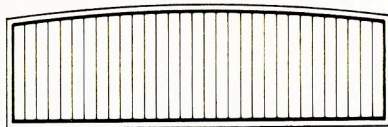


AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY



REGION 15

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS



HISTORY OF REGION 15

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

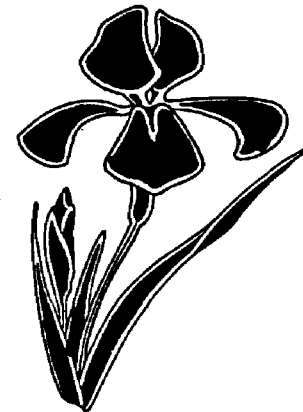
I would like to dedicate this booklet to all the members of Region 15 and all of the wonderful people who have made this region what it is today. I hope important matters and important people have not been omitted. It is not intentional. I have learned the value of keeping track of history.

This compiled history could not have been written without the help of:

Ralph & Lavern Conrad
Marion Walker
Jennie Hopson
Gen Jasper
Affiliated Presidents

Cover Art by Jim Day
Proofreading by Carolyn Stoffel

Bobbie Shepard
RVP Region 15



1991

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

HELD WITHIN REGION 15

"California Trek"	1939
This trek was within Region 14, but caused the split of California into 2 regions.	
Southern California Iris Society	1956
Archie Owen, chairwoman	
San Diego Iris Society	1975
Walter and Penny Bunker, Co-Chairmen	
Sun Country Iris Society	1987
Bobbie Shepard, chairwoman	

AIS PRESIDENTS from REGION 15

1956-1959	Mr. Marion Walker
1975-1977	Clarke Cosgrove



REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS

1939-1944	Lena Lothrop
1945	Eric Nies
1946-1948	Mrs. Otto Steutzel
1949-1951	Carl Taylor
1951-1952	Miss Archie MacLean
1953	Mrs. Otto Steutzel
1954-1956	Mrs. Archie MacLean Owen
1957-1959	Clarke Cosgrove
1960-1962	Mildred Lyons
1963-1965	Thornton Abel
1966-1968	Barbara Serdynski
1969-1971	Art Day
1972	Robert Hubley
1973	Lavern Conrad
1974-1975	Barbara Serdynski
1976-1978	Bob Brooks
1979-1981	Janice Green
1982-1984	Eleanor McCown
1985-1987	Howard Goodrick
1988-1990	Ralph Strane
1991-Present	Bobbie Shepard

AFFILIATED IRIS SOCIETIES

WITHIN REGION 15

Southern California Iris Society	1940
Inland Iris Society	1960
San Diego-Imperial Country Iris Society	1963
Tucson Area Iris Society	1965
Sun Country Iris Society	1969
San Fernando Valley Iris Society	1973
Hi Desert Iris & Daylily Society	1989
Orange County Iris & Daylily Club	1990

Over the years other societies were formed, but are no longer in existence.

HYBRIDIZERS from REGION 15



in alphabetical order:

Thornton Abell	Lena Lothrop
Sanford Babson	Richard Luhrsen
S. Stillman Berry	David Lyon
Ed Brennan	Mildred Lyon
Laura Burbidge	Vernon McCaskill
Valera Chenoweth	Eleanor McCown
Frances Combs	Herb McKusick
Ralph Conrad	Elma Miess
George Coppedge	Gary Miller
Philip Corliss	Carl Milliken
Tom Craig	Ken Mohr
Jeanette Dean	George Murray
Beverly Dopke	Eric Nies
Walker Ferguson	Mrs. Douglas Pattison
Roy Fielding	S. August Phillips
Stanley Foote	Lura Roach
Doris Foster	Sanford Roberts
James Giridlian	Mark Rogers
Bernard Hamner	Neva Sexton
Susan Haney	Don Shepard
William Hawkinson	George Staubach
A. H. Heller	Harry Tate
John Holden	Carl Taylor
Herb Holk	Collie Terrell
Lerton Hooker	Bob Vogel
Russell Hopson	Marion Walker
Robert Hubley	Alice White
Gen Jasper	Clarence G. White
Larry Johnsen	Floyd Wickenkamp
Ralph Johnson	Barbara Wight
Roswell Johnson	Tom & Wilch Wilkes
Lee Lenz	Robert R. Young

THE HISTORY OF REGION 15

On April 22, 1939, the American Iris Society held its first meeting in southern California. It was called the "California Trek". The leaders of AIS at that time were: Dr. Harry H. Everett, President; William McKee, Vice-President; and Junius Fishburn, Treasurer.

