



REGION 22. John W. Humphrey was reared on a farm, and inherited a love for nature and the soil. He holds a deep affection for trees, shrubs and flowers, horticultural and wild alike. He is a photographer (hobby) and has a large slide collection, chiefly of irises, but containing many wild flowers, plants and trees. He uses a battered Rolleicord Camera, which he bought in Shanghai while with the 42nd Seabees in World War II.

He first became interested in irises when his wife, Frances, bought a \$5.00 collection, including BRUNHILDE, GLORIOLE and OLA KALA. He became interested in hybridizing immediately, and since has grown several thousand seedlings each year.

His hobbies include hunting, fishing, coin collecting, trapping, and he is considered as an expert in bridge. He is employed in the Stillwater post office.

The Humphreys have two married daughters, Rebecca and Margaret, and a son, Ricky, who is a senior in high school.

The whole family has long been active in the Oklahoma Iris Society, and John currently is first vice president of that organization.

Paul Cook, Iris Hybridizer

ROBERT SCHREINER

As we turned into the gasoline service station to inquire for more detailed directions to Paul Cook's home, I could not help but muse. Somehow, while I had never visited him before, I had the feeling I had been here with him in the irises. The pleasant farmland country of Wells County in Indiana was but a prelude. This drive along the storied "banks of the Wabash," the pleasant, dappled landscape, tree-lined streams with sentinel sycamores—all furnished the background to the mounting climax of meeting Paul Cook at Bluffton. As we drove in the driveway and parked our car under the wonderful large American elm and walked to see the irises peeking over the garden fence, I reflected: What manner of man was he? Before the advent of color slide snapshots, I was without a visual impression of him. Even before I had the chance to approach him, he stood out in a cluster of iris fanciers. He was not an overly tall man. He was not heavy set; rather he was almost ascetically slender. His voice was modulated, never loud or booming, yet his personality loomed up as one appreciated the carefulness and modesty of this wonderful man. There he was with his ever present garden basket on his left arm, with stud books and crossing paraphernalia. As I walked up to meet Paul Cook, my mind flashed back to an earlier time.

One of the first iris catalogs my father had received was one from Bluffton, Indiana, from the Longfield Iris Farm. The proprietors noted on the mast head were E. B. Williamson-Paul Cook. The year, 1922. Interesting to us

was the fact that Mr. E. B. Williamson, one of the early luminaries of the American Iris Society, was the senior partner, and he was associated with a rural mail carrier by the name of Paul Cook, who also loved iris. This partnership was eventually dissolved, and the Williamsons continued the hybridizations of E. B. Williamson. His early iris creations were of great importance in the development of iris, with such varieties as LENT A. WILLIAMSON and DOLLY MADISON, to mention just two. Their import was felt the length and breadth of the iris world. Upon the passing of Mr. Williamson, his daughter, Mary Williamson, continued the Longfield Iris Gardens, and it was through this famous garden that the developments of Mr. Cook were released to commerce. Many chapters could be written about Mr. Williamson, perhaps the first aril breeder in America, also a breeder of the table irises and other specialities in the iris family.

In the 1920's the epochal impact of the large iris from the Near East, as Asia Minor and contiguous areas, opened up new vistas to iris development. In retrospect, perhaps, we now have better understanding when we face a current breeding development. The examination of these new plants, the promise of finer garden varieties that would have larger flowers, taller stems, branching and other admirable qualities, developed a ferment of iris activity all over the country. Mr. Cook started his own specialized lines of iris breeding and soon he concentrated on his two special "lines" or series. These were known as his "red" line and his "dark" or Sable line.

The specialized line breeding methods were particular with Paul Cook's work, and he carried on some of the most intensive line breeding in the United States. He first established a goal. Next he selected two or three parental stocks, and he brought the amalgam of their crossing together. Then he continued to work with the descendants of these plants, refining, selecting and embellishing the strain. On several occasions it was my privilege to walk down the rows of seedlings with Paul Cook and discuss the various irises. Perhaps personal feeling crept into my thoughts. Have you ever noticed a stone that seems unusual? Perhaps an agate or carnelian that has been exposed and has been worked over by water. Have you had the impulse to pick it up, rub over the surface and sort of "shine" it. This urge to embellish one of nature's manifestations was exactly the process I felt Paul Cook loved to do with his irises. As he often mentioned, by not bringing in, or "dabbing on," as he put it, other iris pollen, he was eliminating the deleterious iris characters or genes.

