

## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS – 2007/2008

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This edition of Contemporary Views includes evaluations from the 2007 AIS National Convention here in Oklahoma City; the Median Iris Society's Prairie Gold Convention, hosted by the Lincoln (Nebraska) Iris Society, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Median Iris Society; the 2008 AIS National Convention in Austin; the 2008 Aril Trek in Albuquerque; and the Region 4 Spring Meeting in Winchester, VA, where I was guest speaker and judges training clinician. A considerable amount of notes were taken in some of the main gardens in the weeks prior to the week of the OKC convention, so you will find many reviewed which probably weren't even seen during the convention.

### AWARD WINNERS

1. **CONTEMPORARY AWARD**—to the Best New Iris seen (one introduced within the past 3 years of the date of this review): **NOBLE STATURE** (George Hilton 2006) is a divine new offering from a new hybridizer from New Jersey. From a simple, classical cross of two Dykes Medalists, 'Song of Norway' (Luihn) X 'Silverado' (Schreiner), this new silvery-white holds its own with its contemporaries. It has the large, full form of 'Silverado' with more of an icy look to its nature with shimmering blue undertones. Deep well-positioned ruffles abound throughout the flower, and it possesses toughness and resiliency in its substance. As you should expect from such a royal lineage, indeed it has superlative 'Song of Norway' branching, tall and stately, with 3-4 branches. The thick strong stalks never waiver from the weight of 3 huge blossoms opening simultaneously, a common sight in this variety. Not just another white – it has flawless plant qualities and a very sophisticated flower.

#### **Runnersup:**

**SATURN** (T. Johnson 2005), unfortunately, peaked the weekend before the Oklahoma City convention, with a "Cup Clump" in spectacular bloom at the garden at the State Capitol. Nonetheless, it still was giving a fine show on tour day, and looked good in other area gardens also. Suave and sophisticated, it is a rich black-cherry bitone, a full shade deeper in the falls. Yet another outstanding child of the great parent, 'Romantic Evening' (Ghio), and the burnt orange beards belie its lineage. From its other parent, 'Naples' (one of Thomas' first introductions, and a great one in its own right), 'Saturn' inherited impeccable branching and placement on its moderate height stalks. The sequencing of its buds is especially impressive, ensuring an outstanding season of bloom. Its velvet pile and its resistance to waterspotting are especially meritorious. **REFINER'S FIRE** (McGrath 2007, OGB) was the star of the Albuquerque Aril/Median Trek, and received my vote for Favorite Arilbred. This rich, deep half-bred reminds me of a more modern, larger, more globular version of its great parent, 'Babylonian Fires' (Rich-Whitely). The base color is rich deep orchid-lavender, with the falls taken hostage with a huge, dazzling burgundy-red signal patch. A closer look reveals a delicate but intricate network of bronze, even approaching orange, veining, which is further enhanced as the color of the style arms. This adds the warmth of a fire opal to the color array, and gives great carrying power across the garden. Big and bold, with typical globular onco shape. Retains its rich colors even in the high-elevation, dry climate of central New Mexico.

Any iris that could survive the devastating – indeed tragic – late freeze of Nebraska deserves to be noted. But for a variety to perform admirably in all three gardens in which it was guested was truly miraculous. **ABSOLUTE JOY** (Aitken 2006) carried riotous colors with bravura, with bright pink standards and falls, then the falls appliquéd with a screaming rich fuchsia spot pattern in the center, made even more dramatic with intensified veining within the spot. Bright, deep, thick pink beards complete the color array. Obviously from the 'Pele' (Aitken) lineage, it has a cleaner color presentation, wider, better developed form, and improved substance. The horizontal falls also have a gentle amount of waving to add to the lilt of the flower. In spite of the freeze, stalks consistently carried 1 branch and 2 buds, with nice, thin 'Pele'-type foliage, a touch tall at times but graceful and pleasing. Imagine how impressive it will be in a "normal" season. **MIDNIGHT VIGIL** (Stahly 2005) was one of the great surprises for me at the OKC Convention, and frankly, I was disappointed it didn't receive more ballyhoo. Rico suave! It is a totally different style of black than found in the popular Schreiner blacks, and even different from previous, excellent offerings in black from this hybridizer. Flowers are quite large, fully saturated in jet black, even in the standards (where you might usually expect deep-deep violet instead of black). Superlative ratings in all the important categories: Excellent velvet texture and thick substance; tall stalks holding up multiple blossoms with 3 branches plus spur; impressive growth habits, with deep green foliage making a stunning clump, with a superb bloom/increase ratio.

2. **L'ELEGANTE AWARD**—to the New Iris with the most beautiful individual flower seen: **CHRISTMAS PRESENT** (Ghio 2007) simply captivated me at the Austin Convention. Described by the hybridizer as a blue-orchid, reminiscent of the historic work in this color of the famed pioneer, Orville Fay, to my eye it was a crystalline pure lilac, a surprisingly rare color in modern irises. It literally shimmered in the sunlight. Beautiful wide form embellished with sculpted, sophisticated ruffling throughout. Stalks carried 3 branches in modified candelabra with perfect spacing over the stalk. Growth was acceptable, but appeared to be suspect in blooming too heavily – further evaluation required to be sure. It reminds me in style of the plethora of dark-tops from the 'Fogbound' (Keppel) line on the market today; yet I find its total self presentation to be refreshing.

**Runnersup:**

**FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES** (Ghio 2007) is a drop-dead gorgeous pure white with leathery substance yet an eloquent satin texture. I never grow weary with the offerings Mr. Ghio's bubble-ruffling line of work produces, and with this variety, we have the ultimate in deep, dramatic ruffling and fluting that is well positioned and consistent throughout the flower. A massive clump (translation – GOOD GROWER) in full bloom at the master planting in OKC at the national convention was memorable. Branching was a bit close to the stalk, but may have been an asset, in that there were so many stalks with multiple blossoms open, yet they all opened properly and did not interfere with each other. **BELLE DE PROVENCE** (Baumunk 2006) is a delicious debutante in soft peach-apricot. The standards have a slight flush of pink in the midribs. The falls are warm white, slightly melded with warm butter yellow, then banded with the primary hues, deeply embedded in tight, sophisticated, intense ruffling. Medium orange beards allow the eye to focus and appreciate the subtle gradations of color. The master planting in OKC produced a huge clump with thick, healthy foliage, with good spacing of stalks throughout. Nicely branched stalks carried 3 branches, double-socketed. Don't let the delicate appearance fool you – substance is substantial; the flowers hold up well to varying climate conditions.

**ANGELIC WHISPERS** (A. Hahn 2006) is just gorgeous, a heavily laced cold white with just a suggestion of a blush of lilac in the heart of the flower. Form is wide and sophisticated. The flowers have heavy substance, yet, in spite of the intensity of ruffling and lace, do not tear their blooms as they open. Very late blooming (had just started blooming the second day of the OKC national convention), with magnificent formal candelabra branching, 3 branches, mostly double-socketed. It is an average increaser with notably impressive plant habits – many laced whites have foliage with a weak "watery" look about them – not so here. **PICTURE BOOK** (Ghio 2007) was magnificent on first-year bloom at the Will Rogers Garden in OKC in 2006. A continuation in a legacy of glorious pinks from this master, the growth habits were notably far superior than many of its predecessors. A luxurious shade of purest medium satin pink, with the intensity and depth of color of the great Dykes Medalist, 'Pink Taffeta' (Rudolph), with ruffling and lace so deeply embedded you would swear it would have difficulty in opening. Even in the cool spring of 2006 here, each flower opened without even a suggestion of tearing or twisting. Wonderful branching and double sockets were a nice extension of plants full of stamina.

3. **9-1-1 AWARD**—to the New Iris that is, in my opinion, the most significant hybridizing achievement or color break: **COUNTY CORK** (Schreiner 2007) was reviewed last year after an impressive appearance at the Portland National Convention. I made special note to keep an eye out for it in Oklahoma to see if the unique coloring held in a different climate. I was so enamored that I have elevated it to "winner"! This ethereal yellow is a wonderful advancement in the quest for green irises. The intriguing lime green haze, so prominent in the cool weather of the Pacific Northwest, carried over to central Oklahoma, observed both on a cloudy day and in full sun. It is a complete package, in that the growth habits are superior, and the stalks are consistently well branched. Where so many previous green attempts have been "muddy", this new iris is captivating and appealing in the garden.

**Runnersup:**

**OASIS LORNA** (Chadwick 2005) is another superb color breaker from this recently deceased Idaho hybridizer. It reminded me of the quality of Keith's 'Oasis Patches', with perhaps even more decorative streaking and splotching. Instead of purple-on-pink as found in its father, 'Isn't This Something' (Ensminger) and 'Oasis Patches', the base color here is a rich burgundy wine then streaked in a fireworks display of white and silver. It reminded me of a glorified 'Bewilderbeast' (Kasperek) with cleaner, brighter coloration. As with many color breakers, the stalks are a bit short; however, it also has shorter foliage, so the overall proportion is intact. With broad form and respectable substance, certainly an advancement in the cause. **OSSEO** (Worel 2007) was a pleasant surprise, and is a

respectable advancement in the ever-elusive attempt at producing a blue-bearded yellow. Large, simply formed flowers have creamy light yellow standards, the falls a warm white with an undercurrent of the standards' color, then capped with an impressive, quite clean light to medium blue beard. So often the offspring from this type of breeding produce muddy flowers and less than palatable memories. Not so here – a fresh, inviting color ensemble. The hybridizer must surely be partial to it also, in that he named it for his home town in Minnesota. Jack's dedicated, concentrated work with blue beards is really starting to pay off – a nice addition to any garden.

Laced blues are still rare, especially in the fuller tones. **CAPE PERPETUA** (Schreiner 2006) is a nice advancement, combining the sophisticated lacing of 'Queen of Angels' (Schreiner) with their well-established blue line ('Captain's Joy'). Take the depth of blue found in 'Captain's Joy' and add a significant degree of lace. Substance appears to be a bit thin, subject to further evaluation – it did hold up acceptably in rather challenging weather conditions.

**PRIME POWER** (Tasco 2006) is a nice advancement in full oranges, especially in the areas of plant habits and overall flower production. A moderate sized flower with moderate to heavy lace, yet the flowers open well without tearing or twisting. It is fully sunfast, with good substance that held up well after rains. It carries 3 branches, with the bottom branch coming up out of the foliage. Exemplary plant habits, healthy and vigorous. The saturation is intense – you can see it from clear across the garden.

4. **SUN BELT AWARD**—to the Best Proven Variety, i.e., one that has been on the market long enough to be thoroughly tested in the Midwest (at least 4 years): **SUN POWER** (T. Johnson 2004) was blooming well in all 3 gardens in which it was guested in OKC, but was (past tense) especially stunning in the Stahl Garden – the week before convention. As (bad) luck would have it, some critter of the chewing kind (cutworms?) got into the clump, literally the night before tour day and ruined what was unquestionably a "Cup Clump"! This heavily ruffled full yellow is a beacon that can be seen clear across the garden. It doesn't say "come hither" to you – it shouts "get over here!" Plant habits are peerless with rich blue-green foliage. It inherited its magnificent branching and bud count from the great parent, 'Goldkist' (Black). It has been consistently superb every year since its first-year bloom in 2005 and has never failed to perform. Thomas has introduced several high-quality yellows this past decade. Unfortunately, most have received very little ballyhoo – and this is the best of the bunch.

#### **Runnersup:**

**JONNYE'S MAGIC** (Rich-Whitely 1992, OGB) continues to impress me, and remains one of my all-time favorite arilbreds. Rounded, globular flowers in silvery-white are finely, artistically veined in deep violet, with the color intensifying the closer to the edges of the petals. The visual impact is that of a plicata, and is most unique in the class. Substance is substantial, allowing the expansive flowers to retain their shape through the life of the flower. Stalks are tall and strong, usually producing 1 branch, 3-4 buds. Its ability to endure any of the quirks of Mother Nature makes it consistent in performance, year after year. **HOOK** (T. Johnson 2001) was one of the first introductions from Thomas Johnson, and set the standard for the high quality of work we would see from him. 'Hook' is a simple full-toned mulled wine to plum blend. The "hook" is literally a hook on this innovative Space Ager. With consistency, a white appendage extends up discreetly from thinner gold beards like the end of a crochet needle. It has tall willow stalks in the tradition of its father, 'Conjuration' (Byers) with magnificent branching. A vision of health in the growth department, dependable year after year.

