

NEWSLETTER OF REGION 23



◆ Santa Fe Iris Society

◆ Albuquerque Aril Society and
New Mexico Iris Society

◆ Pecos Valley Iris
Society

◆ Mesilla Valley Iris Society

SPRING 2003

AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline date for articles for the Summer newsletter will be July 18, 2003. Work on the Summer Edition is already underway and will be published by July 30, 2003. This will allow the information about the 2003 Annual Meeting, along with the registration form, will reach everyone in enough time for those planning to attend can complete their registration and meet those deadline dates, especially if booking a room will be required.

For anyone wishing to submit an article for inclusion in this publication can mail them to:

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 Or you may e-mail it to:
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R. V. P. Ramblings

Spring has sprung! And as all irisarians know, so has the work! Spring clean up, spraying for aphids, and the regime of hoeing, weeding, and watering. Reports in the area are that most gardens have quite an array of irises blooming, everything from species, dwarfs, arils and arilbreds, to tall bearded. Very sporadic showings with many types definitely out of bloom sync. Many gardeners are beginning to wonder if they will have the appropriate varieties in bloom by the time the show dates arrive. When was it your area had a normal bloom season? It has probably been so long ago----- none of us are able to remember that far back.



You will note that there are three articles included in this publication about the medal awards presented each year to those irises voted worthy of them. Clarence Mahan did a spectacular job in researching the individuals that each award was named in honor of. This material was presented in conjunction with one of his judges training sessions on Awards and Ballots. He very graciously consented, and encouraged, newsletter editors, RVP's, or society presidents to pass the information on to the members of their areas and/or regions. I hope that it will be of interest to each of you and that you find the articles educational and informative reading. I know I did.

Many of the regional judges are busy traveling the state, and even neighboring states to judge shows. My congratulations to each on their endeavors and doing their part to keep the goals of the American Iris Society alive and well. Future newsletter publications will include more award articles

The iris societies in the Albuquerque area are in full preparation mode for their upcoming shows and sales. Many members are also very much involved in plans for the Annual Regional Meeting. Further update found elsewhere in the newsletter.

I anxiously await my trip to Falls Church, VA for the National Convention and Garden Tours. Following that trip I will be returning to Nebraska to attend the Region 21 Spring Convention and Garden Tours. The event is being hosted by the Trails West Iris Society from the Scottsbluff area. Wouldn't want to miss this event as I was instrumental in organizing the group. A special feature will be a tour of the Iris Display Garden located at the University of Nebraska Panhandle Station located just north of Scottsbluff. Many of the Charter Members of the group worked hard and diligently for the approval for the garden plot. It features many types of irises.

Well friends, enough rambling for now. I wish you all a fabulous bloom season, blessed with the delight of all the "new" varieties you will enjoy for the first time. And to those of you who also enjoy the challenge of competitive shows, may you go home with an arm full of ribbons and awards. I am still awaiting that ever elusive "Best Specimen of Show" award. For all my years of showing irises, I have received every award but that one. Wish me luck.

I thank everyone for their contributions of newsy articles for inclusion in the newsletter. Always remember, this publication is only as good as **YOU** make it. Keep the information coming, and I would most certainly welcome informative articles on any phase of iris culture.

Until the Summer publication, I remain

Iristatically Yours,
Patricia Randall

P.S. During the Regional Vice President's Councilors meeting at the National AIS Convention, I was nominated and elected to serve as the RVP Representative for the ensuing year.

Albuquerque Aris Society

The Albuquerque Aril Society has been busy, not only with the plans for their annual show to be held on Saturday and Sunday, May 3 and 4, 2003, but are knee deep in plans and preparations for hosting the Region 23 Annual Convention. The dates scheduled for this is Saturday and Sunday, September 20 and 21, 2003. The event will be held at the Best Western Inn at Rio Rancho. AIS President, Terry Aitken will serve as our guest speaker on Saturday evening, and as the Judges Trainer on Sunday morning. We have some interesting, educational and exciting things planned for all, and wait until you get a gander at the items being offered on the raffle table and the auction!!! With the tremendous expansion taking place in Rio Rancho, and just below the hill, we have a lot to offer the convention attendees. Full details will be forthcoming in the Summer addition of the newsletter.

