



**Almanac:
Society for
Pacific Coast
Native Iris**

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PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE SPCNI TREASURER

Prices listed are for SPCNI members

Check List of Named PCI Cultivars

Currently being revised.

Diseases of the Pacific Coast Iris

Lewis & Adele Lawyer: ALMANAC, Fall 1986. 22 pages, 9 photographs. \$3.50 postage paid.

A Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises

Victor A. Cohen: The British Iris Society 1967. Booklet, 5.5 x 8.5, 40 pages, 16 line drawings, 8 color and 6 black-and-white photographs. Brief description of species and sub-species including their distribution. \$4.00 postpaid

A Revision of the Pacific Coast Irises

Lee W. Lenz: Photocopy of *Aliso* original. Booklet 5.5 x 8.5, 72 pages, 9 line drawings, 14 photographs, and 12 maps. Definitive work on the taxonomic status of the *Californicae*, with a key to the species and sub-species. Detailed maps and accounts of distribution. \$6.00 postage paid.

Hybridization and Speciation in the Pacific Coast Iris

Lee W. Lenz: Photocopy of *Aliso* original. Companion booklet to the above, 5.5 x 8.5, 72 pages, 30 figures, graphs, drawings, and photographs. Definitive work on naturally occurring inter-specific crosses of PCI, including detailed account of distribution. \$6.00 postage paid. If ordered together, both Lenz booklets may be obtained for \$10.00 postage paid.

MEMBERSHIP & SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris is a section of the American Iris Society. Membership in AIS is not a requirement for membership in the SPCNI, but is suggested and may be of considerable benefit.

Membership	Individual	Family
Annual	\$ 6.00	\$ 8.00
Triennial	15.00	18.00
Life	75.00	100.00

Please send membership monies to the SPCNI Treasurer. Foreign postage: please add \$1.00 for annual, \$3.00 for triennial, and \$10.00 for life membership.

ALMANAC

DEADLINES: March 1 and September 1.
Back issues are available for \$3.50 each, postpaid.
Please address the person listed under **Almanac Back Issues.**

The opinions expressed in articles and letters appearing in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or beliefs of the SPCNI. Remarks about specific irises, companies, products, and services shall not be considered endorsements by the SPCNI.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Little did I realize when I sat in the back of the bus at the 1975 AIS National Convention in San Diego, conspiring with a group of pacific coast native iris enthusiasts to form a society to further this group of irises, that I would end up as the new president of a group of horticultural terrorists known as the SPCNI.

Perhaps it is only poetic justice that I should occupy this chair. The California native irises were my first love, and I came to them through an interest in California native plants. Once I had experienced their beauty, I found myself with a group of enthusiasts meeting at the home of George Stambach in Pasadena during hot summer afternoons, talking native irises and showing slides.

Stambach's home was the center of the native iris world in the early 1970s, and I consider him my father in the iris world. He gently nurtured the enthusiasm of a number of us through his own enthusiasm. His influence was immense. It would be good if we could commemorate his many contributions through some sort of perpetual recognition of the pivotal role he played, though he was not involved in the formal organization of the Society.

I have attended most of the treks to see the species in the wild. My enthusiasm for the species remains strong, and I think the treks have a wonderful value for the Society. I am planning to head such a trek in June of 2002 to see *I. hartwegii australis* in its native range. I think it is the first trek to see these irises the Society has ever made. More information on that later.

If someone would like to take over as Chair of that trek, I would gladly relinquish the role.

There are, however, few native iris enthusiasts left in southern California, though this area was the hotbed from which the Society emerged.

Obviously one of the goals I have as your fearless leader is to encourage the continuation of treks. Another goal is to encourage the growing of PCIs in areas in which they are presently marginal. Goodness knows that these irises can be the devil's own children when it comes to growing them outside of the native range of the species, but a surprising number of reports of success have been coming in from all over the country. To help further that goal, we have two wonderful organs for the distribution of this information. One is our *Almanac*, in the capable hands of Steve Taniguchi, who took over as editor with the very hard act of Lewis and Adele Lawyer to follow. We also have a very professional website, presided over by Steve Ayala, where additions to the site occur often, with pictures of the latest bloom of the species in their native range, and pictures of award winning PCI's from the exhibition world.

These two members are typical of the quality of the volunteer work that goes into making this organization function so effectively. There are so many other people giving their time and enthusiasm to the Society that listing them would leave Steve Taniguchi no room for articles.

My job as president is not to mess up this fine organization.

I would also like to record the organization's history while we still have some of the old timers around. This function could include collecting old publications, recording the memories of our veteran members, and collecting slides of historic

PCIs as an addition to the Society's slide collection.

I welcome a volunteer for this job, but I might pursue specific people with the relentless enthusiasm of a politician seeking funds. You have been warned.

It is customary to praise one's predecessor in office, and in this case such praise is richly deserved. Jay Hudson has led this organization with foresight and vigor, and he has left big shoes

to fill. With your continued help we can fill them. Happy Gardening.



Richard

FROM THE EDITOR

A hearty welcome to new President Richard Richards. Richard is one of the charter members of SPCNI and has contributed many *Almanac* articles over the years. We also welcome Mike Monninger as Second Vice President.

As for outgoing President Jay Hudson, I suspect that years from now, of all his contributions to SPCNI, he will be most remembered for getting us started in the internet age. In fact, we have a fantastic web site thanks to Steve Ayala's efforts.

I regret to inform all of you that longtime former *Almanac* Editor Lewis Lawyer passed away recently. Although I had met Lewis on the SPCNI Expeditions, I only really became acquainted with him when I took over as Editor. As I learned more about Lewis, I became extremely impressed with his talents. Lewis was a scientist and an artist, and he had interests in photography, music, computers and technology. Most impressive was the love he shared with his wife Adele. He will be missed.

READ ME

Membership in the American Iris Society is not required for SPCNI membership. However, AIS membership is suggested and may be of considerable benefit.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARY/TREASURER

Thank You

A thank you to those who have generously donated to the *Almanac* color photo fund! Several have asked to be anonymous.

Dues Notices

First dues renewal notices will no longer be sent. Please note the expiration date of your membership on the address label. This date indicates the month and year that your SPCNI dues are due. We will continue to send a final reminder notice if we have not heard from you.

Foreign Rates

Foreign dues have been increased by \$1.00 (an additional \$1.00 for annual, \$3.00 for triennial, \$10.00 for life) to cover postage. The final notice will show increase for foreign postage, however when you notice on your address label that your membership dues are ready to be paid, please increase the dues by \$1.00.

Donations

SPCNI will gladly accept tax deductible donations to be used toward production cost of the *Almanac*. We would like to continue to have high quality, as well as more color photographs within the *Almanac*.

Donations will be a way to increase our quality and quantity. If you wish to make a donation, please send it to:

Terri Hudson, Membership Secretary-Treasurer
33450 Little Valley Road, Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Please include a note with your donation indicating that it is for color production of the *Almanac*.

SPCNI Membership List

The SPCNI will be offering its membership list to individuals for a slight fee to cover the cost of mailing and printing (approximately \$3.00 for the US, \$4.00 for overseas). This list can be used only for contact purposes and cannot be used or sold as a business mailing list. If anybody wants to be excluded from the list, please contact Terri Hudson. If members have e-mail and would like to be on an e-mail list, please contact Terri (irishud@mcn.org).

SPCNI SLIDE SET AVAILABLE

Three slide sets are available through SPCNI. Our Slide Chairman, Damon Hill, has produced it and it can be obtained by requesting it from him at 4613 Maddock Road, Sebastopol, CA 95472.

The charge is \$7.50 for any of the three sets. One set deals with species, the second is concerned with hybrids, and the third combines the subject matter of both of these. The slides in each set will be contained in a Kodak carousel.

