intense in Austin than at the OKC convention; either version is most appealing. **VIGILANT** (Ghio 2006) is similar, but with more lavender-blue in the standards than blue-white. The contrast against the black-purple falls is dramatic. Branching was somewhat inconsistent, high-branched in the master planting at OSU but properly spaced in the Hampton Garden at the OKC convention. **MIDNIGHT ROMANCE** (Van Hook 2005) is yet another fine offering from super-parent ‘Romantic Evening’, this time from a relatively new hybridizer from Kentucky who is on my personal “Watch List” for great new things. Standards are rather deep wine, with lilac undertonings in both the standards and the style arms. Velvet-smooth falls are a deep, evocative red-violet, contrasted with haunting burnt orange beards. Magnificent plant habits. Branching in Oklahoma wasn’t as good as I’ve seen it in previous seasons, but still acceptable enough that this variety received one of my HM votes this year.

The description of **DRAMATIC STYLE** (Black 2005) may sound similar to the ‘Romantic Evening’ lineage, but it has a different look, and is from a different line of breeding. Standards are icy blue-white, embellished with an icy white rim. Mercifully, they failed to produce the annoying deeper virus flecking present in similar varieties. Falls are a blend of deep blue-purple with a velvet pile and an intensification of color in the heart of the falls. Hafts blend into a reddish-brown, and then the falls have a tight rim in lighter violet. The whole flower has an “attitude” – well named! **FIT FOR A KING** (Schreiner 2006) is a large, imposing, noble neglecta with light lavender standards and full violet-purple falls, complemented with light lavender beards and smooth at the hafts. It is a rich, smooth color presentation, very suave. Tall stately stalks are strong with formal candelabra branching with 3 branches plus spur, double socketed at most positions. Big, fat, thick foliage produced average increase and fairly heavy bloom in a couple of gardens. All in all, one of the highest quality offerings from the Schreiner family in recent years.

**SKYLAND RANCH** (Richardson 2006) is a wonderfully ridiculously HUGE blue amoena, comparable in size to some of the recent Schreiner releases in this color combination. The contrast is soft and clear, like the old classic, ‘Dover Beach’ (Nearpass), with nearly pure white standards atop sky blue falls, only slightly lighter at the edges. Tree-trunk stalks are tall and imposing – thick and stout – with good branching. Qualifies, with ‘Desert Mesa’ (also from Richardson) as among the largest flowers in irsdom today. Yet, impressive is that it retains its well-structured form far better than any of its contemporaries.

**CLASSICS: BREAD AND WINE** (C. Smith 1971); **CHEROKEE PRINCESS** (Munger 1971); **WABASH** (Williamson 1936).

## **BICOLORS and VARIEGATAS:**

**FLORENTINE SILK** (Keppel 2005) is a pulsating color combo, with dusky peach-pink standards and mauved lavender falls and a bright shrimp beard with a blue base. An attractive deep pink band on the falls was more prominent in Oklahoma than in the Pacific Northwest, and overall the color presentation was cleaner and more vivacious – it definitely needs warmer, drier weather to showcase itself. Outstanding branching in formal candelabra, with 3 well spaced and timed branches. Leathery substance with a silken finish and praiseworthy weather resistance. Peerless plant habits. **ON THE TOWN** (S. Markham 2007) reminded me of a modern version of a great old classic, ‘Pretender’ (Cook), from 50+ years ago. Standards are an unusual shade of light yellow that I swear have green influences in them. Falls are rich velveteen purple with a wine underglow, enhanced with a charming rim of grey to pale orchid. The whole flower has a mysterious haze (not muddy) and a mink texture. Bright yellow beards unite the two principal colors. Tall straight stalks carry 4 branches in beautifully spaced modified candelabra.

**KATHY CHILTON** (Kerr 2006) has magnificent saturation and color contrast, with golden yellow standards over plush deep red falls. It has a large flower with moderately deep ruffling. Quite smooth at the hafts --which are touching to overlapping -- and horizontal falls. A very sensuous look; a sophisticated attitude. **AWESOME ALETHA** (Scarborough 2007), seen at the Hampton convention garden in Oklahoma City, was nearly finished blooming, but the blooms were still retaining their quality. It has excellent contrast in colors, with pure full yellow standards over wine-brown falls with a lighter band similar to ‘Mastery’ (Blyth). Some haft marks are present, but they weren’t offensive. Moderate sized flowers are carried by fairly short stalks which nonetheless manage to produce 4 branches without crowding on the stalk. It has excellent plant habits with good increase.

**CLASSICS:** IN TEMPO (Blyth 1974); LADY OF SPAIN (Luihn 1976); MAY ROMANCE (Crossman 1971).

#### **EMMA COOK PATTERN:**

**AMERICAN MASTER** (Kerr 2006) was splendid in one of the gardens at the Austin Convention, enough so that I considered it for my vote for the Cook Cup. Soft elegant yellow standards held up much better than some others in this color combination. Heavily waved falls are yellow based, complemented with a lavender wash on the edges. Clean colors with good contrast between the colors. Good growth habits. Stalks were strong, of moderate height, with 3 branches, opening 3 at once on a second visit during the convention. Large flowers held together admirably. **CLOTHED IN GLORY** (Kerr 2005) was far better in Austin than at previous conventions, and the form held up quite well in fairly heavy wind. It has wonderful color contrast, with deep yellow standards atop somewhat lighter falls, then banded nearly an inch thick in bold brownish-red. The flowers are large, and then, as they grow even larger as the flower ages, the inner portion of the band breaks down into a bleeding effect, deeper into the heart of the falls. Very captivating.

**DESIGNER'S ART** (Kerr 2005) has soft, clean light yellow standards and white falls with airbrushing dappled in lavender-blue, artistically bleeding on the edges. It has good saturation of color and delineation between the colors. The flower retained its shape better than it had in the clump seen at the Portland Convention. In OKC, the stalks were aborted, but branching and bud count were excellent the next year at the Austin Convention. **OPAL WITHERS** (Van Hook 2005) was consistently impressive at the OKC convention, with large clumps yielding a bounty of tall well-branched stalks well positioned throughout the clumps. Much taller than its registered 3' – right at 4' tall in the Hampton Garden, with willowy stalks inherited from its mother, 'Conjuration' (Byers), yet never failing to hold up its flowers. 3 branches plus spur in modified candelabra style, beautifully spaced. Base color is white. Falls are heavily saturated and sanded in blue at the edges, almost too heavy to be considered an 'Emma Cook' type, with an artistic display of color. A fresh look. Horizontal falls add to the lilt of the effect.