Patricia Randall

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Pecos Valley Iris Society News

Things are picking up here. Our Spring show will be on April 26 and our theme will be "Almost Heaven". It should be a great show as all our plans have gone well. We are going to have some potted iris at our show for sale. We hope that they sell well and if they do will probably continue that practice. I will let you know.

At our February meeting I gave a slide show presentation on reblooming iris. At our April meeting Rosemary Anderson is going to speak to us on showing iris. In May we will be having our show awards banquet.

Our annual rhizome sale will be on September 6, 2003 at the Roswell Mall.

We have also had several new members join in just the last few weeks, so our club is healthy and energetic.

For the state convention, to be held in Roswell in 2004, Phil Williams has agreed to be our keynote speaker.

That is all for now-----*Gary Biggs, President*

New Mexico Iris Society News

The New Mexico Iris Society is in the midst of preparing for our Mother's Day Show. Thanks to a hard core of really dedicated workers, things seem to be getting done on time. I think our regional newsletters are a great place to learn about the people who make up our "Iris World". As President of the NMIS, I'd personally like to thank my "hard core members". They are: Pam and Jack Lackey, who do some of everything and most of the rest! Helen Crotty, always makes my life and that of other members easier with prompt treasury work and attention to detail. Patricia Randall, who besides all she does as RVP, manages to put in a full measure at NMIS. Helen Radebaugh is new to Region 23 and has slid superbly into worker bee status. Phil Doonan always helps with everything and is generous beyond belief. Karen Bergamo handles with a big smile whatever I've asked of her and keeps between the two of us all of my gripes. And of course, my husband Scott, who conned me into this whole thing in the first place!

Since all of us belong to the Albuquerque Aril Society, we are also involved in the Region 23 September Convention planning. The convention promises to be very exciting, with American Iris Society President Terry Aitken as our guest speaker and judges' trainer. Also, we can promise some neat items on the raffle table and in the auction.

Reita Jordan, President

Your articles, pertaining to irises, their culture, etc. would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your help.



Region 23 of the American Iris Society

Get Well Wishes

Bill Phifer, of Las Cruces, was hospitalized when the screw on his broken hip worked loose. His hip was replaced and he was discharged to his sister's care. We are very sorry to hear about the relapse Bill and we all wish you well. It was a delight to see Bill attending the annual Mesilla Valley Iris Show on Saturday, April 26, and to have him as a guest at the Aril Society Iris Show on Saturday, May 3.



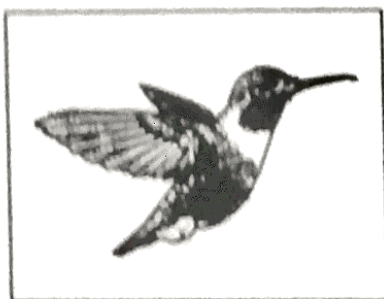
We also hope that Maxine Perkins continues to progress well from her knee surgery. Also the latest news that I received was that her husband "Perk" was scheduled for surgery too. Hope all has gone well and/or goes well with that too. Our best wishes to you "Perk" for a very speedy recovery. The Perkins are from Las Cruces also.

Reita Jordan, of Albuquerque, had spent several days in the hospital with a severe case of pneumonia. We are glad to hear and see that she has recovered quite well so far. Although on oxygen for right now, she is up and about and participating in her usual activities. We wish her a continued and complete recovery.

Rosemary Anderson, of Las Cruces, was scheduled for surgery on her back on May 7, 2003. We hope all went well and send our best wishes for a rapid and complete recovery.

Editor's Note: Whenever anyone hears, or knows about someone who has been hospitalized, or is scheduled for surgery, please drop me a line to let me know so I am able to include news and best wishes in our newsletter. That is what we are all about.