The carousel will be convenient to use and less likely to be damaged in shipment. Payment (payable to SPCNI) should be sent to Terri Hudson, SPCNI Secretary-Treasurer. See the address on page 2. The person requesting the slides is financially responsible for return of the slides.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REPRESENTATIVE

Garry Knipe, Cupertino, CA

Hi, I'm Garry Knipe, the Northern California SPCNI *Almanac* representative. I live in Cupertino with my wife, Ruth, and two children - Carissa (8) and Steven (5). I'm a software engineer at Cadence Design Systems. For fun, I enjoy surfing, white water canoeing, flyfishing, camping, and gardening.

PCI have interested me for many years, having seen them grow wild and displayed at iris shows. A few years ago, I decided to try my hand

at hybridizing them and have chosen goals of extending the bloom season, adding fragrance, and chasing the illusive *munzii* blues. I currently grow about 100 named varieties and am quite excited looking at my first year of bloom in the seedling beds.

As an *Almanac* representative, I look forward to helping Steve with future issues and learning more about growing and hybridizing PCIs.

PACIFIC COAST IRIS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Harry Hill, Roberts Creek, BC

As a recent convert to Pacific Coast irises, I hoped there might be something to learn from the experiences of long-time PCI growers in British Columbia. I wrote to the other SPCNI members in BC, as well as to the members of the Alpine Garden Club of BC who had contributed PCI seed to the group's seed exchange last year, asking them to share what they have learned growing

these plants in a region that is generally cooler and wetter than their home territory.

My own enthusiasm for PCIs came about through an interest in growing West Coast native plants - low-maintenance species that are naturally adapted to our cool, wet winters and temperate, dry summers. Unfortunately, none of the species in the *Californicae* series make it up as far north as BC. (*Iris setosa* occurs in the

northwest of the province, and *I. missouriensis* in the south). The range of the most northerly PCI, *Iris tenax*, falls just short of Tacoma, Washington, which is only marginally warmer than Victoria or Vancouver, BC.

Lowest winter temperatures for the last three years in coastal BC have been about -3C to -7C (27F to 19F), although historically temperatures have dipped as low as -15C (5F) when Arctic fronts have swept cold outflow winds through the valleys and fjords to the coast. (I'm counting on global warming to put an end to that sort of intrusion on my gardening of borderline species!) Interestingly, the area in BC where PCIs are grown neatly overlaps with the northern range extensions of madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*, known simply as "arbutus" in BC) and Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) – two species whose main centers of distribution are in Oregon and Northern California, which is also home to most PCI species.

Although *Iris tenax* might be the most cold-hardy PCI, iris growers I corresponded with all cited *I. douglasiana* as being more tolerant of the high winter rainfall and heavy soils of most coastal BC gardens. Only those gardening in sandy, quickly draining soil thought *I. tenax* was a good choice. Several people named *I. munzii* as being one of the more difficult species to establish. One gardener who had grown many *munzii* hybrids reported that they were short-lived, weak-looking plants, but their flowers were "the most beautiful blues I'd ever seen – to die for!"

Because of their requirement for excellent drainage, PCIs have been most often grown by members of the alpine garden clubs based in Vancouver and Victoria. Many of the earliest PCI growers here obtained their seed from British seed houses. More recently seed exchanges organized by the alpine clubs, SPCNI and SIGNA have been sources. This past year, the Alpine Garden Club of BC listed 13 PCI species and hybrids among the 1,539 items in its seed exchange. *I. douglasiana*, *I. innominata* and *I. tenax* are available from several native plant nurseries in the province, but not through the general nursery trade. Some BC gardeners have ordered named hybrids from U.S. mail order nurseries, but the additional phytosanitary and shipping expenses can be discouraging, not to mention delays at Canadian customs which threaten the viability of the rhizome divisions (which isn't great to begin with!)

Brent Hines, curator at Vancouver's University of British Columbia Botanical Garden, says the North American section of its extensive

alpine gardens contains numerous PCI species and varieties. Many of these were grown from seed obtained through the Alpine Garden Club and from old private gardens. The *I. douglasiana* and *I. tenax* have lasted almost 20 years in the garden, hybridizing somewhat, he reports. The collection also includes different color forms of *I. innominata* and a dwarf form of *I. douglasiana*.

Brent's PCI seedlings spend their first winter in a cool greenhouse. "I always plant out in mid-Spring, after the soil has warmed," he says. "They really take off then." The iris are grown on a sloping well-drained site. "I've lost a few to winter wet, but none to cold or pests that I've seen."

After many years of growing PCIs, Kathy Millar of Duncan, Vancouver Island, has become a bit cynical about their adaptability. "They are never dependable for transplanting as divisions, seedlings or potted plants," she maintains.

Kathy is the only Canadian I located who had registered any PCIs. Her DOROTHY V is a vigorous cream/purple *I. douglasiana* cross grown from seed that originated with the Vancouver Island Rock & Alpine Garden Society. She sold many divisions of it from Millar Mountain Nursery – her former home nursery – and has still has a large clump. Her VERA HAYES is 18" tall, with lavender falls veined in purple and with a dark halo around a white signal. It was grown from Thompson & Morgan seed. She hopes some of her customers still have it because she lost her last clump when she moved three years ago.

In fact, few of the dozens of PCI species and cultivars she had at her old property survived the move. PCIs are notoriously hard to transplant, but going from a gravelly soil to heavy clay didn't help either, says Kathy. A few of the Joe Ghio varieties she's had for 10 years, such as BIG MONEY and EARTHQUAKE, survived the trauma, but most of her Ghio seedlings succumbed. The many *I. tenax* plants that had thrived in almost pure gravel couldn't adapt to the heavier soil in her new garden.

Although she did propagate some of her best PCIs by division, most of the ones at her nursery were grown from seed and put into gallon pots at one year of age. When in bloom, they sold on sight, she says.

"PCIs are easy from seed but not long lived, except for *Iris douglasiana* and *innominata*. Except for those two species, I do not consider PCIs to be reliable border plants," says Kathy. "I think their motto is, 'Here today, gone tomorrow!'"

Salt Spring Island, midway between Victoria and Vancouver, seems to be a hotbed of iris growers. The local garden club has a very active

subgroup focusing on iris, and its members hold a joint membership in SPCNI. The island's poor quality soil and rainshadow conditions (half the 150cm/60" of annual rainfall Vancouver receives) may actually be an advantage in growing PCIs.

"I began growing PC iris shortly after moving to Salt Spring 10 years ago," says Dee Fitton. "I started with seed mixtures from some of the bigger seed houses, like Thompson & Morgan, Aimers and Chiltern. After our group joined the iris society, I began growing named cultivars, although I haven't found any to brag about so far."

"Like many Salt Spring Island properties, my garden is on a steep shale slope, so the soil is not humus rich. Nonetheless, my iris don't seem to mind," she says. "This winter should be a good test, as last summer I finally got some young seedlings into the ground on the lower part of the property. Even though it is near the water, it is also the frost pocket of the garden. So far I haven't noticed any damage and we'll see what spring brings by the way of blossoms."

"As to soil prep and growing conditions, the major thing I worry about is drainage. As my soil is largely sand based, I might add some composted materials as well as a top dressing of composted manure and bark. I wish I could say that I worry over them and feed and primp them, but the sad truth is that I don't," admits Dee. "The one experiment I tried which didn't seem to work was to grow them in more sunshine. Even with our extensive cloud cover, so far I've found them to do better with some light shade. But this new planting down below might also test that theory, as they'll be getting full sun."

Rosemary and Len Wallbank of Salt Spring Island are both gardeners and iris lovers, although Len does all the seeds in this household.

"Len has killed a lot of seed and seedlings!" reports Rosemary. "The tough or lucky ones are now in raised beds, filled with 'made' soil – our own mix of compost, manure, leaf mould, sand, woodchips/sawdust and the soil that was here. Len typically starts seed in the greenhouse. Most stay in pots until they are say 6" high – usually because we don't have anywhere to put them!"