One of the earliest series of line bred iris Mr. Cook started was his red iris line. He began by taking the three red irises of the 1920's he considered worthwhile to work with. They were SEMINOLE (Fair 1920), MORNING SPLENDOR (Shull 1923), and CINNABAR (Williamson 1928). His first numbered seedlings were selected in 1929. He had crossed SEMINOLE with CINNABAR, and also crossed MORNING SPLENDOR with children of that cross, and then intercrossed these seedlings in a myriad of combinations, continuing this work for as many as four and five generations before he would bring in some outside variety. One of these first offerings was the iris he named after his good friend, E. B. WILLIAMSON (1937). It was the product of this involved line breeding. This variety was only the first of many productions in the red iris group. Later varieties would include COPPER ROSE (1941), CAPTAIN WELLS (1941), REDWARD (1942), and RELENTLESS (1948). But this was

only one phase. Mr. Cook did not live only within his own confines. Another iris contemporary of the same golden age of Williamson, Sturtevant, Cook, etc., was the red iris specialist, Mr. E. G. Lapham, whose interest in red iris breeding continued right up into 1964, a full forty years of breeding red iris. Mr. Cook and Mr. Lapham working together, yet separately in some efforts, were constant iris companions. A letter a week between them was as expected as the rising sun each day. Mr. Cook infused some of Mr. Lapham's varieties in seedlings that are yet to bloom.

But red iris were only one of the "lines" of breeding Mr. Cook started. At the same time he was working on the red family, he was also working on the black iris series, as he called it—his "S" (Sable) series. Again, the same technique of breeding was started to found this strain. He selected BLUE BOY (Foster 1913) and crossed this with INNOCENZA (Lemon) a darkish blue with a white. The action of this white, which seemed to intensify the coloring of BLUE BOY, was a phenomenon that was observed, and this information was called on for work Mr. Cook delved into in the 1950's. But, to return to the dark series, by mating this dark side, particularly the CINNABAR-SEMINOLE children, the culmination, after ten years work, was the iris SABLE (1938). Dipping into the reservoir of other breeders' work in dark, the use of MODOC (Essig), BLACK FOREST (Schreiner), and BLACK WINGS (Kirkland) resulted in blacks pouring in an ever increasing and interesting stream. His SABLE NIGHT (1951), a Dykes Medal Winner, was one of the capping achievements to his dark iris efforts.

Ever searching, ever studying his iris, Mr. Cook again probed the palette of iris colors, and contributed two of the most important iris in the orchid-pink colors, DREAMCASTLE (1943) and HARRIET THOREAU (1944). These were stepping stones to further and finer iris. In some of our personal iris breeding efforts the evolution of the better orchid iris would not have been possible had not DREAMCASTLE and HARRIET THOREAU been that invaluable advancement and link to these wonderful colors.

There is a veritable library of "who done it" in the breeding work of Paul Cook. A person interested in geneologies will find a fascinating detective story behind whatever color line was being carried on. I have mentioned the dark (S) series, the reds and the orchids. I should mention, as well, his introductions LANCASTER (1940) and MAJENICA (1941), both continuing products of this highly skilled breeder.

About 1946 some interesting considerations were being projected and analyzed. The introduction of the blue iris DISTANCE in 1946 triggered the imagination of Mr. Cook. "How can we develop a 'bluer' iris?" In fact, it was his observation that a person could get a pronounced headache from constantly studying and culling the blue seedlings, of which he raised hundreds and hundreds of highly refined, selective parentages.

I was interested in the true *Iris pumila*, and was successful in locating some plants of this species in Vienna, Austria and Cludji, Transylvania. I sent plants of these to Mr. Cook, and they immediately interested him. Some of his earliest crosses of this species with other species were, in part, one of the keys to modern dwarf breeding. Yet, significantly, in pursuing the quest for possible contribution from the action of *I. pumila* on tall bearded blue irises, he eventually achieved two irises of the standard dwarf bearded class, BARIA and GREEN SPOT, both highly regarded. There was yet another cross which

was performed. The use of one of the dwarf iris from the Balkan dwarf species complex yielded PROGENITOR, the famous ancestor to many of the famous, later day Cook iris developments. This cross, again, is a fine case history of the carefulness of Mr. Cook's breeding and the interpretation of results and the refinements thereof. His original cross which produced PROGENITOR was this yellow Balkan species cross with a tall bearded blue iris, to see if he could develop that "bluer" blue iris. The result—PROGENITOR. Many a less experienced hybridizer would have quailed at the result. Surely, nothing was envisioned. However, true iris breeder that he was, he then, in turn, crossed this seedling, PROGENITOR, with a tall bearded blue iris again. The result—the dawn of a new race of white standard iris with smooth-colored falls. His records soon told Mr. Cook that he had not discovered a newer blue iris, but he had uncoupled a new dominant amoena pattern of previously unknown high qualities. So while the ideal "bluer" blue did not show up, he began his epochal work with the children of PROGENITOR. Crossing PROGENITOR with his orchid iris, as exemplified by DREAMCASTLE, he selected one iris of this new pattern, MELODRAMA (1956). By selective and refining processes in continuing the use of the tall bearded blue iris and crosses of the children, just as he had done with the red lines years ago, he attained WHOLE CLOTH (1958), the Dykes Medal Winner for 1962. Other irises from this blue parentaged series include WONDERMENT (1958) and EMMA COOK (1959) with its interesting corona margin, MISS INDIANA (1961) and SUPERLATION (1962).

