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ALEXANDER RICHARD WILLIAM BACK: AN OBITUARY

(Mr. Back was the organizer of the Sibirica, Spuria and Japanese Group of the British Iris Society, and was in correspondence with several of our members. The following is reprinted by permission of the BIS Year Book.)

Members will have been greatly shocked to learn of the death of Alex Back on August 29 following a road accident. It seems that he was knocked down while crossing the road to post a letter and died without regaining consciousness. He was 73 years of age.

Alex had worked as an inspector for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children...finally in Stoke-on-Trent, where he was living when he joined the BIS in 1961. I first met him when he entered some classes at a Show soon afterwards. He came to see me with a tale of woe and to cancel his entries. It appears that his carefully packed box of iris spikes had vanished from the roof rack of his car somewhere en route to the Hall!

When he retired in 1965 he moved to Ticehurst in Sussex and started to grow irises and gladiolus, together with other irids, both hardy and tender, in quite a large way. At the same time he started his breeding of Sibiricas, Spurias and other beardless irises which has recently begun to yield good results. He had Sibirica seedlings Selected for Trial in 1973 and 74 and a Pacific Coast seedling in 1975. He competed in the shows regularly

from 1967 showing an increasing interest in the species which culminated this year (1976) in his winning of the Christie Miller Challenge Cup.

...This year he was successful in launching a new Group for the encouragement of beardless iris hybrids (particularly those of the Sibirica, Spuria and Japanese Sections) of which he was elected the first Honorary Secretary.

An enthusiast for all the irids, he grew a wide range of Gladiolus species and hybrids...His death occurred just after his successful efforts at the Anniversary Show of the British Gladiolus Society of which he was an enthusiastic and much valued founding member. He was Chairman of the Gladiolus Breeders Association, an affiliated group of the B. G. S.

Alex had been in poor health for some time but this year he had been much better. He was a quiet, kindly and unassuming man and...a lay preacher who was in considerable demand at non-conformist churches. He will be sorely missed by his many friends.

H. R. Jeffs.

REPORT FROM BERLIN (ECKARD, THAT IS)

1. I. sibirica X I. setosa. This plant came from seed harvested from my own Siberian USO (recently registered) and then treated with colchicine. This plant flowered for the first time in 1973 and had never made capsules; again this year I made over 100 pollinations--no capsules--but the bees did better. From the last flowers I obtained three little pods in which were a few small seed resembling setosa seed. When the first frost comes this plant loses its foliage as my I. setosa also did in fall. Therefore I am sure that the seedlings will be true hybrids of sibirica (28chr.) X setosa (38chr) and will be amphidiploids of n eq. 33 chr. (2n eq. 66). IF the seeds will germinate, then we can build surely a new Iris series. The plant grows like a weed!
2. I. delavayi-tet or delavayi-hybrid-tet. This was to me the greatest surprise! In 1974 I treated mixed seed from all my 40chr. Siberians with colchicine. Out of these came this plant, which grows very slowly--in 1975 it almost died; this year there were only two fans with very thick leaves, only two flowers, two pods--one empty, one with a few bad seed.
- 3-4. Two forrestii forms, nearly identical (tet). This year I had 5 tet-forrestii--these two are the best. Both are reluctant pod-setters. Two others have longer falls, similar to the diploid form, but with much more substance. The one whose picture I sent you last year I had divided--which made two pods, both empty. Last year the same plant had three