

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 2003/2004

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

AWARD WINNERS

1. **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**—to the Best New Iris seen (one introduced within the past 3 years of the date of this review): **PURPLE RITZ** (Lesley Painter 2003) is a smashing debut for this conscientious new hybridizer from California. It is a huge pure purple, not violet, not approaching black – purple – a color amazingly quite rare today in Tall Bearded irises. It has heavy ruffling, symmetrically positioned throughout the flow, but not so heavy as to contradict the regal effect it gives. It produces tall, thick, husky well-branched stalks, with 3-4 branches, double socketed, a quality extended to it from both its parents, 'Indigo Princess' (Schreiner) and Dykes Medalist 'Titan's Glory' (Schreiner). Without fail, it has outstanding growth habits with huge healthy fans and exceptional vigor.

Runnersup:

AMONG FRIENDS (Varner 2002) is among the best of many fine advancements being made in diploid Miniature Tall Bearded, and is my current favorite. Standards are pure white, domed and well shaped. Horizontal falls are rich deep indigo blue-violet with a light halo in white. It is smooth at the hafts, a major advancement in the class. The form is also a major step forward, wide and rounded, but not so wide as to foil the grace that is a must in MTBs. Stalks are textbook – thin, with a graceful S-curve, branching perfectly positioned on the stalk, double sockets to ensure an extended season of bloom. Foliage remains in proportion, thin and shorter so as not to interfere with the flowers. It makes a stunning impact on the show bench, even more so in the garden. **BOLD ENCOUNTER** (Black 2003) is a welcome contribution to variegates, deep and suave in its character. Standards are deepest gold, approaching brown, closed and ruffled. Falls are intense mahogany red, flaring, with moderate to heavy ruffling. Thick beards are deep gold, in harmony with the color of the standards. Rich it is – in colder weather, actually, it is perhaps a bit too deep. But in warm, drier seasons, it is without peer. The entire flower has a velveteen sheen which enlivens the mood and contributes to the carrying power of the colors in the garden. Branching is outstanding, 3-4 branches in modified candelabra style. **FREEDOM SONG** (Schreiner 2003) was on my "watch list" after seeing the positive comments from Joe Ghio upon its introduction. The Schreiner family has produced a legacy of choice violet-on-white plicatas over the years. This one carries on that tradition with a high-quality pure white plicata, finely, precisely stitched in full violet. The King of Clean, with impressive ruffling that is deep, but not so deep as to cause the eye to lose focus on the effect of the plicata pattern. Wonderful branching, and although the stalks tend to be on the slender side, have no problem sustaining 3 flowers open at once. **DANCING BUNNIES** (Black 2002) is one of those flowers that leaves a warm, fuzzy feeling inside, a bit hearty sigh. This SDB has medium yellow standards and pearly white falls edged in the standards' color, complemented with a harmonious soft violet beard. The yellow has a mysterious greenish glow which enlivens the flower. Wonderful wide form, softly ruffled and waved. But it is the texture that makes it special – a waxen finish. Outstanding plant habits and bloom ratio – a complete package.

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

Runnersup:

FANCY STUFF (O. Brown-McCrae 2001) reminds me of a modern version of my very first introduction to purchase, back when I was but a Sophomore in high school, 'Bubbling Springs' (O. Brown 1971). I sat through many a piano lesson,

teaching my way to extra income to support my iris addiction! Laced blues have been a tough nut to crack, and ‘Bubbling Springs’ wound up being less than desirable in the growth and plant health department (and impossible to hybridize with – I assure you, I tried!). ‘Fancy Stuff’ comes a long way in correcting this deficiency. This diamond-dusted softest lavender-blue is wide, with exceptional substance to help hold the flower together. The falls gradually soften in the center to icy white, matching the white beards. As with ‘Kitty Kay’, in spite of a generous amount of lace, the flowers have no trouble whatsoever in opening properly, never twisting or tearing. **FIRST WAVE** (Tasco 2003) is an intensely, deeply ruffled rich aquamarine blue, the falls lightening ever so slightly in the heart. It inherited splendid plant habits from its mother, ‘Sudden Impact’ (Tasco) and the abundance of ruffling of the overlooked ‘Rippling River’ (Schreiner). It is a glossier version of ‘Sea Power’ (Keppel), with similar style of deepest ruffling. My only wish would be that it were a little bit taller and the branches placed a bit further away from the stalk (although they do not impede the flowers’ ability to open). I do believe I shot it in every garden in which it was blooming in Fresno! **CRYSTAL GAZER** (Keppel 2002) is one of a fine series of beautiful irises from the super parent ‘Fogbound’ (Keppel). Here we have a genteel blue-orchid in the standards, the falls a tone lighter in lilac-blue, gradually transforming to silvery-white in the heart of the falls. Beards are a soothing lilac-pink and add to the elegance. Heavily ruffled, it also has a modest degree of lace on all parts. The form and finish are very artistic, a beauty like a cut jewel. Not just a pretty face – it possesses impeccable branching and bud count, and the healthiest of plant habits. **ELYSIUM** (M. Smith 2003) is an eloquent peach glaciata from Keith Keppel’s TB glaciata, ‘Answered Prayers’. It makes for a great antidote to get the blood pressure under control again after seeing Marky’s evocative IB, ‘Delirium’. The color on ‘Elysium’, as with most glaciatas, is pure and crystalline, a soft shade of peach, with the falls a suggestion of a tone lighter, gradually diminishing in color to cream in the heart of the flower. Understated elegance, but with such fine attributes in form, substance, and plant habits that you cannot ignore its impact in the garden.

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

Runnersup:

SYMPHONY OF LIGHT (Meininger 2003) is a major breakthrough in Space Age irises, the best of its kind in this ‘Touche’ (Hamblen) color pattern of pink and blue. The entire flower is very pastel and elegant, with the one standout feature (pardon the pun) being an orange beard which ends in long lavender-blue horns, sometimes becoming spoons. Standards are softest pink with undertones of pale peach; the falls start out as lavender-blue, with a fine peach-pink halo, but as the flower fully expands and ages, the color in the center of the falls gracefully transforms to near-white, making the presence of the horns even more noticeable. It has been considerably taller than its registered 30”, with strong stalks with superb branching and spacing. Excellent plant habits with good increase and dependable bloom. **CHOCOLATE MOOSE** (Kasperek 2003) is the best and most unique of the newer Kasperek color breakers, a breakthrough in coloring. It is a rich chocolate base color, joyfully and recklessly streaked in white and some gold. The form is broad, with only slight ruffling, so as not to interfere with the business of the color breaking. Large flowers, intensity of color, and admirable plant habits inherited from its parent ‘Nigerian Raspberry’ (Kasperek), make it special. And my very favorite zoo name of all times! So clever! **CRAFTED** (Dunderman-Varner 2001, MTB) is a quaint, compact old-rose on creamy white plicata, with the exceptional stalks (3-4 branches), bud count, form, and clarity of color inherited from its parent, the famous ‘Rosemary’s Dream’ (Dunderman). Although the color of the plicating is a more muted version of ‘Rosemary’s Dream’, the application of the edging is a more distinctive plicata marking. We are very fortunate that Terry Varner (and his critical eye for quality) has been charged with the selection and release of the late Mary Louise Dunderman’s final creations. **GREASED LIGHTNING** (Chapman 2001, SDB) is a zany, raucous affair, a misfit offspring from luminata breeding. Beyond description, but let’s try: Basically, the standards are stone-washed violet, gradually transforming into moody green to antique golden-yellow at the edges. The falls are similar, but with a greater degree of irregularity and intensity in the transformation at the edges. Dark yellow beards slip in under the radar and belie the luminata lineage. OK, perhaps all that sounds gross, but trust me, “it works”, and Chuck couldn’t have picked a better name.

4. **SUN BELT AWARD** – to the Best Proven Variety, i.e., one that has been on the market long enough to be thoroughly tested in the Midwest (at least 4 years): **STARWOMAN** (M. Smith 1998, IB) is the epitome of class and poise, the template of what we like to see in a modern IB. This deep violet on white plicata approaches black in its intensity of color, with the standards almost completely saturated. The base color of the falls (pearly white) is a bold contrast to the intensity of the plicating. The form is wide, a testament to its ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black, SDB) heritage, the

falls horizontal, the flowers with a generous amount of ruffling which sets the flowers to dance. Peerless stalk production, tall enough to permit 2-3 branches, bud count sufficient to ensure a long season of bloom. It looks great in the garden, but is also smashing on the show bench (a specimen was First Runnerup at a recent show in Oklahoma City, with 3 beautifully spaced blossoms open). Its catapult to the top of the awards and popularity polls is no fluke – it is an iris of highest quality and style.

Runnersup:

GARNET STORM DANCER (Pryor 1997, LA) was one of Heather’s first introductions, and is on the fast track to becoming a classic. Heavy ruffles in deepest, sultry gartet red are its hallmark. Flowers are smaller, compact, tight, and with impeccable form. The whole flower is embellished with a high gloss which makes the flower glow across the garden. Shorter stalks are in harmony with the smaller flower size, and have a perfect S-curve to allow each branch to fully develop properly and the blossoms to open without interference. It truly is a masterpiece, and has proven itself in all parts of the country. **FOREVER BLUE** (Chapman 1997) would be a worthy competitor even if it were a “oncer”, but this hearty SDB has the constitution to produce dependable rebloom even in Zone 4 gardens. It is a clean, pert light blue, with hints of violet infusions in its makeup, contrasted with a distinctive medium to deep blue-violet beard, big and fuzzy. It has the vigor and rampant increase to sustain the energy required to rebloom; in milder zones, it is reported to be virtually an everbloomer. **BODY AND SOUL** (Stahly 1999) wasn’t widely grown in this part of the country, initially, but has more than made up for lost time. It is a tasteful blend, with the primary color being light to medium apricot. Then, interspersed throughout the flower (standards and falls), we have varying degrees of yellow, pink, and orange, capped with a bright orange beard. It produces beautiful stalks with consistency, no matter what the weather conditions throw at it. Plant habits are strong and hearty, as you can expect from this northern hybridizer. **CANDY APPLE CLASSIC** (Maryott 1999) is a color jewel in true candy apple red, bright and glowing. Technically, perhaps, it is a blend, in that it has undertones of various other shades of red, such as mahogany and ruby, and even a violet flash at times below deep bronze to chocolate beards. The form is wide and classic, with moderate ruffling; flowers produced on strong, well-branched stalks. Foliage is an attractive deep blue-green, a sure sign of health in irises.

5. **DARK HORSE AWARD** – to the variety introduced within the past 10 years or so that has been overlooked by AIS judges and deserved higher awards: **BOOMERANG** (Maryott 1992) is a temperate climate rebloomer which is an eloquent contrast in colors, with light apricot standards and lilac-lavender falls, blended with apricot in the shoulders and a deeper peach beard. The whole flower looks as though it were made from silk. That this iris was totally ignored by AIS judges at the time of its release is simply unbelievable.

