

## Christmas 2002

Has another year zoomed by already?

I hope you had a good year and were able to get at least some of the things done that you planned to.

As always, it seems like there isn't enough time to do all the things we would like to.

### 25 Years

This year I reached 25 years service with what was Ontario Hydro. A couple of years ago Ontario Hydro was broken up into 5 companies. I am with the successor company known as the Independent Electricity Market Operator which ensures there is enough electricity to meet demand. We take bids and offers, determine the resulting Market Clearing Price (MCP), ensure those transactions occur, and then see that everyone gets paid.

As of January 1, 2003 the rule of 82 comes into affect. This means I'll be able to retire in another 4 years! I'll have 29 years on the pension plan at that point, so I would be eligible to receive 58% of my average best 3 years. I expect to have 30 weeks of banked vacation / lieu time by then, so potentially I would go on extended vacation starting in November 2006. The true retirement date would be August 1, 2007.

Freedom 52!

I mention this because the reality of being "close" to retirement only recently came to light. Previously it was so far off in the future that I didn't give it much thought.

It will hopefully mean that I'll be able to get a number of things done that I've been putting off as lower priority.

### Hybrids

Another banner year!

I had another 36 special F2 sopenensis x danfordiae Irises bloom. This brings the total to 57. They break down as: 15 whites with blue, 3 whites, 11 yellow-blues, 6 *danfordiae*-like, 9 blues, 5 spotted light blue-greens, and 5 others. One of latter ones I've nick-named 'Storm', another is 'Sea Green'.

There were also a number of other rather nice hybrids that bloomed for the first time.

If you haven't recently taken a look at [www.Reticulatas.com](http://www.Reticulatas.com) please do so. The web site will have been updated by the time you read this. A fair amount of time was put into making more of my articles available, organizing the pictures, etc. 500 Reticulata Iris pictures are now available.

In the new year I plan to get the other portions of the site updated (i.e. Juno Iris, Other Iris, Hardy Bulbs, etc).

Although I made the highest number of crosses ever, the number of seeds was down (7500), with no bee seeds (it never got sufficiently warm enough for the insects to come out). Of course, as always, the key is the quality of the crosses. I believe the ones I made were important ones. We'll know for sure in 5 years time. If you are interested, take a look at my 2002 Hybridizing Statistics web page to see a break down of some of the types of crosses I made -- in particular how F2 sxd hybrids were used.

Four Dutch growers are now evaluating my hybrids (up from last year's three). I regrouped my efforts to ensure each grower had something I felt has significant market potential. In each case they have varieties that are different from what was given to the other growers. I believe each grower could introduce 2 or 3 of my hybrids. I now have quite a few that are significantly different from what's currently available. It does take a reasonable effort to commercially introduce a new hybrid, which is why I need to involve several growers, not just one. And it will also help ensure that I am successful (able to eventually go to local nurseries and see my hybrids being sold).

A few bulbs sent this year to Holland should bloom next spring. Most should bloom in 2004 (after getting acclimatized and up to bloom-size in 2003). By spring 2005 the growers will have been able to see them in bloom for the second time, and potentially see how they do in pots.

I now have 10 of my hybrids being increased in a lab in Holland. I expect to have 100 bulbs produced of each. These would come out of the lab in time for the 2004 growing season, at which time I'm expecting they'll get up to bloom size. They'll then bloom in 2005. Assuming they are exactly like the original and didn't sport, it's then just a matter letting the

lab know the production number we want. This of course presumes by that point a grower believes that at least one is worthy of large scale commercial introduction. Four or 5 years later we'll be able to start sales (i.e. by 2010); depending on expected sales verses building stock for future sales.

Unfortunately the timing for introducing many of my other hybrids will be even later than that. I have 5 lovely 'Spotted Light Blue Green' hybrids. Which one should be introduced? I really don't know. Personally I quite like 4 of them. Ideally the Dutch grower who has them needs at least 2 to 3 years to see what he thinks, then we can start doing the lab work on the best one(s). This means the earliest sales would be 2013.

The one hybrid I currently believe has the clearest potential is 94-HW-1 (it was the first F2 sxd to bloom; a real beauty, which is continuing to do well). I intend to have the lab produce 2000<sup>+</sup> bulbs now; perhaps a few more if time permits. My analysis shows that sales could start in 2006. This is an aggressive approach. I think it is needed given the number of years Dutch growers have been testing with no concrete results to-date (there are clear reasons why nothing has happened yet; I need to actively move things forward).

The lab work isn't too expensive, but I know costs will add up, which means longer before profits are realized. One must not loose sight of the fact it has already taken 20 years and tens of thousands of dollars to get this far.

### **Miscellaneous**

I am no longer a Scout leader. David wasn't interested in continuing. Jeffrey is now a Venturer, which only requires an advisor. Someone else is filling this role. I'm not sure how I would have managed to do all that I have if I had continued as a leader. It takes up a lot of time -- lots more than just the meetings.

At long last we spent a fair bit of money and had a brother-in-law redo our Kitchen and Bathroom. The result is quite nice!

Another 14 days were spent canoe camping in Algonquin Park. I will get pictures from the trip posted early in the new year. The one thing I still need to do is get the captions on them.

I didn't have time to put together any Quicktime VR (Virtual Reality) pictures. I did take pictures on several occasions. Hopefully I'll get-around-to-it in the new year.

I did try to put together an object movie of 94-HW-1, but had difficulty with lighting, and in particular with focusing. Both started off well. The difficulty comes once the flower has been rotated somewhat. Because manual focusing is not available in macro (close-up) mode, you end up focusing on the stem. The result is the flower blade is not as sharply focused as it should be. Ideally you would like to use natural light, but if you go outside, the smallest breeze causes the flower to move, etc., etc. If I had more time I'm sure I could ways around these issues.

Would you believe I took 10,000 digital pictures this year? That's double last year's number. When I look back at them I feel I should have taken even more. As you might guess, a lot were of my flowers.

### **Next Year**

Look for an article about my hybrids in the March Alpine Garden Society Journal.

I'm keenly looking forward to seeing more new hybrids. I know for example a number more 98-NP hybrids are set to bloom next year.

### **Take a few moments for yourself**

Try to find a little time each week to stop, sit back, and look at the world around you. You can always find some beauty to life no matter what the problems are that you're currently facing.

We are all so busy these days that's it's hard to find that time.

Best wishes over Christmas, and in the coming year,

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