I have been impressed with **LADY OF LEONESS** (Spoon 2000) since the last national convention hosted in Oklahoma City – in 1999 by the former Sooner State Iris Society, when it was guested as a kissing cousin (reciprocal cross) to the Cook Cup Winner that year, 'Uncle Charlie' (Spoon 1999). Both irises are classics, coming from classic parents, Dykes Medalists 'Silverado' (Schreiner) and 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner). Granted, these two are similar, presented in soft, eloquent lavender-blue with lovely waving and ruffling. 'Lady of Leoness' is my preference of the two, but this is just a matter of personal taste. To my eye, it is just a touch smaller in size, and structurally more sound and slightly bluer than 'Uncle Charlie'. As you would expect from such choice parents, the plant habits are flawless, the branching and bud count perfection. **TICKETY BOO** (Niswonger 2001, SDB) has arisen from the pack to be one of the best examples of medians with contrasting beards. It has wonderful color in soft fawn to mauve pink hue, then accented with screaming, dazzling deep indigo blue beards, approaching purple to nearly black! Form is wide and sufficiently "finished" in appearance. It possesses wonderful growth habits and consistency in performance, even in the adverse conditions from Nebraska after a devastating freeze. Wonderfully obscene, cute and clever; it leaves quite an impact!

5. **DARK HORSE AWARD**—to the variety introduced within the past 10 years or so that has been overlooked by AIS judges and deserved higher awards: **CITOYEN** (Anfosso 1989) I only discovered, myself, in recent years, and an impressive clump of it in the McGrath Garden at the Albuquerque Aril/Median Trek sealed the deal for me. An esoteric affair, with the base color an unusual shade of orange, toned down with beige. Then, bleeding at the edge of the falls is a diffused band of **raspberry**, almost in the style of an ‘Emma Cook’ pattern. Nothing like it on the market, with quality features inherited from its mother, the great Australasian Dykes Medalist, ‘Sostenique’ (Blyth). Yes, Pete grows other irises besides arils, and in spite of all those aril types in full bloom on tour day, I found myself sneaking back over to the side of the house for another glimpse of this magnificent French iris.

#### **Runnersup:**

**PEWTER TREASURE** (Durrance 1994) was seen in the Stout Garden in OKC again this season, and brought back memories of just how impressive this iris is. Perfectly named, it is a pewter grey with deeper texture veins that add vitality to the flower. It has a translucent sheen that makes the flower glisten in the sunlight. Most “grey” irises are rather drab in the garden – not so with this one. A charming companion would be **SUNNY BUBBLES** (Maryott 1993), yet another fine Maryott variety that was unforgivably overlooked by AIS judges. A bright sunshine yellow, only slightly lighter in the heart of the falls, just below bright yellow beards. A beautiful study in iris ruffling, they are deep and frothy, perfectly positioned throughout the flower. **SPITFIRE** (Hager 1992, BB) was one of Ben’s finest BBs, yet received very little “play” from the judges. A pure glistening white with bright tangerine beards. It came from a fine lineage, including the equally overlooked ‘Bride’s Lace’ (Julander) and ‘Beverly Sills’ (Hager). It has respectable growth habits, whereas many red-bearded whites fail the test. And **FINE DÉCOR** (C. Palmer 1994, IB), another fine median from a largely unheralded Oklahoma hybridizer. Introduced the same year as the best IB Cleo ever produced (and one of the greatest IBs of all times), ‘Frosty Elegance’, ‘Fine Décor’ is warmer, in soft yellow, creamy warm white in the falls, then banded in the yellow of the standards. Form is impeccable, wide and rounded, with a wonderful chiffon texture. Plant habits are faultless.

6. **PICK OF THE LITTER AWARD**—to the most outstanding and promising seedling personally viewed this season: **PD.CbS.10.01** (Hugh Stout) was, hands-down, the star seedling of the OKC Convention, wowing conventioners with a huge clump in the master planting at OSU. It was one of only a handful of seedlings that garnered a High Commendation (HC) vote in 2007. It is a light, airy blue-orchid amoena of moderate size, with color slightly more intensified at the edges of the falls in the style of an ‘Emma Cook’ pattern. A tangerine beard provides contrast, and is the “star” in the night sky. Completely encapsulated with ruffling, and its airy effect is heightened with nearly horizontal falls, setting the flowers to dance in the breeze, reminding me of the grace and ambiance of the great ‘Heartstring Strummer’ (B. Johnson). Graceful stalks are in the style of ‘Conjuration’ (Byers), but it is actually from another Dykes Medalist, ‘Celebration Song’ (Schreiner), which produces a mighty fine show stalk itself. It has now been named **POLESTAR**, and is scheduled for introduction in 2009 by Rockytop Gardens (Phil Williams, Tennessee). “Local boy done good!” -- created by a talented new hybridizer from right here in Oklahoma City who is also an outstanding AIS judge.

#### **Runnersup:**

Yet another seedling from the work of Slovakian breeder, **Anton Mego**, has found its way into this review, and received another one of my HC votes in the TB class in 2007: **AM-01/0641-1** is a splendid bicolor with apricot standards with an orchid flush in the midribs. That color of orchid becomes the primary color of the falls, with entrancing mauve undertones and a bright, joyous orange beard. Wonderful leathery texture and good substance allowed the flowers to endure a typical brisk Oklahoma wind. Stalks are tall and straight, with somewhat inconsistent branching, but mostly OK, with 2 to 3 branches. The color ensemble reminded me of the classic beauties from Opal Brown, or perhaps the early work of Paul Black. In all three convention gardens in which it was gusted, the growth habits were excellent, with good bloom/increase ratio. **Lynn Markham #97-7B3** was showing off in all three gardens in which it was gusted in Oklahoma City. Clever lady – she has picked a perfect name for this seedling: **POLISHED BRONZE**, introduced in 2008 by Terry Aitken (Salmon Creek Garden). This innovative new iris is a dazzling display of rustic golden bronze with deeper, even glossy copper-brown airbrushing. It has rather unusual form, not the wide and rounded cookie-cutter sameness as our poor brainwashed eyes are accustomed to. The flowers are gently waved in harmony with the intensified coloring – never seen anything quite like it. In Oklahoma, it was only moderate in height, with ramrod straight stalks strong and sensible. The branches are actually quite close to the stalk, yet each flower at each position opened properly in all three gardens – in one, a couple of stalks had 3 open at once, and had plenty of backup buds for the next week. Good growth, with an appropriate bloom/ increase ratio.

**RACHEL JULIA** (Francelle Edwards, a new hybridizer from Glendale, AZ) was the best seedling viewed during the Austin Convention. Registered in 2006, it is scheduled for introduction by Kary Iris Gardens (Scottsdale, AZ) in 2009. It is a lovely, refreshing bicolor, with clean light to medium yellow standards; the falls a tapestry of colors in orchid and tones of red and brown, then banded distinctly in tan-brown. Although from the super-parent, 'Conjuration' (Byers) it doesn't produce a Space Age appendage – just a bright yellow beard to complement the color array. Moderately ruffled and laced. Great stalks. Many in this color combination are soft on substance – not so with this new variety. The flowers hold their color well through the life of the flower. **Bob Annand #89-7C** is a yellow/lavender bicolor in the tradition of 'Stairway to Heaven' (Lauer), but with a more moderate-sized flower and prettier, clearer color presentation. In spite of its subtle coloring, a huge clump in full bloom at the State Capitol Garden in Oklahoma City drew a lot of attention, winning it an HC, one of very few awarded this season. Strong stalks were tall and somewhat willowy, yet they gave gently in the breeze, allowing for an airy feeling. Branching was consistent and excellent throughout the clump. Plant habits were perfection, with a textbook bloom/increase ratio. Now named **CAPITOL DEBUT**, a 2008 introduction.

### **WATCH PARTY:**

I'm always hesitant to describe seedlings still under number in the primary sections of Contemporary Views, because I believe that few people follow these reviews so closely as to go back and see if any I have recognized as seedlings go on to be introduced. But, with so many great seedlings seen these past two years, I don't think it's fair to limit the review to only five finalists for the Pick of the Litter.

### **Tall Bearded:**

**AM-01/0861-5** (Anton Mego) is an intriguing, unusual shade of brown, totally different from the American bloodlines such as Ghio's browns. What is fascinating is that, as the flower ages, the chestnut brown transforms to a totally different shade and texture – NOT fading – transforming. Stalks were a bit thinner, in formal candelabra style, but held up well in the breeze, with 3 branches, mostly double socketed. Good growth habits. I hope he introduces this one, just so I can watch the judges squirm when time to judge it at the show! **Doug Kanarowski 0180** was one of a very limited number of impressive seedlings at the Austin convention. This unusual mauved-violet reminds me of a prettier, cleaner version of the fine 'Endearing Charm' (Painter), with similar bronze colored shoulder pads. Horizontal falls are heavily ruffled and literally touch at the hafts. It carries a nice satin texture and complementary bronze beards. Tall, strong stalks with modified candelabra branching with good placement.

**Leroy Meininger 01-KDxCC** (named **CHILL FACTOR**, a 2008 introduction) is a choice Space Age in pastel peach sherbet, whiter in the falls, then with darker peach shoulders and a hint of a halo around the falls. Deep apricot beards end consistently in white flounces. Very elegant. Tall stalks (40") often opened multiple large blossoms, but did a commendable job of remaining upright. It produced a huge clump, with rampant growth like 'Capricious Candles' (Meininger), but doesn't overbloom as 'Capricious Candles' tends to do. Texture is soft chiffon and although the substance might appear to be less than desirable – not so – it held up superbly after a moderate rain. Another impressive Space Ager was **BEWITCHING HOUR** (Helsley, Registered 2005), an intriguing dark one from a different approach to dark breeding. Although from 'Thornbird' (Byers), it is a deep wine-black, almost self in appearance except for a slight spray pattern of white around the beards which transform into stunning wine-red horns, consistent in their application. This was impressive in more than one garden at the Austin Convention.

### **Medians:**

Good breeding goes beyond the iris patch – like mother like daughter. Stephanie, daughter of Lynn, also produced a seedling which is a repeater in this review, also making the "Watch Party" list in the 2005/2006 edition of Contemporary Views: **Stephanie Markham #98-42A**, now named **BIT O' ROYALTY**, also being introduced in 2008 by Aitken, impressed me at the Portland Convention and again in 2007 in Oklahoma City. This diploid MTB is a smaller, more compact 'Among Friends' (Varner) type, just as clean and colorful, just as exciting. Standards are clear white, pure and chaste, atop royal purple falls with a distinctive halo in white. It has incredible branching, with 3 branches, rebranching, and double sockets. Two SDB seedlings guested in Nebraska were impressive, and wound up being "guinea pigs" in an informative, impromptu judges training session conducted by Terry Aitken in the White Garden. **00-101-5** (Lee Walker) was beautiful and classy, reminding me of some of the early Paul Black things that were so nice. Warm cream with infusions of green in the standards. Falls carried a subtle small yellow-green spot around the beards. Heavy substance with beautiful waxy texture. Flowers were broad with moderate to heavy ruffling. A complete package. Perhaps nothing new in color, yet I found it to be very distinctive in its own discreet way, and the waxy texture captivating. Another from this talented, relatively newer hybridizer from Oregon was **MC02-2-6** (Lee Walker). It is unique – nothing like it on the current market. It appears to be a luminata, or at least from luminata breeding. Standards are soft apricot-pink. The base color of the falls is the same, but then heavily overlaid with a delicate, attractive orchid-lavender wash/airbrushing. Bright shrimp-coral beards. Nicely formed, wide and simple. I would buy either of the seedlings in a heartbeat.

### **UPDATES:**

With this edition of Contemporary Views, I will now provide updates to seedlings previously reviewed in earlier editions of Contemporary Views.

