

**Region 21 Bulletin**  
**American Iris Society**  
**Fall/Winter 2017**



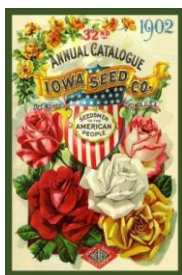
**Agnes Whiting, Spirited Young Woman  
of Hybridizing**

**Bulletin No. 149**

## Whiting Color Photo Gallery



Page 3



Page 4



Page 5



Page 6



Page 6



Page 8



Page 9

# *Table of Contents*

RVP Message – Kelly Norris .....	2
2017 AIS National Convention & Agnes Whiting.....	3
Agnes Whiting: Iowa’s First Lady of Irises.....	4
Preserving Agnes Whiting’s Legacy – Can You Help? .....	12
A Look Back - The Early Days of Region 21 .....	13
2017 Convention Regional Awards.....	15
In Memoriam.....	16
Affiliate Reports.....	18
Path to Becoming an Accredited AIS Judge .....	20
August 2018 Judges Training – Mike Lockatell.....	21
Fall Meeting 2-Year Pilot Program Report.....	22
Region 21 BOD & Committees Directory .....	23



## *RVP Message – Kelly Norris*

2017 will go down as a hallmark year for AIS Region 21. As host of the 2017 AIS National Convention, we welcomed 338 convention attendees from around the U.S. and Canada to Des Moines for five days of irises. We

celebrated irises in lectures like the one given by Tony Hall from Royal Botanic Garden, Kew during the first Saturday Symposium at a national convention. We explored new iris frontiers in five excellent guest gardens maintained by dedicated Region 21 members. We reveled in the company of fellow iris lovers at events like the Dine-A-Round, which will hopefully become a new tradition to look forward to at future conventions. We honored the hybridizers and volunteers who make AIS a vibrant horticultural organization at the annual awards dinner on Saturday evening. I was glad to see our region well represented in attendance and look forward to seeing members at next year's National Convention held in conjunction with the Society for Louisiana Irises in New Orleans, Louisiana (April 9-14, 2018).

More recently, 25 of us convened in Kearney, Nebraska for our fall meeting and auction on August 11 and 12, which featured recently harvested irises from the convention guest gardens. The auction featured 51 varieties and raised \$702 for the region's general fund. Attendees also had the opportunity to learn from two of the iris world's inveterate judges, Jim and Jean Morris from St. Louis, Missouri. During the general meeting, members voted to establish a new initiative to support public gardens like the Iowa Arboretum, a 2017 National Convention guest garden, in developing collections of irises for public display. Look for more information about how to become involved in this effort in a future regional bulletin.

One of the ways you can have an impact on the future of irises in the region is to assume a leadership role. The Region has several vacant positions that are critical to our ongoing success. If you or someone you know would like to become involved, please email me to learn more. The following positions remain vacant as of the writing of this letter: Assistant RVP, Secretary, First-Year Board Director, Judges Training Chairman, Newsletter Editor (as of January 1).

As I close this message, I'm grateful for the Region's successes this past year. The National Convention was a profitable venture and leaves our general operating fund in its best financial position in years. For a small region like ours, this money is essential for annual programming and for investing in new initiatives that help spread the pleasure of growing irises and the benefits of membership in the AIS.

## 2017 AIS National Convention & Agnes Whiting



When Region 21 was formed and hosted its first AIS meeting (not yet called a “convention”) in 1950, Agnes Whiting and her husband Charles were well established hybridizers. Agnes was a driving force in the success of that meeting and the success of the region. In honor of Agnes and all she contributed to Region 21, the AIS, and to iris hybridizing, the third AIS convention hosted by Region 21 used the theme *Rhythm of the Prairie* (a nod to ‘Blue Rhythm’), named the tour buses after six of her introductions, and invited

Cathy Egerer to present a program about Agnes Whiting.

Cathy’s presentation was something we felt was worth capturing and sharing with all Region 21 members. Cathy generously agreed to write an article for our post-convention Bulletin and obtained permission from the Whiting family for the use of the photos (cover photo and those in this issue).

The 2017 AIS Convention was a large undertaking with a small committee and an intrepid band of volunteers. The five host gardens received well over 2000 guest irises which, over the span from planting to garden tour, languished in rich soil slurping up nutrients and water, soaking up sun, and trying to weather Iowa winters. Most of them successfully managed to produce respectable increases. Some of them went into overdrive creating great colonies. Others threw in the towel. Together, with the help of Mother Nature and the garden hosts, the guests performed beautifully, creating a wonderful show for the critical two days of the garden tour.

As you all know, when you start with over 2000 irises you can expect multiples of 2000 to deal with in the aftermath. The post-convention digging and shipping was as big a task as you might imagine and now it is complete.

The generosity of the hybridizers has left us with some wonderful additions to our regions gardens. The experience has left us with a tremendous appreciation for the effort, dedication, and energy behind every AIS Convention.