**CLASSICS:** MISS PERSONALITY (Sexton 1977); NEFERTITI (Gatty 1981).

#### **POTPOURRI:**

**BLUE PERSUASION** (Aitken 2005) is a fascinating, unusual affair. The standards are bronzed-brass heavily flushed in the midribs with a strange mauved-blue. Falls' base color is a somewhat clearer milky blue, then tacked with a distinct band in the primary color of the standards. The whole flower is enveloped in a mysterious mink glow. Flowers are wide and lightly waved. Growth is only average to a bit slow, but the flower has enough strong features to make it a prime player in the exploration of hybridizing! **EXPLICIT** (Ghio 2005) has been exceptional in several areas, from the last bloom in the clump in one of the gardens in Austin, to the star of the garden at the French/Holland Garden in OKC, to winning Best Out-of-Region variety at the Spoon Garden at the Spring 2008 regional in Virginia. Deep golden yellow standards sit atop sophisticated mahogany black falls. Then, bursting outward over more than half the falls, from the yellow beards, is an explosion of bright yellow in a dramatic sunburst ray pattern. Stunning! Very fine plant habits, with consistently acceptable stalks, branching, and bud count.

Not all the good new Burseen varieties have appendages....**HAVE A GOODUN** (Burseen 2006) was, justifiably, a serious contender for the President's Cup in Austin. It is an esoteric blending of colors that reminds me of a modern, updated version of 'Electrique' (Blyth), with oyster white standards infused amber with a halo in tan, and burnished, blended golden-amber and burnished rose falls, accented with bold near-black beards. Wow! It produces nice tall strong stalks, with 3 to 4 branches in formal candelabra placement. A rather heavy bloomer, but not to the point of extinction or punishment on the ballot. **SERIOUS SIGHS** (Burseen 2007) reminded me of a larger flowered 'Concession' (Aitken) with thick leathery substance. The flowers are white, but then the center of the falls is splatter-painted in tiny violet-blue dots in an irregular array. A nice quirky pattern. Stalks were short and kinda clubby. Lower flowers opened OK in spite of the branching being too close to the stalks. Finicky plant habits as seen in Austin. The flower is so exciting, however, it is worth another look.

**IN LIVING COLOR** (Black 2004), in previous years, failed to move me. But in 2007, with cooler weather in central Oklahoma, the colors were more vibrant, and I'm now a fan. It reminded me of a "calmed-down" version of the extremely tall, wild bicolor from Paul from the past, 'Flying Carpet' (in its pedigree). Of moderate height and flower size, 'In Living Color' is a medley of colors (really can't call it a "blend"), with bright yellow standards contrasted by a dazzling array of various shades of gold, plum in the hafts, violet extended over the falls blended with tan and a blue flash, then a gold band on the edges. **OASIS ELMER** (Chadwick 2005) is an odd, intriguing color combination, and was much more attractive in Austin than at previous conventions. The base color is a mulled wine to maroon, but then all body parts are edged in this strange tannish-old gold border, applied more like a haze than a distinct banding. The effect was very ghostly in appearance. Nice form with decent substance, and it appeared to hold its color through the life of the flower.

**PRESENTATION** (T. Johnson 2005) has been somewhat of a Dark Horse, probably because it blooms quite late here. It is an unusual shade of light yellow with a green haze (the hybridizer calls it light green-ecru), with the standards slightly deeper, suggesting its 'Fogbound' (Keppel) lineage. The flowers are large and gently waved and possess a soothing waxy substance. **RETURN TO BAYBERRY** (G. Sutton 2004) I finally got to see, and I love it! I have long awaited an improvement on the great old classic, 'Bayberry Candle' (DeForest), and it has finally arrived – a major breakthrough in this color combination. It has smoother, more evenly applied color, and looked good even in overcast 50 degree weather. In warmer, sunny conditions, the colors were even more impressive. Form is wide and reasonably well shaped. Average stalks, with 2 branches plus spur, double socketed, and although the branching was a bit closer to the stalk than I would prefer, each flower managed to go ahead and open properly. Good strong growth habits, with an acceptable increase/bloom ratio. Would have easily been a 9-1-1 Award winner/runnersup, had I discovered it earlier. Clever name, too!

**CLASSICS:** **BALLYHOO** (Keppel 1970); **PINK TIGER** (El Dorado 1965); **SILVER PEAK** (DeForest 1962).

## **COLOR BREAKERS:**

### **Medians:**

**BACH FUGUE** (Baumunk 2005) is a diploid MTB, a sib to 'Bach Toccata' (Baumunk 2005), already reviewed in a previous edition of Contemporary Views. Whereas Toccata is a light yellow base with red-maroon veining and random dotting and streaking, Fugue is palest lavender with violet colorbreaking. The variation from one flower to the next, and even from one petal to the other, is very charming.

### **Tall Bearded:**

**LIGER** (Spoon 2005) is a cleaner, brighter version of its mother, 'Autumn Years' (Ensminger). Base color is yellow, with maroon striping in the standards, and a mottled medley of maroon splashes in the outer perimeters of the falls, and then brighter violet splashes in the heart of the flowers. Orange beards contribute to the festivities. Flowers are smallish on shorter stalks. Increase is abundant, but in some gardens the number of stalks was somewhat stingy. But the bright, joyous colors are what make this color breaker worthy. **OASIS TWIN** (Chadwick 2006) was a pleasant surprise, a well-shaped, rounded, much improved 'Bewilderbeast' (Kasperek), superior in every way. Maroon base color has undertones of tan and bronze, but then joyously striped with white streaks throughout the flower. Color more attractive than gaudy. Shorter stalks, as with many color breakers, but good plant habits. **QUAIL ALE** (Kasperek 2006) was a pleasant surprise, in that the colors were much more attractive and impressionistic than they appeared in the ads. Dizzying white streaks splash erratically over a maize yellow base color, reminiscent of but lighter than the famous 'Tiger Honey' (Kasperek). Decent stalks are somewhat shorter but well branched with good spacing. Average growth.