#### **2005/2006 Issue:**

**POWER WOMAN** (Neil Mogensen) was introduced in 2008 by Snowpeak Iris Garden.

**RAYOS ADENTRO** (Carroll Morgan MTB) was introduced in 2007 by the Willotts.

**THAT CERTAIN SOMETHING** (Griff Crump) was introduced in 2008 by Winterberry Gardens.

**Thomas Johnson T12B** became **SUPER MODEL**, a 2007 introduction by Mid-America Gardens.

**Thomas Johnson T137A** became **ICE CAPADES**, a 2008 introduction by Mid-America Gardens.

**Stephanie Markham 98-42A** (MTB) became **BIT O' ROYALTY**, a 2008 introduction by Aitken Salmon Creek Gardens.

**Merle Roberts 00-181A** became **WADE RILEY**, a 2007 introduction by Rockytop Gardens.

**Terry Varner V-350** (MTB) became **DESERVING ATTENTION**, a 2007 introduction by Hermit Medlars Walk.

#### **2003/2004 Issue:**

**ELAINE BOURQUE** (Dorman Haymon LA) was introduced in 2008 by Iris City Gardens.

**Ron de la Motte 98-252-2** became **MADDIE DE**, introduced in 2007 by de la Motte.

**Lesley Painter L97-7** became **BRILLIANCE**, a 2005 introduction by Napa Country Iris Garden.

**Barbara Schmieder 97-AR-6** (SDB) became **BANDED TIGER**, a 2006 introduction by Hermit Medlars Walk.

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

### **REDS TO MAROONS:**

The innovative line of red breeding which Joe Ghio is working has opened up new vistas in the quest for red. **HOUSE AFIRE** (Ghio 2003) is a rich velvety deep red, the “fire” being an attractive violet flash below deep old gold beards. It has outstanding form with moderate ruffling and even a bit of lace. In Oklahoma it has been a slow increaser, but produces pretty fans with deep green coloring. **RED SKIES** (Ghio 2007) is a more masculine mahogany red, showcased with a bold blue blaze in the center of the falls. Difficult to evaluate in Austin, it looks promising, and we will keep an eye out for it in the future. The rich luster contributed to the discerning effect.

**FORTUNATE SON** (Schreiner 2006) caught me off guard. A simply formed, rather plain garnet red. Do a double take. Behold, a nice attempt at a deep blue beard, blending into the deep tones of the flower rather than contrasting. Think back. Nope, nothing like it on the market. With that complex pedigree, I wonder where “the beard” came from. I bought it to breed with – not sure what I’m gonna do with it, but I’ll think of something! **WISE WISH** (Spoon 2003) is an unusual number, difficult to describe. Basically a wine-maroon, the falls a full tone deeper than the standards, producing a bit of a bitone effect. The tangerine beards have a fireworks display of white spray shooting from them, covering the upper half of the falls, suggesting there is *plicata* in its ancestry. The whole flower has an unusual overlay of smoke haze, adding intrigue to the effect. Ruffled, flared falls even have a touch of lace on well-established clumps. The color was even better here in Oklahoma the year after convention.

**CLASSICS:** **BRIMSTONE** (Tompkins 1971); **NATCHEZ TRACE** (Wills 1964); **THE RED DOUGLAS** (Sass 1937).

### **APRICOTS TO ORANGES:**

**PRETTY BUBBLES** (Ghio 2005) is another Ghio beauty, this time in soft, pastel peach-apricot with a blush deeper in the shoulders. In spite of having voluptuous deep chiffon ruffling, the flowers didn’t tear when opening, and standards hold their shape well. In several gardens in Oklahoma, it was only an average grower and increaser, and tended to be stingy with its bloom (not enough stalks for the amount of increase). Wide branching with respectable bud count, but stalk strength was also suspect. Yet, it’s just too beautiful and elegant to be denied! **SANTA WAS HERE** (Niswonger 2005) is a clever, more subtle spinoff from its famous parent, ‘Santa’ (Shoop), displayed in palest apricot with slightly deeper ‘Santa’ shoulders in peach. Standards were too short and squatty, throwing off the balance of the flower somewhat, yet retained their shape well. Initially I thought the substance may be weak, but the flowers held up admirably after adverse weather in central Oklahoma. Bud count and branching was fair, with 2 branches plus spur with decent spacing. A pretty flower with chiffon texture, nicer than it was in Portland in previous years. **SUN CIRQUE** (Cadd 2004) is an unusual concoction of colors, and difficult to describe. Although it is short, with somewhat clubby stalks and only average growth, I found myself being drawn back to it again and again. It is basically a blend, with the primary color being orange infused pink. Falls are somewhat lighter, and more creamy in appearance, adorned with a gilt edge on the falls in gold and slightly darker peach in the shoulders around deep orange beards. A wonderful color gem.

**CLASSICS:** **DAWNBREAKER** (Noyd 1970); **KIMBERLINA** (Sexton 1970); **TOP FLIGHT** (Hall 1953).

### **BROWNS:**

**ADOBE CAMPFIRE** (H. Nichols 2002) was seen in several gardens here during the national convention, and although I found the quality inconsistent from one garden to another, it looked quite nice in at least one. It is a solid burnished brown with a satisfying mink glow for texture. Lightly ruffled on flowers which have modest but adequate form. In Austin, it wasn’t quite as nice, but still worthy of mention. Some stalks had inconsistent branching, with some branches toeing-in. It had waterspotted considerably after a rain, not all that uncommon for browns with velvet texture. Could be an interesting parent, in that a sib is an oxblood red. **BAMBOO SHADOWS** (Keppel 2006) left me cold in the Portland Convention gardens – and in the home garden – last year, with “dead”, dull color, so much so that I didn’t understand the logic for it making the final cut for introduction. Imagine my surprise when it began blooming here in Oklahoma, with more exciting coloring. It is an odd blending of bamboo brown with more intense chestnut saturation in the shoulder area and a suggestion of an orchid flush blended in just below the old gold beards. Wonderful stalks hold 3 well spaced branches in modified candelabra style, and established clumps produced a second wave of stalks as the first setting was completing its cycle, ensuring an exceptionally long season of bloom. Excellent, rampant growth. A love-hate type of iris – some won’t care for it. But if you want something different in your garden, try this conversation piece. **VALENTINO** (J. Painter 2008), at the Natural Gardener Garden in Austin, was very impressive. A large chestnut brown, remindful of

‘Rustler’ (Keppel) in style but smoother at the hafts and more of a self than bitone. Held its color well, even under adverse weather conditions (didn’t waterspot after a significant rain the night before). Brilliant thick old gold beards are a nice contrast against the chestnut brown. Decent stalks, with good plant habits.

**CLASSICS:** BURNING DESIRE (Hamner 1970); MAPLEDOWN (Neubert 1971); RUSTICANA (Schreiner 1961).

### **PINKS:**

AUGUSTINE (Schick 2005) was a pleasant surprise at the OKC convention, and the more I saw it, the more I liked it. Richest coral-pink, slightly deeper at the shoulders, accented with rich orange beards. It produced fantastic, thick stalks with 4 branches, double-socketed, in modified candelabra style. It also possesses excellent plant habits, a claim not all rich pinks can make. In Austin, the growth was average and appeared to bloom fairly heavily. However, plant habits tended to be inconsistent on many varieties at this convention. BIRTHDAY GIRL (Keppel 2005) was as high in quality in central Oklahoma as it was in Oregon in the hybridizer’s garden. It is a rich coral-pink with thick bushy deep reddish-orange beards. In cooler weather, the impression is more peach than pink – either way, the color saturation is intoxicating. Stalks with moderate height are respectably branched, and the succession of blooms within the clump is well adjusted. Substance is thick; the saturation consistent, retaining their richness of color even in warmer weather and full sun. ROBIN’S TEA (Worel 2003) is remindful of the great Hamblen classic, ‘Sophistication’, and indeed, this soft satin pink with blue beards is a grandchild of it. It has nice clear color and held up well throughout the season, through variations in temperature and moisture content. The beard is deep blue, but then tipped tangerine, giving a raspberry effect. Similar, but deeper and more dramatic, is TROUBLE (Worel 2006), dressed in medium pink with a mysterious smoky haze that adds to its allure. Beards are a deeper blue than ‘Robin’s Tea’, and have a fascinating blue chevron right below them. At the bottom of the class in flower size and stalk height, the hybridizer was nonetheless correct in his reclassification of this variety from Border Bearded to Tall Bearded.

**CLASSICS:** CHERIE (Hall 1948); FRINGED TAFFETA (Rudolph 1975); PINK PUSSYCAT (Tompkins 1969); PRETTY NANCY (Hamblen 1974).

### **LAVENDERS TO VIOLETS:**

ADOREGON (Keppel 2004) is another classic beauty in a line of breeding from ‘Fogbound’ (Keppel). There are several on the market now; most are high in quality and have distinctiveness. This one is a genteel lilac to orchid-blue, with the falls one tone lighter in silver, making for, technically, a “dark top”. The base of the beards is white, changing to lilac, and finally heavily tipped in a beautiful shrimp pink. Ruffling is extreme and dramatic. To my eye, the standards are noticeably smaller than the falls, yet it makes a distinctive, artistic look. DESERT MESA (Richardson 2006) just might be the largest flower I have seen in TBs. If you like ‘em big, put this astounding one on your Want List. The color is nothing new – a medium to dark violet, somewhat lighter in the heart of the falls, but it does transmit an unusual haze which adds intrigue to the display. The size surely is due to a double dose of ‘Dusky Challenger’ (Schreiner) in its background. What is impressive is that it retains its shape well through the life of the flower and has strong, husky stalks to sufficiently support all that extra weight. ENDEARING CHARM (L. Painter 2003) is amazingly similar in its color presentation, in that it too possesses a dusky overlay throughout the flower, but the flower size is more “traditional” and carries a substantial amount of ruffling. What makes this variety unique is charming shoulder pads in deeply saturated golden-bronze. During the life of the flower, it gradually transforms itself (I didn’t say “fades”) into a different, somewhat lighter shade, very captivating. It has good, healthy plant habits and produces stalks with 3 double-socketed branches.

Although I grow nearly all the introductions which Superstition releases each year, I have somehow missed SPRING FANTASY (Tasco 2002) in previous years. What a delight! Huge, moderately ruffled flowers are displayed in a glowing, magnetic magenta, intense and fully saturated. Flowers transform (not fade – if you’ve taken one of my judges training schools, you know the difference....) to a slightly lighter tone by the third day – both colors are attractive. Big husky plant habits from its great parent, ‘Sudden Impact’ (Tasco). Another color gem I am just now discovering is SECONDHAND ROSE (G. Spoon 2004), a quality rebloomer in good old-fashioned (pretty) old rose.

It was outstanding in every garden in which it was guested in Austin, and then again in the home garden in Virginia. The flower is enlivened with darker texture veins. Orange beards are also attractive, especially when put against this color. Form is wide, simple, and pleasing to the eye.



**CLASSICS:** AMETHYST FLAME (Schreiner 1958); LILAC MIST (Luihn 1969); VIOLET HARMONY (Lowry 1948).

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

SHADOWS OF NIGHT (Tasco 2006), with ‘Picture Book’ (Ghio), was the best of the lot at the Will Rogers Convention Garden in Oklahoma City on first-year bloom in 2006. On an established clump in the master planting at OSU in 2007, it was smashing, with quality on the caliber of previous Contemporary Award winner, ‘All Night Long’ (Duncan). Deepest debonair violet, approaching black (especially in the falls and beards), with a lacquer finish even more intense than its parent, ‘Paint it Black’ (Schreiner). Totally devoid of any noisy haft markings. Tall, bold, with superb branching, bud count, and beautiful blue-green foliage inherited from ‘Paint it Black’. Formidable ruffling everywhere, and impressively resistant to waterspotting. TUXEDO JUNCTION (Pinegar 2005) was a pleasant surprise. Deepest wine-maroon – appearing very nearly black to the eye. Look closely – there is a black spot pattern infused into the top half of the falls – very subtle but definitely there. Deep bronze beards are tipped black, adding harmony to the ensemble. Sufficiently wide but simple form, with just a wisp of ruffling throughout. Beautiful graceful stalks with 3 branches plus spur plus rebranching and double sockets. Good plant habits, too.