# Agnes Whiting: Iowa's First

## Lady of Irises

By Cathy Egerer

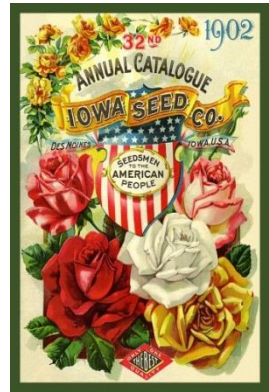


Agnes Whiting was a native Iowan renowned for her beautiful irises, but to those who knew her, she was a kind, gracious lady who always welcomed visitors to her garden. Hardworking and meticulous, her hybridizing work culminated in 'Blue Rhythm', one of the most famous irises ever introduced. Yet, if not for a chance meeting at a small iris show, it might never have happened.

### *The Horticulturist's Daughter*

Agnes Hester was born in Van Meter, Iowa on August 19, 1894, the youngest of 12 children born to William and Sabra Hester. William Hester was a horticulturist for the Iowa Seed Company, specializing in hybridizing vegetables and flowers. Agnes spent her childhood in Van Meter, and in 1906 the Hester family moved to Des Moines where the company was headquartered.

William soon became a partner in the Iowa Seed Company and took charge of all their experimental work. He hybridized the 'New Hester' squash, a new strain of tomatoes, and a number of zinnias and asters. Agnes graduated from West High School in Des Moines in 1912, and the yearbook describes her as "*A bonny lass, I will confess, and pleasant to the eye.*" Pleasant indeed, as her photo shows a pretty, sweet-faced girl with an intelligent look about her.



Agnes next attended Highland Park College in Des Moines, where she studied to be a teacher. She graduated in 1914 (scoring 100% on the Mathematics section) and took her teaching exams that spring. In September, Agnes began teaching sixth grade in Mapleton, about 150 miles from Des Moines. It was there she met Charles Whiting, an attorney and clerk for the Mapleton Trust & Savings Bank, co-founded by his father in 1878. Eventually he became the bank president.



Agnes Hester and Charles Whiting were married in 1917. The photo of Agnes aboard the steamer *America* on Lake Superior (shown on the cover) may have been taken on their honeymoon. Charles served in the U.S. Army during World War I, and when the war ended, they built a house on Courtright Street in Mapleton. Agnes wrote, “We did not get to begin our gardening till the spring of 1919.” That year, Agnes and Charles planted about 30 irises in a perennial border, including some irises sent by her father. They included ‘Queen of May’, ‘Caprice’, and ‘Princess Beatrice’, among others.



Caprice

### *A Fateful Meeting*

By 1925, the Whitings were growing nearly 100 varieties of iris in their garden from various Des Moines nurseries. Their family had grown as well to include their son James, born in 1919, and their daughter Flora, born in 1924. That year, Charles was asked to judge a small iris show at the Des Moines Founders Garden Club. At that time, anyone with some experience in growing irises could be asked to judge at an iris show. Hans P. and Jacob Sass were there with a display of their irises, and the Whitings were fascinated. Agnes recalled, “They stole the show and changed our lives.”



Henry, Hans P. and Jacob Sass

Upon returning to Mapleton, Agnes and Charles accepted an invitation to visit the Sass gardens near Omaha. Agnes later wrote, “*After that, we never missed a year in their gardens. We bought all their named varieties and many seedlings. We also bought from F. X. Schreiner, Carl Milliken, Carl*

*Salbach, and others.*”

Agnes and Charles’s interest in irises continued to grow. As their garden expanded, their thoughts turned to trying their hand at breeding their own irises. Agnes suspected that Charles had an ulterior motive:

*“We had begun some pollenating in 1930. Charles urged me to do nearly all of it – he claimed his fingers were too clumsy, but I’ve always suspected that he wanted to spur my interest. It was spurred by this and by the new varieties and seedlings we saw at Annual Meetings in the*

1930s. Some were so good and some so very bad – it was a challenge. I studied avidly during the winter months, kept meticulous records, and corresponded with many of the leading hybridizers, learning all I could from every possible source.”

### Maple Valley Gardens

By 1933, Charles and Agnes had opened Maple Valley Gardens, selling irises from their home on Courtright Street. The Whittings offered many Sass irises in their catalog, along with other irises of the time. In a note to Robert Schreiner in 1934, Agnes explained that she had not put out a catalog that year, just a price list, and had a number of surplus irises to trade:

*“I grew so much iris before I began to sell any that I have quite a bit more than I can dispose of. The prices were pretty high last year, as I didn’t care much whether I sold it or not. I would just as soon trade with you....most of my iris money goes into new ones anyway.”*



Although Agnes collected irises from many sources, the main irises she used for breeding came from the Sass brothers. Soon a breakthrough occurred:

*“In 1935 Mr. Hans Sass divided a new seedling with us which we used more than any other single iris to the extent that it became the backbone of our breeding efforts. This iris was later named ‘Matula’. Crossed with ‘Happy Days’ it gave us our first named iris, ‘Golden Spike’.*

By the late 1930s, the Whittings were introducing some of the new Sass irises, such as ‘Golden Fleece’. They continued their hybridizing efforts, and in 1940 the first Whiting irises were introduced by Maple Valley Gardens. ‘Golden Spike’, ‘Nylon’ and ‘Raejean’ led the way.