Operation Ruby Throat



Bill Hinton, Jr., (who serves as the Webmaster for Operation Ruby Throat: The Hummingbird Project) recently contacted Scott Jordan

and asked: "I would greatly appreciate you mentioning "Operating Ruby Throat: The Hummingbird Project in your newsletter. If possible, please also

provide a link from your website I feel certain your members, readers, and surfers would appreciate knowing about Operation Ruby Throat. Please note that there is an extensive section on the website devoted to feeding, landscaping, and planting for hummingbirds". Thanks, and best wishes ----*Bill*

Everybody loves hummingbirds, and these tiny feathered dynamos can be used to help students learn about science, math, geography, culture, and virtually any academic discipline. Operation Ruby Throat is an award-winning cross-disciplinary project in which K-12 students, teachers, and others in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Central America collaborate in study behavior and distribution of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Archilochus colubris). Although anyone interested in hummingbirds can participate, teachers are especially invited to become part of this Web-based project, operated by Hilton Pond Center of Piedmont Natural History near York, SC (<http://www.hiltonpond.org>). The Operation Ruby Throat Web Site is the most comprehensive one available about Ruby-throated Hummingbird natural history.

Editor's Note: I hope all of you readers, that have access to a computer and internet, will avail yourself of this information and utilize it for yourself, and the enjoyment of the hummingbirds in your garden. *Patricia*

National Convention News

The Convention, held in Falls Church, Virginia was a pleasurable delight. The meetings, though always long, are interesting and filled with information from all the officers, board members and committee chairmen.

I served as the program chairperson for the Aril Society International. The program provided a great opportunity for everyone to share ideas on culture for arils and arilbreds, and especially those unique tips that make growing them in areas with large amounts of natural rainfall. As with any slide presentation, the group was delighted with the beautiful pictures of various cultivars of arilbreds. A picture is worth a thousand words if all the ohhh's and ahhh's were any indication. The first day of garden tours was pleasant, overcast but pleasantly cool. The next day the morning tour ended with the beginning of a light sprinkle. The afternoon garden tour ended up being an afternoon roaming the Winterberry Garden, the major guest planting garden (over a thousand guest irises) as it was virtually impossible to juggle camera, pad, pencil along with a cumbersome umbrella. We did return to the Winterberry Garden the following day, though cold (temp dipped to 35 the night before), we were able to take the pictures we wanted and make notes on those we all add to our "wish list"! We visited a total of 7 gardens.

"My Ginny" hybridized by Don Spoon of the Winterberry Gardens won the coveted President's Cup, with "Splashacata" hybridized by Tasco won the Franklin Cook Cup.

*report provided by
Patricia Randall*



Caparne-Welch Medal



This medal is restricted to miniature dwarf bearded (MDB) irises. It is named in honor of William John Caparne (1855-1940) and Walter Welch (1887-1980).

William John Caparne was born in Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire, in 1855, and his name was spelled "Caparn" until he added a final "e" in his later years. Both of his parents were artists and shared a love of gardening and flowers. He taught art at a local school and in his own studio, and he sold bulbs and seeds of difficult to obtain garden plants. After his wife died in 1894, he left his teaching position and in 1896, he moved to the isle of Guernsey. Living in a small cottage, he converted an old tramcar into an artist's studio. Here he lived, painted, and grew an hybridized irises and other flowering plants until he became totally blind in 1938. He died on Guernsey in 1940.

Caparne's life was much influenced by his friend Sir Michael Foster. Foster was an admirer of Caparne's paintings and asked Caparne to paint irises. Caparne developed an interest in breeding irises, and by crossing dwarf species with taller cultivars created a new "race" of intermediate irises. He also worked extensively breeding various dwarf iris species and was the first iris hybridizer to concentrate on smaller irises. Most of the dwarf irises cultivars grown in gardens in the first quarter of the 19th century were products of Caparne's hybridizing efforts. The art world saw a renewed interest in Caparne's painting in the 1990's, and his works gained increased admiration and value. If you are interested in knowing more about William John Caparne, it is suggested you obtain two books by Robin A Fenner: *A Genius Undeclared* (Tavistock, 1994) and *Guernsey-My Heaven on Earth* (Tavistock, 1998). These two books reproduce a number of Caparne's iris paintings, and *Guernsey-My Heaven on Earth* lists and describes many of the irises bred by Caparne.