**CLASSICS:** **INTY GREYSHUN** (Ensminger 1979, BB); **OOHS AND AHS** (Ensminger 1977).

## **SPACE AGERS:**

### **Medians:**

Quality black Space Agers, in any class, are still rare, even more so in the medians. **DARK AVENGER** (M. Sutton 2003) is a well-formed, intensely-saturated near-black IB, with deep violet standards and deeper near-pure-black falls. Deep violet-black beards transform into upturned black horns. The huge, floriferous clump at the State Capitol Garden was in full bloom the week before convention, but still had representative bloom by tour day. Excellent increase and stalk production. **HULA HANDS** (G. Sutton 2005) was a pleasant surprise. This cream plicata has compact, tidy flowers with nice shape. The stitching is an attractive mulberry-plum to mulled wine. Consistent smaller mulberry horns pop up from the beards with consistency. The plant habits and floriferousness make this Space Age IB special. Fantastic stalks are thin and graceful, carrying 3 branches and double socketed in most positions. It was common to see stalks with 3 open simultaneously. Vigorous, tidy plants yield a wealth of stalks, well placed within the clump. **LOST IN SPACE** (Aitken 2005, BB), I believe is Terry's first adventure into outer space. "Lost" he is not – he got it right on the money with this dainty bicolor in dark top fashion. Standards are cool orchid in a soothing color to the eye. In contrast, the falls are bright pink, adorned with cute little horns in deeper shrimp-pink. The form is tight and compact, the flowers in perfect proportion to the height of the stalk and the style of branching.

### **Tall Bearded:**

Perhaps Tom Burseen is best known for his zany and even sometimes controversial work with Space Agers, with innovative, even irreverent color combinations – and names! Yet **ABBY AND ME** (Burseen 2004) is an elegant as they come, and conveys a feeling of sophistication and good taste. A large flower on quite tall, sturdy stalks, it is presented with bright full yellow coloring with pristine white falls precisely edged  $\frac{1}{4}$ " in a slightly softer lemon yellow. Magnificently-formed falls are horizontal to nicely flaring, allowing the deep ruffling to set the lilting, airy mood of the flower. Rich yellow beards end in tastefully tattered yellow spoons. It wound up being my choice for the President's Cup in Austin, out of several fine things this talented hybridizer had on display. **BRAGGIN RIGHTS** (Burseen 2005) is an extremely early bloomer, beginning during peak IB season. Yet, due to the abundant bud count, representative bloom was still occurring during the OKC Convention. Pure crystalline white standards are complemented with shimmering blue-lavender falls, gradually lightening to near white in the center of the falls. Heavy ruffling provides vitality to the presentation. A lush, insanely heavy increaser. Impressive in the Spoon Garden at the 2008 spring regional meeting in Virginia, too. **CAUSE FOR PAUSE** (Burseen 2007) was exuberant in its home region, a white plicata with jazzy plum-lilac plicating. As with its outstanding parent, 'Momentous Occasion' (Sutton), the wide, rounded falls produce white spoons which then carry the plicata pattern onto their edges!

**ANGEL WINGS** (L. Miller 2005) is presented in a blessed, soft azure blue with self beards ending in discreet horns – nothing flamboyant here, just pure elegance. Tall stalks were sturdy and straight, with fairly consistent modified candelabra branching and good timing of its blooms. **DUTCHMAN'S DREAM** (Van Liere 2005) was a pleasant surprise, one of the biggest surprises of the Austin Convention! Joyful 'Touche' (Hamblen) colors with clear light pink standards over orchid-lavender falls, complemented with thick shrimp beards ending in lavender horns. Tall thick stalks carried 3 branches. One stalk had 3 open the day before the convention tour, each appearing a different tone – a great example of transforming color that works. Pleasing, soul-soothing colors. Form was just a bit narrow at the hafts of the falls, but not objectionable. It had good sequencing of bloom stalks within the clump, with excellent plant habits. **LUMARCO** (Cayeux 2006) was difficult to evaluate in Austin, but showed great promise, worthy of another look in future years. A luscious confection, with standards in soft, clear baby pink. Falls are blush pink to ivory, edged with an 'Emma Cook' style wash in orchid at the edges. Bright orange beards end in horns. Simple form but acceptable with smaller flowers. It is a descendant of 'Celebration Song', which tells me that stalk production and branching will probably be exceptional.

**CALIFORNIA DREAMIN** (G. Sutton 2004) was a pleasant surprise, in that it was far superior in quality in central Oklahoma than even in its home garden in California during the Fresno Convention. A clean, soft yellow to cream with consistent, distinctive spoons all around, a fresh look. It carried decent branching, with 3 candelabra style branches and some lower rebranching. Vigorous, hearty plants permitted a floriferous display of bloom. In Austin, it really wowed me, with an elegant chiffon finish and huge, consistent flounces throughout an impressive, established clump. So much so that it garnered my vote for the Out-of-Region Cup. **PURE INNOCENCE** (M. Sutton 2006) was only critiqued in a clump in Austin where it appeared to be struggling, with several factors needing improvement. But the individual flower is so drop-dead gorgeous, with its width and deep, luxurious ruffling, that it deserves a place-marker for further review in upcoming years. Pure sparkling white, although there was a hint of lavender infusions in the heart of the flower. The appendages were not consistent, but exotic when fully developed. The branching left a lot to be desired, with only 2 branches, toeing in. Plant habits floundered. In spite of all those negatives, it made my Buy-It List, with the hopes that these traits will improve. **QUANTUM LEAP** (G. Sutton 2005), another with a clever name, a plicata, this time in deepest plum

(approaching black), with white base falls stitched in the plum plicata coloring. White horns are tipped with deep violet, consistent in their development. Makes a showy clump.

**MAKE A WISH** (Christopherson 2005) was nearly finished blooming, making the substance and durability of the flowers difficult to determine if sufficient. Standards are, to the eye, solid yellow, but closer inspection reveals a minute degree of sanding in tan. The falls confirm it is a luminata, with a softer patch of yellow at the beards, but the primary appearance of the falls is a gently sanded plicata. Then, peeking out from the heart, lo and behold we have a yellow horn! The whole ensemble is a totally new look to Space Agers. Vigorous plants with purple-based foliage. **NAVAJO CODE** (Christopherson 2006) is a bold variegata with smashing colors, rich with a velvet pile. Reminded me of a brighter version of 'Solar Fire' (Tasco), though not as tall. Standards are bright golden-yellow; the falls rich brick red with yellow rays shooting outward from the heart of the flower. Yellow beards transform into red horns, which are consistent in their development. As with many children from 'Rock Star' (Byers), it produces shorter stalks, but has very nice branching.