Another Salt Spring islander, Elizabeth Pellett, once took a gardening course at the Los Angeles County Arboretum in Arcadia, California, and Lewis and Adele Lawyer made a presentation on Pacific Coast irises. She was captivated. Shortly thereafter she became a SPCNI life member.

Elizabeth has an extensive collection of bearded and beardless iris. In addition to several PCI hybrids, she has two *Iris tenax*, one a beautiful

blue, an *I. douglasiana* and an *I. innominata*. She reports they have all bloomed beautifully for the past nine years. "My soil is acidic and has a good quantity of rock," she says. "I have done no soil amending."

Pat Parkes, who specializes in beardless iris at her Parkside Gardens nursery on Salt Spring Island, says she normally overwinters her PCI seedlings in a cold greenhouse and plants them out in late spring. *I. innominata*, *I. douglasiana* and *I. tenax* grow well outside for her, while she keeps her *I. bracteata*, *I. munzii* and *I. hartwegii* in pots that she overwinters in the greenhouse. She's found she cannot keep *I. chrysophylla* or *I. fernaldii* for any length of time.

Pat says she has had success dividing her *I. innominata* and *I. douglasiana* in late fall after the rains have started (mid to late October).

Andrée Connell of Galiano Island has been growing PCIs for 20 years. The first ones she obtained were named varieties (although she's forgotten their names) and were obtained from friends in the Alpine Garden Club of BC. She has also grown hybrids from Thompson & Morgan seed, and seed obtained through seed exchanges.

"On Galiano these iris might just as well be in seventh heaven, given their propensity to colonize. I can't say that I've ever noticed any damage much less any losses from cold," she reports. "If I have sown seed deliberately, those plants are in pots until planted out, which is usually over at least one winter and I merely endeavor to keep excess moisture from the pots as I do with any other potted plant left out."

"I tend not to move whole plants," says Andrée. "If I want to give some away, or establish one elsewhere for insurance, I normally carve off a chunk leaving the remainder *in situ*. I pot up zillions of seedlings for our local plant sale. Any and all of this can and has taken place at almost any time of the year."

Andrée says her iris get no "cossetting" of any kind. "Here on Galiano I've planted them directly into our rock and sand which passes for soil, and included them in beds bulked up with commercially purchased 'topsoil' – you know, the kind of stuff that won't even grow weeds – often with doses of mushroom compost and our own well rotted woodchips. Some may get some bone meal every year or two if I'm giving it to plants in the vicinity. My PCI get 'tough love' and thrive on it!"

Joy Flint of Victoria first saw PCIs at a rock and alpine show in 1975 and later purchased some *I. douglasiana* seed. "I planted them in new pots with sterile potting soil and chilled for 30 days," she says. "I put them on a baker's rack and they

germinated well. Next batch I soaked overnight and planted in pots and put them in a cold frame, and they also did well. All were planted in the garden at the end of March."

She has since added other species, grown from Lawyer seeds. "They have done well and I shared with Beacon Hill Rock Garden and some to Government House Gardens," she says.

Joy's PCI fertilization regime entails giving a sidedressing of alfalfa pellets in February and Miracid once a month in spring.

Paige Woodward and her mother Pat have developed an abiding fascination for Pacific Coast iris at their Pacific Rim Native Plants Nursery near Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley. "The light went on in 1994 when I joined the SPCNI and acquired the essential references it distributes," says Paige.

A confessed "species bigot," Paige has obtained most of her seed from SPCNI and SIGNA. "At first I didn't try species from farther south than Oregon, fearing that our Zone 6 cold and winter monsoons might kill them," she says. "Gradually, out of curiosity, I let other species creep into our propagation beds; they survived. Now the only species we don't have in the nursery is *I. fernaldii*, but we've got seed of it, now, too, so we'll see."

"If you focus on species rather than cultivars as we do, some seed is hard to come by. You can almost always find *Iris tenax* and *I. douglasiana*. *I. thompsonii*, *I. purdyii*, *I. tenuissima*, and *I. macrosiphon*, maybe not."

Paige is often puzzled by seedling losses that occur over their first winter. "The cause is rarely clear; other iris of the same species survive handsomely in similar conditions nearby," she reports.

"All species that we've tried grow well in rotted fir bark amended with fertilizers or compost. Sometimes, instead, we imitate the soil they'd grow in on their home ground, be it gravel or peat," says Paige. "No matter what, we always sprinkle alfalfa pellets on the surface. There are rationalizations of this voodoo on the Canadian Iris Society's website at:

<http://members.attcanada.ca/~cris/CIS/alfalfa.html>."

"We do sell some to native-plant enthusiasts, but I'm never quite sure whether they think they're beautiful, or just want natives," she says. "Most irisarians seem to go for tall, I am tempted to say blowsy, bearded hybrids. A few go for the great difficulty and rarity of aril irises. In my eyes, PCIs are the simplest and most elegant."

Further up the Fraser Valley, Doug Murray of Hope reports that he has about 100 PCIs that bloomed last spring – so many, in fact, that he has had to farm them out to friends' gardens. Many were grown from seed he obtained through the SPCNI seed exchange, which he joined in 1992. He reports he has had his best success with Steve Taniguchi's hand-pollinated seed.

The first PCIs Doug ever grew were from seeds he wild-collected in a huge field of *I. tenax* growing in scree conditions. He later obtained plants from Millar Mountain Nursery and from Aitken's in Washington state.

Gardening where rain clouds slam up against the Coast Mountains and North Cascades means having to contend with especially high precipitation. To aid drainage, he adds a bit of acid compost and sand before planting. "Mulch is often counter productive if we don't get extreme cold," says Doug. He finds *I. douglasiana* and hybrids with a high percentage of it in their 'blood' do best for him. "The dry growers don't winter well in our rainforest."

ERIC NIES AND HIS PACIFIC COAST IRISES

Nancy Nies, Bakersfield, CA

One morning this February, I witnessed the opening of a certain delicate, soft yellow, bearded iris. The experience was exciting, not only because I am new to iris-growing and this iris was blooming a couple of months sooner than expected, but also because this was the first time since my childhood that I had seen an Eric Nies iris in bloom.

I never knew my grandfather, as he died when I was two years old. I did know he was a superintendent of agriculture for the Los Angeles city schools, a biology teacher at San Fernando High School, and a landscape architect. I also knew he hybridized irises. We had had a few of his irises in our garden when I was young, and I had seen a few old newspaper clippings, but I never really knew much about my grandfather's irises.

This all changed last year when my cousin gave me a copy of Barbara Perry Lawton's recent book, *The Magic of Irises*, which mentioned our grandfather. It was from that book that I first learned of the American Iris Society's Eric Nies Medal, awarded annually for the best spuria iris.

The book piqued my curiosity, and I embarked on a quest to learn as much as I could about Eric Nies and his irises. My friend, Carol Benston, and Anner Whitehead, of the Historic Iris Preservation Society, provided me with a wealth of intriguing leads. My search has led me to a number of very helpful "iris people", some of whom knew my grandfather. As a result, I have accumulated a large box full of Nies iris correspondence, photos, articles, trophies, and other memorabilia. In addition, I have planted five Nies irises in my garden. What follows is some of what I have learned about my grandfather and his irises.

The AIS awarded its 1952 Hybridizer's Medal to Eric Nies. He never knew he had won it, though, since he died that January. The April issue of the AIS Bulletin reported: "It is ironical that this Bulletin should carry the news of the death of Eric Nies, at the same time as the announcement that the Society had bestowed upon him its highest honor." Four years later, the AIS established the Eric Nies Award. Then, each year from 1959 through 1962, a Nies spuria won that award. My grandfather had more than 50 registered irises to his credit, over half of them spurias. Rounding out the list of Nies introductions, though, are at least eight bearded irises, eight Louisianas, and six Pacific Coast natives.

