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### Follow-on Thoughts

After the joy of disclosing the names of people commemorated by orchids, it's time to come down to earth and ask ourselves how dedicated we are going to be in taking care of such named plants, and not only culturally, but in ways that not only preserve the individual plants, but add to the legacy of each named plant. Might we find still another orchid hybrid that's different, yet colorful and exciting, if we were to cross-pollinate, just for example, Sandra Evette × Josie Maciel, or Edie Virkus × Nora Olsen? Your editor has a beautiful white AOS awarded plant of *Cattleya* Sierra 'Mount Whitney' AM/AOS in the greenhouse. What would the flower look like if we crossed Rlc. Wilma Ferry with C. Sierra 'Mount Whiney'?

How many MIOS members would take particular interest in raising seedlings of any or all of such hybrids? Propagating any hybrid orchid is a long-term gamble: the chances are that you'll get an attractive flower, but the chances are also that you might just get one of those *classics* of hybridization: one that ranks with the all-time beauties that bears not only your name in its ancestry, but is one of those personal experiences of a lifetime.

The orchid world is one of chance where the outcomes are either good,  
or magnificent!

Let's come back down to earth and review a bit of terminology we'll all need to understand. To "do a cross" is to take the pollen from plant A and put it on plant B. If, at the same time, we take pollen from plant B and put it on plant A, that's called "doing back-cross". There are reasons why it may be a good thing to both a crossing and a back-crossing. In many plants the results are about the same, but some orchids are known to function better as pollen parents and some produce better results as capsule carrying parents. Let us suppose one plant is in better condition than another. If so, it makes better sense to not burden a less-than-robust plant by having it carry a seed capsule. There are other reasons, but we can go into those at another time. For the present it's sufficient for us at least to understand the difference between a "cross" and a "back-cross."

The above having been said, your editor recently had a plant of Pl#190206-12. *Cattleya* Sierra Blanca 'Mount Whitney' AM/AOS in flower, and couldn't resist the temptation to make both the cross and back-cross with the newly registered Rlc. Wilma Ferry. The sad part of this story is that although your editor has cultured C. Sierra Blanca since 2006, he doesn't have a digital photo of it on file! Don't ask why; it's just one of those things that just "slipped through the cracks" and never got done! I promise: the next time it's in flower, it will get photographed!! At any rate, it's a large beautiful, white, fragrant *Cattleya* hybrid with petals that overlap in the midline and with a splash of yellow in the throat. Your editor's plant notes list it as having flowers with a natural spread (NS) from 13 to 16.7 cm (5.5 to 6.5 inches). Despite the above excuses and the lack of an available digital photograph, what might we expect to obtain from crossing these two hybrids? That question may get answered in about five years from the date of the

crossing and back-crossing (Thur-22Jan-15) provided one or both capsules are brought to maturity, then sown in an agar (sterile) flask (bottle) and resulting seedlings grown until they can be removed from *in vitro* culture into open air seedling bark and finally into seeing the first flowers. On Sun-14Feb-15, both plants were photographed bearing seed capsules (Fig. 1). Although the actual seed capsules are a little difficult to pick out behind the wilted flower parts at the distal end of each capsule, they're both green and growing. If we figure about 180 days from pollination to maturity, they should be ready to harvest (and sow seed) sometime in late July, 2015.

In short, cross-pollinating a couple of cattleyas is just the first in a long series of steps before one sees flowers! Meanwhile, there's a lot of work to be done cultur-ing seedlings!



Fig. 1. Plants crossed 22Jan-15/01:00 hours, and bearing seed capsules forming. Left: ♀ Pl#280606-15. (Clone#1). Rlc. Wilma Ferry × right: ♂ Pl#190206-12. C. Sierra Blanca 'Mount Whitney' AM/AOS. Digital photo: DSC\_6683. Sun-14Feb-15.

Let's look at another cross and back-cross. Go back and look at *Dendrobium* Buck Dabney on pages 6 and 7 of this issue. A good round number for a *Cattleya* seed capsule to go from pollination to the production of mature seeds is about 180 days. For dendrobiums it's a little longer; usually about 200 days. Another rough estimate is that to see the first flowers on a *Cattleya* usually takes four to five years from pollination. Dendrobiums may take as much as a year less. So what might we see if we cross and back-cross *Dendrobium* Buck Dabney (Fig. 2) with - say - Pl#3211113-2. Den Valley Isle Blue 'Blue' (Fig. 3)? Now, with these, we have a few photographs from which to make comparisons rather than just speculation and a photograph of just one of the parties to the pollination.

Both the cross and back-cross were made Sun-25Jan-15. Three weeks after the pollination event it seemed apparent that fertilization was *very slow* to “take” on the Buck Dabney plant if, in fact, it was going to take at all (Fig. 4).