**SHARPER IMAGE** (Black 2005) was another one of those "Cup Clumps" at the OKC convention, opening its maiden blooms the day before conventioneers toured the State Capitol Garden. Palest blue – the shimmering, satin flowers almost appeared white in full sun – with slightly deeper, cute upturned blue horns. The epitome of health and vigor, with clumps yielding tall, strong stalks consistently carrying 3 branches with perfect placement throughout the clump. Excellent bloom/increase ratio, with stalks aplenty and bountiful buds to ensure a lengthy season of bloom. Also outstanding in Austin at the Murphy Garden. **SOUND OF TRUMPETS** (Meininger 2005) is unlike any other! Different and daring, in a simple dusky blue with some white at the shoulders. Yellow beards transform into white appendages that come out from the falls at least an inch, then shoot straight up in a trumpet/spoon in white. I have seen it, when poorly grown or on a new planting, where instead of the adornment, the white coming out of the beard is like a thin soda straw! Clever and comical, no matter what path it decides to take! I love the diversity we're getting with these Space Agers!

**CLASSICS:** **BLACK HOPE** (Austin 1963); **DAINTY DEB** (Osborne 1976).

## **VARIEGATED FOLIAGE:**

Only one new one evaluated this year, but it's nice: **FANTASTREAKS** (Jedlicka 2007) is a decently-formed pure white from Schreiner laced white breeding. Variegating was somewhat inconsistent from one garden to the next, but overall an impressive addition to a woefully limited class of irises. Average to good increase, with strong stalks with acceptable branching.

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

### **MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:**

#### **Tets:**

**AGLOW AGAIN** (Fisher 2004) is a major advancement in MTB work, in that reblooming MTBs just don't exist. This clean crisp apricot tetraploid with deeper beards looked good both in Oklahoma and again in Nebraska. Form is quite pleasing, wide but still retaining the grace and charm of an MTB. Good substance and decent stalks. Foliage appeared to be a bit thick, but not to the point of being a defect, and certainly not bad for a tet. **MY FANTASY** (Craig 2005) is another breakthrough in color in the important *I. aphylla* breeding the Craigs have been working. Clean soft pink of the standards and heart of the flower continues into the center of the falls, with a patch of white surrounding tangerine beards. Then, lavender-orchid veins gradually intensify to a solid band around the falls. These *I. aphylla* things are tough to categorize sometimes. This was originally registered as an IB, but was reclassified after introduction to MTB. With the graceful, thin stalks and the simple form of the flowers, I think that reclassification was appropriate. A lovely affair, and a welcome addition to a class of iris with a limited color palette. Its sib, **PLEASE** (Craig 2005) also sports an 'Emma Cook' type pattern, this time with clean light yellow standards, style arms slightly deep, then white falls edged in a lavender wash. The color array is pulled together with yellow beards and a presence of yellow in the falls' hafts. As with its sib, it has "happy colors" – clean and refreshing – especially in this classification.

#### **Dips:**

A trio of new MTBs from the Willotts was impressive. **CALICO VISTA** (Willott 2006) reminded me of a smaller, brighter version of its father, 'Bangles' (L. Miller), in mauve-orchid with deeper texture veining. It bloomed at the lower end of the class, with 3 well spaced branches, and well proportioned, slender, graceful foliage. A sister seedling, **GARNET JEWELRY** (Willott 2006) is a deep garnet red infused darker violet, contrasted with a distinctive white spray pattern of haft marks in the upper part of the falls. It has nice tight form, and the colors are rich and attractive. **VELVET SKIRTS** (Willott 2006), another sib, was just starting to bloom in Oklahoma City, and was at the lower end of the scale, but still managed to carry 3 branches with good spacing. Its color manifests itself more like its other parent, 'Consummation', as a neglecta, with light violet standards over deep velvet violet falls with a white ray pattern around the beards. **PETIT LOUVOIS** (Mahan 2006) produced massive clumps at the Oklahoma City convention, full of fairly tall stalks carrying 3 to 4 rather wide branches and double sockets, so impressive that it went on to be First Runnerup for the inaugural Ben Hager Cup for Best Median at the convention. Cleverly named, it reminds one of an MTB version of the famous historic French variety, 'Louvois' (Cayeux), a muted red-violet bitone with a significant influence of brown throughout. In cold Nebraska, it survived the late freeze without flinching and had richer colors than in Oklahoma. Deep gold beards complement the color ensemble.

**CLASSICS:** **DAPPLED PONY** (Witt 1981), **FUN AND FANCY** (Guild 1980), **GUMDROPS** (Hager 1982, Tet).

## **BORDER BEARDED:**

There were very few medians to choose from at the Austin Convention for the Hager Cup for Best Median, but two BBs were exceptional and were vying for top honors. The winner, **CROW'S FEET** (Black 2006), is a crazy concoction, brilliantly named, with pure white standards atop falls that are also white base, but then wildly veined rich purple, straight up and down from the shoulders to the bottom of the flower. Then, as you approach the bottom of the falls, you find lighter purple sarding cropping up in between the lines. Pull it all together with a distinctive white rim around the falls. Bright tangerine beards add pizzazz, and if you look closely, you'll even find some undertonings of peach in the heart of the flower, in the style arms. Flower size is consistently in class. Although the height is at the top of the BB class, and it looks like it's thinking about stretching too tall, it resists temptation and stays within the class. **NICHE** (Ghio 2007) produced a smashing clump at the Natural Gardener Garden in Austin and was my personal choice for the cup. A scaled-down version of 'Gypsy Lord' (Keppel), the Cook Cup winner in Austin, and much prettier and classier. Standards were purest, cold white. Falls continue the white, but are then heavily banded in ultramarine blue, accented with a bright red beard. The band is more distinctive than the ragged edges of 'Gypsy Lord', and the flowers are round and ruffled. Height was correct, but the flowers appeared to be approaching the limit for a BB, and the foliage perhaps a bit thick. Stepping back, looking at the clump, the overall impact was that of a good BB. And sometimes the visual effect is just as important as getting out the ruler to see if something perfectly matches the specifications of the class (please, no hate mail from the AIS judges....)

