

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 1990

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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 remindful 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 frilliest 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 ½” 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** (Army '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 remindful 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 gentile. 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 remindful 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 remindful 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 reminiscent 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 RAIDER** (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 reselecs 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 remindful 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 tooMiss 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 remindful 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:

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-ammoena, with white standards and falls, but the falls lightly washed in lime-green, giving the visual impression of a light green ammoena. 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. **KANDIMOON** (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' (Army), all segments are offset with a contrasting halo in yellow. Lilting form, with ruffled, flat petals. **EMPRESS 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 irisdom – 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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