Though Eric Nies is best known for spurias, in particular, for developing the first brown ones, I have yet to find a surviving Nies spuria. Of the five Nies irises I have found, one is a tall bearded, one is a Louisiana, and three are Pacific Coast natives. My cousins and I are very grateful to Lottie Lambert, Gordon Rabalais, Adele and Lewis Lawyer, Phil Edinger and Richard Richards for sharing their Nies irises with us.

The three PCIs are AMIGUITA, BLUE SAGE and ORCHID SPRITE. As Eric Nies registered only six Pacific coast natives, it is interesting that

at least half of those are still being grown today, 50 to 60 years after they were first introduced. This is all the more noteworthy because, "of the Pacific Coast irises registered and introduced during that period, almost none survive," according to Richard Richards, who calls the Nies irises "the toughest PCIs I have ever grown."

Last summer, I had the pleasure of meeting Marion Walker, who had continued growing and registering Nies irises after my grandfather's death, and who very kindly furnished me with AIS Nies Award trophies honoring Nies irises, as well as his complete Nies iris files. The latter included my grandfather's annotated list of the Pacific Coast seedlings he originated between 1945 and 1951. At the top of the list, both literally and figuratively, is a 1945 volunteer he called AMIGUITA.

Eric Nies registered AMIGUITA in 1947, and the AIS gave it a High Commendation in 1948, an Honorable Mention in 1951, and the Mitchell Award in 1974. The 1951 Lyon catalog called it "a break in colors for our native California irises. It has the coloring of the bearded iris AMIGO, therefore the name AMIGUITA, which means 'Little Friend'. Its rich purple and white combination of coloring is most intriguing. This iris has been withheld from introduction until we had sufficient stock to warrant a low introductory price. Flowers are of good size and bloom on stalks of 12" height. \$4.00."

AMIGUITA's color, says Phil Edinger, is actually more of a light lavender and purple, a description borne out by my grandfather's slides and his 1945 observations of the iris: "Perfect form. Standards frilled, rich medium lavender, heavy royal purple line down the center, falls wavy, same orchid color as standards, dusted cream signal surrounded by heavy wide royal purple edge. One of the best I've ever seen. The purple patch on the falls seems to be a dark large signal patch." Adele Lawyer was kind enough to send me a lovely photo of the iris and an AIS Region 14 bulletin, which bears a logo featuring AMIGUITA. Richard Richards says that AMIGUITA is "easily the most popular of the Nies Pacific Coast irises," and that my grandfather "gave the Pacific Coast irises a big

boost, in that AMIGUITA occurs as a parent for later introductions by other hybridizers for decades later."

ORCHID SPRITE was registered in 1943, and received an AIS Honorable Mention in 1946 and an AIS Award of Merit in 1948. Phil Edinger calls it "a vigorous thing," and says that for years, it was described in the Lyon Iris Gardens catalog as: "Masses of pinkish-orchid flowers of beautiful form on 12" stems. There is nothing like this exquisite little beauty." Richard Richards terms it "a growing fool". Eric Nies wrote in 1951 to H. Senior Fothergill of London, then Secretary of the British Iris Society: "I am glad you like ORCHID SPRITE. Its appearance in the A.I.S. bulletin [110:4, July 1948] was a very pleasant surprise to me. Everyone who sees it seems to like it, but I did not think it would go far enough to get into the bulletin. It is, by the way, *I. douglasiana* - not a spuria. I do not know how it happened to be so listed. I suppose it was because I am tagged as a spuria breeder."

Though AMIGUITA and ORCHID SPRITE are the most exceptional of the Nies PCI introductions, the other Nies seedlings and introductions merit a mention. The 1945-1951 list of 24 Nies *douglasiana* seedlings represents a rainbow of color. Most were shades of blue, lavender, or purple, or yellow, buff, cream or white. There were also, however, two pink seedlings, whose parents were ORCHID SPRITE and AGNES JAMES. My grandfather described one this way: "Best pink I've seen. Nearly deep flesh with some darker rose veins in falls". The other, which he considered even better, but which was unfortunately destined to die out, had "real pink standards and falls." Another seedling, a child of ORCHID SPRITE and AMIGUITA, had an interesting description: "Bronzy with red-lavender lines and cast. Vigorous grower. Purple stripe on standards."

The first two Nies PCI introductions, ORCHID SPRITE and YELLOW OPAL, were registered before the notes were begun. The AIS registry describes YELLOW OPAL as being 12-18 inches tall and "creamy white with purple veining and a deep yellow midrib".

Besides AMIGUITA, three seedlings of the 1945-1951 list were eventually registered: BLUE SAGE, ARIOSO, and CAROLE CABEEN. Eric Nies used these terms to describe BLUE SAGE: "Light blue-lavender, large, tall, nearly perfect flower." According to Richard Richards, it is "a rampant grower", the strongest of the five Nies PCIs he has grown. It is 18 inches tall and of unknown parentage.

My grandfather's *douglasiana* notes mention eight different crosses between ORCHID SPRITE and AGNES JAMES. One was ARIOSO, registered in 1948. The AIS registry calls it an "almost white self with flush of blue on the falls". It is most likely the unnamed 1947 seedling Eric Nies said was: "Near white, pale lavender blush on falls, to blue wash in center. Radial bright yellow signal. Dainty and beautiful."

Eric Nies registered his last PCI in 1949. Another child of ORCHID SPRITE and AGNES JAMES, it was named for my cousin. I thank Keith Keppel for sending me a related article, which appeared in the June 1952 issue of *Flower Grower*. The author, Margaret Cruise, wrote: "Another popular Nies introduction is the *douglasiana* hybrid, CAROLE CABEEN, named for his granddaughter. This is an outstanding bluish lavender." CAROLE CABEEN is almost certainly the 1947 seedling Eric Nies called "pale blue-lavender with blue splash on falls. Standards blue-lavender, bluish center. Styles pale lavender. Splendid form and smooth."

Courtesy of Marie Caillet, I have an article my grandfather wrote for the March 1949 issue of *Golden Gardens*, entitled "The Breeding of Iris". Intended for the novice, it revealed Eric Nies' enthusiasm for hybridizing: "The excitement...the suspense of waiting one or two weeks, watching for an indication of ovary enlarging, the harvesting of the precious seeds, their careful planting, the joy of seeing the tiny seedlings break through the soil, the late summer transplanting, and then the great day comes when a flower stalk appears. One can hardly wait for the full opening of the flower and when it finally happens, then comes the judgment: Is it good? Well, good or bad, it's your very own, and a great joy until something better shows up." Hybridizers will

readily identify with those words. For me, it is a great joy just to see Nies irises blooming in my garden. To those who have helped make this

possible, who have taught me more about my grandfather, and who have shared with me your own love of irises - thank you.

SPCNI WEB SITE RECOGNIZED

Steve Ayala, Petaluma, CA

The Society's Internet site is now part of a master collection of New Word natural history reference sources. Selected sources can place the Neartica logo on their front page.

Designed as a gateway to the natural world of North America, the Neartica collection is large, easy to use and visually attractive. Its staff searches for Internet sites that provide the very best the web has to offer in the natural sciences.

Visitors to <http://www.neartica.org/> find organized lists of natural history topics. Together with the links, there is a summary of what you can expect to find at each site.

The Society for Pacific Coast Iris is listed under two categories: Plants > Iridaceae (Iris); and

Botanical Organizations > Natural Native Plant Societies.

The description of our Society's site is: "If you are as much a fan of iris as we are, you are going to love this site. You'll find detailed descriptions, photographs, and information about each of the native iris species of western North America. There is also a general introduction to the group and their evolution. Highly recommended."

