



THE SIBERIAN IRIS

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THE SIBERIAN IRIS

Volume 5 Number 5

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Editor (Mr. James J. Foreman--address above

Mrs. H. L. Edwards--address above

The President's Page

A joyous welcome to you all. The Varners give thanks for our bountiful food, comfortable homes and most of all for the freedoms we have in our country. After a record-breaking winter--so far--and in the midst of more winter storm warnings, I say "Be of good cheer!"

Spring is coming and with it the fulfillment of dreams of those who work with flowers. Breeders with too much knowledge will not attempt crosses which a beginner will make before he or she knows they are impossible. Go ahead! Make your impossible dream come true! You cannot know if it is possible unless you try, and in the trying comes the joy of living. Everyone deserves at least one little dream to brighten up life.

I commend all who were involved in our two Siberian auctions.-- Well Done! A big "três bien" to our editor, Peg Edwards, for the fine job she continues to turn in, issue after issue. Our very active chairman of Display Gardens, James Foreman, initiated concepts that bring our Display Garden hosts closer together, and provide information of who has what Siberians on display in a very concise chart.

Many of our committees have been inactive. Jean Witt suggests the elimination of the Seeds and Pollen Committee, which she heads, because there have been neither requests nor donors. As Historian for nearly seven years, I have never received a contribution of material to preserve. So, by this message, I am asking for a full report of all committees' activities from each chairperson, to be mailed to me by May 1, 1982. I will include reports from our Secretary, Ruth Wilder, our Treasurer, Gunther Stark, and Julius Wadekamper on sales and inventory of our book Siberian Irises. Please accept my sincere thanks in advance.

The annual SSI Board of Directors Meeting will be held at the Convention hotel, 7 P.M., June 2, 1982. I will look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it there. Harry Kuesel has suggested the possibility of joining with another Section, and he is looking into possible options. I hope the committee to select a suitable award form for our Distinguished Service Award can present their findings there. Anyone nominating a candidate for the award in 1982 (but the award is not intended necessarily to be given annually) should have the nomination and pertinent supporting information in my hands no later than May 1.

We need each member to be a salesperson for the book Siberian Irises by Dr. Currier McEwen. Our SSI cannot thrive unless our members participate in its affairs. Volunteer your time and talents.

Siberian guest irises for the 1985 AIS Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, should be sent this year. I am told Shirley (Mrs. Russell) Bruno, P. O. Box 500, Medaryville, IN 47957, is to be the Guest Iris Chairman. Since she is so many miles from Indianapolis, I am hoping we can tell her what plants we will send and have her designate which gardens will host them and let us send them directly to the host gardens.

May your dreams be fulfilled with bountiful blooms of beauty.



GERMAN CALSIBE AND SIBTOSA HYBRIDS

Tomas Tamberg

For a number of years we have been producing Calsibe hybrids which all have proved to be beautiful but sterile. Because Calsibes are the only way we can introduce the beautiful shapes and color patterns of the Pacific Coast Irises into our cold and wet gardens, we have tried tetraploidy by the use of colchicine. After a lot of losses, we were finally successful in 1978, when two survivors of the colchicine treatment flowered for the first time. Both plants came from (*I. delavayi* x *I. clarkei* (i.e., BERLINER RIESEN) X *I. fernaldii* (light yellow). They had flowers of the sectorial chimera type, i.e., some of the flowers were tetraploid and produced lots of pollen. Both plants were selfed and one developed seven seeds from which five seedlings were grown by use of the embryo cutting method. Three of these plants flowered in 1981 for the first time. Their flowers were rather large and almost identical. They all produced big quantities of pollen, but were only shyly seed-fertile. We got three seeds after sipping two of them, and four seeds with pollen from a new tetraploid Calsibe we had grown from YELLOW CHRYS X *I. innominata* in the meantime. We have registered a first clone of the second generation plants as STARTING CALSIBE this fall (1981).

Another interesting line of hybrids are Sibtosa hybrids, which come from crosses between 28-chr. Siberians and forms of *I. setosa*. A first hybrid of this type was obtained by chance in the garden of Eckard Berlin--*I. sibirica (grandiflora)* ELEMENEY X *I. setosa*, and was registered as STILLES WASSER in 1978. It is a rampant grower producing enormous numbers of tall and well-branched spikes. Up to now it is sterile. In our garden, we have repeated Eckard's cross and have gotten a dozen of seeds. Some of the seedlings were again treated with colchicine and one of them looks quite affected by it.

We hope for a first flower in 1982. One of the seedlings from the untreated batch flowered in 1981 and had flowers similar to STILLES WASSER in shape, but of more uniform color.

We have also done other crosses of the Sibtosia type: SEA SHADOWS X *setosa* and *I. setosa* X LILIENTHAL (white siberian) both yielded some viable seeds and we look forward to the first flowering period of different Sibtosia hybrids. Assuming that they will be fertile at the tetraploid level, the Sibtosia hybrids could well combine the far-developed beauty of the modern Siberians with the extreme branching and hardiness of the Setosas.