At the time of the "California Trek" in 1939, Southern California was part of Region 14 and Canada was Region 15. As a result of the trip to the west coast, the Board of Directors decided to divide California into two regions; the region was divided the same year and Canada became Region 16. Lena Lothrop of Alhambra was elected RVP of the new Region 15. She was a strong leader and made sure that the leadership of AIS was well aware that Region 15 did indeed exist. She served as RVP for the first five years and was a strong supporter of the region until her death some years later in San Bernardino.

The southern California group of accredited judges met on March 9, 1940. As the gathering was breaking up, someone suggested the formation of an iris society, not as a substitute for the region, but as a possible feeder to it. As a result, Southern California Iris Society was formed.

World War II was soon upon us. AIS president McKee cancelled all annual meetings of the national society for the duration. In 1943, Jesse Wills was elected AIS President by mail. In the region the meetings were limited to one meeting in Claremont. Those able to secure enough gasoline attended the meeting.

In 1945 Eric Nies became our second RVP. He was in failing health at the time. Miss Archie McLean, President of Southern California Iris Society, was pressed into service to assist Mr. Nies.

In 1946 Gertrude Stuetzel was elected as RVP.

During the next few years, more gardens developed in the San Fernando Valley. The center of activity moved northward from the Redlands-San Bernardino area to the San Fernando Valley. Mrs. Stuetzel's garden was in Canoga Park. She served until she was confined to her home by illness in 1949.

Carl Taylor became RVP in 1950. Marion Walker campaigned for a Congressional seat. During this campaign, Eric Nies asked Mr. Walker to serve as a Director for AIS. He did not win his political campaign, but he did run and become an AIS Director. He later went on to become President of AIS in 1956.

Gertrude Stuetzel served again as RVP in 1953. During this time there was an iris society thriving in Santa Barbara. Shuffling of RVP's was repeated in 1954 with Archie McLean serving again. During 1954, Southern California Iris Society met as usual. The Santa Barbara Iris Society, the Fallbrook Iris Society, and the California Iris Society were also meeting. Southern California Iris Society had its 15th Annual Iris Show at Plummer Park.

During 1956 many exciting events took place. RVP Archie McLean became Mrs. Edward Owen. We had a bride as RVP! The AIS Board of Directors created the Eric Nies Award for the best Spuria. This was the year Marion Walker became the first person west of Texas to become AIS President. The National AIS Convention was held in Los Angeles in April; 389 guests registered for the convention. Archie Owen was the chairman.

After the convention, Archie retired as RVP and Dr. Clarke Cosgrove replaced her. Clarke Cosgrove had a major part to play in the activities of the next 20 years of Region 15. He became a director and President of AIS nearly 20 years later. It was in this year of 1957 that we lost our famous hybridizer C.G. White at the age of 88. Mr. White was a pioneer in iris breeding and a strong supporter of Region 15 from its very beginning.

Region 15 found itself in possession of over \$2000 in unexpended funds. They gave this money to AIS for use by the Scientific Committee to research iris pests and diseases. Need for this sort of research was discussed in the January, 1958, AIS Bulletin and the Editor stated that the Californians had started the ball rolling. This period of time played a large part in the development of specialty groups for non-bearded iris. Ben Hager was a leader and became involved in rewriting the AIS By-Laws to better fit the needs of this interest in specialty groups. Ben Hager & Sid DuBose originally lived in Region 15. The Median Iris Club and the Aril Society International were started in this period by Californians. George Stambach of Pasadena pushed the organization of the Pacific Coast Native Iris Society. Region 15 has made hearty contributions to stimulate the increasing interest throughout the United States and other nations in irises other than tall bearded - the start of a new era!

