

# In Memoriam: Marvin Granger

by Marie Caillet, Texas

THE IRIS WORLD HAS LOST ANOTHER DEDICATED AND PROLIFIC hybridizer with the death of Marvin Granger of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Marvin died May 11, 2003, after an operation and other health problems. He leaves many devoted nieces and nephews and many iris friends with whom he talked or corresponded for over 50 years. He named many of his introductions for family members, such as MAY ROY, DEIRDRE KAY, and REBECCA GARBER. Other irises were named for collectors and growers, such as BILL LEVINGSTON and SAM REDBURN, or for well-known iris people like KAY NELSON, ROCKI ROCKWELL, and recently one named for HELEN REID of Australia.

Marvin said he got into the iris business quite by accident after a niece married a man from Cameron Parish near Creole, LA. On trips to visit the niece, he and his sister Leona began collecting different shades and forms of *I. giganteaerulea* to bring home to plant in their yards. They lived in property that bordered the Calcasieu River and that was a natural swamp when it rained. They later attended a talk and slide show in Lake Charles where they met Bill Levingston and learned about the red irises (*I. nelsonii*) that grew east of them. This led to collecting trips to the Abbeville area, the meeting of other collectors like Ike Nelson and W.B. MacMillan, and to joining the Society for Louisiana Irises. Marvin described the members of the Society as the "finest, friendliest folks I have ever known."

We can say the same about Marvin, who always welcomed everyone to his home and garden. He gave away more irises than sold and did whatever he could to promote Louisiana irises and the Society. He attended most of the SLI meetings and several AIS Conventions. He wrote articles for the Newsletters and for the *AIS Bulletin*. The members from Texas who drove through Lake Charles for meetings in Lafayette stopped by his garden to see what was blooming and what he had new. It was not out of my way to stop on my frequent trips between Lafayette and Texas, so I stopped often. If he knew ahead, he had a pot

of his strong coffee made and hot biscuits in the morning or cookies in the afternoon. I always left with plants – Louisiana irises, Gulf penstemon, and a seedling pear tree I still grow.

Marvin collected awards as well as irises. He won many blue ribbons at the Lafayette Shows and often won Best of Show or Best Seedling. He won the DeBaillon Medal for KAY NELSON in 1995, the SLI Service Award in 1994 and the AIS Hybridizer's Medal in 2001. His collected CREOLE CAN CAN, the only double Louisiana iris ever found, gave us doubles and cartwheels like DOUBLE TALK, DELTA STAR, ROSE CARTWHEET, and STARLITE-STARBRIGHT. In all, he had registered 42 cultivars, but many of the early ones are probably lost by now. I still grow about a dozen of his introductions including the very old ones DELTA STAR (1966), MAY ROY (1969), and DELTA PRINCE (1971). They are still excellent garden irises.

It is sad to lose old friends like Marvin Granger, who represented the 'old order' of true gardeners and lover of the native irises of South Louisiana. 🌸



CAJUN SUNSET (LA – Marvin Granger)