You can find the Society's web site by entering <http://www.pacificcoastiris.org/> or by typing "Society for Pacific Coast Iris" in any Internet search engine.

VERNON WOOD INTERVIEW

Garry Knipe, Cupertino, CA, and Steve Taniguchi, Santa Clara, CA

Vernon Wood is another great hybridizer of Pacific Coast Iris. His MIMSEY and PINK CUPID have won the Mitchell Award and Mitchell Medal [MIMSEY won both]. The following are excerpts from a taped interview that occurred on April 5th. [Questions that were given to Vern ahead of time are preceded by a "Q". Vern's responses are preceded by a "V". Garry's and Steve's spur of the moment questions are preceded by "G" and "S" respectively.]

Q: Where were you born and raised? What was your occupation before you retired?

V: I was born and raised in Berkeley CA. I worked in Print and Ink R&D.

Q: Were you interested in plants as a child?

V: Yes, I first grew vegetables, every kind of vegetable you can find, then I went to flowers, different kinds of flowers. I actually built a lath house for tuberous begonias, but I couldn't control the mildew. It was miserable so I went to irises, which is a mistake.

Q: When did you start growing iris?

V: I don't know . . . about 1955.

Q: What types of iris do you hybridize, and in what relative proportions?

V: PCNs, TBs, I did Arils for 6-8 years but there's too much trouble with them. I do about one third PCNs, and two-thirds Tall Bearded.

Q: Did you start in Tall Bearded?

V: Yes.

Q: You are noted as a Tall Bearded hybridizer, when & why did you start hybridizing PCIs?

V: My first introduction was THREE CORNERED HAT. That was an 84-13 seedling number, so it was sometime around eighty-four. I guess the reason I started hybridizing was I just liked them. I don't think there was any other reason. I just saw a bunch of Joe's [Joe Ghio] and got interested in them. And Joe is the milepost, or whatever, that you have to run for, and he puts out most of them.

- Q: How long did it take to produce a PCI worthy of introduction?**
V: I don't know - you can go to second year and have one worth introduction, but I think you ought to see it at least three years. I let Jay put one out, WINE AND CHEESE, if it'll play up to what it was the second year it's good.
- G: So when did you make seed for WINE AND CHEESE?**
V: Well it's a ninety-nine, so that means it was planted, probably, in ninety-seven. So you can get something worthy of introduction your first year, but I think really, you should try replanting it to see how it takes to transplanting. Divide it and plant it and see if it lives. And see if it stays as good as it looks the first year. Some of them will look better, some of them will go down.
- Q: Of your many PCI introductions, which are your favorites? Why?**
V: Of my own, there's quite a few I like. I liked SEA ADMIRAL, and I still do, RASPBERRY DAZZLER, COMET TRAILS, PINK CUPID. PINK CUPID, as I look at it now, the flower is magnificent, but as I look at the plant, I probably wouldn't introduce it. But all it did was win the Mitchell.
- Q: What are some of your favorites from other hybridizers?**
V: I love PACIFIC RIM, IDYLWILD is good, lots of Joe's, but I can't remember their names.
- S: What about your MIMSEY? Do you like that one?**
V: I liked that one, I still like MIMSEY. That was the first original one for me. You know, half of it's luck. We sent it to Santa Rosa, this was when Colin Rigby was introducing my stuff, to a regional meeting and it turned out it was a magnificent clump in bloom at the right time. So half of it is just luck. You got to be lucky.
- Q: Do you keep all of your award winning PCIs?**
V: Nope! I don't have the space.
- G: How many do you have, maybe five of them out there? I saw SKY COVER, SEA ADMIRAL.**
V: RASPBERRY DAZZLER is there - That might be it. It might be only three.
- S: So you don't have MIMSEY anymore?**
V: No.
- S: You're like Joe [Ghio], you throw out all these good iris.**
V: I don't have the space.
- Q: How much feedback do you get after introducing a particular cultivar?**
V: I get very little feedback - I don't know why. You get more feedback on the Tall Bearded then you do on the PCNs. Maybe it's because there are more people interested in them.
- S: Is it mainly good feedback, or do people tell you when something is not good?**
V: Usually if you get feedback it's good. I guess people don't like to tell you the bad things unless they're really bad.
- Q: Which of your introductions have been most adaptable to different climates?**
V: I don't know - no feedback again. Now I think SEA ADMIRAL did good, from what I've heard, up North. And I think RASPBERRY DAZZLER did excellent too. That's the only PCN of mine that's still in Joe's catalog [Bay View Gardens], because he really likes it. I consider that high praise if Joe keeps it.
- Q: How difficult is it to get a PCI introduced?**
V: Only because of a lack of gardens, but it isn't hard to get it introduced.
- Q: Do you have long-term goals in hybridizing PCI, or just several short-term goals?**
V: I don't have any goals, I just cross what looks good. If I had a long term goal it would be for a pure fire-engine red, but they're either purple or brown. And a pink with more intense color than PINK CUPID, better form too, because I like round and ruffled, which is the way Joe is going and he sets the pattern. Because everything he puts out is usually ruffled and round
- Q: Have your goals changed over time?**
V: Yes, but sometimes I just cross what looks interesting, although all those wild ones out there were intentional crosses. I figured the only way I could get something really different from Joe's is make crosses that he would never make. He would never cross that yellow with a purple top with the red I crossed it with. You can see there are a couple out there that are really interesting, then you go from there. So goals, no, I just sort of feel my way. In other words, you get something interesting and you go off on that line.
- Q: Which of your goals have you found to be hardest to obtain?**

- V: All of them. Our goal should be to put out flowers that are gardenable. In other words, anybody can grow. Why put one out that only a specialist can grow? If you're an average gardener, and you just want to see flowers, you want one where the plant is going to stay green, and not scraggly, and so forth.
- G: **How do you plan something like that? To me, what you need is good breeding stock.**
- V: You've answered it. Start with what you want, which is a good plant.
- Q: **When you developed PINK CUPID, was your goal to produce a pink?**
- V: Yes.
- Q: **How do you plan to produce a certain color?**
- V: Just get the best pinks you can use and cross them and see what happens. Then line cross them down the line.
- G: **So how long were you playing around with pinks before you got PINK CUPID?**
- V: Probably only two or three years.
- Q: **How do you plan out your crosses?**
- V: Like I said, I make very few plans. The only two plans that I've made are to cross that lilac/lavender out there with PACIFIC RIM. The reason is that PACIFIC RIM is such a beautiful grower. It's a clean looking plant and such a beautiful flower. I want to put that lavender on it and see what I get since they are two good growing plants.
- G: **Does PACIFIC RIM bloom for a long time for you?**
- V: Yes.
- G: **The Lawyers had PACIFIC RIM going for almost two months.**
- V: It's vigorous, it's good. It deserved the [Mitchell] award.
- Q: **Do you have any rules of thumb on when to use a cultivar as the pod or pollen parent for a cross?**
- V: A rule of thumb. I use the good grower as the pod parent, hoping that will carry on.
- Q: **How many flowers do you pollinate when you want to make a particular cross?**
- V: Anywhere from one to two to twenty. When I plant them out and grow the seedlings, I might have 200 seedlings, say, of which 50 are nice and green and vigorous. Then I just replant the 50.
- Q: **How many seeds do you usually plant to explore the results of a particular cross?**
- V: It depends, sometimes several hundred.
- Q: **How many seedlings do you evaluate each year?**
- V: There's probably a hundred out there, maybe a hundred fifty.
- Q: **How long do you evaluate a seedling before you decide to use it for further breeding?**
- V: If I like it, I'll use it the same year.
- Q: **How long do you evaluate a seedling before you decide to introduce it?**
- V: Again, you should wait a minimum of three years.
- Q: **What characteristics do you look for in making 1st, 2nd, 3rd year selections?**
- V: Flower and vigor. I like the wide round ruffled, I like ruffling. And you also want it to be disease free. The only disease that I've had, and I haven't had it recently, is rust.
- Q: **I think you started your PCI lines from Ghio material. What criteria did you use in choosing the Ghio cultivars for parents? Have you used any material from other hybridizers?**
- V: I started with mostly Ghio plants with some Hargrave seed from Australia. I don't have a record of where the Hargrave seed came from and I lost some of my records from the first 5-10 years. I know how some seedlings got mixed - some of those that say unnamed or unknown, I had the seed out in plates drying in the back room and it was a heck of a windy day. I came back home and every plate was on the floor. They were all scattered. I used some of them anyway.
- Q: **Do you use any of the species in your breeding?**
- V: No, too much trouble keeping the species alive for me.
- Q: **How many different lines of PCI are you currently developing?**
- V: I'm not really developing any line at the moment, unless you say the reds and striped.
- Q: **What PCI have you found to be good parents?**
- V: I thought and thought and thought about this but I can't think of any that are especially good.
- G: **So you don't keep going back to the same parent, you're mostly crossing this year's generation?**
- V: Yes, the only ones I would go back to are RASPBERRY DAZZLER, PINK CUPID, and SEA ADMIRAL.