In 1958 members of Southern California Iris Society and Region 15 were asking for more meetings, so the society initiated the July picnic with an iris rhizome sale and a Valentine's Evening Dinner with speaker. Region 15 members were invited to join these extra activities. Tom Wilkes initiated an iris display planting in Descanso Gardens in La Canada, California. This garden is now overseen by Jeanne Clay Planke.

After judging a show sponsored by The Centinela Valley Iris Society, Gertrude Stuetzel and Elma Miess suggested to Clarke Cosgrove, RVP, and August Phillips, exhibition chairman, that an exhibitor should be able to enter more than one specimen in a section providing that they were different varieties. Through August Phillips, Marion Walker, AIS President, carried the suggestion to proper channels and caused a change of show rules. Up until then, AIS was following National Garden Club Rules.

In 1959 Clarke Cosgrove and Ben Hager played a large part in making Region 15 a focal point of

the Spuria Iris Society. Ben was named President and Clarke edited the newsletter. They were the first officers elected outside of Texas. Dr. Lee Lenz did a lot of laboratory and field work on the spuria iris in California. Ben Hager and Eleanor McCown followed suit. The Eric Nies Award for spurias was activated in 1956 by the AIS Board of Directors. Between 1956 and 1965, Region 15 hybridizers won the Eric Nies Award all but one year. It was won by Arizona hybridizer Floyd Wickenkamp in 1988.

In 1956, Arizona was part of Region 12 along with Utah and New Mexico. In 1957, New Mexico broke from Region 12 and joined Colorado. In 1960, Arizona petitioned AIS to break from Utah and join Southern California as Region 15. By April, 1961, Arizona had six AIS judges.

In the next decade there was a rapid growth of iris organizations. In 1960, the Inland Iris Society was founded by Alice White and Nancy Shank while doing their grocery shopping. In 1963 the San Diego-Imperial County Iris Society was formed. The Tucson Area Iris Society followed with organization in 1965 and Sun Country Iris Society came along in 1969.

Tucson held its first official AIS iris show in 1966 and has had an annual show ever since. Many judges came over from San Diego to help this new society. Tucson hosted the Region spring trek in 1968.

In 1972, Sun Country hosted its first Region 15 Spring Trek. It was held at the Safari Hotel in Scottsdale. Clarke Cosgrove gave the Judges Training and Tell Muhlestein was guest speaker. Six gardens were on tour.

Society growth slowed in the 1970's. The San Fernando Valley Iris Society was formed in 1973 because of the efforts of Marge Malone. Marge had maintained a commercial garden for several years.

San Diego hosted the AIS National Convention in 1975. The gardens of Hamner, Vogel, Conrad-Cosgrove, Gunther, Owen, Hooker, Roberts, Pilley, and the commercial gardens of Oak Trail and Cordon Bleu were on tour. This convention was enjoyed by a record number attending.

In 1981 San Fernando Valley Iris Society undertook a joint spring trek with Region 14. The location was in Fresno gardens. The same fellowship was shared again in 1990 in the San Fernando area gardens. It is always nice to share the love of iris with old friends.

Sun Country Iris Society hosted the AIS National Convention in 1987. It was well attended. Many came out of curiosity to see how desert country could grow iris. Most visitors were very impressed by how well so many types of iris were grown. Visitors expressed amazement at the beautiful green foliage with no bug or disease problems.

Hi-Desert Iris & Daylily Society was formed in 1989 because of the efforts of Cal Bostwick and Beulah Robinson. This young society undertook the Region 15 Fall meeting the same year. It was very well organized and well attended. They are currently planning for the spring trek in 1994.

Orange County Iris & Daylily Club became affiliated with Region 15 in 1990. This club has been organized for several years.

With eight affiliated clubs scattered over the varied climates of Southern California and Arizona, our Region has tremendous potential for hybridizers and commercial growers as well as those who simply enjoy our favorite flowers. Region 15 has been home to several prominent hybridizers whose iris have won major awards. Other hybridizers are becoming well known and can look forward to a variety of local and national awards. The future, as always, is next years seedlings and this year's new iris.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IRIS SOCIETY

Actually SCIS was organized March 9, 1940, following a meeting of southern California accredited AIS judges held at the Claremont Inn with Mrs. Lena M. Lothrop presiding. On the motion proposed by Mr. Don Milliken that a Southern California society be organized for the benefit of iris lovers, those in attendance constituted the initial membership. Elected officers were President, Mr. J.N. Giridlian; V. President, Mrs. Don Milliken and Secretary, Mr. E.D. Cappeller.