Runnersup:

ONE LITTLE PINKIE (Durrance 1992) is a voluptuous, tasty rich coral-pink BB with red-tangerine beards. The intensity and application of color is impressive, with substance thick and texture quite leathery, ensuring the color impact stays intact through the life of the flower. Tight, compact flowers in proper proportion, moderately ruffled. Plant size and stalk height are also within the criteria of the class. Increase is average, but certainly not the sulking and temperamental habits which unfortunately, to this day, still plague many BBs. **MAUVELOUS** (Byers 1988) is a hearty Space Age TB which perhaps was overshadowed by its more famous seedling patch mates such as ‘Thornbird’, ‘Conjuration’, and ‘Godsend’ (Byers). It is a rich, widely formed mauve pink, with more mauve concentrated in the standards. Big thick husky plants produce tall, strong show stalks. A quality iris, and its name a clever play on words. **EMILIE DOLGE** (Spoon 1995) is an elegant reverse yellow amoena, with lemon yellow standards atop glistening white falls which gradually blend in to the lemon yellow color of the standards. As with ‘Boomerang’, the texture appears to be made of silk, shimmering in the sunlight. Plant habits are strong, with dependable bloom year after year. This was one of the Spoons’ first introductions, and even to this day, remains one of their finest. **WITH CASTANETS** (Ritchie 1991) is a clean, bright joyous affair – a medium yellow amoena, with purest white standards atop clear sunshiny yellow falls. This SDB is a consistent bloomer, year after year, and is resilient and resistant to the vagaries of the mood swings of Mother Nature in the early spring. Exceptional plant habits, with clean foliage producing stalks with 1 branch, 2-3 buds.

6. **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD** – to the most outstanding and promising seedling viewed this season: **EXPERIMENT** (Black 2005) was seen at the Portland Median Convention as Seedling #J386B. It is the crowning achievement of a long-standing goal to produce an advancement in blue-bearded yellows, carrying on the tradition of ‘Blueberry Muffins’ (Warburton) and ‘Canary Isle’ (Hamblen). We have a rich burnished golden yellow with a strong influence of willow green present throughout the flower. Falls are then accented with huge, thick, deep indigo-blue to violet beards, solid through and through with no other “junk” on them to ruin the effect. Impeccable form is tight and rounded, with closed standards one tone deeper than the falls, then wide, round falls, horizontal, with just the right amount of ruffling and waving. Stalks throughout the clump consistently carry 1 well placed branch, 3 buds total in perfect

sequencing. Plant habits are strong and robust. Predecessors in this color combination would tend to overbloom; not so with 'Experiment' – the increase/bloom ratio is faultless.

Runnersup:

L97-7 (Lesley Painter) was the hit of the Fresno Convention in the Seedling Department, garnering such praise as to win a High Commendation (HC) with the greatest number of votes (by a landslide). My notes, from several gardens, kept saying, "There's that orange again!" Consistent and intense in its coloring, it is a large, moderately ruffled rich orange (they call it Spanish orange) with incredible carrying power in the garden – you can see it a block away (well, almost). There is a slight softening of color in the center of the falls, allowing the eye to focus on brilliant orange beards, which simply add to the pizzazz of the flower. From the mega-branched 'Quito' (Ghio), it too carries 4 branches, double sockets, in formal candelabra style. Unlike its parent, however, the stalks are thicker and hold up better, even if multiple flowers are open. It is quite simply the finest orange on the market today. [UPDATE: This seedling has been named **BRILLIANCE**, introduced in 2005.] **ELAINE BOURQUE** (Haymon future), is a much-awaited Louisiana from this Lafayette hybridizer with the strictest of standards. It won Best Seedling at the 2003 Society for Louisiana Irises (SLI) Convention in Lafayette. When I first saw it, I was speechless (a major accomplishment, as those of you who know me could attest). It reminds me of the classic Japanese iris 'Frilled Enchantment' (Marx), with cold white boldly banded on all parts in the most glorious rose-pink imaginable. Well formed with wavy ruffles throughout. There is absolutely nothing like it on the market, and it will take the iris world by storm when it is released to commerce. [UPDATE: To be introduced in 2008 by Iris City Gardens]. Several SDB plicatas from Barbara Schmieder, Massachusetts, were receiving a lot of attention at the Portland Median Convention. General consensus was that the best was **97-AR-6**. It is a tight, rounded honey plicata with an intense concentration of chocolate in the shoulders – a cute, different look to SDB plicatas. It is at the upper end of the class in height, which is fortunate, because the slender stalks produce 2 branches, totaling 5 buds per stalk. [UPDATE: This has been named **BANDED TIGER**, a 2006 introduction]. **98-252-2** (Ron De La Motte) is a prettier, much healthier and more vigorous 'Feature Attraction' (Schreiner) type, with closed standards and wide well formed falls, all adorned with a heavy amount of lace. Yet the flowers didn't twist or tear when opening. The hybridizer was one of the tour hosts for the Fresno convention, and this seedling was among the best of all seen in any of the gardens. [UPDATE: This has been named **MADDIE DE**, a 2007 introduction.]

TALL BEARDED BY COLOR GROUP

REDS TO MAROONS:

The new reds coming from Joe Ghio are fascinating, intriguing, and each has its own unique character, full of distinctiveness. **CURRENT EVENTS** (Ghio 2004) is blackcurrant red with bronzed beards. The form is wide, and there is a fair amount of ruffling. The coloration is a totally different look than what we find in the Schreiner line of reds, attractive and charming. **ENNOBLE** (Ghio 1999), a parent of 'Current Events', approaches its red from the black-cerise tones, with more of a brick red beard versus bronze. It has an intense glossy finish, whereas 'Current Events' has more of a velveteen texture. **CRANBERRY SAUCE** (Black 2002) is a glowing cranberry to claret wine with bright yellow beards. What adds interest to the flower is a bizarre but beautiful overlay in black which intensifies rather than muddies the color. Its pollen parent, the famous 'Tom Johnson' (Black) passed on its superlative branching to this child. Pretty blue-green foliage. **OASIS RED** (Chadwick-White 2001) was a pleasant surprise, from Idaho hybridizers new to me. It is a most unusual shade of burnished rose-red, a bit rough at the hafts but not offensive. Adding to its character are thick root beer colored beards. It has nice wide form, even sporting some ruffling and lace. Colorfastness is suspect; it did bleach out in some gardens. But when it's right, it is fascinating. It carried just average stalks, and it appeared to be a slow grower in some gardens. Nonetheless, a very interesting variety.

CLASSICS: **BRIGADOON** (Tompkins 1955); **CAMPFIRE GLOW** (Whiting 1947); **FRONTIER MARSHALL** (Schreiner 1965).

BROWNS:

CHOCOLATE CHESS (Moores 2002) is an intriguing entry in this category, a mysterious soft brown, blended with beige, with the falls a tone deeper than the standards. It does this interesting "transformation" of color as the flower ages, very pleasing and artistic. (If you've ever attended one of my judges training schools, you'll know the difference between transforming and fading – fading is a negative connotation directly associated with standard substance).

CHOCOLATE ECSTASY (Schick 2001) has been totally overlooked. Maybe folks just don't like brown irises, but this is rich and luscious, maintaining its intensity of color even in warmer weather (sunfast). It does exhibit a velvet texture instead of a glossy look, such as found in the SDB, 'Death by Chocolate' (Bianco), so this curtails the overall carrying

power of the color in the garden somewhat. **RUSTLE OF SPRING** (Grosvenor 1999) is a fascinating blend of varying degrees of brown, mixed with copper, deep tan, and even burnished rose. Burnt orange beards are thick and bold, complementing the color array. It is a broad, blowzy type of flower, with standards closed and ruffled, even showing some lace, the falls heavily, deeply ruffled.

CLASSICS: **CALDRON** (Schreiner 1957); **FLAME AND SAND** (Carlson 1968); **MALACCA STRAITS** (D. Johnson 1964).

APRICOTS TO ORANGES:

CRACKLING CALDERA (Aitken 2003) is a rich, vibrant apricot-orange, with an influence of yellow to warm the effect. Standards are solid orange. Then, the falls are apricot in the majority, with a distinctive band of the orange along the edges. It is topped off with thick deep orange beards. Nice form, with horizontal falls and an interesting style of ruffling, gently waving from the shoulders and all the way around. **SHANNY ORANGE** (Grumbine 2001) was a “sleeper” for me, and is one of the most heavily laced oranges I’ve seen. It carries intense, pure saturation which retained its substance and color in the heat. It reminded me of a brighter version of the first really good laced orange, ‘Orange Star’ (Hamblen). Standards are open and well held, heavily ruffled with moderate lace; the falls are well shaped, the same shade of orange, with heavier lace. Even the style arms are blessed with laced. Stalks are a bit short, but with formal candelabra branching, perhaps a bit too wide, in that the bottom branch comes up a bit too far but doesn’t impede the balance of the stalk.

CLASSICS: **ORANGE CHARIOT** (Fay 1964); **PALOMINO** (Hall 1952); **TAHITI SUNRISE** (Ernst 1963).

PINKS:

KIND WORD (Keppel 2000) is a wide, ruffled buff pink with contrasting orange beards. The color is such that, on some days, it could be considered in with the apricots. It has a quiet elegance about it, with a waxy substance that adds sophistication. **TENDER MERCY** (Kerr 2000) is satin pink, a touch lighter in the falls, with shrimp beards. Form and style are its strongest attributes, inheriting the magnificent form and ruffling of the great English iris ‘Elizabeth Poldark’ (Nichol). It also picked up the healthy plant habits of its parent, always a positive in the quest for improved pinks. **H.C. STETSON** (Stetson 2003) is from a new hybridizer in Denver, and could easily have been in the running for the L’Elegante Award. It is the palest pink imaginable – you have to do a double-take to be sure, yes, it really is pink. Keeping with the mood, the beards are palest blue, tipped pale pink. The whole flower is heavily ruffled and moderately laced. It doesn’t have the extreme width of ‘Kitty Kay’ or ‘Kind Word’ (Keppel), but is nonetheless pleasing in shape. Stalks on a first-year bloom “required assistance” – I’ll be watching it to see if the strength improves on an established clump. Similar, **LACY DAY** (Ernst 2000) is the softest baby pink with deep, heavy lace all over. The beards are a deeper pink and are harmonious. As with ‘H.C. Stetson’, the form is not as wide and rounded as some of its contemporaries, but is architecturally sound and very attractive, with more compact size and a nice flair to the falls. Very delicate in appearance, but with more than adequate substance to sustain.

CLASSICS: **CHANTILLY** (Hall 1943); **MARY RANDALL** (Fay 1951); **MUSIC HALL** (Hamblen 1967); **PINK BALLET** (Rudolph 1969).

LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:

DESIGNER LABEL (Ghio 2003) is a large-flowered pinkish orchid blend in the tradition of the famous ‘Entourage’ (Ghio), but with much more clarity of color. Falls gradually lighten in the center of the falls, below tangerine beards. Tall strong stalks frequently open multiple blossoms. **SOCIAL GRACES** (Keppel 2000) is a heavily ruffled laced study in blended orchid, lavender, pink, and rose, accented with a harmonious tangerine-red beard. The substance is substantial, allowing the flower to retain its intensity through the life of the flower. **NO DOUBT** (Lauer 2004) is smooth light lavender with some blue in its makeup. It is quite heavily ruffled, and the ruffles are well placed on the flower, giving the whole flower a feeling of motion. The clarity of color makes the flower refreshing. **MIAH JANE** (Parkhill 2001) is a lovely shade of orchid-lavender, in the tradition of the old Larry Gaulter classics, with elegant ruffling and clarity of color. Stalks are impressive – somebody is going to hit Show Day just right and win it all. I have been very impressed with the overall quality of all the things I have seen released from this Tennessee hybridizer who is new to me. He seems to specialize in overall “gardenability” of his irises, an attribute we all should be striving for more often. **PERFECT TOUCH** (Tasco 2001) is another fine introduction from a very talented newer hybridizer from California. It is a deep violet rendition of its lavender parent, ‘Sudden Impact’ (Tasco), with heavy ruffling and superb branching and plant habits. It also retained the beautiful satin texture of its parent.

CLASSICS: CASHMERE (Fay 1959); GRAPE FESTIVAL (Gaulter 1969); ORCHID BROCADE (Rudolph 1965); STERLING SILVER (Moldovan 1963).

DEEP VIOLETS TO BLACKS:

BLACK PHANTOM (Maryott 2001) is going to wind up in the Dark Horse Award category in a few years if it doesn't start getting some attention! It is a fully formed, heavily ruffled jet black with the look of patent leather. Tall stately stalks carry the evocative flowers to maximum exposure. Plant habits are outstanding, producing lush blue-green foliage.

WORLD WITHOUT END (Hager-DuBose 2000) is the best of the last releases from the Melrose seedling patch of the late Ben Hager. It is an outstanding rich deep violet, with some white coming through at the beards, with impeccable form and deep ruffles. Strong plants are husky and huge, with big thick stalks holding up very large (huge) blooms. **FADE TO BLACK** (Schreiner 2002) continues a high quality line of blacks from the Schreiners, a fully saturated black with self beards. Tall stalks are without peer – frequently carries 4 branches with multiple buds. The substance is thick, the ruffling extensive, the carrying power of the color in the garden significant. Beautiful deep blue-green foliage. **MIDNIGHT CAPER** (Rogers 1999) was blooming well in several Fresno gardens and was consistently outstanding, one of the most pleasant surprises of the whole convention. This hardy black, bred in cold, tough Wisconsin, has beautiful individual flowers, deep, intense, with good color saturation in soot black. Branching overall is acceptable, although a few stalks appeared to have its bottom branch a bit too close to the stalk. If this is as high quality in my home garden, it could be a future Dark Horse winner. Too bad it hasn't been more widely grown.

The advancement in reblooming irises is greatly appreciated. **MARTY RICHARDS** (Richards 2005), seen under number in Fresno as Seedling #6005-RE, is an improvement over its famous, high quality reblooming parent, 'Feedback' (Hager), with even more refined form and slightly more ruffling. It is full violet, a tone deeper in the falls. Was registered and named for the hybridizer's wife, so you know he too must believe it is special. Another impressive registered rebloomer which was performing spectacularly in several gardens during the Fresno Convention was **RECURRING GLORY** (Sutton 2002), an even more intense full violet self from the blue side. It has wide, rounded form with billowing ruffles. Stately stalks were well branched, consistent, with double sockets at all positions

CLASSICS: BLACK DIAMOND (Schreiner 1951); NIGHT SONG (Luihn 1965); SABLE NIGHT (Cook 1950); SWAHILI (Plough 1965).

BLUES:

With a thousand (or two) blues on the market, you would think every conceivable combination, look, and style would have been explored by now. But with 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner) on the scene, even more creative combinations and colors are now possible. **TOKATEE FALLS** (Schreiner 2000) is vibrant bluebird blue, wide and rounded. The whole flower is set in motion with a blending of softer blue, approaching white, in addition to deeper blue shadows, all with a generous degree of ruffling. Very artistic, but frustratingly difficult to describe in words or to capture in a picture. **ABOVE THE CLOUDS** (Schreiner 2001) is a glorious azure blue with billowing ruffles like those of 'Altruist' (Schreiner), fluffy and with an airy look about them. Incredible stalks, 3 branches plus lower rebranching, double to triple socketed. The whole flower is silver dusted, shimmering in the sunlight. **PURE SAPPHIRE** (Parkhill 2002) is just that, purest sapphire blue, with no other color to disturb the effect. Moderately ruffled, with utmost clarity of color. Beautiful plant habits make for a complete package. **WALKING ON AIR** (Black 2001) is deep violet-blue, with the falls deeper than the standards. Then, embedded in heavy, tight ruffling, you find where the color has transformed itself into a ghostly lighter edging on all body parts, the name befitting the character of the flower. The flower is smaller and well-disciplined. Deep blue-green foliage, purple-based, adds to the aura of the iris.

CLASSICS: BLUE CHARMER (Rudolph 1972); BUBBLING SPRINGS (O. Brown 1971); GREAT LAKES (Cousins 1938); HIGH ABOVE (DeForest 1961).

WHITES TO CREAMS:

DEVONSHIRE CREAM (Sutton 2000) is an exquisitely ruffled warm cream, my favorite in this color, with the presence of yellow ever so slightly in the hafts of the falls, well coordinated with the yellow beards. It is of highest quality, as it should be, coming from the great English variety, 'Elizabeth Poldark' (Nichol), an update of a very fine flower in and of itself. In some gardens, the branching was a bit high and close to the stalk, but not to the point of being defective. And I swear, at the Fresno Convention, it looked like it was trying to sport horns – I guess from hanging out in the vicinity of all those Sutton Space Age introductions! **TOO BELOW ZERO** (D. Miller 2004) is a tall, imposing cold white with the form, substance, and texture of its parent, 'Silverado' (Schreiner), but much taller than the registered height of 35".

One clump in a Fresno Convention garden had a stalk with 4 open, and would have 5 open the next day. Plenty of backup buds to make it a good garden iris also. **SUNLIT CREST** (Mullin 2002) is a well named masterpiece in warm white with glistening gilt edging in gold, irregularly infused in the flower. The heaviest concentration is in the shoulders. It carries heavy lace embedding the gold glitter, coming from its famous laced parent, 'Laced Cotton' (Schreiner). In addition to the lace, it shows unusual crinkled ruffling which is most attractive. **VATICAN FLAG** (Willott 2005) is a soothing warm white with a ¼" halo of diffused yellow and yellow shoulders and beards. It is similar to the Dykes Medalist 'Bride's Halo' (Mohr), except the halo is more subtle, and rather than a diamond-dusted texture, it is presented in chiffon. Magnificent stalks, with 3 branches plus spur in candelabra branching. Its ruffling is significant, nearly as deep as its parent, 'Rippling River' (Schreiner). A choice new Tall Bearded from a dedicated hybridizing couple from Ohio who have devoted most of their hybridizing efforts over the years with dwarfs and medians.

CLASSICS: CANDLEFLAME (Hall 1961); **TRANQUILITY** (Fay 1950); **WHITE TAFFETA** (Rudolph 1966).

YELLOWS:

ITALIAN ICE (Cadd 2001) is a translucent, icy pale lemon, combining satin texture in the standards with more of a chiffon look in the falls, all pulled together very tastefully. Gently ruffled. Flower quality is sometimes inconsistent, but not to the point that it should be rejected. Extremely tall stalks are well branched but sometimes may need some supporting during adverse weather (such as never-ending strong winds, sweeping down the plains in Oklahoma!). Coming from Space Age breeding, it will sometime project the suggestion of a horn, but this is the exception to the norm.

PICASSO MOON (Schreiner 2000) is a full canary yellow self, right down to the beards, with wonderful carrying power of its color in the garden. The flowers are huge – maybe too big to keep it all together, with only average form. Stalks sometimes appeared to be thin, yet they managed to hold everything up. Everything is super-sized – the plants are big and thick, and there is plentiful increase and good color in the foliage. **PIONEER WOMAN** (Black 2002) is one I had missed. No, not just another nice yellow and white combo. The flowers are huge, with bright sunshine yellow standards (with some white blended in), and then purest white falls, clean, with a distinctive ½" to ¾" band of even more intense yellow. The balance between standards and falls is much better than the catalog picture suggests. **SUN FUN** (T. Johnson 2002) is similar in color and style, with less white showing in the falls – the falls look more yellow with a white patch in the heart, below deep yellow beards. The flowers glisten in the sun, glow in cloudy weather. The stalks are incredible, from the great parent, 'Goldkist' (Black), easily and consistently producing 4 branches.

CLASSICS: ELSA SASS (Sass 1939); **MAY MELODY** (Hamblen 1965); **TRULY YOURS** (Fay 1949); **ULTRAPOISE** (Noyd 1962).

PLICATAS:

CONTEMPORARY ART (Black 2000) is a nice advancement in the quest for red-bearded blue plicatas, inheriting its burnt orange beard from 'Daredevil' (Keppel). It is a clean, wide white, precisely stitched in a band of deep blue-violet. The finishing touch is a distinctive violet chevron immediately below the beards. The beard set the flower aglow.

FEELINGS (Ghio 2002) is one of the prettier additions to the luminata class. The base color, and the color which comes through at the beards, in the heart of the flower, is a soft pink, instead of your usual white or light yellow. The patterning is a marbled, airbrushed look in rich cherry red, topped with tangerine-red beards. Two fancy plicatas from Keith Keppel are vivacious and worthy additions to anyone's plicata collection. **DRAMA QUEEN** (Keppel 2003) is a rich wine emblazoned over a buff-yellow base. Standards are nearly solidly saturated, the falls an exotic combination of sanding, marbling, streaking, and stitching covering virtually the entire surface, with a deeper concentration the closer to the edge you get. Its parent, **TANGLED WEB** (Keppel 1999) is similar in makeup, but done more in rich shades of brown and copper. Each has the type of branching you can depend on from the King of Plicatas. **INSIDE TRACK** (Keppel 2002) and **STORM TRACK** (Keppel 2001) are similar, from related bloodlines in the quest for a true black plicata. IT's stitching isn't quite as deep or intense, nor the band quite as wide, as ST. ST has violet-black stitching, almost completely saturated in the standards, the falls carrying a band of stitching right about 1/2" in thickness, perhaps even wider. It also sports a black dart right below the beard. Flip a coin. Both are fine, so it's a matter of personal preference. I prefer 'Storm Track'.