‘Nylon’

Agnes was asked how she came up with the name ‘Nylon’. Nylon was a new synthetic material in 1940 and the first nylon stockings had arrived on the market that year. She had just received a package of the new stockings in the mail and it inspired her, she said.

The early 1940s was an eventful time in the Whiting



garden. A flurry of new introductions during the war years kept Agnes and Charles busy. Some of the most famous Whiting irises were introduced during this time, including ‘Three Oaks’, ‘Copper Frills’, and ‘Rubient’.

### *A Twist of Fate*

‘Flight Leader’ (1952) was named for the Whiting’s son, James Giddings Whiting, who served as a squadron leader in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II. Jim Whiting flew P-40 Curtiss Warhawk fighter planes, mainly as bomber escorts. His squadron was part of the bombing of Anzio, Italy in 1944.



Italian Countess Mary Senni, an American by birth, was a great admirer of the Whiting’s irises. She planted many varieties in her extensive gardens at Villa Senni, outside of Rome. Huge German railroad guns were hidden in tunnels all around the area of the Villa Senni estate. Jim’s squadron took part in the bombing attempts to destroy the guns in 1944.

In a strange twist of fate, Jim Whiting’s squadron destroyed the Senni gardens – and the large collection of his own mother’s irises. Villa Senni was rebuilt after the war and is now a hotel. Mary Senni was instrumental in the founding of Rome’s Municipal Rose Garden, as well as introducing over 100 irises of her own, of which only a few survive.

### *Blue Rhythm Arrives*



After the war, the Whitings continued to introduce new irises at the rate of 6-8 per year. They established a second, larger garden in a field near the local high school, and it became immensely popular with visitors. The original garden in the back yard of the Whiting home became the center for of their hybridizing efforts.

The year 1945 brought the introduction of what soon became the Whiting’s most famous iris: a smooth, cornflower blue TB named ‘Blue Rhythm’. However, of their 1945 iris introductions, the one the Whitings were most excited about was ‘Rocket’. Agnes described it:

*'A brilliant new orange yellow iris that many of our visitors think is the finest they have ever seen in our gardens... judges and casual visitors alike, went straight to it.'*



**'Rocket'**

But it was the cool, elegant 'Blue Rhythm' that drew visitors' attention, over and over. Both 'Rocket' and 'Blue Rhythm' received Honorable Mentions in 1945, and Award of Merit in 1947. 'Blue Rhythm' was offered in the Maple Valley Gardens catalog for the princely sum of \$25.00. In 1947, Agnes Whiting was awarded the AIS Hybridizer's Medal, the first woman since Grace Sturtevant to receive it. She was asked if she had a favorite iris:

*"You ask me for my favorite from my own seedlings - that is hard to answer. It might be Garden Glory or Rocket or Blue Rhythm. But I like them all or I would not pick them out."*

### ***A Strange Annual Meeting***

The 1950 AIS Annual Meeting was held in Sioux City, Iowa. Harry Randall, President of the British Iris Society, was to be the scheduled keynote speaker - but Mother Nature had other plans. From the Fall, 1950 AIS Bulletin:

*"Winter came - but at the wrong time. It would not end - at the right time. Spring confused some flowers into bursting into bloom not once but several times. There was summer in January, then winter in April. New England is parched brown from drought in the season when it should be wet. Tennessee is lush and green in the season when it should be dry as a bone."*

Spring was late, and the irises were even later. With only a few weeks to go, and over 300 people signed up to attend, the annual meeting was postponed two weeks. When the event finally got underway on May 27, the opening dinner had no entertainment so the attendees chipped in. Several men, including Geddes Douglas and Dr. Franklin Cook, formed a barbershop quartet and sang a few numbers. Geddes Douglas gave a "Boogie Woogie Piano Lesson". And David Hall, famous for his pink irises, played two numbers on the harmonica: "Looking at the World Thru Rose-Colored Glasses" and "Pink Lady".

Unfortunately, the Sass garden was past peak bloom but the Whiting garden was in its full glory. Two standout irises were 'Maytime' and

‘Technicolor’, recent Whiting introductions. But it was a 100-foot row of ‘Blue Rhythm’ that caught everyone’s eye. When the votes for the President’s Cup were tallied, it was the favorite iris of the convention. It received 110 of the 180 votes cast.

Harry Randall was back in England by the time of the awards dinner, but he recorded his speech during his last stop, in Nashville. The members listened to it, instead. As for the President’s Cup, when they went to award it to Agnes Whiting, nobody could find it. (It eventually turned up somewhere.)