On March 20, 1940 their first meeting was held. The official title of Southern California Iris Society was adopted and annual dues was set at fifty cents per member! By June of 1940 there were 58 members. The balance of officers were elected: Treasurer, Mr. Colin Hubbard Smith and Recording Secretary, Mrs. Maria Wilkes.

It was decided in January 1941 to hold meetings in different vicinities so that more people might become interested and that all members might have convenient meeting places available to them at some time during the year. Their first iris show was held in April 1941, cosponsored by the Hollywood Garden Club.

In 1953, a Court of Honor was organized by Jennie Hopson. It consisted of a display of all the irises produced in Region 15 that had won an HM or AM from the AIS. The Region 15 Hybridizers honored in this event were Clarence White, Eric Nies, Carl Milliken, Tom Craig, E.H. Brennan, A.H. Heller, Lena Lothrop, David Lyon, Elma Miess, Mrs. Douglas Pattison, Carl Taylor, and Marion Walker. For many years this exhibit was an outstanding feature of the show.

INLAND IRIS SOCIETY

Inland Iris Society had its beginning is 1960. The organizers were Alice White of Hemet and Nancy Shank of Corona. Nancy had several hundred irises at the time and was a member of the Southern California Iris Society. The society began in a conversation when the two ladies were doing their marketing in downtown Riverside. They began discussing the possibility of starting a local iris society. Although Alice had only a few iris of her own, she did enjoy organizing activities. She ran an advertisement in an Inland Empire newspaper announcing the formation of the new Inland Empire Iris Society. The first meetings were held in members' residences and were later held in landmark locations such as Victoria Savings & Loan, Glendale Savings & Loan, both in Riverside, Park Building in Fontana, San Bernardino Museum, Sizzler in Riverside and Maruko Hotel in San Bernardino.

Several of our members have introduced irises including Bernard Hamner, Herb Holk, Doris Lutz, Opal Ollis, Bob Vogel, Katherine Gannon and Harry Tate through Mark Rogers.

Operating capital is generated from an annual rhizome sale, rhizomes at the annual iris show, and an auction to members of recently introduced iris. We also provide a plant sale table.



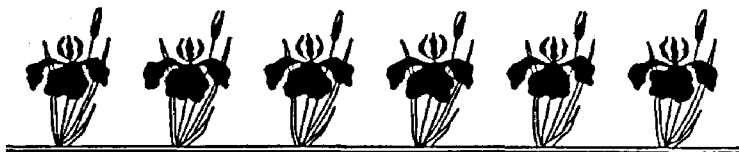
SAN DIEGO-IMPERIAL COUNTY IRIS SOCIETY

The San Diego-Imperial County Iris Society was formed July 20, 1963 by AIS members at the home of Mr. & Mrs. L.B. Larson. Mrs. Larson was its first president and also acted as Area Chairman.

Their first rhizome sale was held in August, 1963. November, 1963, the society had a display at the Floral Building of winter blooming iris and held another sale of iris. The first spring show was May, 1964, with 40 classifications of iris and lots of artistic design entries. Thelma Carrington did her first educational display and has been doing them ever since. Fifteen hundred people visited that first show and 30 joined the society. Spring and Fall shows were held for many years in the old Conference Building in Balboa Park and in Casa Del Prado. The Spring shows are still held in Balboa Park. At one time the Fall reblooming show was bigger than the Spring shows are now.

San Diego hosted the National Iris Society Convention in April, 1975. Several commercial growers were members of San Diego and they had great displays for the convention and at the shows. Only two commercial gardens remain in the San Diego area.

Potlucks and Region 15 auctions are usually held at Bob Brooks or Hazel Carson's home every July. The Christmas party and Sunday meetings take up the rest of the year.