CLASSICS: BLUE SHIMMER (Sass 1941); **GAY TRACERY** (Gibson 1965); **GIGI** (Schreiner 1971); **MEMPHIS MISS** (Schortman 1957); **RADIANT APOGEE** (Gibson 1966).

AMOENAS AND NEGLECTAS:

CAMEO KISS (J. Painter 2003) is the first introduction from John Painter, the husband of the hybridizer of this year's Contemporary Award winner, 'Purple Ritz', Lesley Painter. An unusual amoena, with its richness of color coming from its variegata parent, 'Peking Summer' (Schreiner), with warm ivory standards over deep pink falls which carry an ivory halo. Beards are deep tangerine, tipped deeper tangerine and purple in the heart of the flower. It often exhibits a strange and mysterious cocoa haze over the flower, more effective in warmer weather, somewhat muddy in cooler temperatures. The stalks are impressively taller and better branched than your usual pink amoena. **RARE FIND** (Ghio 2003) is similar, but more orange in the falls, and from a different approach. Standards are thick creamy white with some salmon in the midribs and veining. The falls are rich coral-orange but occasionally have strange, interesting purple specks (freckles?) mixed throughout them. They have a lighter band of coral and then orange beards. The substance is thick and waxy, with a nice leathery look to the flower. Average stalks and plant habits. **PICKLEDILLY** (L. Painter 2004) is an unusual approach to attempt to create a green amoena. Some have commented that they don't care for the coloring, but I like it and find it fascinating. The standards are white with a smoked look to them. The falls are a valiant attempt at mint green mixed in with the primary yellow color, blended with some ecru, but also with a smoked overlay like the standards (which I suppose is what some find objectionable). It produces good stalks, with 3 branches plus spur plus lower rebranching sometimes. It grows on you! A clever name, too!

COULEE BREEZE (M. Roberts 2003) I am tempted to place in the new "Emma Cook Pattern" category of Contemporary Views (see below), because of the manner it distributes its color in the falls. Basically a blue amoena, with palest blue standards (close enough to white to categorize as amoena, in my opinion) with medium blue falls which have varying degrees of depth of color, as if airbrushed, eventually deepening to what could almost be classified as a band. Stalks are shorter, but the iris compensates by producing nearly horizontal falls for maximum viewing exposure. **NEHALEM BAY** (Schreiner 2002) is a quality new neglecta, with light blue standards and rich medium to deep blue falls with a nonobtrusive yellow beard. The form is broad, with flowers with gentle to moderate ruffling. Substance is outstanding. Stalks are thick, tall, and well branched.

CLASSICS: **AMIGO** (Williamson 1934); **BRIGHT HERALD** (Wills 1964); **CLOUD CAPERS** (Schreiner 1966).

BICOLORS AND VARIEGATAS:

ALPINE LACE (Kerr 2001) is a heavily laced bicolor in the style of 'Touche' (Hamblen), with pink standards flushed blue and lavender-blue falls, somewhat deeper at the edges. It is topped off with a tangerine-red to coral beard. Stalks were a bit short and squatty, but the flower glows – it glistens with diamond dusting! Lace in this color combination is rare. **AMIABLE** (Ghio 2002) is a softer version of 'Mandela' (Ghio), with wider form and a chiffon texture. It has soft to medium pink standards and lavender pink falls with a tangerine beard. Growth was notably a vast improvement over similar things from similar bloodlines. In a garden in Wichita, Kansas, it had the best branching of all the clumps in the garden, carrying 4 beautifully spaced branches with well timed buds. **BUT BEAUTIFUL** (Blyth 1999) is a larger, broader rendition of 'Electrique' (Blyth), with light blue standards over blended falls in tan, coffee, and burnished rose, with a burnt orange beard which contrasts nicely against the fall colors. The colors are oddly beautiful, making for an excellent accent piece in the garden. It is an extremely early bloomer, one of the few TBs which was in full bloom at the Portland Median Convention. **SKY KING RETURNS** (Lauer 2003) is a diamond-dusted yellow/lavender bicolor in the style of 'Edith Wolford' (Hager), which is in its background. It has tightly formed, moderate sized flowers, with a pleasing degree of moderate ruffling. Average stalks carried 2 branches plus spur. If this temperate-climate rebloomer goes on to rebloom in the colder zones, it will be a nice advancement in rebloomers. **SHEER FANTASY** (Lauer 2001) is a pretty color combo, with rose-pink standards which gently transfix into lavender falls infused with pink. Thick brick orange beards pull the colors together. Very artistic, with mostly good stalks to support the beauty. **SOTTO VOCE** (Hager-DuBose 2000) reminds me of 'Chasing Rainbows' (Hager) in color presentation, but with softer, perhaps clearer colors, with not so dramatic, gentler ruffling. Standards are light pink with lavender influences. Falls are more lilac than the orchid of 'Chasing Rainbows' and have a most definite suggestion of blue underlaying the color. Beards are also lilac, orange in the heart of the flower.

A trio of bicolors from Mid-America Garden deserves mention; each is unique and distinctive in its own style. **BLUSH OF COLOR** (Black 2003) is cleverly named, with white standards flushed pale lilac and orchid, and then lavender-orchid falls, slightly deeper at the edges, mixed in with gently waved ruffling. The "blush" is an intensification of orchid, approaching rose, in the very center of the falls, almost in the style of the *I. balkana* introductions several years ago from Joe Ghio, such as 'Lineup'. Very distinctive, but in a soft way. **KIND HEARTED** (T. Johnson 2002) is one of the most unusual bicolors on the market. Not just another pink/lavender combo, the entire flower has a glorious "mink" finish overlaid which shroud the flower in mystery. The "opaque" look is a nice change of pace from the typical diamond dusting you usually see in this color combination. Burnt orange beards are the finishing touch. **PORTFOLIO** (T. Johnson 2003) continues the tradition of bicolors begun by Melba Hamblen, a modern version of its parent, the great (but overlooked) 'Enchanting' (Hamblen). It is the total opposite end of the spectrum from 'Kind Hearted', in no way subtle.

Standards are mauve-orchid. The falls are harmonious in deep rich fuchsia-orchid, complete with burnt orange/red beards. Look closely and you'll find a fine edging of deepest rose, more evident in full sun. It is tall and grand (stalks right at 4' tall on established plantings), carrying outstanding branching. If you want to take it to the show, you had better hope for an early season – it is a late bloomer, as was 'Enchanting'.

IDOL (Ghio 1999) is a smashing, bold bicolor whose color screams across the garden. Standards are rich orange with a golden undertone. Falls are brilliant claret wine, full, smooth at the hafts, and contrasted with burnt orange beards. It produces very nicely branched stalks, and has strong, consistent plant habits. **NAPLES** (T. Johnson 2001) is similar, but coming from plicata breeding, with the colorful 'Film Festival' (Keppel) being the pod parent. Standards are medium buff-apricot, intensely flushed violet in the base of the midribs. Falls are a luxurious lustrous violet with cherry undertones, complete with an interesting narrow band of deep pink on the edges and bright orange beards. WOW stalks – it will dazzle 'em on the show bench!

MASTERY (Blyth 2001) is a smart looking variegata with medium chestnut brown standards and deep red-brown falls with a distinctive band of the standards' color. Deep gold beards are in harmony. It carries a velvet texture which adds to the suave look of the flower. **SARGENT PRESTON** (Chapman 2000) is an unusually colored variegata, with deep tan (not brown) standards over rich, lustrous violet-purple falls with a distinct, precise band, 1/4" to 3/8" wide, in brown. Purple beards. The closest thing in color might be the bicolor 'Jurassic Park' (Lauer), but with more harmonious colors, better form, and much better substance.

CLASSICS: **ACCENT** (Buss 1953); **CAMELOT WINE** (Powell 1972); **LOUD MUSIC** (Muhlestein 1971); **MELODRAMA** (Cook 1956).

EMMA COOK PATTERN:

With this edition of Contemporary Views, I have added a new color category to separately review the fine work being done by several hybridizers currently in the resurgence in popularity of the pattern first seen in the variety 'Emma Cook' (Cook 1959). That is, light colored standards carry the same color, or a contrasting pastel color, into the falls, but then there is an intensification of color at the edges of the falls, not as a plicata pattern, but rather a band, stain, or wash, sometimes very narrow and discreet, sometimes wide and bold. **BOLD VISION** (Kerr 2000) is from the same hybridizer which gave us another Emma Cook type, 'Queen's Circle', but the pattern is the only thing that is similar. The color combination, instead, is rich yellow standards and falls, then precisely banded in bold brown-red. Yellow beards blend in to the base color. A nice advancement over an earlier Emma Cook type introduction from Fred, 'Dear Jean', with richer color and more elegant banding. It is finally receiving the recognition it deserves. The fact that **PERFECT UNION** (Schreiner 2001) has received virtually no attention (and certainly no AIS awards) is baffling. This moderately sized, tightly formed flower is glistening white with a distinct band in orchid-blue in the falls and yellow beards. Stalk after stalk is outstanding, inheriting its beautiful spacing and consistency from its pollen parent, 'Conjuration' (Byers). **FUTURISTE** (Cayeux 2002), from France, is pure white with an intense wide border in the falls of bold indigo blue to violet. White beards tipped yellow blend into the primary coloring. The Emma Cook border is presented in an irregular, "bleeding" manner, very captivating and creative. Just the opposite in effect is **LA MEIJE** (Cayeux 2001), a glistening white with banding in baby blue so soft and subtle you may have to adjust the bifocals to capture the edge, almost a blush. Broad rounded form with elegant ruffling. The beards are contrasting in orange, like a flicker of fire in the midst.

POTPOURRI:

RIDE THE TIGER (Lauer 2002) is so mixed up I didn't know where to put it, so I threw it in the pot(pourri). The bottom line is that it is a very nice attempt at a green with deep blue beards! The color, upon close inspection, is soft yellow ecru, with infusions of lavender and silvery-white. The beards are deep lavender, having the appearance of blue, especially on overcast days. It has excellent plant habits, vigorous and robust, with pleasing stalks with 3 branches.

BRAVE FACE (Ghio 2002) was one of the surprises of the Fresno Convention for me. I love it. It is basically a bicolor, with pink standards and rich magenta, rose, and violet blended falls. But then, a splendid pink sunburst pattern explodes from the red beards, so artistic and dramatic they could never be confused with old-fashioned haft marks. It is a child of one of Joe's most famous recent introductions, 'Starring', and inherited many of its fine traits. **ORIGINAL ART** (Ghio 2003) is a gregarious medley of colors, with the standards and falls bright sherbet orange, and the falls heavily edged in varying degrees of electric violet, airbrushing towards the orange in the heart of the flower under thick bright orange beards. The whole flower is shot with neon. Very impressive, and you definitely cannot miss it! Stunning!

