



Photo courtesy of Tracy Plotner

## *Dr. Kleinsorge - Oregon Pioneer in Irises*

BY TRACY PLOTNER, AIS LIBRARIAN, OREGON

Dr. Rudolph Kleinsorge was born in Waterloo, Iowa in 1883. His undergraduate education took place at the University of Iowa where he received his B.A. in 1904. After working his way through school as an assistant to the head of the physiology department, he obtained his degree in medicine in 1908. He also pursued graduate study at Harvard University. For those five years he was content to be an instructor in the medical school at the University of Iowa.

Being the son of a circuit-riding preacher, and used to moving around a lot, the urge to head out west bite him hard. He came to the western lumber town of Silverton, Oregon in the summer of 1909. He immediately began his practice as a physician and surgeon. He liked to refer to himself as a "country doctor." Indeed a country doctor was what he was since there were no hospitals in the

area when he began his practice. He traveled around by carriage, sleigh, and horseback to patients' homes. Later he saw patients in his office on the second floor of the old Masonic Building. Eventually a hospital was established in a residence in 1918 until Silverton Hospital, a 45-bed facility, was raised in the early 1930's.

In his lifetime, Dr. Kleinsorge found the time for professional and civic service. He was past president of the Marion County Medical Society, a member of the Silverton School Board, and held memberships in Sigma Xi, Alpha Omega Alpha, the Rotary, the Masonic Lodge, the Shriners, and the American Medical Association.

But this article is about his role in the early beginnings of the iris. Within a year of his arrival in Silverton, Dr. Kleinsorge met and married Nina Bazley. In 1916 while building a new house (the house still stands today in

beautiful condition), he told the landscape artist that he wished for a planting of the new type of irises to be included around the house. That began the dabbling of blends, browns, and yellows that started Dr. Kleinsorge in his quest for new and improved forms and colors of irises.

In 1924, Dr. Kleinsorge gave his friend and patient Rholin Cooley a gift of some of these ‘strangely fascinating flowers’. By 1928, the Cooleys had established their iris

farm, printed their first catalog and a business was born.

As Kleinsorge’s interest grew he began developing irises of his own. As the years flew by, his hobby earned him awards of achievement from various organizations including The American Iris Society and the British Iris Society. Surprisingly all these irises were created in a 100 square foot garden across the street from his property.

Some of his notable achievements of his time include:

<b>1943</b>	‘Daybreak’ (1941) Award of Merit Runner-up for Dykes Medal in 1945 Tied for Dykes Medal in 1946	<b>1949</b>	‘Sunset Blaze’ (1948) Franklin Cup, AIS Convention, – Portland, OR
<b>1944</b>	‘Grand Canyon’ (1941) Award of Merit ‘Prince of Orange’ (1940) Award of Merit	<b>1950</b>	Foster Memorial Plaque
<b>1945</b>	‘Treasure Island’ (1937) Award of Merit	<b>1952</b>	‘Ballet Dancer’ (1949) Award of Merit
<b>1946</b>	‘Tobacco Road’ (1942) Award of Merit ‘Ranger’ (1943) Award of Merit	<b>1953</b>	‘Solid Gold’ (1951) Award of Merit ‘Thotmes III’ (1950) Award of Merit ‘Prospector’ (1950) Award of Merit
<b>1947</b>	‘Bryce Canyon’ (1944) Award of Merit ‘Cascade Splendor’ (1944) Award of Merit	<b>1976</b>	‘Tobacco Road’ (1942) Board of Directors Award*

Dr. Kleinsorge died in 1978 at the age of 95. In a newspaper article written about him in 1969, he stated that if he were younger and starting out again he would do the same things over and had no regrets about anything.

\*The award is to be “given to any iris which has not won a Dykes Medal, but which shows clearly

in its progeny that it is among the greats of irisdom.” This award was presented to Dr. Kleinsorge at the AIS Convention in Lansing Michigan in 1976.

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Photo: Mike Unser



'Cascade Splendor'



'Daybreak'



'Prospector'



'Sunset Blaze'



'Treasure Island'



'Thotmes III'