VOLTAIRE’S CLOAK (B. Nicodemus 2005) was the best of a series of very fine blacks recently released by this talented, relatively newer hybridizer from southwest Missouri. It is a dignified violet-black from the blue side, a nice advancement on its famous parent, ‘Hello Darkness’ (Schreiner). Unfortunately for the OKC conventioners, it was extremely early (one of the first TBs to bloom in the season) and was nearly completely finished blooming at convention. Yet the flowers retained their form and excellent color saturation, right down to the last blossoms on the stalks. Stalks were tall, staying upright through a wide range of weather conditions, although they looked willowy with very wide branching. YOSEMITE NIGHTS (G. Sutton 2004) is a heavily ruffled, deepest velvet black with self beards. It has well branched and spaced stalks, although, occasionally, with opening 3 at once, had trouble staying upright with that many open. Beautiful healthy purple-based foliage. In some gardens, the bloom/increase ratio was somewhat off – needed a few more stalks in the established clumps for optimal balance. In Austin, these traits improved, with even better branching and bud count, with 4 branches plus rebranching.

**CLASSICS:** BLACK ONYX (Schreiner 1958); NOBLEMAN (Babson 1970); OPENING NIGHT (Gibson 1970).

### **BLUES:**

ABSOLUTE TREASURE (Tasco 2006) was the best newer TB in my garden in 2008, blooming in a well-established 2-year clump. Not just another blue, this shimmering, heavily ruffled light blue makes its impact with its impeccable plant habits and superlative branching, carrying 4 branches and rebranching, double-socketed, on tall, majestic stalks. It was also very impressive in Austin; unfortunately, it was unmarked (as were several other convention guests in one particular garden), and many conventioners weren’t able to make the connection. Well named, it is truly a treasure of perfection in absolute blue. JOYFULNESS (Willott 2006) is a transcendental shade of dusky blue with mauve undertones and a suggestion of a mauve halo on the falls. Shoulders are nearly mustard in color, but not as intensified as ‘Endearing Charm’ (Painter). Not muddy at all. Huge flowers have magnificent form, rounded and ruffled with a hint of lace. Wide, formal candelabra branching with 3 branches on husky show stalks, strong and stately. Thick clean foliage with strong increase. It’s one of those that makes you backtrack in the row, stand there for a minute and try to decide if you like it or not. I must confess – it grows on you! RAGING TIDE (Keppel 2007) has huge flowers with deep billowing ruffling in the style of its parent, Dykes Medalist ‘Sea Power’ (Keppel), but with lighter edges on the falls like ‘Honky Tonk Blues’ (Schreiner) or ‘Rite of Spring’ (Hager), both of which are in its lineage. Great, strong stalks carry 3 well-spaced branches. Husky, healthy plant habits. In one garden, the saturation was much lighter overall, resembling ‘Olympiad’ (Ghio) in a light to medium blue with a deeper intensification in the heart of the falls.

**CLASSICS:** BLUE RHYTHM (Whiting 1945); ELEANOR’S PRIDE (Watkins 1956); HELEN MCGREGOR (Graves 1946); SEASIDE (O. Brown 1967).

### **WHITES TO CREAMS:**

**ANGEL MY LOVE** (A. Hahn 2006) is a sib to L'Elegante Award Runnerup, 'Angelic Whispers' (A. Hahn), and is every bit as gorgeous. They are similar, except 'Angel My Love' has more color – a blush lilac with diamond dusting, while 'Angelic Whispers' is nearly pure crystalline white. Both are very late blooming, and were just starting their bloom cycle during the week of convention. The form is wide with ruffling and heavy lace. It has formal candelabra branching with good spacing. It is only a fair increaser and may be a bit of a heavy bloomer. The sister, overall, has the better plant habits, which was the final factor in deciding to place it in the awards category of this review. I have been observing and loving **CHRISTMAS ICE** (Schick 2004) for a couple of years but was hesitant to review it because of its disheartening, notably weak growth habits. It is a compact, delicate cold white with magnificent tangerine beards strongly influenced with rich pink. It is graced with heavy, elegant lace, yet showed no evidence of having difficulty in opening. Shorter, simpler stalks are in proportion to the size of the flowers. Increase is minimally acceptable, and the foliage not the prettiest in the garden. But be patient, for it will treat you to one simply gorgeous flower. **IRISH CREAM** (G. Sutton 2005) is technically a blend, the base color in creamy, silvery white. Deep, voluptuous ruffles even have a hint of lace embedded. The ripples are infused with undertones of pale lavender and even a presence of mint green. The form is impeccable, from its grandfather, 'Silverado' (Schreiner), and the whole flower is encased in heavy wax. Not the type of flower that will dazzle you, but you will keep coming back to it for its classic elegance and sheer beauty.

**MOONLIT CRYSTAL** (Willott 2006) is a well-named, mysterious jewel. Crystalline white standards have a haze reminiscent of some of the late Rudolph classics, this time complete with a slight gold halo. Falls carry even more diamond dusting in their texture, with a more predominant gold halo and deep yellow beards. Wide formal candelabra branching is well placed on thick, strong stalks. A husky, healthy grower. **PEACE PRAYER** (T. Johnson 2005) is a large flowered, big blocky warm white with an intense glow of warm butter yellow throughout the heart of the flower, not just on the shoulders of the falls. It has wonderful formal candelabra branching reminiscent of 'Goldkist' (Black) with a healthy, vigorous plant. The entire flower is embraced with soft chiffon ruffling that brings a quiet elegance to the ensemble. **SATIN CHARM** (Parkhill 2003) is yet another high-quality offering from a most discriminating hybridizer from Tennessee whose work, for the most part, sadly, has been overlooked by AIS judges. This is a tall stately white with just a hint of yellow in the shoulders and beards. Perhaps nothing new in color, but still very nice, with beautiful form and undeniable grace. Formal candelabra branching on strong stalks, with 3 branches, double-socketed. Well named, it has an elegant satin texture.

**CLASSICS:** **FROST AND FLAME** (Hall 1957); **HIGH SIERRA** (Gaulter 1967); **POWDER SNOW** (Schreiner 1970).

**YELLOWS:**

**ELEGANT DANCER** (Valenzuela 2007), at first glance, appeared to be a somewhat muddy yellow. Yet I kept being drawn back to it. Upon closer inspection, I decided it was a very nice attempt at green, reminding me of ‘Country Cork’ (Schreiner) in style. Simple, understated form with decent shape and nice ruffling. Worthy of another look in the future. **MATERIAL GIRL** (T. Johnson 2005) is technically a reverse yellow amoena, with yellow standards over white falls with a yellow band. However, the visual impact is yellow. A refreshing combination of colors, with standards a clear soul-soothing lemon yellow, the falls pristine white with deeper yellow intensified in the hafts and a lemon edge. The form is wide and classical, complete with light ruffling and heavy lacing around all petals. Stalks are tall and well-branched. The plant habits are minimally acceptable – a slow increaser but with husky plants. The entire flower is shot with diamond-dusting, adding immensely to its carrying power in the garden. Similar in pattern, but worlds apart in style, was **SIERRA DOWNTOWN** (Scott 2003), one of the sleepers of the Austin Convention. A bright sunshine yellow, with white and lemon yellow falls heavily banded in yellow in the tradition of the great ‘Joyce Terry’ (Muhlestein) of yesteryear. It was misnamed in a huge, floriferous clump at the San Marcos Garden, but just as impressive, and correctly marked, at the Natural Gardener. Beautiful form, with heavy ruffling and light lace. Flowers had excellent substance and sun-resistance. The flowers showed signs of a small hook or horn, and fairly consistently. However, it is not registered as a Space Ager.

**CLASSICS:** **BRIGHTSIDE** (Schreiner 1961); **MISS ILLINI** (Varner 1966); **OLA KALA** (Sass 1942); **SILENCE** (Tompkins 1966).

**PLICATAS:**

**COUNTY OF KENT** (Baumunk 2005) is a fancy plicata from luminata breeding, but done so with soft brushstrokes in pastels. Base color is a pale-pale pink with airbrushing and speckling in deeper pink and lavender on the edges, transforming to deeper etch-a-sketching in the shoulders of the falls. Form is simple, rather plain, but reasonably wide. Moderate sized flowers on shorter stalks. **DOUBLE STITCH** (G. Sutton 2005) bloomed very early in the master planting at OSU, but was in good bloom during convention in another garden. It is a clean amethyst-violet on white plicata from the Hager reblooming plicata bloodlines. Perhaps nothing new, but made the cut to be included in this review because of its pert, distinctive stitching, nice form, and its abundance of bloom. Stalk sequence was staggered to extend its bloom cycle, carrying quality bloom into midseason. **RENEWAL** (G. Sutton 2004) was another pleasant surprise in the OKC convention gardens, and even better the year after convention. From reblooming bloodlines, it is not just another plic – the color combination and pattern are most attractive. Standards are an unusual greenish-yellow with some plicata markings in violet. The falls have a white ground, then distinctly banded ½” in rich violet stitching. Then, around the bronze beard, you find a distinctive spoke pattern of violet, the focal point of the flower. Wonderful vigorous growth, as any good rebloomer must possess.

**OREO** (Keppel 2004) was a show-stopper in Oklahoma, and much taller with a somewhat higher bud count than advertised by the hybridizer upon introduction. Well named, a startling contrast of near black stitching on pure white base. Flowers were considerably larger than seen in its home state of Oregon. The standards are nearly completely saturated, making the name even more apropos. **SHANE ALLEN** (C. Hahn 2006) was a nice *déjà vu* to the style of bitone-plicatas Keith Keppel made famous in his early plicata work. Standards have light blue plicating, almost solidly saturated. The falls are a bright violet-blue on clean white ground, complete with a cute belly stripe right down the middle. Bronze beards. It is somewhat short but has good stalks in modified candelabra and produced a good season of bloom with its well-timed buds. Made a very showy clump with its clean colors and healthy foliage.

**CLASSICS:** **BELLE MEADE** (Wills 1950); **CURTAIN CALL** (Schreiner 1967); **GIBSON GIRL** (Gibson 1946); **MINNIE COLOQUITT** (Sass 1942).

### **AMOENAS, BITONES, and NEGLECTAS:**

The contribution of ‘Romantic Evening’ (Ghio) as a parent continues to impress. **BY DESIGN** (Kerr 2005) has blue-white standards over velvet, luscious wine falls with a tint of blue and a discreet, lighter halo, contrasted with rich burnt tangerine beards. A few white lines for haft marks are unobtrusive, but rather, allow the viewer to concentrate the focus on the beards. Flowers are large and well-formed, with nearly horizontal falls. Stalks carried 2 branches plus spur, a bit close to the stalks, but the lower blossoms opened OK. **CREATIVE VISION** (Kerr 2005) is similar, with the standards more oyster in color without the blue. Falls are an even more intense depth of velvet wine-red with brighter brick red beards instead of the burnt orange look. Color saturation was richer and more intense in Austin than at the OKC convention; either version is most appealing. **VIGILANT** (Ghio 2006) is similar, but with more lavender-blue in the standards than blue-white. The contrast against the black-purple falls is dramatic. Branching was somewhat inconsistent, high-branched in the master planting at OSU but properly spaced in the Hampton Garden at the OKC convention. **MIDNIGHT ROMANCE** (Van Hook 2005) is yet another fine offering from super-parent ‘Romantic Evening’, this time from a relatively new hybridizer from Kentucky who is on my personal “Watch List” for great new things. Standards are rather deep wine, with lilac undertonings in both the standards and the style arms. Velvet-smooth falls are a deep, evocative red-violet, contrasted with haunting burnt orange beards. Magnificent plant habits. Branching in Oklahoma wasn’t as good as I’ve seen it in previous seasons, but still acceptable enough that this variety received one of my HM votes this year.

The description of **DRAMATIC STYLE** (Black 2005) may sound similar to the ‘Romantic Evening’ lineage, but it has a different look, and is from a different line of breeding. Standards are icy blue-white, embellished with an icy white rim. Mercifully, they failed to produce the annoying deeper virus flecking present in similar varieties. Falls are a blend of deep blue-purple with a velvet pile and an intensification of color in the heart of the falls. Hafts blend into a reddish-brown, and then the falls have a tight rim in lighter violet. The whole flower has an “attitude” – well named! **FIT FOR A KING** (Schreiner 2006) is a large, imposing, noble neglecta with light lavender standards and full violet-purple falls, complemented with light lavender beards and smooth at the hafts. It is a rich, smooth color presentation, very suave. Tall stately stalks are strong with formal candelabra branching with 3 branches plus spur, double socketed at most positions. Big, fat, thick foliage produced average increase and fairly heavy bloom in a couple of gardens. All in all, one of the highest quality offerings from the Schreiner family in recent years.