TUCSON AREA IRIS SOCIETY

In the fall of 1965, the Tucson Area Iris Society was formed due to the efforts of Gen Jasper and Joe Fairbanks.

In 1966 the first official AIS show was held at Randolph Park. In the Spring of 1968, Tucson hosted the AIS Region 15 Spring Trek, a first for Arizona. Many members came from California. The trek consisted of a full AIS flower show in the morning, then every one went to a motel for lunch and a meeting. Two or three gardens were visited in the afternoon.

In the early days that Sun Country was started, Tucson did much to help their "sister" society get going. Gen Jasper let Sun Country dig her entire stock of arilbreds for their rhizome sale.

Tucson hosts an annual AIS spring show and meets about 6 times a year.



SUN COUNTRY IRIS SOCIETY

Sun Country Iris Society was formed April, 1969. It was the brainchild of Foster Try and Archie Garrard while they shared a room in the hospital and discovered they both had a love for iris. Clarice Maben was the first president and is still with us and still active in the society.

The society held its first rhizome sale in late July of 1969 in the home of a member, Barbara Deremiah. Their first spring show was held in April of 1970 at Thomas Mall. Barbara was the chairman. There were 190 horticulture entries from 15 exhibitors and 15 artistic exhibits from 7 exhibitors. It was interesting that many of the public asked where the greenhouses we grew the iris in were. They couldn't believe the iris were grown out in this desert sunshine. The following weekend, Sun Country had its own tour of 12 members gardens and ended up with a pot luck dinner in the Shepard Iris Garden. The first year had passed with much success.

Over the following years Sun Country had an annual spring show and rhizome sales each year as well as auctions and pot lucks. Our Christmas parties have always been enjoyed. Our first time to host the Region 15 Spring Trek was in 1972. Our turn came up again in 1977 and again in 1982. Ron Mullin was our speaker in 1982. He was so impressed with the gardens and the members of Sun Country and Region 15, that he asked Sun Country to host the AIS National Convention in 1987. We did it! It was a wonderful experience and a wonderful convention. Sun Country showed the AIS membership that we could grow iris with the best of them!

Now in this year of 1991, Sun Country is pleased to host Region 15's Golden Celebration Spring Trek.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY IRIS SOCIETY

The San Fernando Valley Iris Society was founded in 1973 primarily because of the interest and efforts of Marge Malone.

For the first three years the Society meetings were held in Marge's living room. The Society grew and over the years moved the meetings through a series of "donated" meeting rooms in various banks and auto agencies. Finally we reached a membership level that required a meeting hall. The Canoga Park Womens Club own a venerable meeting hall built in 1926 that finally become our permanent home.

Interestingly, of the original 20 listed "Charter" members, Marge Malone is the only one remaining as an active member.



ORANGE COUNTY IRIS AND DAYLILY CLUB

Orange County has been organized for several years, but it has just affiliated with Region 15 and AIS in 1990. Its members share their love between iris and daylilies. Sometimes it is hard to choose.

This club sponsors a large plant sale every year. It is located at the Fullerton Arboretum Green Scene. The club sells hundreds of daylilies and other plants. With the iris bloom that are displayed, there is a lot of interest generated for the iris.

The members meet every 2nd Tuesday of each month and have three potlucks during the year.

HI-DESERT IRIS & DAYLILY SOCIETY

The Hi-Desert Iris and Daylily Society was organized by Cal Bostwick and Beulah Robinson in May of 1988. The first meeting was held with 41 of 46 charter members in attendance.

The first year was lean of finance but through generous plant donations from AIS members and some sales help from San Fernando Valley Iris Society members, the first ever public iris sale was held in the area. These sales earned enough money to carry the society through the first year.

The first AIS iris show was held in April 1989 with 31 exhibitors. The show consisted of the normal horticultural section, many artistic arrangements and a small English Box section. The show was enhanced by an exhibit of Iris and desert paintings from a local artist and some iris crafts. There was also background music provided by local musicians on piano and organ.

Hi-Desert hosted its first regional meeting in October, 1989, and are scheduled for their first Spring trek in 1994. This takes a lot of work and enthusiasm from such a young group.