- Q:** What types of observations do you make in the garden and how do you use that information when making selections or choosing parents?
- V:** Again flower, form, color, vigor. It could look good this year, but then you split it up and transplant it and for some reason it'll just croak. You want one that will transplant.
- G:** Is that usually consistent? If one of them does survive then the next time you break it apart they'll all live or they all usually have a hard time?
- V:** I've had them do both. I've had them come back and do good, and I've had them stay like that.
- G:** Have you noticed any reblooming tendencies in any PCI?
- V:** The only one I know of is HARLAND HAND.
- Q:** What about long bloom duration - have you noticed any exceptional cultivars?
- V:** Of course it'll depend on the vigor and the number of bloom stalks. Individual flowers should last three to four days, maybe five days. For shows, I have put them in the refrigerator for a week and won awards with them. If I decide this one's the one and the show is a week away, I cut it then and put it in the refrigerator. If it hasn't opened fully, the night before you pull it out of the refrigerator and put it in water.
- Q:** Do you think color-breaking (streaks of color - like the TB BATIK) in PCI is possible? If so, how would one achieve color-breaking?
- V:** Color-break, I don't know. Wild colors like that one out there [Vern's back yard], yes. But you get that from what you cross. Most of those wild ones came from FOOTHILL BANNER originally. That's behind all those striped ones. I used FOOTHILL BANNER and crossed it with anything, reds, yellows, pinks, and that way I figured I'd get something that Joe would never do. And I have, I think.
- S:** Could you also cross it with darker colors?
- V:** Yes.
- S:** What would that do?
- V:** Find out. That's what I do, I cross it and find out.
- Q:** Do you have any advice for the beginning hybridizer?
- V:** Start with a good plant and cross what looks interesting.
- Q:** Can a beginning hybridizer ever "catch up" to the creations you and Joe Ghio produce? (Even if one uses the latest introductions as parents, the plants are still several years behind because it takes several years to build up enough stock to introduce, right?)
- V:** Yes, you can do it in one year with a little luck.
- Q:** There aren't many people hybridizing PCI. What can we do to increase interest?
- V:** You got me there, I don't know. We seem to be getting more people interested in PCNs. What can we do, I don't know. I don't know how to get them interested in Tall Bearded.
- Q:** Would genetic engineering be good or bad for PCI?
- V:** It's expensive isn't it? You think you can get a fire engine red out of it? If I could do it, and had the time and money, I'd probably try it. Just to see what would happen. Well, it would be interesting if you could isolate the genes for fire engine red. I think the genes are there in the spot on some of the Arils. Transferring that into a pure red on a whole flower would be a lot of work - more than I've got time for. I think it would be interesting.
- Q:** What's your method for planting seeds and lining out seedlings? When do you plant your seeds? Do you transplant often?
- V:** I plant the seeds in November, it's ideal to plant them out when they are 4-5 inches tall. Mine aren't going to be that tall for another month, and I don't have any space. I have to dig out something to plant them. So I've got problems. If it's normal, I would get them out early in the middle of April if they are tall enough. That's seedlings. For clumps, I transplant one to two years usually. If it's a good grower I'll split it up the first year. Soils, I don't need that much, so I use *Gardner and Bloome - Acid Planting Mix*. It's expensive.
- G:** That's what I've been getting lately, I think Jay [Hudson] suggested it too.
- V:** It's an acid mix and the only one that I know.
- Q:** Do you fertilize your PCI? If so, how much and how often?
- V:** I didn't this year and they seem just as good. If I did I would use *Miracid*. When I've used it I used it at half the recommended amount.
- Q:** How often do you water your PCI?

- V: There's an argument there, some people say they've got to go dry all summer long. Well they do in Redding and Chico, but down here if you water them regularly, they do better. You don't want them dripping wet but you don't want them to dry out either.
- G: So how often do you water them here, through the summer?**
- V: Probably every couple of weeks at the least.
- S: Does it get real hot here?**
- V: Only for four or five days at a time, maybe two or three times a year.
- Q: Do you do anything special to the soil such as the addition of sand, compost, or other organic material?**
- V: No because they're in pretty good stuff to begin with, but if I had a large area, I probably would add mostly peat moss which holds water pretty good. I don't like to use sand because in a couple of years it's all washed down. Sand would be great if you needed the drainage.
- Q: How much sun do your PCI receive?**
- V: Most of them get about a half a day. Those on the side of the house get two or three hours, that's all they get. I think they're slower, they take longer to grow. More of them will bloom the second year than the first year.
- Q: What's your weather like here in Pinole?**
- V: It's wild, sometimes we'll get an awful lot of fog. I guess that doesn't hurt them. The rain this time of year beats up the flowers, though. If they can withstand the rain it's great. I've seen some that will fold completely in a light rain, and some of them you can hit with a shovel and you couldn't hurt them. I get some frost, but the way my place is sheltered, I don't get it close to the house - the frost is all the way out towards the back of the yard, and there are no PCNs there. In general they escape the frost.
- G: Do you think the PCNs are hurt substantially by frost?**
- V: I don't know, I haven't had the experience and I haven't heard anyone mention it.
- Q: I think the two major diseases of PCI are crown rot and rust. Do you have any observations on resistance to either?**
- V: I haven't had rust for some time. *Plantvax* worked, but it's no longer available, it's off the market.
- G: Any suggestions on alternates?**
- V: No. I don't know - the only thing you can do is get pamphlets on the fungicides and read what they're supposed to control. Most of the producers of fungicides aren't interested in iris - that's peanuts. I think the Lawyers find they get more rust on *munzii*.
- G: Do you ever cross into the Lawyer stuff? What do you get out of it? I'm growing alot of Lawyer stuff right now - I've got about 300 seedlings**
- V: You get plants similar to what the Lawyers have gotten. SKY COVER you saw out there is a cross with one of the Lawyers. You should have a minimum of two flowers on a stem. If it's only got one forget it. I've seen Lawyers with, I think, 16 blooms on one stalk. I've had some of these out here branch one year and the next year they won't.
- Q: Do you use any chemicals to control rust or crown rot?**
- V: I have so little I don't worry about it.
- Q: Do you ever have problems with insects? What do you use to control them?**
- V: This year I didn't have any insects except those bugs [some sort of grasshopper]. If I had done anything it would have been Cygon, which is systemic. I didn't spray this year and I probably won't. I have very few aphids out there.
- Q: Any special techniques for dividing and transplanting?**
- V: I don't have any.
- G: So what do you do?**
- V: Pull up the clump, pull it apart in sections by hand, it'd probably be better of if you cut it with a knife or sharp scissors. But it doesn't seem to bother it if you pull it apart by hand. I've tried Subdue, but I'm not convinced it does any good. I tried it on seedlings as a precaution and I'd swear it doesn't do anything to them.
- Q: Do you have any tips you want to share on preparing your PCI for shows?**
- V: I've told you about the refrigerator, or if they're just opening, cut them and hold them overnight. But try and get one straight up.
- G: What do you want to see, where do you want PCI to go, besides red?**
- V: Well, it would be a goal to have something with gardenability, where it's going to do good in everybody's garden. Which means a vigorous plant that transplants. I think you can put the flower

on if you get a good plant. Larry Gaulter said that about Tall Bearded, give him a good plant with the branching that he likes, and he said "I'll put a flower on it." And he was a pretty good hybridizer. I'd like to see more gardenability, and I think that will get more people interested. If you put something out there that's going to die back, oh like some of the species will die back, the average gardener is not interested in die back.