**SKYLAND RANCH** (Richardson 2006) is a wonderfully ridiculously HUGE blue amoena, comparable in size to some of the recent Schreiner releases in this color combination. The contrast is soft and clear, like the old classic, ‘Dover Beach’ (Nearpass), with nearly pure white standards atop sky blue falls, only slightly lighter at the edges. Tree-trunk stalks are tall and imposing – thick and stout – with good branching. Qualifies, with ‘Desert Mesa’ (also from Richardson) as among the largest flowers in irisdom today. Yet, impressive is that it retains its well-structured form far better than any of its contemporaries.

**CLASSICS: BREAD AND WINE** (C. Smith 1971); **CHEROKEE PRINCESS** (Munger 1971); **WABASH** (Williamson 1936).

### **BICOLORS and VARIEGATAS:**

**FLORENTINE SILK** (Keppel 2005) is a pulsating color combo, with dusky peach-pink standards and mauved lavender falls and a bright shrimp beard with a blue base. An attractive deep pink band on the falls was more prominent in Oklahoma than in the Pacific Northwest, and overall the color presentation was cleaner and more vivacious – it definitely needs warmer, drier weather to showcase itself. Outstanding branching in formal candelabra, with 3 well spaced and timed branches. Leathery substance with a silken finish and praiseworthy weather resistance. Peerless plant habits. **ON THE TOWN** (S. Markham 2007) reminded me of a modern version of a great old classic, ‘Pretender’ (Cook), from 50+ years ago. Standards are an unusual shade of light yellow that I swear have green influences in them. Falls are rich velveteen purple with a wine underglow, enhanced with a charming rim of grey to pale orchid. The whole flower has a mysterious haze (not muddy) and a mink texture. Bright yellow beards unite the two principal colors. Tall straight stalks carry 4 branches in beautifully spaced modified candelabra. **KATHY CHILTON** (Kerr 2006) has magnificent saturation and color contrast, with golden yellow standards over plush deep red falls. It has a large flower with moderately deep ruffling. Quite smooth at the hafts ---which are touching to overlapping -- and horizontal falls. A very sensuous look; a sophisticated attitude. **AWESOME ALETHA** (Scarborough 2007), seen at the Hampton convention garden in Oklahoma City, was nearly finished blooming, but the blooms were still retaining their quality. It has excellent contrast in colors, with pure full yellow standards over wine-brown falls with a lighter band similar to ‘Mastery’ (Blyth). Some haft marks are present, but

they weren't offensive. Moderate sized flowers are carried by fairly short stalks which nonetheless manage to produce 4 branches without crowding on the stalk. It has excellent plant habits with good increase.

**CLASSICS:** IN TEMPO (Blyth 1974); LADY OF SPAIN (Luihn 1976); MAY ROMANCE (Crossman 1971).

### **EMMA COOK PATTERN:**

AMERICAN MASTER (Kerr 2006) was splendid in one of the gardens at the Austin Convention, enough so that I considered it for my vote for the Cook Cup. Soft elegant yellow standards held up much better than some others in this color combination. Heavily waved falls are yellow based, complemented with a lavender wash on the edges.

Clean colors with good contrast between the colors. Good growth habits. Stalks were strong, of moderate height, with 3 branches, opening 3 at once on a second visit during the convention. Large flowers held together admirably.

CLOTHED IN GLORY (Kerr 2005) was far better in Austin than at previous conventions, and the form held up quite well in fairly heavy wind. It has wonderful color contrast, with deep yellow standards atop somewhat lighter falls, then banded nearly an inch thick in bold brownish-red. The flowers are large, and then, as they grow even larger as the flower ages, the inner portion of the band breaks down into a bleeding effect, deeper into the heart of the falls. Very captivating.

DESIGNER'S ART (Kerr 2005) has soft, clean light yellow standards and white falls with airbrushing dappled in lavender-blue, artistically bleeding on the edges. It has good saturation of color and delineation between the colors.

The flower retained its shape better than it had in the clump seen at the Portland Convention. In OKC, the stalks were aborted, but branching and bud count were excellent the next year at the Austin Convention. OPAL WITHERS (Van Hook 2005) was consistently impressive at the OKC convention, with large clumps yielding a bounty of tall well-branched stalks well positioned throughout the clumps. Much taller than its registered 3' – right at 4' tall in the Hampton Garden, with willowy stalks inherited from its mother, 'Conjuration' (Byers), yet never failing to hold up its flowers. 3 branches plus spur in modified candelabra style, beautifully spaced. Base color is white. Falls are heavily saturated and sanded in blue at the edges, almost too heavy to be considered an 'Emma Cook' type, with an artistic display of color. A fresh look. Horizontal falls add to the lilt of the effect.

**CLASSICS:** MISS PERSONALITY (Sexton 1977); NEFERTITI (Gatty 1981).

### **POTPOURRI:**

BLUE PERSUASION (Aitken 2005) is a fascinating, unusual affair. The standards are bronzed-brass heavily flushed in the midribs with a strange mauved-blue. Falls' base color is a somewhat clearer milky blue, then tacked with a distinct band in the primary color of the standards. The whole flower is enveloped in a mysterious mink glow. Flowers are wide and lightly waved. Growth is only average to a bit slow, but the flower has enough strong features to make it a prime player in the exploration of hybridizing! EXPLICIT (Ghio 2005) has been exceptional in several areas, from the last bloom in the clump in one of the gardens in Austin, to the star of the garden at the French/ Holland Garden in OKC, to winning Best Out-of-Region variety at the Spoon Garden at the Spring 2008 regional in Virginia. Deep golden yellow standards sit atop sophisticated mahogany black falls. Then, bursting outward over more than half the falls, from the yellow beards, is an explosion of bright yellow in a dramatic sunburst ray pattern. Stunning! Very fine plant habits, with consistently acceptable stalks, branching, and bud count.

Not all the good new Burseen varieties have appendages....**HAVE A GOODUN** (Burseen 2006) was, justifiably, a serious contender for the President's Cup in Austin. It is an esoteric blending of colors that reminds me of a modern, updated version of 'Electrique' (Blyth), with oyster white standards infused amber with a halo in tan, and burnished, blended golden-amber and burnished rose falls, accented with bold near-black beards. Wow! It produces nice tall strong stalks, with 3 to 4 branches in formal candelabra placement. A rather heavy bloomer, but not to the point of extinction or punishment on the ballot. **SERIOUS SIGHTS** (Burseen 2007) reminded me of a larger flowered 'Concession' (Aitken) with thick leathery substance. The flowers are white, but then the center of the falls is splatter-painted in tiny violet-blue dots in an irregular array. A nice quirky pattern. Stalks were short and kinda clubby. Lower flowers opened OK in spite of the branching being too close to the stalks. Finicky plant habits as seen in Austin. The flower is so exciting, however, it is worth another look.

**IN LIVING COLOR** (Black 2004), in previous years, failed to move me. But in 2007, with cooler weather in central Oklahoma, the colors were more vibrant, and I'm now a fan. It reminded me of a "calmed-down" version of the extremely tall, wild bicolor from Paul from the past, 'Flying Carpet' (in its pedigree). Of moderate height and flower size, 'In Living Color' is a medley of colors (really can't call it a "blend"), with bright yellow standards contrasted by a dazzling array of various shades of gold, plum in the hafts, violet extended over the falls blended with tan and a blue flash, then a gold band on the edges. **OASIS ELMER** (Chadwick 2005) is an odd, intriguing color combination, and was much more attractive in Austin than at previous conventions. The base color is a mulled wine to maroon, but then all body parts are edged in this strange tannish-old gold border, applied more like a haze than a distinct banding. The effect was very ghostly in appearance. Nice form with decent substance, and it appeared to hold its color through the life of the flower.

**PRESENTATION** (T. Johnson 2005) has been somewhat of a Dark Horse, probably because it blooms quite late here. It is an unusual shade of light yellow with a green haze (the hybridizer calls it light green-ecru), with the standards slightly deeper, suggesting its 'Fogbound' (Keppel) lineage. The flowers are large and gently waved and possess a soothing waxy substance. **RETURN TO BAYBERRY** (G. Sutton 2004) I finally got to see, and I love it! I have long awaited an improvement on the great old classic, 'Bayberry Candle' (DeForest), and it has finally arrived – a major breakthrough in this color combination. It has smoother, more evenly applied color, and looked good even in overcast 50 degree weather. In warmer, sunny conditions, the colors were even more impressive. Form is wide and reasonably well shaped. Average stalks, with 2 branches plus spur, double socketed, and although the branching was a bit closer to the stalk than I would prefer, each flower managed to go ahead and open properly. Good strong growth habits, with an acceptable increase/bloom ratio. Would have easily been a 9-1-1 Award winner/runnerup, had I discovered it earlier. Clever name, too!

**CLASSICS: BALLYHOO** (Keppel 1970); **PINK TIGER** (El Dorado 1965); **SILVER PEAK** (DeForest 1962).

## **COLOR BREAKERS:**

### **Medians:**

**BACH FUGUE** (Baumunk 2005) is a diploid MTB, a sib to 'Bach Toccata' (Baumunk 2005), already reviewed in a previous edition of Contemporary Views. Whereas Toccata is a light yellow base with red-maroon veining and random dotting and streaking, Fugue is palest lavender with violet colorbreaking. The variation from one flower to the next, and even from one petal to the other, is very charming.

### **Tall Bearded:**

**LIGER** (Spoon 2005) is a cleaner, brighter version of its mother, 'Autumn Years' (Ensminger). Base color is yellow, with maroon striping in the standards, and a mottled medley of maroon splashes in the outer perimeters of the falls, and then brighter violet splashes in the heart of the flowers. Orange beards contribute to the festivities. Flowers are smallish on shorter stalks. Increase is abundant, but in some gardens the number of stalks was somewhat stingy. But the bright, joyous colors are what make this color breaker worthy. **OASIS TWIN** (Chadwick 2006) was a pleasant surprise, a well-shaped, rounded, much improved 'Bewilderbeast' (Kasperek), superior in every way. Maroon base color has undertonings of tan and bronze, but then joyously striped with white streaks throughout the flower. Color more attractive than gaudy. Shorter stalks, as with many color breakers, but good plant habits. **QUAIL ALE** (Kasperek 2006) was a pleasant surprise, in that the colors were much more attractive and impressionistic than they appeared in the ads. Dizzying white streaks splash erratically over a maize

yellow base color, remindful of but lighter than the famous ‘Tiger Honey’ (Kasperek). Decent stalks are somewhat shorter but well branched with good spacing. Average growth.

**CLASSICS:** INTY GREYSHUN (Ensminger 1979, BB); OOHS AND AHS (Ensminger 1977).

### SPACE AGERS:

#### Medians:

Quality black Space Agers, in any class, are still rare, even more so in the medians. DARK AVENGER (M. Sutton 2003) is a well-formed, intensely-saturated near-black IB, with deep violet standards and deeper near-pure-black falls. Deep violet-black beards transform into upturned black horns. The huge, floriferous clump at the State Capitol Garden was in full bloom the week before convention, but still had representative bloom by tour day. Excellent increase and stalk production. HULA HANDS (G. Sutton 2005) was a pleasant surprise. This cream plicata has compact, tidy flowers with nice shape. The stitching is an attractive mulberry-plum to mulled wine. Consistent smaller mulberry horns pop up from the beards with consistency. The plant habits and floriferousness make this Space Age IB special. Fantastic stalks are thin and graceful, carrying 3 branches and double socketed in most positions. It was common to see stalks with 3 open simultaneously. Vigorous, tidy plants yield a wealth of stalks, well placed within the clump. LOST IN SPACE (Aitken 2005, BB), I believe is Terry’s first adventure into outer space. “Lost” he is not – he got it right on the money with this dainty bicolor in dark top fashion. Standards are cool orchid in a soothing color to the eye. In contrast, the falls are bright pink, adorned with cute little horns in deeper shrimp-pink. The form is tight and compact, the flowers in perfect proportion to the height of the stalk and the style of branching.

