

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS—2000/2001

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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-1990s, 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 had been interesting to see which varieties were “flashes” and which ones have truly become a vital part of the collection, impressing each bloom season.

AWARD WINNERS

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 1999 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 style arms, 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 than 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 4/19/1995. 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 plant 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 heavy 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 fortunately to get it as one of my 200 or so convention guests for 1999, 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 the 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 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 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!

YIPPY 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 SDB 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 BBs released in the 1990s. It is 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), 7-9 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 soft light to medium lemon with a blush of violet in the midribs. The falls are 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 freeze, 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 IBs 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 midribs. 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 in 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 plant habits. Of course, great branching too, on stalks moderate in height.

5. The **DARK HORSE AWARD** is 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 SDBs). 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 BB 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 veering 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”. Yet, 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’ (Black), 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 rich milk chocolate. Falls are yet deeper and richer, in a bittersweet chocolate. From ‘Zing Me’ (Blyth, IB), 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 guested 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** (M. Smith 2001) is a new IB that has been privately guested here (I’m a Median Iris Society Display Garden) and is a far cry from the types of things Marky has released to date. Well named, for this is sheer insanity! Standards are a strange, moody gold, but heavily overtone 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 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 contrasting 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 and light tan, with an unusual, attractive pink glow about it. The texture is leathery, with gentle ruffling rather than 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’ (Roderick), 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 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 3 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 with 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 great ‘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 of 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 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 type 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 1999 convention, and thusfar, I’ve been surprised at its virtual lack of support in the awards systems – baffles me. Yes, another fine advancement from the Schreiners in blacks. Broad flowers, gently ruffled. Branching without peer. But the intensity of the standards and 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 bloomer, 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 distinctiveness. 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 Rairdon' (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 light lemon, but instead of infusions 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); **STARRING 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, plant 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 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 medium buttery yellow. The stitching is a distinctive bronzed brown, very finely appliquéd 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 10th 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 AND NEGLECTAS:

PACIFIC CLOUD (Lauer 1997) is a 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 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 silvery-blue, then falls fully saturated in 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 rich medium to dark peach. The falls are 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’ (Ghio). **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 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 grayed lavender falls. It has a warm look, with a mink texture, rather than the traditional sparkle. 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 substantiated 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 2nd 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 smoky 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 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 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 general 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’ (Kasperek), 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’s 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 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 remindful 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 cool lavender; the falls 2 shades deeper. But then the adornment is this stunning 2” flounce, crimped and feathered all the way, as if George had the pinching sheers out that morning. Heavy, deep ruffling simply adds 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 flounces 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 form 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 1999 Convention. I have been impressed with its compact look and consistency in staying in class. A fine contribution to BBs – and to Space Agers.

CLASSICS: **HORNED ROSYRED** (Austin 1958); **HORNED SUNSHINE** (Noyd 1968); **UNICORN** (Austin 1954).

MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

MINIATURE TALL BEARDEDS:

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 MTBs, 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 1999 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. '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 notable late bloomer, beginning its bloom well into TB season. **WISTFUL WISTERIA** (Wulf 1998), from Nebraska, is simply lovely, a 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 BEARDEDS:

CANADIAN BORDER (Chapman 1997) is a fantastic new addition to the class, and has quickly become a favorite here. I entered it in a Sooner State show one year, with 3 open, and won Best Median with it. And it went on to win 1st 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, **ERAMOSIA 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 ever 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 stalks 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 BEARDEDS:

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** (M. 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, SDB). 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** (M. 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 IBs. The base color in this plicata is brilliant saffron gold. The standards have just a brushing of bronze in them. But then the falls have a broad ½" 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 2 seasons has to be **COUTURE STAR** (Ransom 1996), a French SDB plicata with a white ground, gently stitched in pale blue, approaching steel gray! Wide wonderful form – you'd swear it had to be from 'Chubby Cheeks', 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, 3-4 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, **MARKSMAN** (M. 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 this 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 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. **STRUTTING 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 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** (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** (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** (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 plants habits, and a dependable bloomer in this relatively temperate climate. **SPARKLETTTS** (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 *I. 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 a 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 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 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 plants habits, with plentiful increase each year. **LADY BUTTERFLY** (Jenkins 1994) is a case of “elegance supreme”, 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 ruffling. 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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