NOTES, COMMENTS, QUOTES

Siberians in Southern Ontario--Verna Laurin

Siberian irises grow well in most parts of Canada. In Southern Ontario they are probably the easiest of all irises. Miss Isabella Preaton worked at the experimental Farms at Ottawa and introduced several, including GATINEAU, probably a parent of WHITE SWIRL.

We have grown Siberians in our garden for at least forty years. About 25 years ago we added several Canadian introductions. After my first A.I.S. Convention, in New Jersey in 1961, I added WHITE SWIRL, PLACID WATERS, and VIOLET FLARE.

The only time I lost new Siberians was the first time I imported eight varieties from California and didn't follow instructions--to let them grow new roots before planting. (I thought I knew how to plant them but didn't consider how long they had traveled.) Five survived in spite of my carelessness. Several of our members grow some Siberians; the Royal Botanical Gardens at Hamilton, have a very good collection. John and Gloria McMillen have listed Siberian irises in their catalog (Norwich, Ont.) for several years and are adding newer varieties.

We have had Siberian and Spuria Irises at a mini-auction at our Annual C.I.S. Meeting, each fall for the last three or four years. More members are bidding for them and interest is growing.

We had bad winters the last two years. Extreme temperatures (over 50 to -20 F.) with little or no snow, but quite a bit of rain and ice. The Siberians, Standard Dwarfs and Intermediates, came through beautifully.

New Zealand--Paul Richardson

After a cold wet start to Spring which delayed all the bearded irises by a week, later-flowering species have in some way benefited. Both here and in Hawkes Bay the Japanese have excelled themselves and most of the Siberians were also better than in recent years. STEVE was an exception; both here and elsewhere its characteristics seem to be altering, and not for the better. In my garden, blooms were quite flat and looked messy. Best of the diploid were NELSON BLUE (Delany), VASARI (Kokich) and a very vigorous unknown seedling which may also be locally raised. There may yet be a general rule formulated that locally raised irises of many types do better than imports. I will keep an eye on things. BUTTER AND SUGAR, as expected, didn't bloom, but is certainly established. Best of the tetraploids were EWEN, SILVER EDGE and HARPSWELL HAZE--all nice large tailored blooms. Since apart from EWEN all my tetraploids were planted last Winter, no useful conclusions can yet be reached. *Sanguinea* also made an excellent display. The 40's usually flower well and this season was not exception, although our winds do not allow tidy plants for long. As expected, the *delavayi-clarkei* cross-produced a mass of bloom on which I tried, with limited success, to hybridize some P. C. H. pollen. Fortunately, a small P. C. H. rebloomed at the right time and has fathered two pods. Using stored P. C. pollen, kept for the purpose, rather had me bluffed. I usually put anther to stigma with fine tweezers and this works fine even after anthers have been stored for several months. I find, however, the stored P. C. anthers shed their pollen at the slightest touch and I will have to change my procedure to the use of a brush. Despite all the coddling I gave her, I regret to report that PEG EDWARDS deigned to produce one miserable little bloom on a 12-inch stem.

The most interesting happening was the first flowering of three seedlings from (*delavayi* x *claekei*) X *forestii* given to me just after sprouting by Frances Love. Apparently, all the other seedlings from this particular cross have been lost. One plant produced a feeble so-called bloom, mostly of style arms on a one-foot stem. The second produced a three-foot stem with a large rather dull yellow flower that I selfed. The third one, and the first to bloom, gave me a three-foot stem with a very attractive, largish bloom that was broken off by the wind. Fortunately, substance was so good that I could still get a reasonable picture of it. This bloom shows evidence of its parentage--a slight sign of the *clarkei* "butterfly" motif, the deep-colored slash at the point of the falls from *delavayi*, and a bright yellow background color from *forestii* and it looks well worth keeping on working on. (Paul sent me a slide of this and it does look lovely--standards pale lavender with a dark midrib showing on the underside, while the inner side is a paler, almost white tint with a very distinct medium lavender;

the styles are difficult to determine but seem to be the very pale tint, a little darker in the center and ruffly; and the falls are a clear yellow about half-way down changing to light lavender with a darker streak through the center, and a network of dark veins over most of the falls--and Paul, are those fine brownish markings I detect at the fall?--and the basic color of the under (outer?) side of the fall just about matches the yellow and lavender coloring. Shape is quite elegant, with rather long pointed falls curving out and down, styles almost horizontal, and standards at about 20 degrees from the vertical.--Peg)

What Have We Here?--Marlene Ahlburg

Last year I had first bloom on a very nice dwarf--label lost. Must be a Siberian as far as I can see. It increased like a weed; hope it comes through the winter. If it flowers again, my husband will make a photograph and I'll send it to you, hoping you can identify it. It is striking, a very blue net like pencil lines on white falls, blue-purple domed standards and styles, with prominent darker veins. Two flowers, narrow leaves. Very different and dainty. No branch. The net of blue veins on each fall ends in a narrow flush of blue at the tip of the fall. I have tried to remember what seedlings I had--I recall *I. nertschinskia* (or *-iana?*), *I. Hookeri*, a *munzit-douglasiana* cross, *I. sibirica*, from the Taunus Mts.-Rhein area, and GRANDIS--that's all. This past year, the plant was about a foot tall, but will probably be a bit taller later. I sent pictures to Jean Witt and Currier McEwen--Jean did not know what it might be and I have not yet heard from Currier; now I shall ask Brian Matthew and Prof. Bowley from the English Species Group and someone from SIGNA. I must find it out!