The quality of **ELEGANT LASS** (Craig 2002) was first observed during the Portland Median Convention in 2004, and continued to impress this year both in Oklahoma City and in the Nebraska median convention gardens. Easy on the eye, it is a simply formed clean orchid-lilac bitone with a subdued yellow beard. Although registered at the upper end of the class, I found the height of the stalks to consistently be well within the proper range for a BB. Although Terry Varner is best known for his development of MTBs, his work with BBs is exceptional. His pert, bright yellow 'Romantic Interlude' was overlooked by AIS judges, in my opinion. In Nebraska, in two different gardens, we saw his new neglecta, **SILGREY'S BEAUTY** (Varner 2007) perform commendably. Standards are light to medium blue, the falls two tones deeper. The flowers are nice, wide, with simple form. Flower size, stalk height, stalk thickness, and foliage were all perfectly in class. Stalks carried 2 branches plus spur. The stalks stagger their bloom, making for an extended season of bloom. Good growth, with good bloom/increase ratio.

**LACED HANDKERCHIEF** (Cadd 2005) was one of the most voluptuous flowers seen in the whole OKC Convention. A huge, floriferous clump at the master planting at OSU was sensational, full of bright yellow blossoms, artfully embellished with an elaborate network of lace. The lace is embedded in an even richer golden band, more noticeable in the falls. Unfortunately, the iris is not in class. Although the flowers are close to the proper size for the class, the stalks consistently grew much taller than the registered 27" – more like 34-37", although they are fairly thin and flexuous. Plant habits are exceptional, with plentiful increase and pretty foliage. I hope it gets re-registered as a small-tall; even if not, the flowers are just too exquisite to deny. I have seen **MINI RAINBOW** (Cadd 2002) at previous conventions, but this year, it really grew on me. Nicely ruffled flowers are a variegata-plicata in the tradition of 'Flamenco' (Keppel), with soft brown standards and cream falls widely banded in 'High Life' (Schreiner) red. Lovely, lilting form, the flowers are the proper size for a BB. Unfortunately, as with 'Laced Handkerchief', the stalks are wonderful, just too tall. Still, a very desirable iris.

**CLASSICS: ANGEL FEATHERS** (L. Markham 1973); **MANZANITA** (Hamblen 1972); **MISS GOLDILOCKS** (Hamner 1972).

## **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:**

**BARREL HOUSE BLUES** (Baumunk 2004) reminded me of a "reverse" 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner, TB), with an unusual medium blue base color with shadows in deeper smoked blue, instead of lighter blue infiltrations as found in HTB. A very mystical menagerie of color blending. It has nice form, wide but simple, and very fine plant habits, mindful in quality as its sib, the deep violet Sass Medalist, 'Midsummer Night's Dream' (Baumunk). **BRICKLE** (Blyth 2000) is a festive color array, a pink-apricot ground plicata, heavily saturated with plicating in plum to near black, a very attractive combo, topped with burnt tangerine beards. Nicely formed, and produces show stalks which open 2-3 at once consistently. **FOR YOUR LOVE** (Lauer 2002) impressed me in Nebraska because it overcame the weather woes in every garden in which it was guested. A simple blue, mindful of a modern version of the great Sass-winning IB classic, 'June Prom' (A. Brown) but in a cleaner shade of porcelain blue.

Waxy substance, the flowers well formed with moderate ruffling and horizontal falls. Excellent growth habits.

**SYNERGY** (Keppel 2004) was one of the best clumps in the Cundall Garden at the Median Convention in Nebraska, just starting to bloom. It is a somewhat smoky pink, then accented with a clean purple spray and sarding on the falls like a fancy plicata. Thick brilliant orange beards set off the whole flower. Wonderful form, horizontal falls, quite heavily ruffled.

To be a “wash”, it carries its color well across the garden. Outstanding plants habits, with good bloom/increase ratio and good branching. It was also sequencing its stalks to have a later wave of bloom stalks, extending its season of bloom.

I finally got to see a good specimen of **ORAGEUX** (Cayeux 1996), in the McGrath Garden in Albuquerque, and in spite of its age, added it to my Wish List. A deep-deep variegata, with standards deep gold (approaching copper in depth) over black velvet falls with a wine haze. Deep copper beards compliment the array. Nicely shaped flowers, gently waved, with strong plant habits. Nothing like it on the market, and very suave. **SATIN CUT** (Blyth 2002) was a pleasant surprise in Albuquerque, both on the show bench and then later in an impressive clump in the White Garden. Wound up earning my vote for Favorite Median of the Trek. A strange, spooky shade of smoked blue, deeper than the silvery blue of its registration description. Then accented with a near-black beard. Reminded me of a scaled-down version of the TB, ‘Mythology’ (T. Johnson), maybe not quite as deep. The satin is more of a rich, luxurious mink finish, adding mystique to the effect. Wonderful branching and bud count with superb plant habits.

**CLASSICS:** **AZ AP** (Ensminger 1980); **BUTTER COOKIE** (Gatty 1980); **WHY NOT** (Hager 1980).

### **STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:**

**ANUBIS** (M. Smith 2008), seen at the Nebraska Median Convention, is a suave beauty in richest deep black from the red side, complemented with a rich velvet pile. It is mindful in style of ‘Devil Baby’ (Keppel) but appears to have a better bloom/increase ratio. As with ‘Devil Baby’, the foliage is also a tad thick, but not to the point of deducting points.

**MICROWAVE** (M. Smith 2007) is a wonderful light to medium blue, with just a hint of a deeper blue spot pattern around white beards. It reminds me of a modern version of the classic Cook-Douglas Medalist, ‘Sapphire Gem’ (Schmelzer). Fantastic form, with horizontal falls and light to moderate ruffling. Excellent substance and texture with diamond dusting. Flawless plant habits; it withstood the test of a tempest Mother Nature and survived the Nebraska late freeze unblemished. Also impressive at the Aril/Median Trek in Albuquerque in the White Garden on a first-year bloom. Also in the White Garden was a maiden bloom of **PLAINSONG** (M. Smith 2007). Not your traditional blue-bearded pink SDB, it is a toned-down buff-orange, slightly more intense in the heart of the flower, then capped off with a stunning deep violet to indigo blue beard, appearing black from a distance. Very entralling, very attractive. The form is rounded, the falls horizontal, and there is heavy ruffling throughout, compliments of its father, ‘Cachet’ (Black).