#### Tall Beardeds:

Perhaps Tom Burseen is best known for his zany and even sometimes controversial work with Space Agers, with innovative, even irreverent color combinations – and names! Yet ABBY AND ME (Burseen 2004) is an elegant as they come, and conveys a feeling of sophistication and good taste. A large flower on quite tall, sturdy stalks, it is presented with bright full yellow coloring with pristine white falls precisely edged ¼” in a slightly softer lemon yellow. Magnificently-formed falls are horizontal to nicely flaring, allowing the deep ruffling to set the lilting, airy mood of the flower. Rich yellow beards end in tastefully tattered yellow spoons. It wound up being my choice for the President’s Cup in Austin, out of several fine things this talented hybridizer had on display. BRAGGIN RIGHTS (Burseen 2005) is an extremely early bloomer, beginning during peak IB season. Yet, due to the abundant bud count, representative bloom was still occurring during the OKC Convention. Pure crystalline white standards are complemented with shimmering blue-lavender falls, gradually lightening to near white in the center of the falls. Heavy ruffling provides vitality to the presentation. A lush, insanely heavy increaser. Impressive in the Spoon Garden at the 2008 spring regional meeting in Virginia, too. CAUSE FOR PAUSE (Burseen 2007) was exuberant in its home region, a white plicata with jazzy plum-lilac plicating. As with its outstanding parent, ‘Momentous Occasion’ (Sutton), the wide, rounded falls produce white spoons which then carry the plicata pattern onto their edges!

ANGEL WINGS (L. Miller 2005) is presented in a blessed, soft azure blue with self beards ending in discreet horns – nothing flamboyant here, just pure elegance. Tall stalks were sturdy and straight, with fairly consistent modified candelabra branching and good timing of its blooms. DUTCHMAN’S DREAM (Van Liere 2005) was a pleasant surprise, one of the biggest surprises of the Austin Convention! Joyful ‘Touche’ (Hamblen) colors with clear light pink standards over orchid-lavender falls, complemented with thick shrimp beards ending in lavender horns. Tall thick stalks carried 3 branches. One stalk had 3 open the day before the convention tour, each appearing a different tone – a great example of transforming color that works. Pleasing, soul-soothing colors. Form was just a bit narrow at the hafts of the falls, but not objectionable. It had good sequencing of bloom stalks within the clump, with excellent plant habits. LUMARCO (Cayeux 2006) was difficult to evaluate in Austin, but showed great promise, worthy of another look in future years. A luscious confection, with standards in soft, clear baby pink. Falls are blush pink to ivory, edged with an ‘Emma Cook’ style wash in orchid at the edges. Bright orange beards end in horns. Simple form but acceptable with smaller flowers. It is a descendant of ‘Celebration Song’, which tells me that stalk production and branching will probably be exceptional.

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN (G. Sutton 2004) was a pleasant surprise, in that it was far superior in quality in central Oklahoma than even in its home garden in California during the Fresno Convention. A clean, soft yellow to cream with consistent, distinctive spoons all around, a fresh look. It carried decent branching, with 3 candelabra

style branches and some lower rebranching. Vigorous, hearty plants permitted a floriferous display of bloom. In Austin, it really wowed me, with an elegant chiffon finish and huge, consistent flounces throughout an impressive, established clump. So much so that it garnered my vote for the Out-of-Region Cup. **PURE INNOCENCE** (M. Sutton 2006) was only critiqued in a clump in Austin where it appeared to be struggling, with several factors needing improvement. But the individual flower is so drop-dead gorgeous, with its width and deep, luxurious ruffling, that it deserves a place-marker for further review in upcoming years. Pure sparkling white, although there was a hint of lavender infusions in the heart of the flower. The appendages were not consistent, but exotic when fully developed. The branching left a lot to be desired, with only 2 branches, toeing in. Plant habits floundered. In spite of all those negatives, it made my Buy-It List, with the hopes that these traits will improve. **QUANTUM LEAP** (G. Sutton 2005), another with a clever name, a plicata, this time in deepest plum (approaching black), with white base falls stitched in the plum plicata coloring. White horns are tipped with deep violet, consistent in their development. Makes a showy clump.

**MAKE A WISH** (Christopherson 2005) was nearly finished blooming, making the substance and durability of the flowers difficult to determine if sufficient. Standards are, to the eye, solid yellow, but closer inspection reveals a minute degree of sanding in tan. The falls confirm it is a luminata, with a softer patch of yellow at the beards, but the primary appearance of the falls is a gently sanded plicata. Then, peeking out from the heart, lo and behold we have a yellow horn! The whole ensemble is a totally new look to Space Agers. Vigorous plants with purple-based foliage. **NAVAJO CODE** (Christopherson 2006) is a bold variegata with smashing colors, rich with a velvet pile. Reminded me of a brighter version of ‘Solar Fire’ (Tasco), though not as tall. Standards are bright golden-yellow; the falls rich brick red with yellow rays shooting outward from the heart of the flower. Yellow beards transform into red horns, which are consistent in their development. As with many children from ‘Rock Star’ (Byers), it produces shorter stalks, but has very nice branching.

**SHARPER IMAGE** (Black 2005) was another one of those “Cup Clumps” at the OKC convention, opening its maiden blooms the day before conventioners toured the State Capitol Garden. Palest blue – the shimmering, satin flowers almost appeared white in full sun – with slightly deeper, cute upturned blue horns. The epitome of health and vigor, with clumps yielding tall, strong stalks consistently carrying 3 branches with perfect placement throughout the clump. Excellent bloom/increase ratio, with stalks aplenty and bountiful buds to ensure a lengthy season of bloom. Also outstanding in Austin at the Murphy Garden. **SOUND OF TRUMPETS** (Meininger 2005) is unlike any other! Different and daring, in a simple dusky blue with some white at the shoulders. Yellow beards transform into white appendages that come out from the falls at least an inch, then shoot straight up in a trumpet/spoon in white. I have seen it, when poorly grown or on a new planting, where instead of the adornment, the white coming out of the beard is like a thin soda straw! Clever and comical, no matter what path it decides to take! I love the diversity we’re getting with these Space Agers!

**CLASSICS: BLACK HOPE** (Austin 1963); **DAINTY DEB** (Osborne 1976).



### **VARIEGATED FOLIAGE:**

Only one new one evaluated this year, but it's nice: **FANTASTREAKS** (Jedlicka 2007) is a decently-formed pure white from Schreiner laced white breeding. Variegating was somewhat inconsistent from one garden to the next, but overall an impressive addition to a woefully limited class of irises. Average to good increase, with strong stalks with acceptable branching.

## **MEDIANS BY CLASSIFICATION**

### **MINIATURE TALL BEARDED:**

#### **Tets:**

**AGLOW AGAIN** (Fisher 2004) is a major advancement in MTB work, in that reblooming MTBs just don't exist. This clean crisp apricot tetraploid with deeper beards looked good both in Oklahoma and again in Nebraska. Form is quite pleasing, wide but still retaining the grace and charm of an MTB. Good substance and decent stalks. Foliage appeared to be a bit thick, but not to the point of being a defect, and certainly not bad for a tet. **MY FANTASY** (Craig 2005) is another breakthrough in color in the important *I. aphylla* breeding the Craigs have been working. Clean soft pink of the standards and heart of the flower continues into the center of the falls, with a patch of white surrounding tangerine beards. Then, lavender-orchid veins gradually intensify to a solid band around the falls. These *I. aphylla* things are tough to categorize sometimes. This was originally registered as an IB, but was reclassified after introduction to MTB. With the graceful, thin stalks and the simple form of the flowers, I think that reclassification was appropriate. A lovely affair, and a welcome addition to a class of iris with a limited color palette. Its sib, **PLEASE** (Craig 2005) also sports an 'Emma Cook' type pattern, this time with clean light yellow standards, style arms slightly deep, then white falls edged in a lavender wash. The color array is pulled together with yellow beards and a presence of yellow in the falls' hafts. As with its sib, it has "happy colors" – clean and refreshing – especially in this classification.

#### **Dips:**

A trio of new MTBs from the Willotts was impressive. **CALICO VISTA** (Willott 2006) reminded me of a smaller, brighter version of its father, 'Bangles' (L. Miller), in mauve-orchid with deeper texture veining. It bloomed at the lower end of the class, with 3 well spaced branches, and well proportioned, slender, graceful foliage. A sister seedling, **GARNET JEWELRY** (Willott 2006) is a deep garnet red infused darker violet, contrasted with a distinctive white spray pattern of haft marks in the upper part of the falls. It has nice tight form, and the colors are rich and attractive. **VELVET SKIRTS** (Willott 2006), another sib, was just starting to bloom in Oklahoma City, and was at the lower end of the scale, but still managed to carry 3 branches with good spacing. Its color manifests itself more like its other parent, 'Consummation', as a neglecta, with light violet standards over deep velvet violet falls with a white ray pattern around the beards. **PETIT LOUVOIS** (Mahan 2006) produced massive clumps at the Oklahoma City convention, full of fairly tall stalks carrying 3 to 4 rather wide branches and double sockets, so impressive that it went on to be First Runnerup for the inaugural Ben Hager Cup for Best Median at the convention. Cleverly named, it reminds one of an MTB version of the famous historic French variety, 'Louvois' (Cayeux), a muted red-violet bitone with a significant influence of brown throughout. In cold Nebraska, it survived the late freeze without flinching and had richer colors than in Oklahoma. Deep gold beards complement the color ensemble.

**CLASSICS:** **DAPPLED PONY** (Witt 1981), **FUN AND FANCY** (Guild 1980), **GUMDROPS** (Hager 1982, Tet).

### **BORDER BEARDED:**

There were very few medians to choose from at the Austin Convention for the Hager Cup for Best Median, but two BBs were exceptional and were vying for top honors. The winner, **CROW'S FEET** (Black 2006), is a crazy concoction, brilliantly named, with pure white standards atop falls that are also white base, but then wildly veined rich purple, straight up and down from the shoulders to the bottom of the flower. Then, as you approach the bottom of the falls, you find lighter purple sanding cropping up in between the lines. Pull it all together with a distinctive white rim around the falls. Bright tangerine beards add pizzazz, and if you look closely, you'll even find some undertonings of peach in the heart of the flower, in the style arms. Flower size is consistently in class. Although the height is at the top of the BB class, and it looks like it's thinking about stretching too tall, it resists temptation and stays within the class. **NICHE** (Ghio 2007) produced a smashing clump at the Natural Gardener Garden in Austin and was my personal choice for the cup. A scaled-down version of 'Gypsy Lord' (Keppel), the Cook Cup winner in Austin, and much prettier and classier. Standards were purest, cold white. Falls continue the white, but are then heavily banded in ultramarine blue, accented with a bright red beard. The band is more distinctive than the ragged edges of 'Gypsy Lord', and the flowers are round and ruffled. Height was correct, but the flowers appeared to be approaching the limit for a BB, and the foliage perhaps a bit thick. Stepping back, looking at the clump, the overall impact was that of a good BB. And sometimes the visual effect is just as important as getting out the ruler to see if something perfectly matches the specifications of the class (please, no hate mail from the AIS judges....)

The quality of **ELEGANT LASS** (Craig 2002) was first observed during the Portland Median Convention in 2004, and continued to impress this year both in Oklahoma City and in the Nebraska median convention gardens. Easy on the eye, it is a simply formed clean orchid-lilac bitone with a subdued yellow beard. Although registered at the upper end of the class, I found the height of the stalks to consistently be well within the proper range for a BB. Although Terry Varner is best known for his development of MTBs, his work with BBs is exceptional. His pert, bright yellow 'Romantic Interlude' was overlooked by AIS judges, in my opinion. In Nebraska, in two different gardens, we saw his new neglecta, **SILGREY'S BEAUTY** (Varner 2007) perform commendably. Standards are light to medium blue, the falls two tones deeper. The flowers are nice, wide, with simple form. Flower size, stalk height, stalk thickness, and foliage were all perfectly in class. Stalks carried 2 branches plus spur. The stalks stagger their bloom, making for an extended season of bloom. Good growth, with good bloom/increase ratio.