And, please, where do I send for a copy of Currier's book? I didn't send for it when I read about it, and now I can't find it.

(For Siberian Irises, send to Julius Wadekamper, 10078 154th Avenue, Elk River, MN 55330; fee is \$7. The notice was on page 7 of the Fall issue, and here it is on page 7 again!)

(As for the guessing game, it could well be any of the last three--I don't know *nertschinskia*--possibly even *hookeri*--but I'd be inclined to bet on the Taunus *sibirica*. I have a whole batch of seedlings from Siberians that were not far from the species and they have all been rather similar to the description. One, I am sure, came from a plant I have that is supposed to be VELVET GOWN but is about as velvety as a piece of coarse linen--the seed dropped close to the parent and has a somewhat similar look as far as the plant habit goes, though the foliage is thinner--not much more than a quarter inch. But plant is shorter

by about 3-4" and flower stalks are about 16-18" tall with no branch and usually three buds at the top. This, and two of the three in the back garden, have flowers that are small, dainty, rather "old-fashioned" and have white ground falls veined blue to light violet in rather thin crisp lines except at the top, where they blurr a little; all have a small triangle of the vein color at the tip end of the fall. Standards and styles are a matching color. The fourth of these seedlings is similar except that the flowers are pure white, with a tiny yellow blaze on the fall, just below the style. The three in the back garden have been here for several years and are slow to increase--but they haven't had very much fussing, which may account for that--and the one in front may have been growing there for some time but last year was the first time it bloomed, with three stalks. When you look at one you have the feeling of seeing a species of some sort, but they don't quite fit the description of any species I have looked up, and I didn't confine myself to the Sibiricae. This year I have started seed I collected from SUMMER SKY which has a different shape and coloring of flower but much the same daintiness of growth, and also is, I suspect, the most likely parent of the back-yard threesome. Maybe in two or three years I can report further on this affair of the doubtful darlings.--Peg.)

Northwest Michigan--Art Cronin

Siberians seem to do well here; we got -30 F. once or twice a winter but lots of snow cover, and a sandy soil. I have two or three tets and a dozen or so diploids plus quite a few seedlings--a short row of dwarfs of which two bloomed last year (1980) and produced pods with seed--planted in October. I plan to work for red Sibis though I'll be interested in pinks, yellows, bronze; rebloomers and doubles, too.

(Art, if you have dwarf seedlings and they stay dwarf, you've got a line started--stick with it. We can use a few good dwarfs--for a start.--Peg.)

Update on HOLDEN CLOUGH--Jennifer Hewitt

Since writing last time, I've met two growers over here who have set seed on *I. foetidissima citrina* with pollen from H.C. Neither had a big success but both got some seed and we'll have to see what the seedlings do, if anything. I got 5 seeds from *I. chrysographes* X *I. pseudacorus bastardii*. Not the most healthy-looking seeds I've seen, but have sown them and a progress report will, I hope, be coming one of these days.--A super new book, just published, The Iris, by Brian Mathew--a botanist at Kew who specializes in irises and irida-

ceae--a very comprehensive account of the species, beautifully produced and illustrated.

Siberians, Birds and Bugs--Dorothy Hamilton

A drift of old Siberians near the "cedar tree cafe for birds" has not been cut back as the mourning doves nestle in the leaves to sun. One year, fox sparrows dropped out of the flight line and kicked behind them every vestige of a leaf in the doves' sunning bed. Not a Sib tip appeared that year. The next year, the iris reappeared proving conclusively that one should not dig up an iris bed for at least two years. The irises may be rejuvenating after a bad season.

We feel that the birds have been our insurance for insect-free plantings. The birds are always with us as we keep the feeders full all the year round.