**VIVALDI** (Baumunk 2007), also seen in the White Garden in Albuquerque, proved once again that one of the greatest median parents of all time, ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black) still “has it”! Clean pure white base color caressed in plicata rims in the softest, sweetest baby blue. Diamond dusting gives carrying power to this subtle color array. It has that trademark wide, rounded ‘Chubby Cheeks’ form, completed with moderate ruffling. **BREAK YOLK** (D. Miller 2002) is one of the older varieties reviewed this year, but I was impressed with it in both years leading up to the OKC convention. Cleverly named, the standards are palest yellow, approaching white. Falls then have an egg yolk spot pattern in rich full yellow, edged in the color of the standards. Impressive was its toughness and resilience to adverse weather conditions, its vigor and floriferousness, and its cheery disposition in the garden. **CLASSIC SUNRISE** (B. Jones 2005) is well named, a melodious, unique combo of colors, with apricot sherbet and soft lemon blended, with the falls more intense in the center, gradually transforming to a softer color on the edges. Bright carrot orange beards complete the ensemble.

**FINE IDEA** (Black 2005) is a subtle fancy medium blue-violet plicata with beards that are tangerine in the heart of the flower. It is subtle but distinctive; the pattern in the falls reminded me of that of the TB, ‘Athens’ (T. Johnson). It has nice shape and excellent substance. Excellent growth habits, with foliage the proper thickness. Floriferous, with a good bloom/increase ratio, producing stalks with 1 branch, 3 buds (even in Nebraska, where the late freeze had compromised the bud count in many medians). **FINGERTIPS** (Black 2004) produced huge, rampant clumps, with stalks tall enough to clear the foliage. A wonderful color pattern, with a soft light to medium golden-yellow base color, then a diffused spot pattern in the falls in charcoal, bleeding irregularly into texture veins towards the edges – a nice effect, and well named. Full orange beards add character. Substance in this type of SDB has traditionally been subpar; here it is surprisingly sturdy. **SEQUEL** (Black 2005) is a pert violet on white plicata, different in that the stitching is approached from the orchid side, against a silvery-white base color. Deep in the heart of the flower is a suggestion of tangerine in the beard. Its colors were prettier in cold Nebraska than here in Oklahoma, and its resilience to overcome the most adverse of conditions was impressive, with floriferous bloom and rampant growth habits. **WISH UPON A STAR** (Black 2006) is a charmer, and it appears it will be a benchmark in a huge stable of quality medians recently released by this expert hybridizer. Brilliant white beards appear in the midst of deepest violet, like stars twinkling against the velvet of a midnight sky. Exciting on the show bench, but the true impact is in the garden on a full, established clump. Average growth and increase with exceptional floriferousness.

**CLASSICS:** **ALTUS** (Dennis 1973); **KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS** (B. Jones 1971); **PUPPET** (Hager 1969); **TINKERBELL** (Douglas 1954).

## **MINIATURE DWARF BEARDED**

**CHEMISTRY** (Black 2003) is a cute little number, with burnished rose standards over deeper red-purple falls, accented with a thick burnt orange beard. The form and ruffling are inherited from its ‘Tweety Bird’ lineage. Consistently in class each and every year, with outstanding plant habits. **COLD SNAP** (Black 2003) is also from ‘Tweety Bird’ via Paul’s outstanding MDB, ‘Tingle’. I call it a “barely-plic” because there are just a few plic markings in pale violet which lose their color as the flower ages. Cold-cold white actually has a suggestion of green in its makeup, especially in the standards’ midribs. Flowers are so wide and rounded they almost look out of class, but they are in compliance. **DOLLOP OF CREAM** (Black 2006) is a warm creamy white glaciata with self beards. It has rounded form and a lovely chiffon texture. First-year bloom was in class, with proper flower size and height of stalk. Cute name.

Several MDBs from Dorothy Willott and her late husband, Tony, are impressive, year after year. A favorite is **LITTLE DRUMMER BOY** (Willott 1997), a pure *I. pumila* in white with a dazzling deep blue spot in the falls. Cute tiny florets. Unfortunately, this far south, it is difficult to maintain pure *I. pumilas*, even though we do get a fair amount of really cold weather in the winter. **CROWN OF SNOW** (Willott 2001), although from ‘Little Drummer Boy’, has as its other parent, ‘Ice and Indigo’, one of the Willotts’ most famous SDBs, and consequently isn’t as difficult to keep going here. This has stunning contrast, with pure, cold white standards against rich deep red-violet falls with a wire rim in white. Cream beards add the finishing touch. **ICE CHERUB** (Willott 2000) is a glistening icy blue-white with light blue beards, wonderfully formed and consistently in class. A mound of bloom of this one is memorable. Similar, but in solid light blue, is **SMALL BLESSINGS** (Willott 1999), still competitive with the newer releases and still a charmer, year after year, leaving a lasting impression.

**MINIKIN** (Ensminger 1998) is a colorful character which I had never seen until I spied it over in the “Ensminger Bed” at the Gary White Garden in Lincoln. It reminds me of a scaled-down version of the reblooming SDB, ‘What Again’ (Ensminger 1991), with dark violet standards keeping watch over unusual saffron yellow falls, capped with deep violet beards. Tight, cute form.

**CLASSICS:** **GRANDMA’S HAT** (Mahood 1957), **KID SISTER** (A. Brown 1972), **SMALL GEM** (Hamblen 1972).

## ARILBREDS

A trio of arilbred-medians are significant advancements in the class. The star is **SUSPECT** (T. Johnson 2006, OGB-), a rich violet that is heavily overcast in blue, most rare in arilbreds. The falls are a gentler rosy-violet, but then shot with blue-violet veining and a punctuating crimson-red spot surrounding the beards. Magnificent plant habits. From the looks of the AIS awards in 2008, the Median Symposium results, and the MIS Display Garden reports, it is confirmed this new arilbred-median is performing admirably throughout the country. **CHAIN REACTION** (Tasco 2007, OGB-) is another one of the best new arilbred medians, second only to ‘Suspect’. Intoxicating color in richest mahogany wine with a magnificent velvet pile. There is a hint of a black signal pattern, making the flowers glow. It reminded me of a scaled-down version of its father, the great ‘Concerto Grosso’ (Mathes). **HAMMURABI** (Baumunk 2004, OGB) is a fascinating, rare half-bred arilbred-median, the father being the great white MTB, ‘Astra Girl’ (Varner). Of moderate height, the standards are medium purple, heavily netted with deeper violet and red veining. The falls are a white base, but then heavily covered in a complex network of similar colored veining, with more rose in its makeup. In place of a signal pattern, that area of the falls is a heavier concentration of veining. Tidy, compact flowers are more oval in shape than the traditional globular onco look. It has a long bloom season, still in bloom during convention in the master planting at OSU.