**LACED HANDKERCHIEF** (Cadd 2005) was one of the most voluptuous flowers seen in the whole OKC Convention.

A huge, floriferous clump at the master planting at OSU was sensational, full of bright yellow blossoms, artfully embellished with an elaborate network of lace. The lace is embedded in an even richer golden band, more noticeable in the falls. Unfortunately, the iris is not in class. Although the flowers are close to the proper size for the class, the stalks consistently grew much taller than the registered 27" – more like 34-37", although they are fairly thin and flexuous. Plant habits are exceptional, with plentiful increase and pretty foliage. I hope it gets re-registered as a small-tall; even if not, the flowers are just too exquisite to deny. I have seen **MINI RAINBOW** (Cadd 2002) at previous conventions, but this year, it really grew on me. Nicely ruffled flowers are a variegata-plicata in the tradition of 'Flamenco' (Keppel), with soft brown standards and cream falls widely banded in 'High Life' (Schreiner) red. Lovely, lilted form, the flowers are the proper size for a BB. Unfortunately, as with 'Laced Handkerchief', the stalks are wonderful, just too tall. Still, a very desirable iris.

**CLASSICS:** **ANGEL FEATHERS** (L.Markham 1973); **MANZANITA** (Hamblen 1972); **MISS GOLDILOCKS** (Hamner 1972).

### **INTERMEDIATE BEARDED:**

**BARREL HOUSE BLUES** (Baumunk 2004) reminded me of a "reverse" 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner, TB), with an unusual medium blue base color with shadows in deeper smoked blue, instead of lighter blue infiltrations as found in HTB. A very mystical menagerie of color blending. It has nice form, wide but simple, and very fine plant habits, remindful in quality as its sib, the deep violet Sass Medalist, 'Midsummer Night's Dream' (Baumunk). **BRICKLE** (Blyth 2000) is a festive color array, a pink-apricot ground plicata, heavily saturated with plicating in plum to near black, a very attractive combo, topped with burnt tangerine beards. Nicely formed, and produces show stalks which open 2-3 at once consistently. **FOR YOUR LOVE** (Lauer 2002) impressed me in Nebraska because it overcame the weather woes in every garden in which it was gusted. A simple blue, remindful of a modern version of the great Sass-winning IB classic, 'June Prom' (A. Brown) but in a cleaner shade of porcelain blue.

Waxy substance, the flowers well formed with moderate ruffling and horizontal falls. Excellent growth habits. **SYNERGY** (Keppel 2004) was one of the best clumps in the Cundall Garden at the Median Convention in Nebraska, just starting to bloom. It is a somewhat smoky pink, then accented with a clean purple spray and sanding on the falls like a fancy plicata. Thick brilliant orange beards set off the whole flower. Wonderful form, horizontal falls, quite heavily ruffled. To be a “wash”, it carries its color well across the garden. Outstanding plants habits, with good bloom/increase ratio and good branching. It was also sequencing its stalks to have a later wave of bloom stalks, extending its season of bloom.

I finally got to see a good specimen of **ORAGEUX** (Cayeux 1996), in the McGrath Garden in Albuquerque, and in spite of its age, added it to my Wish List. A deep-deep variegata, with standards deep gold (approaching copper in depth) over black velvet falls with a wine haze. Deep copper beards compliment the array. Nicely shaped flowers, gently waved, with strong plant habits. Nothing like it on the market, and very suave. **SATIN CUT** (Blyth 2002) was a pleasant surprise in Albuquerque, both on the show bench and then later in an impressive clump in the White Garden. Wound up earning my vote for Favorite Median of the Trek. A strange, spooky shade of smoked blue, deeper than the silvery blue of its registration description. Then accented with a near-black beard. Reminded me of a scaled-down version of the TB, ‘Mythology’ (T. Johnson), maybe not quite as deep. The satin is more of a rich, luxurious mink finish, adding mystique to the effect. Wonderful branching and bud count with superb plant habits.

**CLASSICS:** **AZAP** (Ensminger 1980); **BUTTER COOKIE** (Gatty 1980); **WHY NOT** (Hager 1980).

### **STANDARD DWARF BEARDEDS:**

**ANUBIS** (M. Smith 2008), seen at the Nebraska Median Convention, is a suave beauty in richest deep black from the red side, complemented with a rich velvet pile. It is remindful in style of ‘Devil Baby’ (Keppel) but appears to have a better bloom/increase ratio. As with ‘Devil Baby’, the foliage is also a tad thick, but not to the point of deducting points. **MICROWAVE** (M. Smith 2007) is a wonderful light to medium blue, with just a hint of a deeper blue spot pattern around white beards. It reminds me of a modern version of the classic Cook-Douglas Medalist, ‘Sapphire Gem’ (Schmelzer). Fantastic form, with horizontal falls and light to moderate ruffling. Excellent substance and texture with diamond dusting. Flawless plant habits; it withstood the test of a testy Mother Nature and survived the Nebraska late freeze unblemished. Also impressive at the Aril/Median Trek in Albuquerque in the White Garden on a first-year bloom. Also in the White Garden was a maiden bloom of **PLAINSONG** (M. Smith 2007). Not your traditional blue-bearded pink SDB, it is a toned-down buff-orange, slightly more intense in the heart of the flower, then capped off with a stunning deep violet to indigo blue beard, appearing black from a distance. Very enthralling, very attractive. The form is rounded, the falls horizontal, and there is heavy ruffling throughout, compliments of its father, ‘Cachet’ (Black).

**VIVALDI** (Baumunk 2007), also seen in the White Garden in Albuquerque, proved once again that one of the greatest median parents of all time, ‘Chubby Cheeks’ (Black) still “has it”! Clean pure white base color caressed in plicata rims in the softest, sweetest baby blue. Diamond dusting gives carrying power to this subtle color array. It has that trademark wide, rounded ‘Chubby Cheeks’ form, completed with moderate ruffling. **BREAK YOLK** (D. Miller 2002) is one of the older varieties reviewed this year, but I was impressed with it in both years leading up to the OKC convention. Cleverly named, the standards are palest yellow, approaching white. Falls then have an egg yolk spot pattern in rich full yellow, edged in the color of the standards. Impressive was its toughness and resilience to adverse weather conditions, its vigor and floriferousness, and its cheery disposition in the garden. **CLASSIC SUNRISE** (B. Jones 2005) is well named, a melodious, unique combo of colors, with apricot sherbet and soft lemon blended, with the falls more intense in the center, gradually transforming to a softer color on the edges. Bright carrot orange beards complete the ensemble.

**FINE IDEA** (Black 2005) is a subtle fancy medium blue-violet plicata with beards that are tangerine in the heart of the flower. It is subtle but distinctive; the pattern in the falls reminded me of that of the TB, ‘Athens’ (T. Johnson). It has nice shape and excellent substance. Excellent growth habits, with foliage the proper thickness. Floriferous, with a good bloom/increase ratio, producing stalks with 1 branch, 3 buds (even in Nebraska, where the late freeze had compromised the bud count in many medians). **FINGERTIPS** (Black 2004) produced huge, rampant clumps, with stalks tall enough to clear the foliage. A wonderful color pattern, with a soft light to medium golden-yellow base color, then a diffused spot pattern in the falls in charcoal, bleeding irregularly into texture veins towards the edges – a nice effect, and well named. Full orange beards add character. Substance in this type of SDB has traditionally been subpar; here it is surprisingly sturdy. **SEQUEL** (Black 2005) is a pert violet on white plicata, different in that the stitching is approached from the orchid side, against a silvery-white base color. Deep in the heart of the flower is a suggestion of tangerine in the beard. Its colors were prettier in cold Nebraska than here in Oklahoma, and its resilience to overcome the most adverse of conditions was impressive, with floriferous bloom and

rampant growth habits. **WISH UPON A STAR** (Black 2006) is a charmer, and it appears it will be a benchmark in a huge stable of quality medians recently released by this expert hybridizer. Brilliant white beards appear in the midst of deepest violet, like stars twinkling against the velvet of a midnight sky. Exciting on the show bench, but the true impact is in the garden on a full, established clump. Average growth and increase with exceptional floriferousness.

**CLASSICS:** **ALTUS** (Dennis 1973); **KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS** (B. Jones 1971); **PUPPET** (Hager 1969); **TINKERBELL** (Douglas 1954).

### **MINIATURE DWARF BEARDEDS**

**CHEMISTRY** (Black 2003) is a cute little number, with burnished rose standards over deeper red-purple falls, accented with a thick burnt orange beard. The form and ruffling are inherited from its ‘Tweety Bird’ lineage. Consistently in class each and every year, with outstanding plant habits. **COLD SNAP** (Black 2003) is also from ‘Tweety Bird’ via Paul’s outstanding MDB, ‘Tingle’. I call it a “barely-plic” because there are just a few plic markings in pale violet which lose their color as the flower ages. Cold-cold white actually has a suggestion of green in its makeup, especially in the standards’ midribs. Flowers are so wide and rounded they almost look out of class, but they are in compliance. **DOLLOP OF CREAM** (Black 2006) is a warm creamy white glaciata with self beards. It has rounded form and a lovely chiffon texture. First-year bloom was in class, with proper flower size and height of stalk. Cute name.

Several MDBs from Dorothy Willott and her late husband, Tony, are impressive, year after year. A favorite is **LITTLE DRUMMER BOY** (Willott 1997), a pure *I. pumila* in white with a dazzling deep blue spot in the falls. Cute tiny florets. Unfortunately, this far south, it is difficult to maintain pure *I. pumilas*, even though we do get a fair amount of really cold weather in the winter. **CROWN OF SNOW** (Willott 2001), although from ‘Little Drummer Boy’, has as its other parent, ‘Ice and Indigo’, one of the Willotts’ most famous SDBs, and consequently isn’t as difficult to keep going here. This has stunning contrast, with pure, cold white standards against rich deep red-violet falls with a wire rim in white. Cream beards add the finishing touch. **ICE CHERUB** (Willott 2000) is a glistening icy blue-white with light blue beards, wonderfully formed and consistently in class. A mound of bloom of this one is memorable. Similar, but in solid light blue, is **SMALL BLESSINGS** (Willott 1999), still competitive with the newer releases and still a charmer, year after year, leaving a lasting impression.

**MINIKIN** (Ensminger 1998) is a colorful character which I had never seen until I spied it over in the “Ensminger Bed” at the Gary White Garden in Lincoln. It reminds me of a scaled-down version of the reblooming SDB, ‘What Again’ (Ensminger 1991), with dark violet standards keeping watch over unusual saffron yellow falls, capped with deep violet beards. Tight, cute form.

**CLASSICS:** **GRANDMA’S HAT** (Mahood 1957), **KID SISTER** (A. Brown 1972), **SMALL GEM** (Hamblen 1972).

## ARILBREDS

A trio of arilbred-medians are significant advancements in the class. The star is **SUSPECT** (T. Johnson 2006, OGB-), a rich violet that is heavily overcast in blue, most rare in arilbreds. The falls are a gentler rosy-violet, but then shot with blue-violet veining and a punctuating crimson-red spot surrounding the beards. Magnificent plant habits. From the looks of the AIS awards in 2008, the Median Symposium results, and the MIS Display Garden reports, it is confirmed this new arilbred-median is performing admirably throughout the country. **CHAIN REACTION** (Tasco 2007, OGB-) is another one of the best new arilbred medians, second only to 'Suspect'. Intoxicating color in richest mahogany wine with a magnificent velvet pile. There is a hint of a black signal pattern, making the flowers glow. It reminded me of a scaled-down version of its father, the great 'Concerto Grosso' (Mathes). **HAMMURABI** (Baumunk 2004, OGB) is a fascinating, rare half-bred arilbred-median, the father being the great white MTB, 'Astra Girl' (Varner). Of moderate height, the standards are medium purple, heavily netted with deeper violet and red veining. The falls are a white base, but then heavily covered in a complex network of similar colored veining, with more rose in its makeup. In place of a signal pattern, that area of the falls is a heavier concentration of veining. Tidy, compact flowers are more oval in shape than the traditional globular onco look. It has a long bloom season, still in bloom during convention in the master planting at OSU.