A New Zealander at St. Louis--Dora Sparrow

The first stop on Thursday was the Missouri Botanic Garden, sometimes known as the Shaw Garden... Here, too, we were to see plantings of Siberian irises which were to impress us as the days followed. Those with irises here were Louise Bellagamba, Ben Hager, Dr. Currier McEwen, Prof. William McGarvey, Steve Varner and Bee Warburton... Friday we visited the one-acre garden of Louise and Gus Bellagamba set in a grove of black locust and evergreens where there was little to remind one of the city. Louise is very interested in hybridizing. Among her Siberian introductions is MAGGIE LEE, a red-violet self with a small white blaze, and CHRISTMAS WISH, a white which has come from WHITE SWIRL... The first garden on Saturday was breathtaking, irises with associate plants; a large clump of WHITE SWIRL almost dwarfed by ten or twelve spires of a rose and white lupin... A highlight for me was to see the significant advancement that has taken place in the development of the Siberian irises. The modern varieties have a distinction, with flowers of wonderful substance, a velvet quality which enhances the rich blues, wines, pinks. The white haft markings are being taken over by subdued bronze tones, or greenish turquoise. Some of them are such gay flowers, with flaring horizontal falls. The wonderful WING ON WING of Prof. McGarvey is a warm white with the standard petals more horizontal. This and the McEwen BUTTER AND SUGAR are sure to be popular, as will the pink tones and those with silver-edged falls.

A gentleman's garden of iris
 Was troubled by galloping virus.
 When he cried "what to do?"
 They replied, "Listen, you--
 You have to do more than admire us!"

NOTES ON SIBERIAN IRISES

Currier McEwen

This article is written to comment on Siberian irises seen in several distant gardens as well as my own during the 1981 season.

At the St. Louis Convention, I think all will agree, the most impressive clump was that of Harley Briscoe's STEVE VARNER, a fine medium blue of large size and good form with an interesting pattern of darker veins at the proximal half of the falls, somewhat similar to that of SUPER EGO. Two of Louise Bellagamba's introductions, MAGGIE LEE, a pleasing red named for her mother, and CHRISTMAS WISH, a tall, flaring white, made excellent displays as did several of her numbered seedlings. The small-flowered blue bicolor SUMMER SKY, dating back to 1935 (introduction date; reg. 1939) was a wonderful example of the fact that popular interest doesn't go exclusively to the newcomers. It drew, I think, as many admiring comments as any other Siberian in the tour gardens. In view of the many siberians seen only in bud at recent conventions, the display at St. Louis was a pleasant change.

I regret that I had to leave St. Louis without the time to visit Harley Briscoe's garden in Whitehall, Illinois, but there were a good number of his seedlings in the Convention gardens. I also had to give up my plan to visit the gardens of Steve Varner and Bob Hollingworth on the way home from the Convention, but that proved to be a good thing because even when I was able to visit them ten days later, only the earliest ones were in bloom. I spent the night with Steve and Avis at Monticello, Illinois but even so had all too little time to observe as carefully as I could have wished their very large planting of irises and peonies. As noted above, only the earlier bloomers were out of bud, but they certainly made the visit a great pleasure, as did Steve and Avis' hospitality. Most of the ones in bloom are too well known to require comment. I was especially impressed with KISMET and FRIENDLY WELCOME. One new seedling which Steve said came from seeds from me was a lavender-pink tetraploid of nice flaring form. An unexpected pleasure was the chance to go over photographs of Steve's World War II experience in the Tank Corps in North Africa. Thrilling! They made my service in Army hospitals in Europe seem like a Sunday School picnic.

Steve and Avis drive me to West Lafayette, Indiana, next day to visit Bob and Judith Hollingworth. Again, unfortunately, only the early ones were in bloom but that night we went over slides of many of Bob's flowers. In addition to his diploids, he is making great strides with tetraploids, crossing some he has had from me, but especially through the use of colchicine on his own. We saw only in a

slide his exquisite, very round and ruffled white diploid which I am sure will be introduced as soon as stock accumulates. He has some lovely dark blue tetraploids in the seedling beds, but most impressive to me, and I think to Bob, too, are some medium to dark blue tetraploids with what I would call a "sunburst" pattern of gold in rounded signals extending halfway out on the falls. I have not seen this to such a striking degree in any other Siberians. I must add what a pleasure it was just to stay with this delightful family.

In my own garden I have accumulated some 300 older cultivars and more recent introductions of other breeders in my display beds. Of these, I believe my favorites are Marjorie Brummitt's DREAMING SPIRES and Julius Wadepammer's BORBELETA, among the blues; Bill McGarvey's WING ON WING and Tomas Tamberg's WIDE WHITE among the white ones, and Bill's RED PASSION among the reds. This display garden has become a heavy burden, taking an inordinate part of my time, and I must reduce it to have more time for my own breeding program.

As for my own things, I will start with two disappointments. Again, there has been no significant progress in my yellow breeding line, with no diploids enough different from BUTTER AND SUGAR to warrant registering, and no tetraploids better than those of 1973. The other disappointment was the increased height in some of my 7- and 12-inch miniature seedlings. Two of them, however, have remained at 7 inches after four years of bloom, giving me hope that they will stay so. This again emphasizes the need to observe miniatures for a number of years before selecting them for introduction.