OK, you cross two oranges and what do you get, duh, orange, right? Not so this time. **PLEASANT SURPRISE** (Hager-Cooley's 2001) has rich plum-violet standards contrasted with deep brown falls, interrupted with thick, bushy bright tangerine beards. A unique coloring which holds well throughout the life of the flower, refusing to burn or wash out.

Form is wide and simple, with light ruffling. Stalks carry 4 branches, double and even triple socketed, well spaced, with good staggering of bloom sequence. **TAUGHT BY MASTERS** (Ernst 2002) is a dark top, with violet-purple standards, lighter in the midrib, and then falls in creamy peach, slightly deeper at the shoulders, and sporting tangerine-orange beards. What makes this one different from others on the market is its chiffon texture (instead of satiny) and opaque finish, and elegantly waved versus ruffled. The overall form gives a “looser” appearance than most of the dark-tops, but very attractive.

CLASSICS: **COLOR CARNIVAL** (DeForest 1949); **HOLD THAT TIGER** (Lauck 1958); **ROYAL TAPESTRY** (Schreiner 1964).

COLOR BREAKERS:

Medians:

AMUSING (Black 2004) is a wide, lightly ruffled apricot-orange SDB with random grape-purple flecks (measles?) all over, with a heavier concentration around hot thick deep orange beards. There might be some debate as to whether this is really a color breaker. I place it in this category because the amount of flecking is variable, as is the intensity of color of the foreign color. **RASPBERRY SILK** (Spoon 2000) is a well proportioned BB, with the color breaking clean and artistic in raspberry and cranberry streaks on pink lemonade, brighter and prettier than most of the others currently on the market. Stalks were well branched, with 2-3 branches. Nicely formed flowers. Most respectable plant habits, with proportionately thinner foliage but healthy and of good increase. It remained in class in all features in several gardens, including a couple of convention gardens where everything was a bit too “pumped up”.

A trio of BBs from Brad Kasperek was noteworthy. **ANACONDA LOVE** (Kasperek 1999) has intensity and clarity of color in the striations which are bolder and more spectacular than most of the others. A light pink base color in the standards is generously splashed with violet. Then the falls are almost like an inversion of the standards, with red-violet base color, more heavily washed, splashed, streaked, and striated with silvery white and pink. A notable improvement in the growth department also. Its primary fault is, although the stalks are usually within the height specifications for a BB, the flower size is sometimes too large. **CONGO BONGO** (Kasperek 2001) is one of my favorites, although it has proven to be very inconsistent in its coloring from one garden to another, impacted by cultural conditions, temperatures, and the amount of moisture sustained during bloom season. When it’s right, it is stunning. Deep golden-bronze standards have no color breaking. Then, in contrast, deep chocolate to brick red falls have predominant yellow streaking throughout. It is a different look, and very attractive. It has graceful S-curved stalks with 2 branches. **EMU ZING** (Kasperek 1997), to me, is an updated version of the famous/infamous ‘Baboon Bottom’ (Kasperek), and at least the name is certainly less controversial! The tone of pink in the base is perhaps a bit deeper, and clearer, with brighter ruby and pink striations taking turns all up and down the flower, with more activity occurring in the falls. It has a tighter, more compact look to the flower than ‘Baboon Bottom’, with similar plant habits.

Tall Bearded:

On down the row at the zoo, Brad had several other TB color breakers which merit a mention here too. Three sister seedlings from the cross ‘Nigerian Raspberry’ (Kasperek) by ‘Isn’t This Something’ (Ensminger) made the final cut for introduction. All are unique; all are worthy. **LACY LYNX** (Kasperek 2002) is light to medium pink with deeper splashes of violet and lighter streaking in pale pink, white, and silver. It is the first color breaker I am aware of with a significant amount of lace. Personally, I don’t care for the look of lace on color breakers, but it is different and distinctive. Growth habits are especially good, coming from 2 of the best growers in color breakers. **SQUID SQUIRT** (Kasperek 2002) has a deeper pink base color and without the lace. The squid is content to display just the darker violet streaking throughout the flower, without the lighter streaking found in its lacy sis. **SALAMANDER SAL** (Kasperek 2002) is a much softer version of the dynamic duo above, a soft salmon-pink with discreet streaks in silvery-white. Bright medium orange beards add a touch of pizzazz to the effect. It also displays some lace, but not as heavily applied as ‘Lacy Lynx’. And then **MAGDALENA LOUISA** (Kasperek 2003) is probably the most sophisticated of the Kasperek releases, and the one he chose to name for his mother. It is medium pink with artistic streaking in silvery-white, with the best form and presentation of the lot. No screeching zoo critters with this one, just understated elegance and simplicity.

And last but not least, **JUMPIN JACK FLASH** (J. Painter 2004) is an exciting new color breaker in the style of ‘Batik’ (Ensminger), with white streaks and splashes against glossy deep pansy violet. The flowers are large and wide. A check of the parentage reveals the intense color saturation – the pollen parent is a Keith Keppel seedling from his black plicata line. Growth habits were quite strong, with husky plants with moderate increase, a blessed respite from the finicky nature of some of its predecessors.

CLASSICS: DOODLE STRUDEL (Ensminger 1977); HUMORESQUE (Keppel 1962).

SPACE AGERS:

Medians:

CONCERTINA (G. Sutton 2000, IB) is a subtle blending of pink and rose from the SDB super-parent, ‘Chanted’ (Blyth). Contrasty orange beards give way to an exotic dark violet-blue horn. In my garden, the form appeared a bit loose and the substance suspect. It tends to be consistently tall and “rangy”, a trait not uncommon in ‘Chanted’ children. But it is nonetheless an attractive Space Age median. BERMUDA TRIANGLE (Cadd 2000) does exceed the BB class limits, frequently, with flowers too large and the stalks and foliage a bit too tall. However, I have also seen it when it maintained proper restrictions. All this put aside, it is an exciting, innovative iris. Standards are richest gold, flushed violet in the midribs. Falls start out with the same base color of gold, but then transform to a dazzling array of varying degrees of lavender to violet, represented as a flash in the center, and then bleeding out towards the edges. Violet horns aren’t the largest, but they are definitely there, and with consistency. CRYSTAL NUGGET (Cadd 2002), also a BB, is a pet favorite of mine, and has been consistently in class in at least 3 states where I have observed it. Tight, compact, heavily ruffled flowers are a diamond-dusted blend of warm white and creamy yellow, producing with consistency a short fuzzy horn in deeper yellow. Stalks are just incredible, more slender and graceful as a good BB stalk should be, with branching and bud count that just won’t quit. A complete package.

Tall Bearded:

I continue to be amazed at the clever names these hybridizers keep coming up with for their new Space Agers. HOOK (T. Johnson 2001) is the most clever of all. It is a simply colored, unassuming plum self with just a bit of chocolate in the shoulders. But then, gold beards end in a white hook -- not a horn, not a spoon, not a flounce. It turns up like the end of a crochet needle, and does it every time! Killer stalks with the most incredible placement of branches, often opening multiple blossoms. Show junkies, rejoice! ANNOUNCEMENT (Black 2002) is a favorite, a vivacious bicolor with pink standards, lavender falls, and huge flounces so heavily ruffled they almost look like extra standards instead. It has a satin finish that is most appealing. It will occasionally throw a distorted bloom, coming out of the lower branches, but this is the exception, not the norm. The falls are horizontal, with the flounces rising from the base. HONK YOUR HORN (Black 2001) is a giant, with tall, Paul Bunyan stalks, well built, with huge flowers that look like a ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiner) – a parent – with bold deep blue horns. The graduation of tones from the deepness of the centers of the petals to the silvery-white edging is even more dramatic than its parent. Whopper plants are in proportion with the flower size and stalk height.

AIRFORCE ONE (Sutton 2002) was impressive in several gardens at the Fresno Convention, including the home garden. It has pale blue standards with deeper wisteria blue falls, completed with wisteria blue flounces shooting straight up from the falls, which are consistent and well-developed. Technically I suppose it would be a bitone, but the impression was that of a blue amoena. Quite tall, with thick, strong stalks, with branching that was consistently good to outstanding in several convention gardens. FIMBRIATED SPACE (Sutton 1999) is an unusual manifestation of the Space Age appendages, a pure white with beards that either develop into flounces or feathered, irregular (fimbriated) spoons. Form is very simple; standards are open but hold up acceptably, allowing the viewer to get a better look at the artistic display of appendages. Stalks are quite good, although the bottom branch sometimes comes up a bit too high on the stalk. HEARTBREAK HOTEL (Sutton 1998) was the most consistent of several Sutton Space Age releases at the Fresno Convention, looking exceptional in several gardens. Clean, complementary colors, with standards salmon-pink, the falls deep lavender, contrasted with red beards which produce impressive horns which come about nearly an inch from the falls. It is more refined and richer in color than its parent, ‘Sweet Musette’ (Schreiner), picking up the quality traits of its mother, including outstanding plant habits and faithfully consistent show stalks, well spaced with 2-3 branches plus spur.

HOLY FIRE (Sutton 2000) is a nice advancement in red-bearded white space Agers. There just aren’t many on the market yet. It is pure white with decent form, with only a touch of yellow in the shoulders. Bold contrast occurs with bright red beards which eventually give way to white horns. Stalk strength may be suspect; however, I haven’t evaluated it yet on a fully established clump. MIDNIGHT THUNDER (Sutton 2001) is also an advancement in Space Age blacks, another color for which progress has been virtually nonexistent until now. A deep near-black from the blue side, it has purple horns rising from the falls. The consistency of production of appendages carried through to the last blooms on the stalk, a trait not all Space Agers possess. And of note, the falls are smooth at the hafts, the primary advancement of this variety. It has the lustrous, silken finish of its parent, ‘Hello Darkness’ (Schreiner). Its one major fault is the weakness of the stalks. Although well branched, they are willowy and have trouble staying up. I’ll stake it – and cross it with a black

that does have stronger stalks. **SUNSET POINT** (Sutton 2002) is orange, with the falls a tone lighter than the standards, then edged in the primary depth of color. Thick orange beards carry small but consistent horns. It has wide form, but with ruffling in the falls somewhat uneven. Wonderful stalks carry 3 branches plus bottom rebranching, with excellent timing of buds. **TROPICAL DELIGHT** (Sutton 2002), from 'Heartbreak Hotel' (Sutton), is a colorful bicolor, with amber-pink blended standards and medium lavender falls. Tangerine beards produce an exotic deeper lavender-violet spoon. It was starting a second wave of bloom stalks, as the primary stalks were coming to an end, greatly extending the season of bloom for the variety.