‘Blue Rhythm’ was on everyone’s mind when it came time to cast the ballots for the Dykes Medal in 1950. It received 100 votes – more than twice the number of the next runner-up. To this day,

‘Blue Rhythm’ is one of the most-honored irises in history:



Agnes and 'Blue Rythm'

1945 - Honorable Mention

1947 - Award of Merit - AIS

1950 - American Dykes Medal

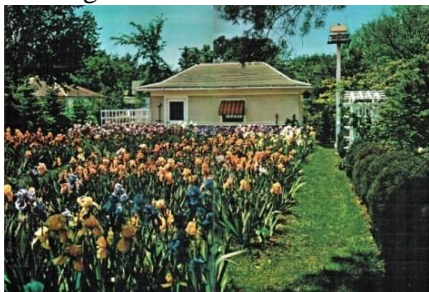
1950 - Award of Merit - Royal Horticultural Society and Iris Society of England

1951 - First place - AIS Symposium (remained on top 100 list for next 20 years)

1953 - First Class Certificate - Royal Horticultural Society and Iris Society of England

### ***Beyond Blue Rhythm***

By the early 1950s, the Whitings were raising over 9,000 seedlings each year, of which perhaps 100 received numbers. Their irises were being sold to gardeners all over the world. The commercial irises were farmed out to Long’s Iris Garden in Boulder, Colorado, and the gardens in Mapleton became their hybridizing gardens.



The main seedling garden was still located behind the Whiting house on Courtright Street.

Sue Ragan and Jim and Craig Whiting have fond memories of their grandparents' garden.

**Craig Whiting:** *"When a boy, I often visited Grandpa and Grandma and in season always got a tour of the gardens. What really stuck with me all these years was not the flowers (of which I still have Blue Rhythm in my garden) but the image of my Grandfather in bib overalls, with a white shirt and tie, tending the garden."*

**Sue Ragan:** *"When photographers were visiting, Grandmother would often ask me to be a model. With elation, I accepted. Still very young, I thought this was magical, like a princess in a story. In one of the photos, you will see a trellis. Often, I would be seated there for the photograph. How I loved to sit there and pretend to be a princess."*

**Jim Whiting:** *"Several times each week, on my way home from school, I would cut through Johnny Welch's back yard to get to the garden that you see. Johnnie and I were close friends so I was not really trespassing. I would look up and down the paths in the garden looking for my grandmother. The plants were tall but I would find her on her knees digging and planting. She loved the company and we would visit a bit. She always had questions about what we were doing in school. Frequently she would send me on some assignment, like feeding the gold fish in the ponds, while she would finish up her project."*

*In those days we kids were expected to work and to save money. I had the job of mowing grandma and grandpa's yard. This was in addition to my own yard and the Episcopal Church's yard and a few others. Also, my grandpa would ask me to help him with jobs around the house.*

*One of the tasks he and I did together was to clean and maintain the bird house that you see in the photo. Grandpa and Grandma loved birds, particularly the Martins that ate mosquitos and other bugs in the yard. The birdhouse that you see on the tall pole next to the garden, is a martin house.*

*Grandpa had a special ladder that he would lean against the tall pole of the birdhouse. My job was to climb the ladder and clean out last year's nests. Then Grandpa would set me up with a special brush and a container of powdered sulfur. I would dust out the bird dwellings. The powder was to destroy the "mites" in the bird hotel. We worked together.*

*As I write this I am reminded of many more things that we did together. Grandpa and I started a business building and selling Martin birdhouses. We repaired Edison Phonographs in his excellent workshop in the basement. Grandpa and Grandma loved trains. Many nights each week grandma and grandpa would pick us up in their car (a Mercury) and we would go watch the trains roll through. They took Sue and me on a train trip to Sioux City one Saturday.*

*They had an entire room dedicated to storing their complete set of National Geographic magazines.*

*Grandma liked to act like a ghost on Halloween. She would drift across the Mapleton City Park in an eerie manner, trying to scare us kids. They took voyages on tramp steamers down the coast of South America and collected "Curios" which they displayed in a special cabinet upstairs in their home.*

*They raised goldfish in two ponds in the garden. I have seen the bullet hole in the shirt worn by grandpa when, as a child, he accidentally shot himself with the rifle his father had made for him. There was a fine collection of antiques and guns in their attic. But grandpa's greatest love was music. His attic was full of coronets, trumpets, trombones, snare drums, and other band instruments. When we would ride the back roads of western Iowa in the evening, music would run through his thoughts, and he would hum and buzz like a brass band.*

*The building that you see in the back of the photo is their garage and a workshop-shed. The Mercury was on the right side and the workshop on the left, and behind the garage were empty boxes and baskets and stuff to go to "The Dump." In the workshop they had shovels, spades, tools. They also made ID tags for the iris plants. They were metal (maybe zinc?) and were etched with a mild acid solution. Very enduring tags."*

**Craig Whiting:** *"Agnes was an avid reader and with that gave me the spark to read and yearn for travel. She and Charles traveled by freighter mostly and brought back little treasures from all over the world. That was my inspiration to see the world. Unfortunately, I never developed the green thumb she had."*

Don Roy, of Provincetown, Massachusetts recalls visiting Agnes in her garden when he was a boy.

*“My father was an insurance agent in Omaha, and he sometimes had business with Mr. Whiting at the Mapleton bank. When I was in my early teens, I would ride along with him when he went on his business trips, and Dad would drop me off at the Whiting garden. I would always find Mrs. Whiting working in the rows of irises. She taught me how to deadhead the blooms and I would help her. While we were working, she’d talk with me. I remember how kind she was, and she started me on my own lifelong love of irises. What a wonderful lady.”*

Charles and Agnes enjoyed traveling in the winter months, often by steamer. Passenger records show they took trips up and down the Atlantic coast, to Central and South America. But springtime would find them back in their beloved iris gardens. Together they introduced more



**Charles and Agnes in their garden**

than 130 new irises, many of which became parents to famous new cultivars. As one example, ‘Blue Rhythm’ is a parent of ‘Eleanor’s Pride’, the Dykes Medal winner in 1961.