The founder of the Dwarf Iris Society, Walter E. Welch, was born in Missouri in 1887. A musician and artist, he studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and was a talented interior decorator. After moving to Middlebury, Indiana, he worked for the U. S. Post Office Department. There he met Paul Cook and began hybridizing irises. He shared Cook's enthusiasm for dwarf irises, and set out to develop new forms for the garden. Welch introduced his first dwarf iris cultivars in 1950. One of these, '*Primus*', won the American Iris Society's Caparne Award, which was the top award restricted to dwarf irises at that time. Seven more of his dwarf introductions won this award: '*April Morn*' (1954), '*Blazon*' (1955), '*Sparkling Eyes*' (1956), '*Veri Gay*' (1958), '*Cherry Spot*' (1960), '*Fashion Lady*' (1964), and '*Atomic Blue*' (1965).

Walter Welch organized the Dwarf Iris Club in 1950, and published the first dwarf iris *Portfolio*, that same year. The Dwarf Iris Club later became the Dwarf Iris Society. Welch edited the *Portfolio*, he continued to contribute many learned articles. He organized the dwarf iris slide program. Walter Welch was tireless in his efforts to promote dwarf irises and to encourage younger hybridizers.

written by - Clarence Mahan

A.I.S. and Region 23 Web Sites

A. I. S. Web Site

www.irises.org

Region 23 Web Site

http://www.geocities.com/aisregion_23/

A. I. S. Region 23 "Links"

http://www.geocities.com/aisregion_23/links.html

Cook - Douglas Medal



This medal is restricted to standard dwarf bearded (SDB) irises. It is named in honor of Paul Cook (1891-1963) and Geddes Douglas (1902-1993).

Paul Cook was born in Indiana in 1891, and began hybridizing small fruits and sweet peas when he was a teenager. He soon was attracted to iris hybridizing, but his work was interrupted by Army service in France in WWI. Cook was a highly literate man, unpretentious but brilliant. He worked as a rural mail carrier, an occupation that allowed him to have his afternoon free to work in the garden. He collected as many iris species as he could obtain and made extensive crosses to learn about iris genetics. His first tall bearded iris introduction, 'E. B. Williamson', won the Roman Gold Medal from the Concurso Internationale in Rome in 1938.

Because of the popularity of tall bearded irises, Paul Cook is probably best known for his revolutionary breeding of that class of irises, and particularly for his 'Progenitor' line that is behind all of our modern dominant amoena irises and the 'Emma Cook' pattern. Three of his irises won the Dykes Memorial Medal: 'Sable Night' (1955), 'Whole Cloth' (1962) and 'Allegiance' (1964).

Paul Cook's work with dwarf irises was truly pioneering. His early breeding of dwarf irises led to a series of *I. arenaria* hybrids, the most notable being 'Keepsake', 'Tampa', and 'Promise'. He was the first to use the true *I. pumila* in his breeding programs, and this resulted in the introduction of the first of the great stud irises in the standard dwarf class: 'Baria', 'Fairy Flax', and 'Green Spot'. When the

British Iris Society awarded Cook the Foster Memorial Plaque in 1957, Dr. L. F. Randolph wrote of him, "....his major contributions have been in the improvement of dwarf irises and in the utilization of blooming-periods ranging from the very early miniature dwarfs through the medians to very late-blooming tall".

Geddes Douglas was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1902. Douglas was a chemist and businessman. In the early 1950's, he founded the Geddes Douglas Garden Center in Nashville. He became a leader in the Tennessee Nurserymen's Association, and served a term as president of the Southern Nursery Association. He was widely known in Tennessee as the horticultural commentator on a Nashville television program from 1954 to 1969.