On the happier side, my greatest problem was to decide what to keep out of the large number of seedlings I liked. I ended by selecting one diploid and six tetraploids for introduction in 1982. The diploid will be called Kenabee because it was selected as the best of a hundred or more children of DEAR DELIGHT by Ken and Agnes Waite and Bee Warburton. Of the tetraploids, one, to be named Ira Wood, came from a cross made by Ira of two tetraploids I had sent him years ago. Betty kindly gave me permission to introduce it for Ira. It is the nearest to true blue in the medium range I have seen. Others include Fourfold Lavender, my first fertile tetraploid lavender-pink; Hubbard, which I consider my best red to date; Lady of Quality, a very large light blue child of SILVER EDGE; Happy Event, my first white tetraploid with form that I like; and Ruffles Plus, a dark blue-purple self with the most pronounced ruffling of any Siberian I have seen. Of others selected for future breeding and evaluation, I will mention a medium violet tetraploid with round falls so wide they overlap; several green-whites from DREAMING GREEN; several improved whites from Happy Event; some blues with dotted patterns, wide style arms, and ruffling,

from DEAR DIANE; and several greenish yellow seedlings from crosses of yellow tetraploids and DREAMING GREEN. Altogether it was, in my own garden as well as in my travels, an exciting year for me.

(Currier made a good start at another exciting and, I hope, satisfying year. On January 3, 1982 he was married to Elisabeth Felkerson, a longtime family friend who used to help him in his hybridizing and the early use of colchicine when he gardened in Riverdale, N.Y.C.

I am sure all our members join in wishing Currier and Elisabeth many happy years together.--Peg.)

TREASURER'S REPORT

Gunther Stark

On hand, Feb. 1981, Checking Account.....		\$ 1,619.14
Dues income.....	\$ 519.25	
Miscellaneous income.....	44.00	
Interest.....	178.35	
Eastern Auction, net.....	401.00	
Upper Midwest Auction, net.....	1,199.00	
Book sales.....	3,102.86	
Borrowed, AIS Foundation.....	6,500.00	
Cashed Cert. of Deposit.....	<u>3,500.00</u>	<u>15,444.46</u>
		\$17,063.60

Expenses

Bulletin printing.....	\$ 408.18	
" postage.....	243.84	
" typing.....	82.25	
Book preparing.....	4,284.00	
" printing.....	8,775.00	
" shipping.....	423.62	
" sales expense.....	46.30	
Envelopes--Display Gardens.....	8.80	
Extra deposit tickets.....	1.50	
President's expenses.....	40.00	
Deposit Box rent.....	5.00	
Repay AIS Foundation.....	<u>2,000.00</u>	<u>16,318.49</u>
On hand, Feb. 20, 1982, Checking Account.....		<u>\$ 745.11</u>
		\$17,063.60

Still owed AIS Foundation.... \$4,500.00

On hand, cert. of deposit.... \$2,000.00

VARIETY SHOW

If we are to maintain our aim of insuring that the Siberian Irises continue to display the greatest possible variety of forms, colors, sizes and growth habits there are two attitudes we must be wary of: the idea that whatever is never is automatically better, and the idea that we must never vary from the original shapes, sizes, colorings and habits of growth of the original species from which we work. The quick answers to these two frames of mind are, to the first, that one need only go through a seedling bed in first bloom to know that some of the new can be pretty awful; and, to the second, that all the breeding in the world can't put in any characteristics that aren't there. Even the characters derived from tetraploidy come from within the gene-set of the parents, and result from the availability of twice the number of genes that can be displayed in one plant; the genes were there all along.

But there is more to it than that. Let's deal first with the notion that what is old is automatically old-hat, outdated, no longer to be admired. In Dr. McEwen's article he mentions the fact that SUMMER SKY drew a great deal of interest. This iris was introduced in 1935. By any standards, that is old for a registered Siberian. But it is unique. There simply isn't any Siberian that displays the particular coloring, form, and growth habit of SUMMER SKY, and I doubt if any newer variety ever will duplicate it in all details. To breed the coloring with the form of, let's say WHITE SWIRL, would at best only produce a new and different variety with the color of the one and the form of the other ancestor, and perhaps with an intermediate growth habit. It might be an extremely attractive plant, but it wouldn't be "the same, only better." You can say the same for many of the older varieties. Tastes do fluctuate over a period of time, but what is out of style in one decade may be back as strong as ever in the next. And there are always a few who cherish their old favorites, so the good ones are never really lost; when that style returns, they are there to be propagated once more from the basic stock. The oldies that have vanished were just not as good as they seemed at first. Maybe they didn't have the staying power to go on growing in someone's back lot despite neglect; maybe they just didn't look as attractive as when they first came on the market--they were boring after a while. But the good ones come back, again and again. There have been times within this century, when Siberians were as popular with gardeners as they are today, and perhaps even more so. Then they went out of fashion with most gardeners. Checking against the Registration Lists one can conclude with some chance of being right, that the dull periods came shortly after breeding of Siberians slowed down to the neighborhood of Zero. (When I say "breeding," for most of that time one must also include selecting