Agnes Whiting passed away on July 6, 1966 at the age of 71. Her Dykes

Medal is on permanent display at the Museum of American History in Mapleton, the former Trinity Episcopal Church. Charles passed away at the age of 93 on August 6, 1984. He kept his private garden for many years, but in 1970 he gave away the irises in the big field to anyone in town who wanted them, to beautify his beloved hometown of Mapleton.

## ***Preserving Agnes Whiting’s Legacy – Can You Help?***

Today, about 30 of Agnes Whiting’s introductions survive, but there may be others still growing somewhere. HIPS is trying to locate missing Whiting cultivars so we can place them in the HIPS Guardian Gardens program, grow them on, and share them so they don’t disappear.

These irises were all known to be in gardens within the last decade:



Autumn Glory  
Baghdad  
Cadet Blue  
Copper Kettle

Cynthia Ann  
Parker  
Garden Glory  
Harvest Moon  
Majolica

Orient Pink  
Petunia  
Priscilla  
Veishea  
Wood Opal

Please help us to honor Agnes and Charles Whiting by keeping their irises alive for future generations to enjoy. If you can locate any of these irises, please contact HIPS President Cathy Egerer at [pr@historiciris.org](mailto:pr@historiciris.org) or by phone: 906-494-2570.

## ***A Look Back - The Early Days of Region 21***

*Editorial Note: Region 21 was founded in 1950, the same year it hosted the AIS Annual Meeting in Souix City. The region later held its own first meeting in Omaha. The minutes of that meeting, published in the region Bulletin, provides an interesting look at the fledgling organization.*

*As you read these minutes you might want a little background music. Here are a few suggestions from the 1950 top 30: Good Night Irene, Bonaparte's Retreat, and Music Music Music. Clearly, there are 27 more to choose from but you can research those on your own. Just to get you started – ♪Put another nickel in...*

### **Minutes of the Frist Meeting of Region 21 - November 4, 1950**

The first meeting of Region 21 of the American Iris society was held at the Rome Hotel in Omaha, Nebraska, on November 4, at 12:30 p.m. Mrs. Ralph E. Ricker, regional vice-president, presiding, and Mrs. J. Arthur Nelson acted as secretary.

Mrs. Ricker first asked all present to introduce themselves. There were sixty-seven people present at the meeting. North Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska were represented. The crowd gave liberal applause to Mrs. B. E. Ellis, of Ottumwa, Iowa, and Ruth M. Johnson, of Fargo, North Dakota, for the distance which they had traveled to be at the meeting.

Mrs. Charles Whiting explained the changes in districting which finally had resulted in Region 21. Mrs. Whiting pointed out that originally Iowa and Nebraska had been a part of Region 9, but as interest and membership grew, the new Region 18, composed of Missouri,

Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska was formed. In a short time Region 18 became the largest region in the AIS, and the new Region 21 was formed by taking Iowa and Nebraska away from Region 18, and by giving the new Region 21 North and South Dakota.

Mrs. L. F. Kelly, past president of the Greater Omaha Iris Society, welcomed the guest to Omaha, and explained the organization of the Greater Omaha Iris Society.

Mr. Kelly introduced Mr. G. E. Redman, the new president of the Greater Omaha Iris Society. Mr. Redman spoke of the many honors that Region 21 had won, and spoke of the many fine gardens in the region. In conclusion, he read a poem that he had written about iris, and the poem that his wife had written in rebuttal.

Mr. Slothower, Regional Slide Chairman, made an appeal to the members present to help build up the regional slide collection.

Miss Vera Ludden, of Sioux City, Iowa, in the absence of the editor, Mrs. Marcue, spoke of the new regional bulletin and the plans for its continuation and improvement.

Mrs. Whiting spoke in the absence of Mr. W. H. Apted, regional membership chairman, and outlined the plans for the membership drive. She reported that a number of commercial growers had made it possible for the membership committee to offer some grand prizes for securing of new memberships, and that the plan was outlined on page 21 of the new regional bulletin.

Mr. R. S. Lyell reported on test gardens and spoke in their behalf as an aide to the hybridizers off the beaten path.

Mr. Sothower showed a number of interesting slides. Chester Tompkins acted as narrator. Mrs. Charles Kavan showed the slides of the Greater Omaha show, with Mr. Nelson acting as narrator.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mrs. E. A. Emery presided over the drawing of the door prizes. These prizes had been given by Sioux City Growers, Mr. Henry Sass and the Greater Omaha Iris Society. Mrs. J. Arthur Nelson, Acting Secretary

## ***2017 Convention Regional Awards***

Region 21 hybridizers were well represented by guest irises in the five tour gardens of the 2017 convention. Participating hybridizers were:

Dean Douglas  
Allan Ensminger  
David Lionberger  
LeRoy Meininger

Kelly Norris  
Kent Pfeiffer  
Robert J. Smith

### ***President's Cup***

Those of you attending the convention will remember from your garden tour ballot that the President's Cup is awarded to the "introduced iris originated by a hybridizer from the home region" receiving the most votes at the conclusion of the garden tour. The winners were announced during the Awards Banquet Saturday evening.