Ever interested to see how a different character would work, the inevitable question from a person working with the very deeply colored black iris—what would happen when this new dominant pattern, that suppressed the coloration of the standards in previous crosses, was crossed with the blacks? So he made just such a cross. The result—TOLL GATE (1959). Once he had produced WHOLE CLOTH and raised several more generations of its children, Mr. Cook discontinued working in this line. As he mentioned, just about everyone would be working it, and he had something more interesting he would like to spend his more limited time and space on.

Yes, he had! And, it was again the unusual—the crossing of the children of WHOLE CLOTH ancestry with one of the deep brown blends. These crosses gave a totally different color pattern—not blue and white as when blue or lavender irises were mated; not orchid as in MELODRAMA; but an iris with pure yellow standards and fairly interesting blue falls. This most recent color pattern was the most recent phase of iris creative ability that occupied his main interest the last few years. Yes, as he told me, he was still after that elusive true blue iris. The excursion into the entire field of dominant bicolors or amoenas that WHOLE CLOTH sired was one of the fascinating diversissements that iris breeding will yield to the breeder—and what a diversissement it was!

This, then, was Paul Cook. He has been acknowledged as one of our most careful and discerning iris breeders. His attention to his flowers and his study of them was so intense, yet backgrounded with both a great affection for and a deep understanding of them, that it made a trip through his garden, as he related about this and that effort, one of the unforgettable experiences. No histrionics, a keen and pleasant sense of humor, and as deep an understanding of the iris family as I have seen evidenced. Personally, I, and I am sure

many, many iris enthusiasts, feel a great debt to this keenly investigative iris breeder who coupled with his theory the utmost of patience and persistence, often under trying circumstances. On occasions a late spring frost would wipe out a whole year's bloom. Undaunted, he studied his books more, and slowly decided which were the crosses he wanted to make and which of the many seedling combinations he was going to use. Just this past year the American Iris Society awarded the Dykes Medal to his iris ALLEGIANCE—a rich, deep blue-violet iris. Paul Cook's allegiance was to the flower he loved. Yet, he did not slight nature. The sheltered woodland area just behind his iris beds had the wilding life that was native to Wells County—the wildflowers, the birds. This was their sanctuary and here, too, Paul Cook communed with nature. His legacy in inspiration, iris thought and iris achievement are a gift for which he will be ever remembered.

Ackerman Awarded Service Medal



The Board of Directors at the Chicago meeting in October voted to the Treasurer of the Society, Jay C. Ackerman, of Waverly Hills, Michigan, the Distinguished Service Medal, the highest honor that AIS can bestow, for his long and devoted attention to the affairs of the Society.

Mr. Ackerman was born in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, and is a graduate of Michigan State University, with a B.S. degree in civil engineering. He was elected to *Tau Beta Pi*, honorary engineering fraternity, and has been a registered professional engineer since 1937. He has been employed in the structural steel industry for forty-two years, and now is the plant manager of the Lansing branch of the Mississippi Valley Steel Company.

In October 1926 Mr. Ackerman and Marion Merrill were married, and they have one married daughter, Marjorie, and three grandchildren, Karen (11), Susan (9) and Richard (7).

Mr. Ackerman started growing irises in 1941 when he purchased such varieties as E. B. WILLIAMSON, DOLLY MADISON, PRESIDENT PILKINGTON, MORNING SPLENDOR and TIFFANY. He joined AIS in 1948, and served as RVP of Region 6 during 1953-55. He was appointed to the Board of Directors of AIS in 1964, and served on the Board for twelve years. He was Chairman of the Awards Committee for 1958-59, and Treasurer during 1960-64, a position which he currently occupies.

His devotion to the duties of the Society is attested to by the fact that he has attended fourteen of the fifteen national conventions since 1950, and all of the fall board meetings since 1954.

He belongs to the dwarf and the median societies, and has done limited hybridizing in these sections, as well as with tall bearded. One of his hybridizing efforts established a first with an interspecies dwarf cross between *pumila* and *arenaria*. Two seedlings of this cross, PUMAR ALPHA and PUMAR BETA, were registered and introduced in 1954.