'Francesca', his first iris introduction came in 1934, the year he joined the American Iris Society. Phil Edinger has written that its greatest distinction was as a grandparent to Douglas's 'Titian Lady', the first tangerine-bearded white tall bearded iris, introduced in 1941. Douglas later introduced many award-winning tall bearded irises, including 'Extravaganza', 'Amadine', and 'Pagan Princess'.

Douglas's historically most important hybridizing achievements were with dwarf irises. Working with stock from Paul Cook, Douglas's crosses of *I. pumila* with tall bearded irises created the race of irises that came to be known as 'lilliputs'. Some of his best known standard dwarf cultivars are 'Lilliput', 'Helen's Child', 'Happy Thought', 'Pigmy Gold', and 'Dark Star'.

Geddes Douglas served the A.I. S. in many ways. He was Editor for many years: 1946-1948 and 1950-1959. He was a Director from 1943 to 1948, and Secretary from 1949 to 1956. He received the Distinguished Service Medal in 1956. Geddes Douglas also edited the book on garden irises published by the American Iris Society, *The Iris, An Ideal Hardy Perennial*.

written by - Clarence Mahan



Williamson-White Medal



This medal is restricted to miniature tall bearded (MTB) irises. It is named on honor of E. B. Williamson (1877-1933) and Alice White (1886-1969).

Edward Bruce Williamson was born in Marion, Indiana in 1877, and grew up in Bluffton, Indiana, where his father was a bank president. His friends called him Bruce, but he is known to the iris and zoological worlds as "E. B." Williamson. After graduating from Ohio State University, Williamson worked as Assistant Curator of Insects in the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh. Succeeding his father as bank president in 1905, he continued to study and conduct research on insects, particularly dragonflies. He was later appointed Research Associate in the Museum of Zoology at the University of Michigan. He wrote many monographs and articles, and was recognized as a world-class authority on dragonflies.

Williamson began growing irises in the early 1900's and collected many different species, which he then grew from seed. He grew thousands of seedlings, frequently used mix pollen, and kept few records. He established Longfield Iris Farm in Bluffton, and it became a mecca for iris lovers. His *'Lent A. Williamson'* and *'Dolly Madison'* were considered masterpieces, and are to be found in the pedigrees of nearly all modern tall bearded irises. He introduced many outstanding cultivars including *'Cinnabar'*, *'Dorothy Dietz'*, and *'Amigo'*. *'Wabash'*, which won the Dykes Medal in 1940, was introduced by his daughter Mary after his death. His beautiful Louisiana iris hybrid *'Dorothea K. Williamson'*, introduced in 1918, tends to breed true to form, and it has the distinction of now being naturalized in some areas of the eastern U. S. Where Hexapogae species are not indigenous.

Although others had introduced irises that fit into the miniature tall bearded iris class before Williamson, Williamson was the first to breed them as cultivars in a distinctive class of irises. They were apparently bi-products of his breeding for tall bearded irises. Thura Hires and Ethel Peckham were the first to sort them out of Williamson's seedling beds. They recognized that these smaller irises had great potential as garden plants and for use in floral designs. Mrs. Peckham gave them the name 'table irises'. The first of these table irises to be introduced were *'Siskin'*, *'Pewee'*, and *'Kinglet'*. *'Chewink'* and *'Daystar'* followed. Mary Williamson produced *'Widget'* (1943) and *'Nambe'* (1946).

Although table irises had a number of proponents such as Mrs. Hires, Mrs. Peckham, and Charles Gersdorff, they languished in the shadow of tall bearded irises for many years. In the early 1950's, Alice White of Hemet, California began to crusade to gain recognition of the assets of the wonderful smaller irises. She organized table iris rosters and wrote many articles for the *AIS Bulletin* and gardening magazines promoting their virtues. She encouraged iris hybridizers to breed these irises to obtain new and finer cultivars. She led the campaign to have a separate class established for table irises. When the class was finally approved, Alice White graciously accepted the name "miniature tall bearded" irises, although she always preferred to call them table irises.

written by *Clarence Mahan*