Winner:	'Landscaping Made Easy'	by Allan Ensminger
1st Runner-up:	'Bess Streeter Aldrich'	by Dean Douglas
2nd Runner-up:	'Elderberry Wine'	by David Lionberger

### ***Lloyd Zurbrig - Clarence Mahan Seedling Cup***

This award goes to "the best seedling seen in the convention gardens." Any seedling from any hybridizer, any variety, regardless of region, is eligible to win this award.

We are pleased that one of our own gained recognition in this very competitive category.

1st Runner-up:	Seedling LM-14-03	by LeRoy Meininger
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Congratulations to all!

*A full list of award winners can be found in the Summer 2017 issue of the AIS Bulletin.*

*Pictures, when available, are posted on the Region 21 website.*

## *In Memoriam*



### **Vince Fox**

by Gary White and Linda Rader

Vincent Fox passed away August 15, 2016, at the age of 84, in Mankato, Minnesota.

Vince was born in Sioux City, IA and graduated from Central High School in Sioux City in 1950. He graduated from Dunwoody Industrial Institute, the printing department, in Minneapolis, MN. Vince then spent 42 years working in newspapers in Minnesota and South Dakota. Vince retired in May, 1997 after 39 years with the Huron Plainsman, in Huron, SD. He married Donna Lea Loetz in Sioux City, IA on August 21, 1953.

According to AIS membership records, Vince Fox became a member of AIS and Region 21 in July of 1963. Over the years, he became an iris judge, rising to Master Judge, and then was a retired judge during the past several years. Vince would be seen at virtually every regional meeting and convention during the years we knew him. And during most of that time, he was taking photos of irises, people, and meetings, and planning the next issue of the Region 21 Bulletin.

Vince was the Editor of the Region 21 Bulletin from Spring 1996 through 2007. Vince and Donna received the Region 21 Distinguished Service Award in 2003 for their work and service to the Region. There was no nearby iris club for them, but they faithfully attended regional meetings, offering their irises, enthusiasm, time and energy to the region.

Vince enjoyed baseball, both watching and playing. He played baseball in Sioux City, Minneapolis, Montevideo, Clark, and Huron. And he played with the Madison Broncos in the Eastern South Dakota State League for a time. And, he was an avid New York Yankees fan. Among his other interests were bowling, gardening and, of course, irises.

Vince is survived by his two sons, Jeffrey of Midland, MI and Timothy (Fred) of North Mankato, MN, six grandchildren and his brother Val.

Vince will long be remembered in Region 21, for his dedication, work ethic, the 20+ issues of the Region 21 Bulletin that he produced, and his great personality and smile.

## Opal Wulf

by Gary White and Linda Rader

Opal Wulf passed away on October 6, 2015. She was a longtime and loyal member of the Lincoln Iris Society and Region 21 of the American Iris Society, as well as a hybridizer of irises.



Opal and her late husband Henry joined AIS and LIS in the early 1980s and quickly became involved in the activities of the local group and Region 21. On the local level Opal participated regularly in the shows, prepared the Show Schedule, and won Best of Show three times. Her major contribution was managing the annual sale for many years with husband Henry.

On the national and regional level, Opal was a member of several AIS Sections and Vice-President of the Tall Bearded Iris Society for a year in 2001-2002. She also served a term as Regional Vice President (RVP) of Region 21 in 1990-1992. She and Henry were recipients of the Region 21 Distinguished Service Award for 1995. She was an AIS Master Judge and served as Judge's Training Chair for the Region. She also presented judge's training sessions at fall regional meetings.

Opal and Henry were co-chairs of the 1990 national AIS Convention, Prairie in Bloom, headquartered in Omaha, NE. During that convention, their garden, Wulf's Backachers, was one of the host gardens on tour in Lincoln. They opened their garden for many spring regional conventions after that, including the Region 21/TBIS convention in 2004.

Opal's hybridizing was a large part of her iris "life" as well. Over the years, from 1993 to 2004, she registered 40 irises with the American Iris Society. Of these, 20 were MTBs, 9 TBs, 8 BBs, 1 SDB, 1 IB, and 1 Siberian iris. Of the 40 registered, 25 were introduced. Two, 'Wistful Wisteria' and 'Snickerdoodle' won HMs (Honorable Mention) in the AIS awards system, and in 2002, 'Wistful Wisteria' was awarded an AM (Award of Merit) in the MTB class. Miniature Tall Bearded Irises always were a special interest of hers. In addition to her own irises, Opal maintained a near complete collection of Allan Enslinger's irises at her home, and also introduced irises for Allan after his farm was sold.

Opal Wulf was a dedicated and avid supporter of irises, AIS Region 21 and the Lincoln Iris Society. She gave of her time and talents for both.

We could always count on her to take charge of an activity and “make it happen”. And then there were her cookies. Her motto was “Have cookies, will travel!” We loved her for that and for being part of our lives. We will miss her.