of seedlings from bee-crosses.) In time someone started growing bee-set seeds or tried making protected crosses, and inevitably got a few good seedlings, which were registered and put on the market. The first trier was followed by others--perhaps he or she was so impressed by one of the new seedlings that he tried it as a parent. A really fine new seedling is a challenge to others to try to get something even better out of it. Of course, it is also true that one of the reasons for a loss of interest in Siberians was the remarkable growth of interest in the TBs after the tetraploids began to come on the market in quantity--here was something spectacular! Everyone wanted these in the garden; they took up a lot of space; so not much was left for the Siberians--and for other types of irises which were put through the same lull for the same reason: suddenly big was in, and small was out. But it really didn't take long for interest in other types of iris to begin their return to more general interest. In the case of the Median irises this was touched off by the appearance of the first SDBs bred from the TBs crossed with the pumilas, a group much more attractive to eyes accustomed to the wide, and widening, range of color and form of the TBs. This first push was reinforced as the SDBs were used with the TBs to produce Intermediates that surpassed the old ones which came from the chamaeiris group. In the case of the Siberians it was probably brought about by one single variety--WHITE SWIRL--though more power was poured into the system with the later Cassebeer introductions to turn a trickle into a stream. These new varieties, used in breeding by others, have given us yet more fine new plants, and their descendants will go on for quite a long time building more interest in Siberians. But don't forget: these new Siberians derive directly from the older ones that had survived the test of time long enough to serve as their ancestors.

What is new, the group of tetraploids that are just beginning to make an impression on the general market for Siberians, also come from the old varieties, and from the newer diploids: they do look different in some ways; they have combinations of characteristics we haven't seen before in Siberians. But the characteristics themselves are the same we have always had available to breed with--it is only the combinations that are really new. It happens that these combinations are the result of human endeavor, but Nature, and Nature's cosmic rays, could have done the same thing--as happened with the TBs. The tetraploid TB species were found in nature, not made by man, and the same thing has happened in other genera of plants. Who knows how many such occurrences may have happened and then been lost, because nobody happened to be around to make use of them? If the first tetraploid Siberians had occurred in the wild, they might also have been lost to us. There is the only difference between the Siberian tets and the TB tets: one group made by man, the other found by him. And this, of

course, is the answer to the claim that we have tampered with the species and what has been produced in recent years is not the true, the valid, the old Siberian. The new are, in fact, the direct descendants of the old, as truly Siberians, as validly members of the clan, as the child of human parents is a human child, or the offspring of two cats is itself a cat. They cannot be anything else but Siberians. And they do not by their existence invalidate the old ones. If they don't look like the species--why should they? They aren't species, they are hybrids. So, for the most part, were their parents. In fact, in some cases, new introductions may actually be closer to a species than many of the older ones, because they come from a back-cross of a newer one with a pure species. If one really wants the species look, one must grow the species. As soon as you grow a seed from a species growing near another compatible species, you have produced something that is not a species, in all probability. Indeed, two clones of the same species will give offspring that differ from both. What man has done (and done for millenia) has been to take advantage of the variation that occurs in nature to make use of any slight improvement, and develop that improvement as far as it can go while still keeping its usefulness or beauty--its desirable qualities. There will always be those who take the pursuit to extremes, but the extremes don't last long--they go out of style and are forgotten. It might be enlightening to cross a typical *I. sibirica* clone with a typical *I. sanguinea* clone and see how many of the seedlings you'd really like to have in your garden! I would bet you'd have such a collection of "dogs" as would spoil your appetite! Yet one of those mutts just might, if crossed to the right parent, give you something worth having. Roughly, that is what the hybridizers have been doing since the first gardener tried pollen-daubing. In the early days, they just wanted something better--but they didn't know what that something might be. Only within the last century have the breeders had the knowledge to try to cross for a specific aim.

In breeding Siberians we work for beauty. Beauty is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder; what one loves may leave his neighbor cold. What the hybridizer wants may turn out to be uninteresting to many of the gardeners but it will be of interest to many others, and as the breeders are all human beings, and differ from each other in their specific aims, the result will be a wide range of forms, colorings, habits of growth and vigor. There will be some that are happier in the warmer parts of the Temperate Zones and others that do better in the cooler areas; some that will be big, showy, handsome flowers but few in number, and others smaller, delicate-looking, but very vigorous and floriferous; some soft and frilly, some firm and tailored; some little fellers for the edge of the border and some big ones for the rear. And this is how it should be. Siberians have something for everyone.

ELECTION YEAR 1982

Proposed Amendment of Bylaws of the Society for Siberian Irises

The Bylaws of TSI state:

ART. X--Amendment of Bylaws.

Sec. 1. These Bylaws may be amended at any annual or special meeting of the membership by a two-thirds vote of the members of SSI present in person or by proxy, provided such amendments shall have been submitted to the membership at least thirty days before the meeting.