S: Yeah, I've had some die back permanently. [bunch of laughter]

V: The average gardener wants a decent looking plant.

S: So I shouldn't be throwing out the ones that have a nice plant but an ugly flower?

V: Well, ugly, yeah. [more laughter] Split it down to good flower but not great. You don't know what you're going to get when you cross those things. You can get anything. That's why they're more fun than Tall Bearded. The Tall Bearded they say don't cross a purple with a yellow, but I wouldn't hesitate to cross purple with yellow PCNs. That's the only way you're going to get something different. You take Joe's and cross two lavenders together you're probably going to get lavenders, mostly, but you won't get something different from Joe's. That's why I say if you're interested, do something different, do something radical.

G: Have you done much crossing of other people's stuff, you said you're starting to use PACIFIC RIM?

V: Very few. Some of Joe Ghio's and Lois Belardi's. A lot of Joe's named stuff goes in ten or fifteen years ago, then I branched out with whatever interested me. Well, it's all Joe's stuff originally, except for the Hargrave seed.

G: I'm looking at the *munzii* right now, there's stuff that came from southern California that didn't come from Joe's breeding. One of the things I'm trying to work on is really early blooming and really long blooming stuff. I have this hope that crossing things of completely different ancestry might bring more unusual combinations.

V: That's the fun, that's a good goal. I think you'll get interesting plants from *munzii*.

G: One of the ones I have has pink [foliage] that goes up almost to the flower, but the plant is not the most beautiful plant in the world.

V: Maybe you should breed for it.

S: Garry's neighbor is letting him use her back yard.

V: He's hooked. He is hooked. Hook, line, and sinker. Do you think interest in PCNs is growing?

S: Since I started editing we have essentially the same number of issues going out, but we seem to keep getting new people and I guess some of the other people lose interest or forget to renew.

V: It's interesting because the awards - PINK CUPID won with I think 21 votes. So the judges aren't getting to see the PCNs. You would think it would take 50 or 60, or at least twice as many [votes].

S: Do you think there aren't enough judges?

V: Oh, no question there aren't enough.

G: I heard you did some experimentation on flower color . . . ?

V: Yeah, I sure pulled a fast one that time.

G: Could you tell us about the use of food coloring? [lots of laughter]

V: Take a nice white flower and put it in the blue or the red dye color and you get veins. I did it for fun and I put it in a show [more laughter], I put some silly name on it and I figured the judges would catch it.

S: Like "April Fool" or something? [more laughter]

V: And they didn't catch it. I had to stop them because they were going to give it an award [lots of laughter]. It's amazing, try it. Take a light color because the color goes up the veins. Every year after, the judges would ask me, "put any funny ones in this year?" [lots more laughter]

G: Another thing I find interesting is where you get the names for your cultivars.

V: Well, you can look right here [reaches for a garden catalog] take a Mid America Gardens, go back to large flowered daylilies. You can take these names and just switch them around a little. You can get tons of names that way or from the horse races.

S: What gave you the inspiration for ones like DISTANT NEBULA and COSMIC GLOW?

G: Are you an astronomer?

V: I love reading about it. So I picked those out of a book on the universe.

S: Are PCI easier to get a good flower than Tall Bearded?

V: In general, much easier. Out of a hundred Tall Bearded, you might get one. PCNs, you ought to get ten that look good. Maybe not introducible, but good-looking. For Tall Bearded the odds are against you.

We thank Vern for letting us interview him and for showing us his latest creations [some are shown on the color page]. Starting this year, Vern's Pacific Coast Iris will be introduced by The Iris Gallery.

SPCNI TREASURER'S REPORT

1/1/00 Through 12/31/00

INCOME

2000 TREK:

BUS DEP REFUND	400.00
REGISTRATIONS	860.00
BACK ALMANACS	49.00
BOOK SALES	188.40
DONATIONS	272.00
DUES	1,758.00
INTEREST EARNED	168.61
SEED EXCHANGE	108.82
SLIDE RENTALS	7.50
T-SHIRT SALES	132.00

TOTAL INCOME	3,944.33
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EXPENSES

2000 TREK:

BUS	255.00	
REDWOOD IRIS SOCIETY FOR MEMBER REGIONAL REGISTRATIONS		640.00
ALMANAC	1,540.01	
BANK CHARGES	5.00	
MITCHELL MEDAL	675.10	
SECRETARY/TREASURE	73.91	
SLIDE PROGRAM	4.30	
SHIRT PURCHASE	56.10	

TOTAL EXPENSES	3,259.42
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TOTAL INCOME/EXPENSES	\$684.91
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BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

CASH AND BANK ACCOUNTS	
CD ACCOUNT	4,315.71
CHECKING	1,086.39
TOTAL CASH & BANK ACCOUNTS	5,402.10

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

LIABILITIES	0.00	
EQUITY		5,402.10

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$5,402.10
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SEED DISTRIBUTION WRAP-UP

Debby Cole, Seed Distribution Chairman

The SPCNI Seed Bank received 48 orders and \$503 for seeds this year, plus \$12 for 2 memberships. That's a significant increase over last year's 35 orders and \$315, despite the price hike. And the good news is, we only spent \$70 on packaging and postage this year (cf. \$67 last year), although that was largely because we had quite a few envelopes left from last year's purchase. Some \$40 of the money received was deliberate donation by generous members. You bought 795 packets of seed, an average of 16.5 packets per order (17 last year). Seven people underpaid for their orders and five overpaid. The increase to SPCNI's treasury was \$433, including the donations (approximately).

Introduced cultivars whose seed was most popular were DEEP MAGIC and MISSION

ATTENTION, HUNTERS & GATHERERS:

Debby Cole, Seed Distribution Chairman

SPCNI's Seed Bank has no seed of *I. fernaldii*, *I. chrysophylla*, *I. macrosiphon*, *I. munzii*, *I. purdyi*, or *I. tenuissima*. We could also wish for some *I. hartwegii* ssp. *columbiana* and ssp. *pinetorum*, some *I. tenax* ssp. *klamathensis*, and some *I. tenuissima* ssp. *purdyformis*. The known locations of these species and subspecies are listed by counties near the back of SPCNI's "Check List of Pacific Coast Iris," readily available from SPCNI. Please consult your references and go forth, see them blooming, mark their location, and come back in two months and collect seed for us all. Do check the plant characteristics and be sure what you're collecting! And take good pictures for the *Almanac*. As to quantity, PCI growing in the wild are far less accessible than those in your back yard; please gather at least a dozen pods. And for those who will be collecting and/or submitting seed from wild iris populations, here's a suggestion from Tim Ross, a recently returned former member: "For each seed lot, it would be helpful to have the state, county, physiographic unit (such as "Gervis Hills" or "Polecat Creek Canyon") and a directional location from the nearest town in the general area (such as "3.2 miles WSW of Hannibal along Willitts Road"). As a (former) field and herbarium botanist, I would consider such information to be the bare minimum acceptable for a field collection. Additional info like flower color is a plus." Many of our members are species enthusiasts and will appreciate your care.