BENEATH MY WINGS (Meininger 2005) is a supremely elegant blue amoena, with purest white standards flushed ever so slightly with soft grayed blue in the midribs. The falls have a lavender undertone to them, and then a distinct edging in near-white. Appendages are fully developed in lavender-blue, either as spoons or even flounces. The stalks carry formal candelabra branching, but in some gardens only carried 2 branches – needed 1 more branch and 2 more buds. **JUMP FOR JOY** (Hager 1999) is similar to another pink Space Ager from Ben Hager, 'Corps de Ballet', but with more peach in its makeup. Beards are more tangerine than contrasting violet, and tend to produce horns instead of flounces. 'Jump for Joy' produces stalks at a more sensible height, with branching not so erratic. **TRILLION** (Bessette 2000) was a deeper, richer color than I was expecting, and brought back memories of the variegata, 'Gala Madrid' (Peterson), except adorned with horns. Golden yellow standards; ruby red falls with some infusions of orchid. It has wide form with good color saturation which held up well in the heat. Magnificent stalks, with 3 branches, double socketed, with good timing of the buds. Decent growth habits.

COMET CONNIE (Burseen 2003) is an oddly beautiful affair, basically a warm white (approaching ivory) with a subtle lavender flush in only the falls. Orange beards transform into long, extravagant lavender spoons. In some gardens, it had small flowers and shorter stalks – might've made a good Border Bearded. But don't tell Tom Burseen that – he is a die-hard TB fan! **KINGDOM COME** (Burseen 2002) is an attractive reverse yellow amoena, with burnished yellow standards (not muddy) over taffeta-textured white falls with a distinctive band in the color of the standards, more golden yellow in the hafts. Gold beards turn into well developed gold spoons. Pleasing, heavy ruffling. **IN A HEARTBEAT** (Christopherson 2002) is colored in the style of the Progenitor of Space Age irises, 'Sky Hooks' (Osborne), but with brighter, cleaner colors. It has light yellow standards, a bit lighter in the falls with deeper yellow shoulders. Yellow beards yield to purple horns which proceed to form yellow flounces. Stalks are tall – much taller than the registered 3' – and like its parent, 'Triple Whammy' (Hager), may on occasion appreciate a little help from your friendly bamboo stake.

CLASSICS: **HORNED FLARE** (Austin 1963); **MIZ LIB** (Osborne 1974); **SPOONED LACE** (Austin 1963).

MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION

MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:

In general, the MTBs in my garden have appeared, as a class, more susceptible to damage from extended periods of heat and drought, as we experienced in central Oklahoma the past 3 summers. Some varieties went dormant and never "came back" when the autumn rains commenced, while other plants started rebounding from the punishing heat and dryness. For fear of bacterial soft rot, in the past, I have rarely watered my bearded irises during these periods. I have come to the conclusion that MTBs, more than any other class, perhaps must be sustained and judiciously watered, if I want to see a good representation of bloom the next season.

Many considered the 1993 Median Convention in Oklahoma City ("Median Spree in '93") as Marky Smith's "coming out party", with the debut of her quality SDBs 'Firestorm' and 'Gemstar'. The same can be said for Stephanie Markham and her MTB work as seen in both the Fresno National and Portland Median Conventions in 2004. When all the votes had been counted at the Portland Convention, her varieties had captured Best MTB and both runnersup! **DAEMON IMP** (S. Markham 2004) is a suave new dark beauty of intense color saturation, with dark violet standards and black velvet falls with distinctive white striations radiating from the hafts. (When I think they are a distraction, I call them haft marks; when they add character, I call them striations!). Stalks were inconsistent, with some with good branching and bud count. Foliage was perfect, smaller in height and thinner in nature, as a good MTB should. The whole clump had excellent proportions. **DANCING LILACS** (S. Markham 2002) consistently displayed magnificent clumps, floriferous, with excellent branching, but with placement of stalks within the clump so as not to interfere with each other. It presents itself in soft orchid-lilac, with white falls widely edged in the standards' color (thus the name). Flowers are very dainty and compact, and there are plenty of them. **THINK SPRING** (S. Markham 2003) is classic simplicity, nicely shaped flowers in orchid-lavender with an underglow of pink. It produces beautiful stalks, with the proper height and thickness. Its clarity of color is its calling card. **LARRY'S GIRL** (S. Markham 2002), First Runnerup in Portland, not only looked good there, but was in full bloom in several gardens in Fresno. It is a soft blue-lavender plicata on a white base, with the

plicating displayed with sanding, dots, and then stitching on the edges. Tight, tidy flowers. It inherited the impeccable stalk production, branching, and plant habits of its highest caliber parents, ‘Astra Girl’ (Varner) and ‘Rosemary’s Dream’ (Dunderman). It consistently carried 3 branches, double socketed, with beautiful spacing. **SKY TRACERY** (S. Markham 2003) is similar in style to ‘Larry’s Girl’ but with more blue in its composition without the lavender, and with even better form and finish. It is a tight, sophisticated, neat pattern in soft blue, with texture veining imitating stitching and sanding. Form is notably better than your usual diploid MTB. It was an extremely heavy bloomer in some gardens, but compensates by producing more than its share of increases each year. Pure class. In my opinion, this is probably the best of the lot of the MTBs from Stephanie reviewed this year.

BEN A FACTOR (R. Miller 2000), bred by Lynda Miller’s husband, Roger, is a wonderful new addition to the limited playing field of **tetraploid MTBs**. An unusual, attractive color combination, new to tet MTBs: Standards are lemon yellow, which continues into the style arms. Then, falls are contrasted with a remarkably clean orchid-pink somewhat muted in tones but still a nice contrast. Where MTB tets tend to “act up” on a hybridizer (usually the year of introduction, but of course), having 2 sets of critical eyes in the family has helped ensure that this one is in class, and worthy. **RAVE REVIEW** (Craig 1992) is an outstanding advancement in tet MTBs, from *I. aphylla* breeding, giving us a new color to work with, in orchid-rose with bright pink to tangerine beards. Form is most acceptable, and substance is outstanding. The clarity of color is the key here. Its child, **SCANDALOUS** (Craig 2001) is a clean shade of bright but deep lavender, contrasted with bright tangerine beards. The color effect is different and less rose than its parent. It has nice proportions, and within the MTB requirements of the class. **NIGHT SPIRIT** (Craig 2002) is a favorite, again from *I. aphylla* breeding, but this time in a solid deep violet, approaching black. It carries a lustrous finish, nice form, and outstanding substance. The branching is memorable.

PETIT LION (Baumunk 2001) was actually registered and introduced as a species, an *I. variegata* coming from SIGNA seed, but I’m reviewing it in this class. The basic color ensemble is light yellow standards atop white falls. But in the standards you’ll find dotting and striations of purple. In the falls, the same style, but with much more intensity and deeper color in the veining. Charming! **BACH TOCCATA** (Baumunk 2005) is a cute new one, carrying the broken patterning of the old historic, ‘Kaleidoscope’ (Katkamier). Standards are light yellow, mostly solid in color. Then pale yellow falls have a broken plicata patterning in maroon throughout, each fall on each flower varying. Looking forward to seeing the sister, ‘Bach Fugue’ also, with a white base color instead of yellow. They will make nice companions. **STEFFIE** (Fisher 1993) has somehow missed previous Contemporary Views reviews (I keep a database, and rarely ever critique a variety more than once, unless it should go on to win one of Contemporary Views’ awards). High quality and personality – 2 things you’re assured of when Ken Fisher makes the final cut. Here we have a clear white, with the falls boldly spritzed with an intense violet/indigo blue spray pattern spewing from the cream beard. Impeccable plant habits, with tidy foliage, then proper thin, willowy stalks with sensational branching placement and bud count.

MASLON (Spoon 2002) has bright yellow standards over red-violet falls with a hairline rim in white. The color seems to vary considerably with weather conditions, with the falls being much more violet in the Pacific Northwest, so different I initially didn’t even recognize it. In warmer weather, it is a bright, cheerful color array, with exceptional vigor and good bloom/increase ratio in established clumps. Branching was inconsistent in several gardens, including here in Oklahoma, but it can produce a very nice stalk. **MISSUS BEE** (Bunnell 2003) is a nice send-off as the first introduction from this new hybridizer from Indiana. It has lilac-lavender standards over bright rose-red falls with a network of much deeper veining extending downward from bright yellow beards. The pattern is cute rather than offensive. And it is a bloomin’ fool, pretty much at the top of the class, giving room for the placement of 3-4 branches up and down the stalk. It makes a stunning clump, with exceptional vigor and floriferousness. **CHEESE AND WINE** (Dunderman-Varner 2003) is a rich, maroon-wine self, smooth at the hafts, with bright golden yellow beards approaching orange. It has beautiful rounded form and a velvet finish. Branching was somewhat inconsistent but acceptable, double socketed. Foliage was lean and graceful, in class. **CHERRY BERRY** (Willott 2003) is similar to ‘Cheese and Wine’, but has a clearer cherry red color and bright orange beards. The form wasn’t quite as rounded as ‘Cheese and Wine’, but still acceptable. It produced excellent stalks.

CLASSICS: **AGATE PASS** (Witt 1978); **LOUISE HOPPER** (Hager 1980, Tet); **NAVY WINGS** (Guild 1981).

BORDER BEARDED:

BORDER CONTROL (T. Johnson 2000) was Thomas’ first release on the iris market, and sets the standard for quality which I knew, having tutored him during his AIS apprenticeship, he would demand of his work. Standards are white, enlivened with infusions of blue. The falls are a harmonious medium violet blue, with soft, unobtrusive yellow beards. Wonderful form, gently ruffled, and consistently in class. Rather than the diamond-dusting you might expect with a blue amoena, it is endowed with a leathery substance that gives a whole new look to the iris. **TOUCH OF FROST** (L. Markham 2000) was very impressive at the Portland Convention, a white approached from the icy side, with suggestions of mint green infused to given an even fresher look. The flower size is in class, with fairly simply formed flowers with

sufficient width. The stalks are in class, with magnificent branching (3 branches plus spur) perfectly placed in modified candelabra style on the stalk. Foliage was healthy, in class, and with acceptable vigor. It was just starting to bloom in Portland, and displayed the promise of making a beautiful clump. Another impressive BB which I just “discovered” in Portland was **SPY** (Craig 1999), a magnificent display of a well defined band of blue-violet stitching on white plicata, with tight, tidy form and deep ruffles all over. This is one, like ‘Touch of Frost’, which is going to take many piles of horse manure to push out of class – it is solidly locked in at BB. It too carries 3 branches with beautiful placement on the stalk. Bright and clean –and in class!