ART. IV--Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

Sec. 1, fourth and fifth sentences: All terms, including that of the president, shall be for three years beginning on January 1 and continuing until successors shall take office. The officers and directors shall serve not more than two terms following adoption of these bylaws without interruption of service for at least three years.

The Board of Directors, meeting in St. Louis, Mo., May 12, 1981, proposed to amend Article IV, Section 1, fourth and fifth sentences. (It was the opinion of those present that the interests of the SSI would best be served by a Treasurer serving an extended continuous term.)

The proposed amendment to Article IV, Section 1, sentences four and five to read: All terms, including that of the Treasurer, but including that of the President, shall be for three years beginning on January 1 and continuing until successors take office. Excepting the Treasurer, officers and directors shall serve not more than two terms without interruption of service for at least three years.

SSI members present at the Siberian Section meeting at the AIS Convention in Denver in June 1982 will be asked to vote on the proposed amendment. If you are unable to attend, proxy votes received by me by May 1, 1982, will be counted.

(signed) D. Steve Varner

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As this is the year in which we elect our officers, in accordance with the provisions of our Bylaws, and as the Election Notice and the slate of officers should be sent to our members with the Fall issue, it might be well to remind all of you, and particularly the newer members, of what this entails.

The Nominating Committee must present the slate of candidates in

time for publication in the Fall issue, the deadline for which is Sept. 15 (although in practice, as the slate is not sent to the printer until about Sept. 25, this can be sent to the editor after the 15th, up to the 25th). For this reason, anyone wishing to propose a possible candidate should send that name to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee before Sept. 1 so that the Committee has some time in which to consider such proposals and inquire whether the proposed candidate is in fact willing to serve in that capacity.

After the slate presented by the Nominating Committee has been mailed to the voting members (all dues paying members living in the United States and Canada) further nominations can be made by eight or more members acting together, not later than four weeks after the slate has been mailed to the members. Such nominations "from the floor" as it were, must be in writing, signed by the eight or more members making the nomination, and accompanied by the letter of consent of the individual so nominated.

If any such nominations are made, the Elections Committee must have a ballot prepared listing all candidates, and the ballots must be mailed to all voting members not later than Jan. 15 with instructions for voting by mail. Ballots must be returned not later than Feb. 1. Of course, if no such additional nominations are made within the allotted four weeks, then the candidates listed in the slate of the Nominating Committee are judged to have been elected, and will take office in the usual way, on Jan. 1.

It is possible that some of the present officers and board members may prefer not to become candidates for other offices or to serve another term in their present office. Think about this. Do you feel that you might qualify for any of the jobs listed? The Presidency is excepted because the bylaws call for the First Vice-President to succeed automatically to the job. But otherwise...

But maybe you don't feel up to starting up near the top? There is one committee chairmanship wide open, and it is a very much needed one. Some of the other chairmen would love to be released from their job-- either to take on some other or to sit back a while and draw a few deep breaths. Some of those poor souls have been serving in one capacity or another for 20 years or more! Or, if the chairman doesn't feel he or she wants to resign, another worker on the committee might be very welcome to lighten the load a little. Think about this, too.

Another thing to think about is that no organization can go on for very long without the infusion of some new blood every now and then. If you have found your membership valuable to you, perhaps it is time to make some return over and above paying your dues. Turn to page 2 and look at the work being done. Are you sure you cannot be helpful

somewhere in that list of offices? While you are at it, look at page one, at the index of articles. Maybe this is where you could help. Even a brief note may have just that little difference in viewpoint that helps to keep a publication from getting stale. Have you brought in any new members? Do you have any of the Membership Invitations in your possession, that you could take along to a meeting of your local iris group? Could you take some slides next bloom season to add to our slide collection? How about some clear black-and-white snapshots that could be printed in the fall issue, or put in a collection to be available when we are asked for the loan of pictures for other publications? We do occasionally get such requests.

Back Talk

As I am sure you all know by this time, this year's American Dykes Medal went, for the first time, to something other than a Tall Bearded. Three cheers for BROWN LASSO, its breeder, the late Gene Buckles, and its introducer, Dave Niswonger! And now let's follow it up with a Dykes for an American-bred Siberian. We have plenty of candidates, right in line and coming along on the path to glory.

I'm sorry this is such a thin issue; but as I've said many times before, if you don't write it, we can't print it. And I might add, it isn't very much help to me to have a letter arrive February 16 to ask if we could use an article for the Spring issue. By that time I'm already starting to type that issue (and, thanks to our Mrs. Zabriskie, I don't have to spend three weeks trying to get copy clean enough to go to the printer!) so I am normally done with the basic draft within 10 days. So the offer comes too late. Except, of course, if I only have enough material for seven pages or thereabouts, and I have to scratch around in the letter file for anything that has a note on top--in red, of course--"Poss. Quote Par. TSI," which indicates that it wasn't written for publication but might go into some sort of omnium gatherum. Even worse, I may have to write an article out of my head (which is where I usually am when confronted with the need for something else) and my brain is too numb by that time to think of anything. There is something about typing that tends to put me to sleep. If I could only manage somehow to take the typewriter to bed nights, and had some magic trick that would remove the gadget from my chest as my eyes fall shut, I might have a cure for my insomnia; though that one would probably give insomnia to spouse and cat, who share the bedroom. When I am lying there trying to get to sleep--that's when ideas come instead; but in the morning I can't read the notes I have scribbled in the dark, and I can't turn on the light or I'd wake Harry and Timothy. But with the morning light comes total forgetfulness of any idea I may have had at, say, 1 AM. I woke up one morning with a faint recollection that I had worked out exactly what to cross to get a real, fire-engine red iris. I could remember that much. But I have yet to