However, the flower of the Valley Isle plant has folded over (kind of withering) while *the ovary of the Valley Isle flower is showing a decided greening*, indicating that “something” is happening (Fig. 5)! The Valley Isle Blue flower is a little smaller than that of Buck Dabney and its form is a little more compact compared with the

Fig. 2. Part-inflorescence, PI#091196-12. Den Buck Dabney. DSC\_4185a Tues-24May-11.

more open form on Buck Dabney, but the real question is one of *what color or*

*variety of colors* the hybrid offspring of these two plants might (eventually) be, and at this point (and even until the first flowers are seen a few years from now) your guess is as good as mine concerning what colors the offspring might turn out to be! We might expect the color to be a little lighter than the intensely dark “Aggie Maroon” of Buck Dabney, but it’s possible we may see a whole array of



Fig. 3. Inflorescence, PI#3211113-2. Den Valley Isle Blue ‘Blue’. DSC\_5680 Mon-23Dec-14.

color variations if we bring fifty or a hundred seedling plants into flower. Plant-wise, we might expect to see plants with “canes” that grow to somewhere in the range of a meter in height. Buck Dabney can grow canes to two meters, but Valley Isle Blue doesn’t seem to want to even grow to one meter in high.

In short, when we get into the world of doing our own hybridizing rather than just looking to buy several “pre-done” hybrids from some commercial grower, we enter a whole new realm of “do it ourselves” orchid growing! Also, working with these newly named hybrids can bring new reasons for each of us to personally

look at and take greater interest in caring for the growing seedlings as well as caring for such “old standards as Molly Tyler, Hail Storm, and the spring-flowering encyclias. When it comes to orchid culture, we might well see five different members come up with even more than five different sizes of plants and color combinations of flowers!

This isn’t a “I can do it better than she

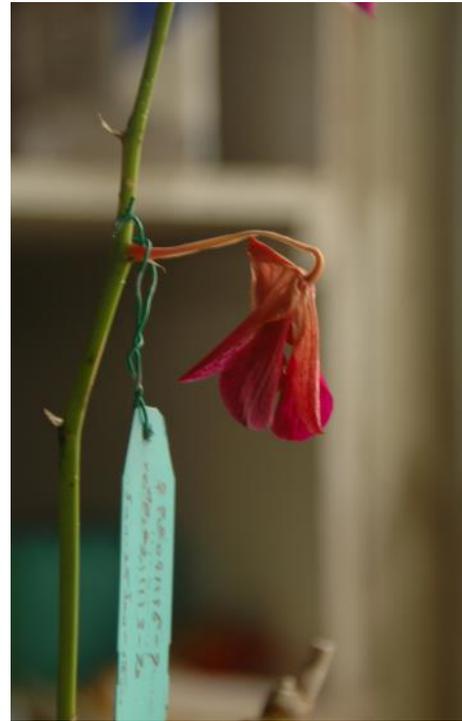


Fig. 4. ♀ PI#091197-7 × ♂ PI#211113-2 Den. Buck Dabney. (flower used as female for pollination). DSC\_6685 Sun-14Feb-15.



Fig. 5. ♀ PI#211113-2 × ♂ PI#091197-7. Den Valley Isle Blue ‘Blue’, flower used as female. DSC\_6684 Sun-14Feb-15.

can” type of thing, it’s a learning tool for each as well as simply realizing that each of us has slightly different growing conditions than any one else. If everything gets lost for one member, it doesn’t really “get lost” because of that magic term “sharing”. Each of us will have a plant die for this or that reason (hopefully not because of simple neglect!), but with several individuals growing plants, lost plants can, in most cases, be replaced by the division of a plant from somebody else.

What your editor has been trying to convey with these “follow on thoughts” is that this society can be a case of an internal adventure beyond the mere naming of a few orchid hybrids. This society is in its sixteenth year and it has seen people come and go in the last few years, yet - despite the loss of some good people - there have been some changes for the better. Some of the changes have been in the financial and business sectors, and your editor has seen local help materialize so that he has (at long last!) had the time to research the literature and his own rec-

ords, and be able to come up with these hybrids that legitimately merit names. It's true that the problem of finding a stable meeting place is still with us, but this is a group of people who get along with each other and have concerns *about each other*, not just flowers, and this is an attitude seen - seemingly in little ways - elsewhere in the orchid world.

How about an example. The first two forms were mailed to the Registrar at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to register Wilma Ferry and Nora Olsen (Fig. 6). In due time, the RHS responded. Due to a difference in what their website advised, the check had been mailed for not enough to register the two hybrids. The Registrar returned the check, but went ahead and registered the hybrid names anyway! This was a graphic example of honorable people dealing with honorable people! When the other hybrid descriptions and names were sent, your editor included the original fees due along with



Fig. 6. Pl#091196-4. Den. Nora Olsen (Walter Oumae x Somsak) DSC\_2472a. Tues-19Aug-08.

the correct fees for each hybrid orchid in that "second order" and added an additional amount as a donation. Frankly, in this so-called "modern world" it's refreshing to find that traits like honor and honesty still exist, and this is part of what makes the orchid world the refreshing world it is!

It's not only about the flowers: it's equally about the *people*!

As your editor continues to search the orchid literature and his records there appears to be little doubt that more hybrids will be discovered for which names can be bestowed. In addition, as we - as individuals and as a society - continue to pollinate and actually grow orchids from seed, not only will totally new flowers result, but more names will appear in the MIOS Journal.

The future looks interesting...and bright!

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