## ***Affiliate Reports***

Deadline for the Spring/Summer issue is Feb 1. Affiliates and independent members can submit information about activities and events at any time to the Region 21 website (see Directory).

### **Iowa**

#### **Heart of Iowa Iris Growers**

HOIIG celebrated its 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary Sept 28<sup>th</sup> with a potluck social and tour of The Garden of Hopes and Dreams on the DMACC (Des Moines Area Community College) campus in Ankeny. Two of our newest members are volunteers in this universal access community garden and provided a talk on its history. HOIIG members will be providing irises to be added to the garden.

The program schedule for 2017-2018 is in place and an iris show is being planned for next Spring. We meet the last Thursday of each month at Café Diem in Ankeny, IA at 7:00 p.m., with occasional exceptions, such as this year’s Sept meeting.

See the HOOIG website for updates and changes: [hoiig.wordpress.com](http://hoiig.wordpress.com)

### **Nebraska**

#### **Lincoln iris Society**

President - David Lionberger  
402-466-2838  
[lionswiss@windstream.net](mailto:lionswiss@windstream.net)

Secretary - Jenny Cich  
402-525-5047  
[jennycich@gmail.com](mailto:jennycich@gmail.com)

Vice President - Heidi Brase  
402-781-2277  
[brasefamily6@gmail.com](mailto:brasefamily6@gmail.com)

Treasurer –Lois Linke  
402-269-2858  
[loispetersenlinke@gmail.com](mailto:loispetersenlinke@gmail.com)

Immediate Past President -Mark Cich  
402-525-8154  
[doit7up@aol.com](mailto:doit7up@aol.com)



2017 has been a busy and eventful year for the Lincoln Iris Society. Our annual show held on May 13<sup>th</sup> was our largest show ever with a total of 289 entries.

The annual rhizome sale and auction on July 29<sup>th</sup> broke all past sale records. The auction rhizomes were purchased from the gardens of the 2017 AIS Convention in Des Moines, IA.

In addition to these major events LIS staffed an educational and information booth at The Husker Lawn and Leisure Show on March 10-12, 2017 at the Lancaster County, NE Event Center.

LIS also staffed an educational and information booth at The Spring Affair Plant Sale on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017. This event was also held at the Lancaster County Event Center.

Both of these events served us well with reaching the gardening public, providing exposure to the American Iris Society, LIS, iris information and advertising our upcoming show, sale and auction.

Our membership continues to grow and we are very pleased with our growth in youth membership. Youth activity involved with the show exceeded all past shows as did their involvement with the sale/auction.

The LIS newsletter, Rainbow Messenger is published monthly except May and December and is sent to all members.

The Lincoln Iris Society is the “Home Society” of Gary White, current President of the American Iris Society. We are proud to have Gary as one of our own!

LIS meetings are held the last Monday of the month, no regular meetings are held in May or December.

Location: St. Andrew Lutheran Church  
1015 Lancaster Lane, Lincoln, NE

Time: 6:30 PM

Consult the LIS newsletter or call for meeting details and any changes in time and place.

# *Path to Becoming an Accredited AIS Judge*

Source: AIS Handbook for Judges and Show Officials

The following “Quick Start” guide to becoming an AIS Accredited Judge was prepared by request. Additional information, forms, and links can be found on the Region 21 website under “Judges Corner.”

All AIS members are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about irises and, in their own time, to consider taking the step from Candidate to Apprentice.

Qualified judges are needed by every affiliate hosting an iris show, including those in Region 21.

## **Tips For Getting Started**

- *It is recommended that a log of all Judges Training be kept for personal records.*
- *When attending Judges Training outside of your home region, it is your responsibility to provide documentation to your home region RVP.*
- *Judges Training Year of Record runs August 01 through July 31*

## **To Become a Candidate**

Requirements: None

Time Limit: None

AIS Membership Requirement: None

Reporting Requirements: None

Educational and Guideline Resources:

- AIS Handbook for Judges and Show Officials, current edition  
[Available for purchase from AIS, or as free download on AIS website]
- All approved, structured, classroom AIS Judges Training events

## **To Become an Apprentice Judge**

Entry Requirements:

- 3 years continuous AIS membership at the time of application.
- Successful completion of at least two approved judges training session for a minimum of 10 hours.

- Application to Regional Judges Training Chair with written recommendations from five (5) accredited judges

Time Limit: 3 Years to complete

AIS Membership Requirement: Continuous AIS membership

Reporting Requirements: Annual Activity Report, due August 1

Educational and Guideline Resources: Same as above

Training as an Apprentice Judge

- 10 hours of approved AIS Judges Training.
- Successfully complete AIS Awards and Balloting Judges Training session of at least 2-hours in length, taught by an accredited AIS Judge.

