

## Paul H. Cook—A Eulogy

WE HAVE just been suddenly and unexpectedly deprived of Paul H. Cook's physical presence and mental abilities. This sudden jarring of the sensibilities has more vividly than ever before brought into focus the importance of the man and his work. Those of us who were privileged to know Paul Cook, not just for his fine irises, but also as a person keenly interested in all aspects of the rainbow of life, must find a means of conveying our treasured feelings about his spirit of life to those others of you who knew him less well. He was inherently a reticent, retiring, self-effacing man; yet he also was a strongly self-reliant and individualistic person.

One fact about him which merits attention was his intrinsically keen mind which he continually cultivated and developed throughout his entire lifetime by means of rigid self-discipline and orderliness of thought and action. Along with his brilliance and his ability to pierce to the core of most problems quite quickly, there was also a subtle sense of humor which brimmed over not infrequently.

When Paul's formal education ended, his lifelong self-education began. He was a voracious reader who had delved extensively into the works of the various philosophers. He could become engaged in lively conversation and speak authoritatively on a surprisingly large number of different topics. During his lifetime he assembled an extensive library. Though irises were his first love, one could readily say that he was acutely interested in all aspects of horticulture. His interest in plants and flowers dated from his early childhood.

Paul's inquiring mind led him to probe the literature dealing with plant genetics. His approach to plant breeding was, for the most part, a scientific one. He was forever seeking, and often finding, the explanations for his observed data in regard to the full range of genetic expression of all the members of a resultant iris progeny. Yet his iris-breeding programs, which were both scientifically and experimentally oriented, were harmoniously counterbalanced by an intrinsically practical, pragmatic, and empirical view toward extending the color range and the general adaptability of irises so as to obtain ever better garden cultivars. It was the duality of the scientific and empiric approaches which were united in Paul Cook (a rare combination of abilities in any individual) that enabled him to soar to ever increasing heights in extending the gamut of expression in garden irises. Some of his several directions included new hues, new color patterns, new depths or intensities of coloring, and the creation of previously nonexistent types of irises. His fertile brain generated many new ideas which he then put to work in his various iris-breeding programs, which he realistically termed "problems."

Though Paul Cook's successes were many, he tended to lose interest in the problem at hand as soon as it had been solved. It was the continuum of a nonaccomplished problem that goaded him on with further efforts and ideas toward seeking a solution. On at least one occasion he confided to me that he would "any amount" rather cross two iris species together and observe the results than to cross two horticultural cultivars. This remark reveals him as the experimentalist that he was.

Paul abhorred sham in any of its many guises. His life was one of careful honesty, openmindedness and fairmindedness in all areas of thought and

action. In his judging of irises the iris itself stood or fell on its merit alone. The "reputation" of the hybridizer of the iris was, very properly, completely dissociated when Paul was judging an iris.

It is indeed regrettable that his published output is so small, for this man's knowledge of the particulars of iris genetics was undoubtedly on a par with that of the best trained scientists of the day. As I see it, there are perhaps two major reasons why he wrote so little for publication. One of these was his extreme modesty. The other one is related to aphorism which states, "the more one knows, the more he is aware how little he knows." Paul often said to me in discussing a genetic problem, "I could be wrong about this, because I have *proved* myself wrong on so many previous occasions." He was careful in his thinking, and perhaps too cautious in his writings; for this latter trait seemed to preclude Paul's annotation on the printed page of his own ideas and findings. He has however left behind for us the triple legacy of his many superior iris cultivars; his even more valuable, meticulously accurate records of the crosses he had made and their resultant progenies; and an extensive, worldwide correspondence, which, when brought to light, will surely prove of sufficient interest and merit to justify its subsequent publication in edited form.

I first met Paul Cook when a friend took me to his garden in the late 1930's. I was about 13 years old then. Paul immediately took me under his wing as his student, and my extended correspondence with him dates from that time. He gradually fed me his knowledge, bit by bit, as I became able to assimilate it.

In Paul's death, Emma Cook lost her fully appreciated and treasured husband. With Paul's sudden death I lost my "father by choice" and an irreplaceable friend. The world has lost its most distinguished iris hybridizer since the death of Sir Michael Foster. Bluffton, Indiana, was "put on the map of the world" by Paul H. Cook. While *the world* was David Fairchild's garden," it *was* the world, instead, that beat a path to Paul Cook's garden.

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*Dr. Galyon is an ophthalmologist in Knoxville, Tennessee. He has been crossing irises for more than thirty years and has introduced Fire Chief, a variegata. In addition to TB breeding, where his interests are variegatas, amoenas, reds from tangerine-bearded lines, and "ice blues," an interest in arils and arilbreeds is "very much on the upswing" and he is growing a fairly representative collection of pure arils. He is also engaged in the interbreeding of species in the genus Magnolia.*

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### Herbert F. Fulkerson

of Dallas, Texas, died August 9, 1963. In addition to his hobby of growing irises, Mr. Fulkerson was an enthusiastic amateur photographer. For many years he and his wife, Myrtle, were familiar figures at all national meetings of AIS. The Oklahoma City meeting in 1959 was the last he was able to attend. In that year he suffered the first of a series of strokes that ultimately confined him to a wheelchair. He was one of the organizers of the Big D Iris Society in Dallas and was as active in its affairs as his health would permit up to the time of his death.