SANTA CRUZ. Seedling seed most in demand was from the Lawyers' XP317A (a Valley Banner type with very dark styles) and XP317E (pictured in the fall *Almanac*). Of the deliberate crosses whose seed was donated, buyers found *I. douglasiana* x *I. macrosiphon* (fragrant) and MARINE MAGIC X CHIEF SEQUOIA most interesting. From our no-longer-so-vast stockpile of old seeds, biggest sellers were the garden-grown gold *innominata* and pink *tenax*, the Salt Point *douglasiana*, the *thompsonii*, both *munzii*, and the *macrosiphon*.

Nine of the 48 seed orders arrived after January 15. We had the seed to fill them fairly well, and so did; but the hard part was finding the time.

From your gardens, we'd especially like to offer seed of named varieties not previously included in our listings. So if you're growing something not on last year's list, save several pods for the Seed Bank.

Also, in support of the quest to breed hardier PCI, we'd like to receive PCI seed (of named varieties, planned crosses, hardy seedlings, or garden-grown species) from growers outside the areas to which PCI are native—i.e., non-west-coast USA, especially foreign.

If you're making a deliberate cross to contribute, cover your intended pod parent with a panty-hose "bag" while still in bud to prevent unwanted premature pollination. After it opens and you remove the bag and make the cross, remove the falls of the now-pregnant flower to prevent late contamination, and shake out the "bag" before moving it to the next candidate bud.

Send your contribution to the next Seed Distribution (posted not later than September 15, 2001) to:

Debby Cole, SPCNI Seed Chairman
7417 92nd Place SE
Mercer Island, WA
USA 98040-5807

If your pods aren't ripe by then, please send word of your intentions to the above address, or e-mail to dctthree@juno.com so we can at least include them in the listing. Good hunting!!!

LEWIS OLSON LAWYER 1907-2001

Glenn Corlew, Walnut Creek, CA

There is much we can say about Lewis Lawyer.

We could say that Lewis had an artistic gift and that he started his adult life as a Commercial Artist. This talent was generously shared, much to the benefit of various Iris related organizations, including SPCNI.

We could say that Lewis had a passion for music and maintained a large and varied music library - stretching from 78s to CDs.

We could say that Lewis was a graduate of UC Berkeley and that he had a long and distinguished career with Del Monte Corporation as Assistant Director of Agricultural Research.

We could say that Lewis was unique in having the same partner in professional life as in private life. Lewis and Adele were indeed a team and it has always been difficult to think of either of them separately. It has always been Lewis and Adele, or Adele and Lewis.

We could say that Lewis was a loving and caring father and that he and Adele raised three children - two daughters and a son.

We could say that Lewis was a charter member of the SPCNI and that he gave freely of his time and expertise in the development of the society.

We could say that Lewis and Adele were the co-editors of the Almanac for a number of years and that they organized many of the spring treks that the SPCNI members enjoyed over the years.

We could say that Lewis had a love for horticulture, particularly in the *Californicae* which became his hybridizing focus. He continued the work with *I. munzii* that had been started by Dr. Lee Lenz and continued by Thornton and Alma Abell. This led to the flowering of Sierra Dell which was awarded the Sydney B. Mitchell Award in 1995.

Yes, we could say all of the above (and more) and each would be true. But these are not the memories I will cherish. I will remember a quiet, thoughtful man, a gentleman in the fullest and best sense of the word. I will remember his warm greetings, always delivered with a smile that made me feel like my mere presence brought him pleasure. I will remember his organized mind and his respect for detail. I will remember his willingness to share his thinking and to listen to mine. I will remember his knack for telling me that I was wrong and making me believe that I had thought of it myself. I will remember these things and I will miss him. He was my friend.

[Editor's note: Donations to SPCNI in memory of Lewis Lawyer were received from:

Jay and Terri Hudson

Francesca and Sven Thoolen

Marjorie Murray

Steve Taniguchi

Colin and Teressa Rigby

All donations to SPCNI in memory of Lewis Lawyer will be put in a fund for Pacific Coast Iris research]

CATALOGS

Steve Taniguchi, Santa Clara, CA

At the time of this writing, I have received only three mail order catalogs that list PCI.

Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden, 608 NW 119th St., Vancouver, WA 98685. Catalog is \$2.00. Sixteen named cultivars listed. Web site is: www.flowerfantasy.net

Bay View Gardens, 1201 Bay Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Catalog is \$2.00. Twelve introductions, seventy other named cultivars, also offers reselect seedlings and seed of random varieties.

The Iris Gallery, 33450 Little Valley Road, Fort Bragg, CA 95437. Catalog is \$3.00. Seven introductions, approximately seventy other named cultivars.

Beautiful View Iris Garden didn't have any PCI listed in their catalog, but their website: www.beautiful-view-iris.com has photos of PCI that you can order online.

LETTERS

Bill Ferrell, Philomath, OR

I really have been having trouble getting the PCNs to grow well for me here. We live in a narrow valley in the foothills of the coast range and I lose clump after clump to rot. Perhaps it's the combination of the freezing and thawing plus the relentless dampness so that rots, especially the *Botrytis* species, take over and rot the crowns. Our native *I. tenax* does fine, obviously, but the wonderful creations of Joe Ghio and Vernon Wood and others from California simply don't last more than a season or so here. Some better-drained and more open conditions out in the valley do better. If I were much younger I would start a hybridizing program crossing the Ghio

things into *I. tenax* and probably *I. douglasiana* which also does well here. I wish I could be more optimistic but realism prevails.

Along with this, I think it would be wise to get another Almanac Rep. from Oregon, one who has been having better luck growing them than I.

Jay Hudson, Fort Bragg, CA

On January 16th there was heavy frost on the ground and I walked into the garden to survey any damage. I found lovely bloom with RAFFLES (Rigby), SIMPLY WILD (Ghio), OPULENCE (Besette), and CHIMES (McCaskill). RAFFLES and SIMPLY WILD have continued to bloom and still are (as of March 16th).

THE LAST WORD

From the Editor

- 1) Thanks to: Harry Hill and Nancy Nies for their excellent articles. Articles from SPCNI members are greatly appreciated and enhance the content of the *Almanac*. Articles and letters can be sent by regular mail, or by e-mail (yes, the Editor now has an e-mail address). My e-mail address is ST1732@aol.com; I will try to check it at least once a week.
- 2) Terri Hudson asked me if we should list new members in the *Almanac*. I thought it would be best if I ask you, the *Almanac* reader, if you want new members listed in the *Almanac*. We won't list the member's address; we would probably list name, and city/state. Please send your input to the editor. If I get no input, I'll let Terri decide since she would have to provide me with that information.
- 3) The Fall 2001 issue of the *Almanac* will be dedicated to the late Lewis Lawyer. If you have an interesting anecdote about Lewis Lawyer, please send it to me by 01 September 2001. Articles about blue PCI and *I. munzii* would also be great.
- 4) I would like to devote a substantial portion of the Spring 2002 issue to seedlings (species and hybrids). We should be able to have two color pages for that issue, so send me a photo of your favorite seedling and some comments about it (what it is, why you like it, etc.). If anyone has tips on germinating seeds or growing seedlings, please send them to the editor.

COLOR PAGE

Top Left:	British Columbia PCI photo: Flint	Top Right:	Wood seedling 98-60 photo: Knipe
Middle Left:	Wood Seedling 21-11 photo: Taniguchi		
Bottom Left:	WINE AND CHEESE (Vernon Wood, 2001) reproduced from a slide provided by Vernon Wood	Bottom Right:	Vernon Wood and some of his iris. photo: Knipe