recall what the varieties were that I would use. The trouble, of course, is that in that stage of pre-sleep I am really in the first stage of sleep, and the last thought before complete slumber arrives in the first to vanish in the struggle to come to again.

Spring came rather early here; but not to stay. It has been dropping in for brief visits since shortly after Christmas. (The first sign, the green nubbins the snowdrops push up, came on Thanksgiving.) Right after Christmas the white tips of the flowers were sticking out of their green wrappers, and on New Year's Eve one had gotten all the way out and was hanging its head, half open. Then it turned cold again, and we had some snow, and it wasn't until the end of the month that rain and another small dollop of spring brought the snowdrops back to the air and sun. Within a day the whole clump was in full bloom and the first snow crocus were showing a smidge of color. By mid-February these too were in full bloom south of the house, and even at the north end of the back yard several clumps were blooming. Now, at the end of the month, the winter aconites are opening under the azaleas beside the driveway, and the red buds on the Pieris are beginning to turn pale. I love these tough little things; once they have decided to bloom, they stick with it, and cold, snow, sleet don't scare them at all.

And last week the titmice were all out paging Peter. By June I'll be tired of the almost incessant demand for Peter (who he?), but in February it is more musical than the lark at dawn or the nightingale at midnight.

I got a small giggle out of one passage in Currier's article--p. 10--where he is talking about the burden his display garden is becoming. I can see his point; certainly to take care of 300 varieties on display along with the number of seedlings and sales stocks he must have is more than I could handle. I found myself wondering what I would do if I were confronted by so many plants out of which I would have to choose some (let's say 50 or 60) to keep and then find new homes for all the others. I go through enough anguish every year over my seed lists--and those are plants I don't even have yet! This year's list was fairly typical. By January 1 I had the rough draft written in my scribbling book, counted the total number of seed packets and the total cost and compared these with the available space to put the plants if I grew them all. There was no question that, even allowing for growing some to bring to the garden club plant sale, I would have about enough plants to do every garden on this block; even worse, I wouldn't have enough left in the garden budget to pay for fertilizer to get them off to a fair start. There were 127 packets! For most of two weeks I struggled with the list, slicing off one here, two there; meditating while doing the dishes, pondering while watering the houseplants,

considered as I knitted (two nieces are having babies this year) and studied the lists as I sipped my evening tea. I did manage to get them down to more reasonable proportions, and finally mailed the orders in mid-January. The end of the month, here came the American Horticultural Society's seed list, and all was muddled again. Fortunately for my sanity there is a definite limit to how many packets I can order--they set the limits, too, so I have to do it. By that time I was in the groove--inured to the task, and the job went faster; the list was in the mail by February 2, the packets have all arrived, and now I have tiny little Begonia seedlings showing their first true leaves, Pelargoniums and Hostas big enough to be transplanted last week, and Penstemon almost ready to shift. I shouldn't have started these so soon; I usually leave the perennials till May. But I had somehow overlooked this packet and wasn't sure the seeds were still good (2 years old) so I was just going to put a few at one end of a large flat to try out, only Tim jumped up to see what I was doing and joggled my hand, and there went the whole lot. He never showed any interest in my seed sowing before, though he helps (if that's the word) when I weed; why this time? I can only hope that it warms up enough to put them out in the cold frame in early April, because if it doesn't, I'm going to get awfully crowded in here. There must be over a hundred seedlings in that small space. Fortunately, I went in rather heavily for houseplants this year so they needn't be sown until most of the garden things have gone outdoors.

But what am I going to do with the packet of Chinese Cabbage I got that I never asked for? I hate cabbage. On the other hand, I did get a packet of Dahlberg Daisy--which I can't find under any name in any of my garden books, unless the clues I followed in Taylor's Encyclopedia from the list of genera in the Compositae did really lead me to the right place with Baeria. Does anyone know? I'd like to hear, because if it turns out to be as nice as it sounds--little yellow daisies atop feathery foliage on low spready plants (Taylor says Baeria has weak foliage and stems, but that would be why it spreads)--I might like it along the sidewalk. And I might want to show it in a flower show, and for that I need the botanical name. This is getting awfully iffy. Maybe I'd better stop now.

Have a good spring and perfect bloom just in time for the local flower shows and the garden tours.

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