**CROWN OF SPLENDOR** (McGrath 2005, OGB) has been impressive in Oklahoma, but of course was exceptional in the home garden in Albuquerque. Standards are nearly solid white, with palest lilac veins apparent only upon closest inspection. Falls are golden bronze, toned down somewhat with beige. Then, in the tradition of Pete’s mentor, Howard Shockey, there is a large bold deep red signal, like a beacon, distinctly predominating the rounded, recurved falls. Global form in classic onco. The garden impact is memorable. **GIDEON’S LAMP** (McGrath 2004, OGB) is similar in style and color presentation, but from totally different bloodlines. Standards are white with more of a flush of yellow in the midribs. Falls are also white, but heavily washed yellow, with an even more intense yellow blaze hosting a decorative brown chevron-shaped signal. **PENNINAH’S PROVOCATION** (McGrath 2004, OGB) was among my favorites of the McGrath introductions in the home garden, second only to ‘Refiner’s Fire’. Pete had several stalks open on tour day, and each was showing off with impressive consistency. Standards are a rich full lilac to orchid; the falls beige, veined throughout in burgundy with a startling, exotic black-burgundy signal. Stalks are consistently at 2’ in height with some branching, 3-4 buds per stalk.

**HOLY MOLEY PLUM** (Chacon 2007, OGB) is a fun new half-bred with a festive name from a relatively new breeder from California. The base color is light grape-violet, but then the entire flower is bombarded with a heavy network of deep plum veining, accented with a large, even deeper plum-violet signal pattern in the falls. It carries an amazing amount of ruffling and fluting for a half-bred arilbred. **NOBLE WARRIOR** (Tasco 2007, OGB) is an exciting new offering from a California hybridizer who is really starting to make a name for himself in arilbred breeding. Standards are creamy ivory with gradually intensifying flushes of yellow in the midribs. Falls are a golden yellow base, garnished with burgundy veining and a bold, huge deeper red signal. Growth habits are exceptional; I suspect even those gardens who have difficulty growing arilbreds will grow this half-bred with ease. **RIVERS OF BABYLON** (Baumunk 2004, OGB) is a choice arilbred in a beautiful array of colors. Standards are lavender, with suggestions of blue in their makeup, gradually lightening at the edges. The falls are a blend of tan to yellow, then pulling in the lavender of the standards at the edges of the falls. Large red-brown signals are perfectly shaped and dominate the flower. From the outstanding ‘Lancer’ (Shockey), this is one of the best half-breds on the market today. **KALIFA’S FORTUNE** (Annand 2001, OGB) is a dynamo color gem, with standards a strong rose with lavender veining throughout. Then the falls blend the rose color of the standards with intense coppery-brown overlaid in bold fashion. Intense maroon signals below brown beards add drama. The color is luscious; the form outstanding. Some stalks showed evidence of snaking, but this defect was not present in the entire clump. The carrying power of the color array in the garden, and the flower’s ability to retain its intensity through the life of the flower, was most impressive.

The next four arilbreds, though certainly not new, were not found when I went back through my Contemporary Views database, and therefore have never been reviewed here. **BABYLONIAN FIRES** (Rich-Whitely 1992, OGB) is a parent of new ‘Refiner’s Fire’ (McGrath, reviewed in the Awards Section), and you can certainly see where it gets its magnificent color. Standards are deep rose with lavender undertones and some gold in the midribs. Falls carry an even richer glow of deep rose into a blending of orange and mahogany. It has a deep black signal with a reddish tint. I first discovered **JUDEAN OASIS** (Whitely 1994, OGB) at the Oklahoma Iris Society (OIS) show in 2007, but then also got to evaluate its plant habits in a couple of area gardens later that week. It is a wonderful yellow amoena, similar in style to its mother, ‘Syrian Moon’ (Brizendine), with clean bright white standards with just a flush of yellow in the midribs. It then sports a somewhat smaller, moderate-sized deep brown-black spot, not as large but with better definition than its parent. Outstanding globular form; commendable plant habits. **MOHR PRETENDER** (Rich 1978, OGB) is still one of my all-time favorite arilbreds. As with ‘Jonnye’s Magic’ (reviewed in the Awards section), it is dependable, year after year, resistant to any curve ball Mother Nature may decide to pitch that spring. This shade of soft blue is still all-too-rare, even

today, in arilbreds. Globular flowers are embellished with a non-spectacular violet signal etched at the beards. Color and consistency are the strong assets here. I recommend both to the novice irisarian wanting to venture into the world of arilbreds. **PEGGY'S SONG** (Wilson 1997, OGB) is a charming, somewhat older English variety not so widely grown as many of the popular arilbreds from Geoff Wilson. Standards are a soft violet blue. The falls a medley of colors blended, with the base color primarily lemon yellow, then veined in varying degrees of violet and rose, topped off with a large dark purple signal. Form is typically globular, and carries the strong plant habits of its famous father, 'Zerzura' (Hager).

**FRANK RICE** (Rice-Annand 2002, OGB+) is a ¾-bred which appears to grow quite well in different climates. The base color is lavender, slightly lighter in the falls. Then, throughout the flower, the petals are intricately veined in purple to maroon, more intense in the falls. The falls are capped with a distinctive deep maroon to brown signal. The form is stylishly elongated, rather than onco, showing its *I. korolkowii* lineage. **MASADA'S GLORY** (Whitely 2002, OGB+) is a regal affair, with pure white standards atop a more creamy base color in the falls, lightly sanded with tan, but then emblazoned with a dashing, dominant dark red-wine signal. Spectacular contrast. This 3/4-bred is a respectably strong grower here in central Oklahoma. **QUMRAN CANARY** (Danielson 2000, OGB+) was dazzling in the Albuquerque sun. The primary color is old gold to brass yellow. The falls are heavily saturated with rich maroon, brown, and brass, with deeper veining and refined flecks of purple mixed in. Then there is a narrow golden edge as you often find in medians. A very unique ¾-bred.