*If successfully completed as a candidate, can be counted toward Apprentice requirements but does not count as current judges training hours.*

Required Tutored Activities

- In garden judging of blooming seedling or named cultivars on two (2) separate occasions, under tutorship of two (2) different fully accredited AIS judges. Each session must be for a minimum of two (2) hours and must be spent truly evaluating iris plants (e.g. vigor, stalk, branching, substance, durability, bud count, form).
- Exhibition training at two (2) different accredited shows, or simulated show conditions (must be pre-approved by RVP), under the tutorship of two (2) different fully accredited AIS judges, **limited to listening** to the evaluations being made by the judges and to learn from their deliberation and in no way participating in the judging, clerking or other related activities. However, the apprentice should have the opportunity to evaluate one or more specimens independent of judging and related official activities.

## *August 2018 Judges Training – Mike Lockatell*

Rebloomers (remontants) hybridizer Mike Lockatell will be speaking and presenting Judges Training at the 2018 Fall Meeting, to be held in Ames, Iowa August 10 & 11.

The success of his plants in the convention host gardens led Mike to request that his guest irises spend an extra year in Region 21. He plans to take the opportunity to visit the extended stay host gardens while in the

area including the gardens of the Greater Omaha Iris Society, which has joined in hosting his plants.

A Reblooming log is being kept on the Region 21 website and we are hoping that you will help provide information on when and how well your rebloomers (by any hybridizer) are performing. This information will be available to everyone and will certainly be under discussion at the meeting next August.

Meeting information will be posted on the Region 21 website in early 2018.

## ***Fall Meeting 2-Year Pilot Program Report***

We expected the fall meeting might have low attendance this year because of the time, energy, and money many members had already invested in going to convention. With that in mind, we went with low fee/no fee alternatives that might make it more appealing. Attendance was better than expected and was right in line with previous years.

The Kearney library provided free meeting space. That along with the potluck lunch and no banquet meant a low registration fee. The expanded Friday evening schedule coupled with a re-structured Saturday schedule allowed attendees a full fall meeting agenda and activities while eliminating the need to stay an extra night.

- The primary objective of the 2-Year pilot is to test the idea of relieving the affiliates of the tasks of planning and management of the fall meeting by moving that responsibility to the Region.
- The secondary objective is to determine if a predictable meeting site(s) schedule would better serve all of the Region 21 members. This is a topic of much discussion, including how far north to go and how many sites for the rotation, with more input and discussion from all members needed.

Please provide us with your thoughts on these two topics – in person, via email (wrmesser@gmail.com) or mail (P O Box 64, Huxley, IA 50124).

# ***Region 21 BOD & Committees Directory***

## **Officers & Directors 2016-2019**

RVP	Kelly Norris
50313	1128 Riverview Dr, Des Moines, IA
	gardens@kellydnorris.com
	515-777-2356
ARVP	-Open-
Immediate Past RVP	Linda Wilkie
	lrwilkie@gmail.com
	402-493-3808
Secretary	-Open-
Treasurer	Sue Witt
	cswitt2605@gmail.com
	702-498-6413
Directors	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year (2015-2018)	Kris Jurik,
	Honors Committee Chair, &
	Nominations Committee Chair
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year (2016-2019)	Mike Becker
1 <sup>st</sup> Year (2017-2020)	-Open-
	Iris Auction Purchase Committee Chair

## **Other**

Bulletin Acting Editors	Wayne and Pam Messer
	P O Box 64, Huxley, IA 50124
	wrmesser@gmail.com
	515-597-4240
Library	Wayne and Pam Messer
Webmaster	Wayne Messer

**Website**                      **AISregion21.org**

## **Region 21 Bulletin Deadlines & Web Postings**

Spring/Summer Issue: Feb 1

Fall/Winter Issue: Sept 1

Items arriving after deadline -

Items too large for the Bulletin –

Color photos which are printed in black and white –

A PDF copy of the Bulletin –

**will be posted on Region 21 Website,**

The Region 21 Member Director (current copy included in this mailing)

**WILL NOT be posted on the website.**

**Information to be posted on the website can be submitted at any time by emailing Wayne Messer at: [wrmesser@gmail.com](mailto:wrmesser@gmail.com) or via mail: P O Box 64, Huxley, IA 50124**



## ***CALENDAR***

### 2017

Nov 3-4      AIS Board Meeting  
Dallas, TX

### 2018

April 9-14    AIS/SLI Convention  
New Orleans

May            Region 21 Spring Meeting  
TBA

Aug 10-11    Region 21 Fall Meeting  
Ames, IA

Nov    2-3      AIS Board Meeting  
Portland, OR

### 2019

April 23-27   AIS Convention  
Northern California

May            Region 21 Spring Meeting  
TBA

Aug 9-10      Region 21 Fall Meeting

Oct 31-  
Nov- 1        AIS Board Meeting  
Tulsa, OK

### 2020

May            AIS National Convention  
Newark, NJ

Region 21 Spring Meeting  
TBA

Aug 7-8        Region 21 Fall Meeting

## *Region 21 Directory*

The Oct 2017 Member and Affiliate Directory is being mailed with this issue of the Region 21 Bulletin.

Any corrections to the directory should be sent to Tom Gormley (AIS Membership Secretary) and to Wayne Messer so that AIS and Region 21 records can be corrected at the same time.

The directory will not be posted on the Region 21 website.

### **AIS Region 21 Member and Affiliate Directory Oct 2017**



Region 21 includes the states of Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota, as well as, the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.