COLOR MY WORLD (Black 2000) had its maiden bloom while Paul still lived in Oklahoma, and I’m pleased that it survived and went on to be introduced. A simple description would be a “modern ‘Color Carnival’ (DeForest 1949)”. But for those of you too young to know what that means: Bubble gum to salmon color, flushed orchid. The falls are slightly lighter, then irreverently striped and washed in orchid-violet, with the salmon finally winning out at the edge of the falls. Bright orange-red beards pull the colors of this raucous affair together. Gloriously gaudy! **GO FOR BOLD** (Black 2001) is another which, as a seedling, survived the trials and tribulation of gardening in central Oklahoma. The standards are a simple clean light to medium yellow. There ends any hint of tradition. The falls start with a white base, but only showing through as a “zonal” of sorts around bright yellow beards. Then add a chaotic splashing and streaking of bold violet over the rest of the falls, irregularly bleeding into the white. If any walks by this one unaffected, they’re either color blind or too heavily medicated! Here’s screamin’ at ya! **DEAR DIARY** (Black 2002) is a very classy reverse yellow amoena in the style of the great classic Dykes Medalist, ‘Debby Rairdon’ (Kuntz), with medium yellow standards and white falls with a distinct ¼” band in the yellow of the standards, along with yellow beards to fit right in. It has a wonderful leathery texture to go with its impeccable substance and carrying power. Deep waxy ruffles also have a bit of lace mixed in. I have seen it go beyond the BB classification in stalk height and flower size, but then I have seen some convention gardens so over-fertilized to the point that SDBs looked like small-flowered Tall Bearded! You must keep all this in perspective when evaluating BBs, in particular.

Two BBs from Sutton are among my current favorites. Both were under serious consideration for the L’Elegante Award category. **LACY DOLL** (Sutton 2001) is a ruffled and heavily laced sparkling lavender blue with a yellow beard tipped tangerine. The flower size is correct, and the form is tight and rounded, reminding me of my own BB from a few (several) years ago, ‘Soft Spoken’ (Dyer 1980), but in the shade of blue of the classic TB, ‘Charisma’ (Blocher). The lace is intense and evenly distributed throughout the flower. **PRINCESS BRIDE** (Sutton 2000) is a creamy white confection with soft creamy yellow blended in, amidst the voluptuous ruffles. A child of the great English TB, ‘Elizabeth Poldark’ (Nichol), it inherited its superb plant habits, vigor, and magnificent branching, with 3 branches, often opening 3 at once, with sufficient backup buds to extend its life if the grower can’t bear to cut it and take it to the show. **TWILIGHT** **PASSAGE** (Aitken 1998) is well named, a mysterious combination of orchid and pink, but the whole flower looks as though it is encased in smoke, moody and most appealing. Bright tangerine beards snap you back into reality. In the 2 gardens and at the 1 show where I observed it this year, it appeared to be consistent in its stalk height and flower size. An average grower and increaser, but certainly not anemic or suspect. **INDIGO DOLL** (Lankow-Aitken 1997) is a compact jewel which I somehow missed in its first years of release. A sultry neglecta, with light blue standards atop the richest indigo blue falls, contrasted dramatically with a bold bushy red beard. **CLASSIC NAVY** (Lankow-Aitken 1999) is a good representation of the critical standards Carol Lankow had in the evaluation of her creations. Indeed, it is a classic navy blue, lustrous and deep with absolutely no other color present. It has tight, rounded form, flawless, with deep rippling for ruffles. Stalks are in class and well branched, with 3 to 4 branches a common occurrence. I am of the opinion that this is one of those rare BBs which will truly stay in class, no matter how carried away the gardener gets with the fertilizer!

I finally got to see **LITTLE MARY SUNSHINE** (Roderick 1990) and can understand and appreciate the wellspring of support it has garnered in recent years. What a cutie! A clean pert light yellow, appearing to be more of a lemon yellow to me. Falls are a diamond-dusted pure white with the yellow blended in at the shoulders and on the edges. Superb stalks, with 2 and sometimes 3 well spaced branches distanced properly up the stalk. Makes a tidy, clean clump. **COUNTRY LACE** (Kerr 1998) is an unusual shade of copper (the hybridizer describes it as reddish-brown), set off with tangerine beards. The kicker is a generous dose of ruffling and even lace. I’ve seen it right at the top of the class, perhaps occasionally exceeding its height, but still a worthy and fun BB. **DESIGN IN CANTALOUPE** (Niswonger 2001) is a continuation in Dave’s quest for a pure orange amoena. Clean white standard have but a brushstroke of pink in the midribs. Falls are a lovely shade of cantaloupe orange, showing a suggestion of a white wire rim around them. Elegantly ruffled, tidy and in class, with a satin sheen that sets it apart from others in this style. **WAITING FOR OCTOBER** (Lauer 2003) is a nicely ruffled persimmon orange amoena, with a fair amount of yellow blended in. Flower size appeared to be in class; however, the stalks, although reasonably thin, often got too tall – way too tall. Nonetheless, a pretty flower with excellent color saturation and contrast between the standards and falls. A nice advancement in rebloomers.

CLASSICS: MAYNARD (Knopf 1969); **MOLTEN GLASS** (Marsh 1969); **PUPPET SHOW** (Moldovan 1969); **SHIRLEY SPURR** (Gatty 1967).

INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:

END ZONE (Stahly 2002) – zowie! – lived up to its advance billing in every way, and has quickly become one of my favorite IBs today. It is a luxurious deepest red-black colored similar to the classic TB, ‘Credo’ (Babson), and then even deeper in the falls, with nearly jet-black beards. A vibrant color display. Its glossy texture permits it to have outstanding carrying power in the garden. Stalks carried 2 branches, 5 buds. **BANSHEE** (M. Smith 2005) is a deep red-black bitone, with the falls approaching full black, offset with thick brilliant burnt orange beards. It has ‘Minidragon’ (M. Smith, SDB) in its background and you can sure tell it. The colors are deep and rich, with the contrast between the beards and the principal colors very stunning. A row of it, lined out at Aitkens’, awaiting introduction, was memorable. **SOFTLY** (Tasco 2003) made an impressive show at the Portland Median Convention, with clump strength bloom in more than one garden. A sister to the famous ‘Miss Mauve’ (Tasco 2000), which won Best IB at this convention, it is a softer version, more in taffeta pink tones infused with light mauve, instead of the deeper, richer mauve coloring of ‘Miss Mauve’. It has the same outstanding show stalks (3 branches, often opening 2 at once) and inherited excellent plant habits from its parent, ‘Chanted’ (Blyth, SDB). **PINK COTTON CANDY** (Niswonger 2000) is a fun cotton candy pink, also from ‘Chanted’. Beards are tangerine based, but have a distinctive blue in the upper part. This blue continues under the beard in a blue chevron. Has all the vigor and dependability of ‘Chanted’. **GALWAY** (Keppel 1997) is a pleasant medley of colors in pastels, from pink in the standards, flushed orchid in the midribs, to a smooth, silky blending of peach (the primary color), pink, soft yellow, and a dab or orchid mixed in. Plentiful ruffling sets the flower in motion. Prerequisites to making the cut with this hybridizer: The plant habits are outstanding, vigorous, with plenty of increase and generous stalk production, sturdy stalks with proper placement of branches, and good bud count.

DEVIL MAY CARE (Black 2000) continues a line of bold, distinctive dark IBs which Paul has released recently. This late-blooming addition to the median garden is a strange soot-black, then blasted with a shocking thick orange beard, like embers aglow. Drama! The texture is from velvet, versus the shellac of what you usually see in dark ones – this just intensifies the soot effect. ‘Devil May Care’ doesn’t have the wide rounded body parts we have grown accustomed to. However, don’t know about you, but I threw away the cookie cutter years ago. My beardless training has taught me that many forms and styles are acceptable, if they are architecturally sound and pleasing to the eye. This one qualifies. **IN A FLASH** (Black 2001) is another product of the ‘Tom Johnson’ (Black, TB) breeding in IBs. It is a dark purple self, with an underglow or red that adds distinction. In the falls, the intensity of the color decreases somewhat towards the edges, suggesting a halo effect. Contrast supreme with bright carrot beards. Form is more of the cookie cutter, neat, round look I disavowed above (!). Each of these introductions from ‘Tom Johnson’ breeding has picked up the incredible branching and bud count of its TB parent. It has an especially long season of bloom, lasting well into peak TB season. **CITIZEN’S BAND** (Keppel 2001) is a cute 2-tone plicata, with blue standards with just a bit of white peeking through, followed by clear white falls precisely banded in royal violet. Yes, another child of the great ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black), this time as the daddy. For any plicata, but especially a violet-blue on white IB plicata, to make it to the introductions page of the Plicata King, it must be special. The distinctiveness and personality of this one are its strongest assets. Its one fault is that it has a propensity for throwing extra petals, usually 4 falls. So if you’re getting ready to cut that gorgeous show stalk for the show this weekend, count its body parts first! **REDONDO** (Keppel 2000) is a rich plicata in wine on warm white, in the style of the great classic TB, ‘High Life’ (Schreiner), with a bit more brown in the stitching. Typical with any of Keith’s releases, the form is outstanding, the plants habits healthy – a very good garden iris.

RUBY SLIPPERS (Keppel 2002) is a dazzling ruby red, slightly deeper in the falls, with even deeper, thick, bushy beards. It produces wonderful stalks, with 3 branches, double socketed. The flower color is richly saturated. It has good form, although it will sometimes have a slight twist in it, usually not so much as to be a distraction from the overall shape. The beards are stunning. **SANGRIA** (Keppel 2003), a sister to ‘Ruby Slippers’, approaches red from the burgundy side, with falls more nearly black, and a beard which is deep bronze instead of red-orange. The whole flower appears to be covered in a haze of black smoke, very intriguing and sultry. **KAHUNA** (M. Smith 2002), in Fresno, had begun a whole new second wave of bloomstalks, with the primary stalks, occurring during the usual IB seasons, finished. An unusual offspring also with ‘Minidragon’ in its background, it wound up being an odd russet infiltrated with chestnut brown, lighter in the falls and then producing the suggestion of a mahogany spot pattern and shoulders even deeper than the standards. Brownish-orange to bright gold beards are added to the mix. **OBLIVION** (M. Smith 2003) is a shocking black luminata, with a glimmer of light in the heart of the flower surviving an intense study in jet black. Rich texture with a reverberating finish. The form is wide and rounded, going all the way back to the classic form passed on by the great ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black, SDB). And of course, excellent branching and bud count.

CLASSICS: **APACHE WARRIOR** (A. Brown 1972); **BLESSED AGAIN** (Jones 1976); **BOY WONDER** (Ghio 1977); **FANTASY WORLD** (O. Brown 1975).

STANDARD DWARF BEARDED:

ATTACK CAT (Black 2004) is a nice variation on the tradition violet-on-white plicata pattern in SDBs. White standards are boldly stitched in deepest violet, complete with a belly stripe running up the midrib. Falls are a stark, cold white, finely stitched in the lower portions of the falls, gradually intensifying in degree and depth of color the closer you get to the shoulders. It's the style arms, though, that shoot the flower into orbit – solid rich violet, approaching black! Duck!