One last entry I gotta tell you about. One of the highlights for me was walking into the Albuquerque Show during the Aril/Median Trek and seeing a specimen of **PURPLE SEQUIN** (Shockley 1992), a pure aril – AR (OG) – nonchalantly sitting on the show bench amongst the other entries. Only 10" tall, it is a milky white self with a dazzling deep purple signal embroidered into the falls. I let out a yelp when I discovered it, for most folks (including the local experts) thought this little jewel had met the fate of extinction. As you know, pure arils can be very difficult to grow. Many never see commerce, and this was one of the few that Howard ever officially released. Cindy Rivera (Trek Organizer Supreme) to the rescue! Apparently she picked up a sprig of it shortly before Howard's death. She wasn't even sure she had the real thing – at least until it had increased enough to bloom this spring!

**CLASSICS:** **BIB 'N' TUCK** (Foster 1968, Arilbred-Median); **DOVE SONG** (Flanagan 1967); **ESTHER, THE QUEEN** (Hunt 1968); **LAHARA** (Sundt 1964); **PROLIFIC** (Clark 1966); **RADIANT SMILE** (Danielson 1968).

## **SPURIAS**

**ADRIATIC BLUE** (Niswonger 1996) is a deep lustrous blue with bright yellow falls with a band of the standards' color and some of the blue infiltrating into the yellow base. High quality deep blues are remarkably rare in Spurias; this one remains among the best. **ARIZONIQUE** (Jenkins 1998) has standards and midribs in full lavender with some yellow blended in. The falls start out light yellow, but gradually transform into a bleeding edge in lavender. The form is flaring, giving the flower a nice lilt. **BILLOWING CLOUDS** (Jenkins 2000) is smaller in stature, with moderate-sized flowers on stalks moderate in height. Pure waxy white with the bright yellow signal pattern dominating the falls. The flowers are heavily waved with moderate ruffling, providing a very airy look to the ensemble. **BUTTER RIPPLES** (Jenkins 1999) is tall and imposing, a butter yellow self with heavy ruffling and even a suggestion of lace. Bright and showy from across the garden. **ELFIN SUNSHINE** (Jenkins 1998) is a wonderful example of the smaller, shorter Spurias that Mr. Jenkins has been working, and is my personal favorite of the grouping. Here we have a light yellow, gradually deepening at the edges of the petals. Petite and charming with tight crimping for ruffling – and a nice change of pace from the tall, regal varieties we are used to seeing in Spurias. A welcomed addition for the landscape. **SUN HALO** (Jenkins 1998) is a bold blending of colors, with brown standards with a touch of yellow blended into the base. Falls are bright sunshine yellow with a halo in the color of the standards. A high-quality Spuria from the famous 'Janice Chesnik' (McCown).

**CLASSICS:** **CONTRADICTION** (Ferguson 1963), **DARK AND HANDSOME** (Ferguson 1966), **LYDIA JANE** (Walker 1965), **MEDIA LUZ** (Hager 1968), **NEOPHYTE** (Hager 1965).

## **LOUISIANAS**

**ARROWS** (Dunn-Ghio 1998) is a perky lavender with eloquent deeper texture veining throughout the flower. Lime green line signals are distinctive, appearing on all six petals to form the "arrows"; very clever. Wide rounded form with moderately heavy ruffling. The flower carries an attractive silky sheen that adds life to the flower. **DIVORCEE** (Ghio 2001) is a distinctive, fun iris. A colorful rich blend of apricot in the standards, joined with rose-pink in the falls. The twist on this one is the bold deep rose streak running right down the center of the falls. My sometimes-too-vivid imagination could conjure up all kinds of risqué descriptions for the effect, such as a "wild hair" or "sowing wild oats", or....I'll leave it at that. **HONEY GALORE** (Betzer 2000) is a tight, compact honey brown with a minimum amount of

infusions of buff and amber. The color has excellent carrying power and, most importantly, has been sunfast, not always the case in this color of Louisianas. In proportion to its flower size, the stalks are shorter, with the excellent branching and placement as its parent, ‘Gladiator’s Gift’ (Taylor). It also has a leathery texture very much in harmony with the color scheme.

A trio from Down Under was impressive. **BUOYANT** (Taylor 1999) is nearly a yellow amoena, with white standards blended in the heart with light yellow. Light yellow falls are accented with green signals. The hallmark Taylor ruffling is well represented here, with deep billowing ruffles throughout the flower and wide, nearly overlapping body parts. **LOST FOR WORDS** (Pryor 1998) is unlike anything else currently on the market. Difficult to describe, it is basically a soft buff-orange self with some undertones in rose-pink to add life to the flower. Discreet yellow signals are then outlined in maroon eyeliner, adding intrigue. Gently ruffled in an elegant fashion. Just the opposite effect is **WOW FACTOR** (Pryor 2001), an innocent yellow ground color then exploding with a shocking network of brilliant maroon veining all over the flower, deeper and even more intense in the falls. Look closely and you’ll find an orange line signal deep in the jungle. Simply stunning, and carries all the fine plant habits and blooming qualities of its father, ‘Rokki Rockwell’ (Haymon).

**CIRCE’S APPEAL** (Faith 2005) is nothing new in color in Louisianas, but nonetheless a high-quality, attractive iris. Rich medium bluebird blue from the Aussie, ‘Dural Bluebird’ (Taylor). Its coloration is clear, the form very pleasing, presented on tall impressive stalks with well-spaced branching. **JUNE’S PICK** (Faith 2002) is a frothy light to medium yellow, given freshness with a definite influence of lime green in its makeup. The texture is deceiving, different from most Louisianas on the market, reminding me of the “creped” look of the Stout winning daylily, ‘Brocaded Gown’. In spite of this “bubbled” look, it has sufficient substance through the life of the flower.

**RAE RAE** (Faith 2004), named for one of the Faith granddaughters, is a delicate medium blue with a hairline picoteed halo in silver. Medium sized flowers are displayed on rather tall, strong stalks with 3 branches, holding up well after heavy rains. Vigorous, rampant growth with pretty foliage. Consistently good in OKC and in Austin, outstanding at the Murphy Garden.

**CLASSICS:** **BAYOU CANDELABRA** (Arny 1974), **CHARJOY’S JAN** (Arny 1978), **CREOLE CANARY** (Granger 1978), **MISS ARKANSAS** (Chowning 1978).

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