**CROWN OF SPLENDOR** (McGrath 2005, OGB) has been impressive in Oklahoma, but of course was exceptional in the home garden in Albuquerque. Standards are nearly solid white, with palest lilac veins apparent only upon closest inspection. Falls are golden bronze, toned down somewhat with beige. Then, in the tradition of Pete's mentor, Howard Shockey, there is a large bold deep red signal, like a beacon, distinctly predominating the rounded, recurved falls. Global form in classic onco. The garden impact is memorable. **GIDEON'S LAMP** (McGrath 2004, OGB) is similar in style and color presentation, but from totally different bloodlines. Standards are white with more of a flush of yellow in the midribs. Falls are also white, but heavily washed yellow, with an even more intense yellow blaze hosting a decorative brown chevron-shaped signal. **PENNINAH'S PROVOCATION** (McGrath 2004, OGB) was among my favorites of the McGrath introductions in the home garden, second only to 'Refiner's Fire'. Pete had several stalks open on tour day, and each was showing off with impressive consistency. Standards are a rich full lilac to orchid; the falls beige, veined throughout in burgundy with a startling, exotic black-burgundy signal. Stalks are consistently at 2' in height with some branching, 3-4 buds per stalk.

**HOLY MOLEY PLUM** (Chacon 2007, OGB) is a fun new half-bred with a festive name from a relatively new breeder from California. The base color is light grape-violet, but then the entire flower is bombarded with a heavy network of deep plum veining, accented with a large, even deeper plum-violet signal pattern in the falls. It carries an amazing amount of ruffling and fluting for a half-bred arilbred. **NOBLE WARRIOR** (Tasco 2007, OGB) is an exciting new offering from a California hybridizer who is really starting to make a name for himself in arilbred breeding. Standards are creamy ivory with gradually intensifying flushes of yellow in the midribs. Falls are a golden yellow base, garnished with burgundy veining and a bold, huge deeper red signal. Growth habits are exceptional; I suspect even those gardens who have difficulty growing arilbreds will grow this half-bred with ease. **RIVERS OF BABYLON** (Baumunk 2004, OGB) is a choice arilbred in a beautiful array of colors. Standards are lavender, with suggestions of blue in their makeup, gradually lightening at the edges. The falls are a blend of tan to yellow, then pulling in the lavender of the standards at the edges of the falls. Large red-brown signals are perfectly shaped and dominate the flower. From the outstanding 'Lancer' (Shockey), this is one of the best half-breds on the market today. **KALIFA'S FORTUNE** (Annand 2001, OGB) is a dynamo color gem, with standards a strong rose with lavender veining throughout. Then the falls blend the rose color of the standards with intense coppery-brown overlaid in bold fashion. Intense maroon signals below brown beards add drama. The color is luscious; the form outstanding. Some stalks showed evidence of snaking, but this defect was not present in the entire clump. The carrying power of the color array in the garden, and the flower's ability to retain its intensity through the life of the flower, was most impressive.

The next four arilbreds, though certainly not new, were not found when I went back through my Contemporary Views database, and therefore have never been reviewed here. **BABYLONIAN FIRES** (Rich-Whitely 1992, OGB) is a parent of new 'Refiner's Fire' (McGrath, reviewed in the Awards Section), and you can certainly see where it gets its magnificent color. Standards are deep rose with lavender undertones and some gold in the midribs. Falls carry an even richer glow of deep rose into a blending of orange and mahogany. It has a deep black signal with a reddish tint. I first discovered **JUDEAN OASIS** (Whitely 1994, OGB) at the Oklahoma Iris Society (OIS) show in 2007, but then also got to evaluate its plant habits in a couple of area gardens later that week. It is a wonderful yellow amoena, similar in style to its mother, 'Syrian Moon' (Brizendine), with clean bright white standards with just a flush of yellow in the midribs. It then sports a somewhat smaller, moderate-sized deep brown-black spot, not as large but with better definition than its parent. Outstanding globular form; commendable plant habits. **MOHR**

**PRETENDER** (Rich 1978, OGB) is still one of my all-time favorite arilbreds. As with ‘Jonnye’s Magic’ (reviewed in the Awards section), it is dependable, year after year, resistant to any curve ball Mother Nature may decide to pitch that spring. This shade of soft blue is still all-too-rare, even today, in arilbreds. Globular flowers are embellished with a non-spectacular violet signal etched at the beards. Color and consistency are the strong assets here. I recommend both to the novice irisarian wanting to venture into the world of arilbreds. **PEGGY’S SONG** (Wilson 1997, OGB) is a charming, somewhat older English variety not so widely grown as many of the popular arilbreds from Geoff Wilson. Standards are a soft violet blue. The falls a medley of colors blended, with the base color primarily lemon yellow, then veined in varying degrees of violet and rose, topped off with a large dark purple signal. Form is typically globular, and carries the strong plant habits of its famous father, ‘Zerzura’ (Hager).

**FRANK RICE** (Rice-Annand 2002, OGB+) is a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -bred which appears to grow quite well in different climates. The base color is lavender, slightly lighter in the falls. Then, throughout the flower, the petals are intricately veined in purple to maroon, more intense in the falls. The falls are capped with a distinctive deep maroon to brown signal. The form is stylishly elongated, rather than onco, showing its *I. korolkowii* lineage. **MASADA’S GLORY** (Whitely 2002, OGB+) is a regal affair, with pure white standards atop a more creamy base color in the falls, lightly sanded with tan, but then emblazoned with a dashing, dominant dark red-wine signal. Spectacular contrast. This  $\frac{3}{4}$ -bred is a respectably strong grower here in central Oklahoma. **QUMRAN CANARY** (Danielson 2000, OGB+) was dazzling in the Albuquerque sun. The primary color is old gold to brass yellow. The falls are heavily saturated with rich maroon, brown, and brass, with deeper veining and refined flecks of purple mixed in. Then there is a narrow golden edge as you often find in medians. A very unique  $\frac{3}{4}$ -bred.

One last entry I gotta tell you about. One of the highlights for me was walking into the Albuquerque Show during the Aril/Median Trek and seeing a specimen of **PURPLE SEQUIN** (Shockey 1992), a pure aril – AR (OG) – nonchalantly sitting on the show bench amongst the other entries. Only 10” tall, it is a milky white self with a dazzling deep purple signal embroidered into the falls. I let out a yelp when I discovered it, for most folks (including the local experts) thought this little jewel had met the fate of extinction. As you know, pure arils can be very difficult to grow. Many never see commerce, and this was one of the few that Howard ever officially released. Cindy Rivera (Trek Organizer Supreme) to the rescue! Apparently she picked up a sprig of it shortly before Howard’s death. She wasn’t even sure she had the real thing – at least until it had increased enough to bloom this spring!

**CLASSICS:** **BIB ‘N’ TUCK** (Foster 1968, Arilbred-Median); **DOVE SONG** (Flanagan 1967); **ESTHER, THE QUEEN** (Hunt 1968); **LAHARA** (Sundt 1964); **PROLIFIC** (Clark 1966); **RADIANT SMILE** (Danielson 1968).

## **SPURIAS**

**ADRIATIC BLUE** (Niswonger 1996) is a deep lustrous blue with bright yellow falls with a band of the standards’ color and some of the blue infiltrating into the yellow base. High quality deep blues are remarkably rare in Spurias; this one remains among the best. **ARIZONIQUE** (Jenkins 1998) has standards and midribs in full lavender with some yellow blended in. The falls start out light yellow, but gradually transform into a bleeding edge in lavender. The form is flaring, giving the flower a nice lilt. **BILLOWING CLOUDS** (Jenkins 2000) is smaller in stature, with moderate-sized flowers on stalks moderate in height. Pure waxy white with the bright yellow signal pattern dominating the falls. The flowers are heavily waved with moderate ruffling, providing a very airy look to the ensemble. **BUTTER RIPPLES** (Jenkins 1999) is tall and imposing, a butter yellow self with heavy ruffling and even a suggestion of lace. Bright and showy from across the garden. **ELFIN SUNSHINE** (Jenkins 1998) is a wonderful example of the smaller, shorter Spurias that Mr. Jenkins has been working, and is my personal favorite of the grouping. Here we have a light yellow, gradually deepening at the edges of the petals. Petite and charming with tight crimping for ruffling – and a nice change of pace from the tall, regal varieties we are used to seeing in Spurias. A welcomed addition for the landscape. **SUN HALO** (Jenkins 1998) is a bold blending of colors, with brown standards with a touch of yellow blended into the base. Falls are bright sunshine yellow with a halo in the color of the standards. A high-quality Spuria from the famous ‘Janice Chesnik’ (McCown).

**CLASSICS:** **CONTRADICTION** (Ferguson 1963), **DARK AND HANDSOME** (Ferguson 1966), **LYDIA JANE** (Walker 1965), **MEDIA LUZ** (Hager 1968), **NEOPHYTE** (Hager 1965).

## **LOUISIANAS**

**ARROWS** (Dunn-Ghio 1998) is a perky lavender with eloquent deeper texture veining throughout the flower. Lime green line signals are distinctive, appearing on all six petals to form the “arrows”; very clever. Wide rounded form with moderately heavy ruffling. The flower carries an attractive silky sheen that adds life to the flower.

**DIVORCEE** (Ghio 2001) is a distinctive, fun iris. A colorful rich blend of apricot in the standards, joined with rose-pink in the falls. The twist on this one is the bold deep rose streak running right down the center of the falls. My sometimes-too-vivid imagination could conjure up all kinds of risqué descriptions for the effect, such as a “wild hair” or “sowing wild oats”, or.....I’ll leave it at that. **HONEY GALORE** (Betzer 2000) is a tight, compact honey brown with a minimum amount of infusions of buff and amber. The color has excellent carrying power and, most importantly, has been sunfast, not always the case in this color of Louisianas. In proportion to its flower size, the stalks are shorter, with the excellent branching and placement as its parent, ‘Gladiator’s Gift’ (Taylor). It also has a leathery texture very much in harmony with the color scheme.

A trio from Down Under was impressive. **BUOYANT** (Taylor 1999) is nearly a yellow amoena, with white standards blended in the heart with light yellow. Light yellow falls are accented with green signals. The hallmark Taylor ruffling is well represented here, with deep billowing ruffles throughout the flower and wide, nearly overlapping body parts. **LOST FOR WORDS** (Pryor 1998) is unlike anything else currently on the market. Difficult to describe, it is basically a soft buff-orange self with some undertones in rose-pink to add life to the flower. Discreet yellow signals are then outlined in maroon eyeliner, adding intrigue. Gently ruffled in an elegant fashion. Just the opposite effect is **WOW FACTOR** (Pryor 2001), an innocent yellow ground color then exploding with a shocking network of brilliant maroon veining all over the flower, deeper and even more intense in the falls. Look closely and you’ll find an orange line signal deep in the jungle. Simply stunning, and carries all the fine plant habits and blooming qualities of its father, ‘Rokki Rockwell’ (Haymon).

**CIRCE’S APPEAL** (Faith 2005) is nothing new in color in Louisianas, but nonetheless a high-quality, attractive iris. Rich medium bluebird blue from the Aussie, ‘Dural Bluebird’ (Taylor). It coloration is clear, the form very pleasing, presented on tall impressive stalks with well-spaced branching. **JUNE’S PICK** (Faith 2002) is a frothy light to medium yellow, given freshness with a definite influence of lime green in its makeup. The texture is deceiving, different from most Louisianas on the market, reminding me of the “creped” look of the Stout winning daylily, ‘Brocaded Gown’. In spite of this “bubbled” look, it has sufficient substance through the life of the flower. **RAE RAE** (Faith 2004), named for one of the Faith granddaughters, is a delicate medium blue with a hairline picoteed halo in silver. Medium sized flowers are displayed on rather tall, strong stalks with 3 branches, holding up well after heavy rains. Vigorous, rampant growth with pretty foliage. Consistently good in OKC and in Austin, outstanding at the Murphy Garden.

**CLASSICS: BAYOU CANDELABRA** (Army 1974), **CHARJOY’S JAN** (Army 1978), **CREOLE CANARY** (Granger 1978), **MISS ARKANSAS** (Chowning 1978).

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