BALLISTIC (Black 2002) is a riotous affair, an exotic burgundy-brown on yellow plicata, with much more burgundy in its makeup than the brown. The degree of yellow coming through in the standards adds to the intensity of the color presentation (whereas many plicatas today are almost totally saturated in the standards with the color of the stitching). To complete the package, how about a bold, burgundy belly stripe, unashamed, right down the middle of the falls! Outstanding plant habits, inherited from a long line of careful selection in Paul's 'Chubby Cheeks' and luminata bloodlines.

DINKY DOODLE (Black 2001), after reviewing the above, seems introverted, but in its own way makes just as powerful a statement in the median garden. It is a dainty white plicata, with flower size and height at the lower end of the class, with a reserved amount of violet stitching tattooed around the beards and outward. Tight rounded flowers with just enough ruffling, but not so much as to spoil the presentation of the pattern. **WILD HAIR** (Black 1999) is an odd progeny of a very complex luminata gene pool Paul has developed over the years. Very late blooming in the season, it is deep black from the red side, with pearlescent orchid peering from the heart of the flower, reminding you that it is a luminata. Flowers have tended to be a bit large, but it does have taller stalks (at the top range of the class) which helps compensate.

BABY SOFT (Black 2004) is a pastel affair with light pink standards, somewhat flushed with mauve. Falls are considerably lighter, a baby pink, with a hint of a rim in the depth of color of the standards, and even slightly deeper yet in the shoulders. Baby blue beards complete the story. Decent, wide form with light ruffling. **CANDLE** (Black 2002) is a magnificent cream with infusions of yellow, mostly concentrated in the standards. The yellow is more intense in Oklahoma than in the Pacific Northwest. The form is simply impeccable, with wide falls with gentle ruffling. What sets this apart is its texture – certainly well named, it has a waxy texture throughout the flower, giving a very sophisticated look. **BOAST** (Black 2002) makes a stunning clump. Standards are full yellow, open and well held. Horizontal falls are a very masculine medium brown (not red) with a yellow edge, yellow beards, and then a yellow chevron right below the beard. Holds its color well. **BRIGHT NOTE** (Black 2004) is a pert medium yellow, a total self, with distinctive medium blue beards. It is remindful of a modern version of 'Stockholm' (Warburton), slightly deeper all over. It is nothing like the Pick of the Litter winner, 'Experiment', and looks like a "calmed-down" version in more gentle presentation of colors. Broad form only lightly waved, a nice change from all the ruffles and frills. **POOKIE** (Black 2003) is a comedic blend of colors, with the standards an odd olive green, then blue falls with a mother-of-pearl glow to them, rudely interrupted with shocking, deep indigo blue beards, thick and imposing. It has tight rounded form, making tidy, compact clumps. **ZAP** (Black 2004) is a red-violet self with a velvet pile, starkly contrasted with a screaming, thick, bushy, deep yellow beard. They jump out at you! Plant habits bear watching; it appears to be a less rampant grower than some of the Mid-America releases.

Marky Smith has a trio of newer releases which exhibit the innovative work she is doing with orange plicatas in the SDBs. **HELMSMAN** (M. Smith 2002) is a lovely thing, a perky orange based plicata with a red-orange beard. Standards are almost solid in color, with just a suggestion of plicata markings in the base of the midribs. Falls are more of a cream, then edged in orange plicata markings, deepening to brownish plicata veining in the shoulders. It sends up a secondary wave of bloomstalks as the season progresses. Early stalks tend to be in the foliage, a defect which corrects itself with later bloomstalks. **INFANTA** (M. Smith 2003) is from associated breeding but manifests itself as a dainty orange glaciata, with glowing soft orange tints and a white beard. And then the most recent offering, **PILOT** (M. Smith 2004) is an extension of the orange plicata look of its parent, 'Helmsman', considerably deeper in overall color, with an odd smoked overlay, and less brown plicating showing through, mostly as light stitching and dotting in the heart of the flower. Deep thick orange beards add to the excitement.

CIRCUS DRAGON (B. Jones 2002) is an exciting color array with bright red-orange beards against bright canary yellow. The falls carry an even deeper tint of yellow in the heart of the flower (suggesting a spot pattern), then lighten at the edges of the falls. The saturation is intense, the beards brilliant. Displays 1 branch, 3 buds. Growth rate is a bit slow, which throws off the bloom/increase ratio somewhat, in that it tends to bloom heavier than it should, for the amount of plants it produces. **MURPHY'S LAW** (B. Jones 2004) is a unique color combination. Difficult to describe, but basically has pale blue-white standards and then citron falls with a most definite appearance of green, all topped off with bright tangerine beards. An unusual, appealing color combination. Has excellent form and a nice sheen to the texture. Average growth habits. **COY MISTRESS** (Baumunk 2005) is a broad, heavily ruffled plicata in purest white with a heavy band of the softest baby blue to silver plicating possible. To be so pastel, the diamond dusting dares you to overlook it! It shimmers in the sunlight. Tight, compact flowers, with stalks carrying 1 branch, 3 buds. At the opposite end of the spectrum, **DEVIL BABY** (Keppel 2005), seen at the Portland Median Convention under Seedling #98-42A, is a stunning jet black approached from the red side. It has a suave velvet pile which makes the coloring ever more intense. It is as deeply

saturated as ‘Panther’ (M. Smith), but ‘Panther’ approaches its darkness from the blue side. It has nice plant habits with a good bloom/increase ratio. Stalks carry the traditional 1 branch, 3 buds, well-timed.

IMPEACHED (Keppel 2000) is an orange child of ‘Tweety Bird’ (Black 1992) with a totally different look than the oranges I’ve released from Tweety. It is a soft peachy-orange, somewhat infused with salmon, which is more predominant in cooler, wetter weather. It has the tight ‘Tweety Bird’ ruffling and wonderful form. It’s hard to imagine, but **NAVY RUFFLES** (T. Johnson 2002) is also a child of ‘Tweety Bird’. It is a stark, dark blue-purple, contrasted with distinct, thick white beards. Copious amounts of ruffling, as the name suggests. I had envisioned in my mind’s eye more of a navy blue than the purple, and perhaps it will be in other soils and weather conditions. Nonetheless, a wonderful addition to the darker color range in SDBs. **TRUE NAVY** (B. Jones 2001) is similar in color, except more of a blue than the violet-blue of ‘Navy Ruffles’. A total self of navy blue, right down to the beards. Comes from a more traditional approach, inheriting the smoothness of color and the ruffling of its father, ‘Bay Ruffles’ (Warburton).

MAPLE MADNESS (Chapman 2000) is a unique color, truly shades of maple with orange undertoning and texture veining. Contrasting deep violet beards add a nice touch. Needs full sunlight to fully appreciate the rich coloring. Inherited its strong plant habits from its father, ‘Chanted’ (Blyth). **ULTIMATE** (T. Johnson 2003) is well named, because it surely is the epitome of the stunning yellow/red color combinations in the tradition of ‘Jazzamatazz’ (Blyth) and ‘Radioactive’ (Dyer). Bold, brilliant yellow standards are in stark contrast to richest full mahogany-red falls, adorned with a precise 3/8” band of the brilliant yellow of the standards. It screams at you from across the garden!

CLASSICS: GRACE NOTE (Hamblen 1965); **JUST SO** (Benson 1965); **TWICE BLESSED** (Dennis 1966); **VELVET CAPER** (Warburton 1964); **VELVET TOUCH** (Dennis 1966).

ARILBREDS

I continue to praise the trailblazing Jonnye Rich did with arilbred-medians, and her ‘Loudmouth’ (1970, OB) continues to be the standard of what is to be expected in a good arilbred-median. **OTHMANI** (Rich 1985, OGB) is a spectacular jet black, with only an undercurrent of red filtering through in the standards. The texture shines like a raven’s wing. There are absolutely no other colors present, no veining, and just a suggestion of an even deeper black signal below deepest purple beards. It is intermediate in its height and flower size. **OMAR’S STITCHERY** (Boswell 2000, OGB) is another arilbred-median winner from Carl Boswell. At IB height and size of flower, it has softest lavender (approaching white) standards, delicately stitched in violet. The falls are more nearly white, then heavily etched in a delicate, deeper violet plicata pattern. It has outstanding vigor and health for a ½-bred. It reminds me of a scaled down version of ‘Jonnye’s Magic’ (Rich-Whitely), with more delicate veining.

BYZANTINE ART (Baumunk 2001, OGB) is a dazzling carnival of colors with outstanding plant habits, healthy even in the cooler, damper climate of the Pacific Northwest. Standards are smooth rich lavender with no other colors present. Then the falls are tan with a huge, bold signal pattern in glowing dark red. What makes it captivating is the color of the signal which then begins to bleed outward, towards the edge of the falls. Tall and imposing, with strong stalks supporting large flowers. **CHOCOLATE MINT** (Tasco 1998, OGB) is also becoming well known for its health and adaptability in varying climates. Standards are light lavender, fading even lighter as the flower ages. The falls are an unusual blending of chartreuse, buff, and tan, with an evocative deep brown (chocolate) signal. As with ‘Byzantine Art’, it is tall and strong, this time carrying 2 branches, very impressive for a half-bred.

A stalk of **SPIRIT OF CALEB** (McGrath 2002, OGB) in the Sutton Garden sent me into orbit. I don’t believe I have ever witnessed a half-bred with 3 flowers open at once on a stalk! Well spaced at that. Obviously, it has very favorable branching and bud count. Pure white standards sit atop brilliant yellow falls which lighten at the edges. Then the falls sport huge deep brown signals, very imposing and evocative. The color appeared to be bleaching a bit in the heat of central California, but that won’t keep me from acquiring and growing it. And of course, it will open 3 at once for me 3 days after the show! The magnificent stalks were not just an anomaly – a week later, in Portland, stalks there also carried 2 branches.

WALKER ROSS (Ross-Chapman 1998, OGB-) is a wonderful quarter-bred from Canada which reminds me of a modern version of the great ‘Engraved’ (Craig). The base color is cool white, but then has spokes of violet radiating from the centers of the standards and falls, out to the edges. The patterning covers the entire flower, instead of mimicking a plicata pattern, as ‘Jonnye’s Magic’ (Rich-Whitely) does. This is from ‘Spinning Wheel’ (Nearpass), and it picked up the health and vigor of this classic TB.

CLASSICS: BLACK JOPPA (White 1954); **ENGRAVED** (Craig 1953); **JALLAH EFFENDI** (White 1952); **LADY MOHR** (Salbach 1943); **NELSON OF HILLY** (White 1941); **OYEZ** (White 1938).

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