

Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



Meeting: Wednesday, February 12, 2003

**Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center
1232 De La Vina (at De La Vina and Victoria)**

Meeting begins at 7:30 pm

Potting Demonstration begins at 7:15 pm

►► *Note that we have returned to our regular location* ◄◄
at Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center.

Program

Paul Storm

will speak to us about

The Wonderful World of Schomburgkias

Want to learn more about the large plants of the genus Schomburgkia? Come listen to Paul Storm tells us about these relatives of the cattleyas and laelias with which we are all familiar. Storm describes his fascination with schomburgkias as an "obsession;" it has led him to travel in search of species and new hybrids and to work on a book about the genus. Storm, who lives in Florida, is so familiar with the genus that he was chosen as recipient of the Schomburgkia collection of the famous cattleya alliance expert, Carl Withner.

Potting Demonstration: The return of this popular event! This month's potting demonstration will be led by Don Brown. Come fifteen minutes early to see how Don pots his orchids.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Fascination of Orchids Show

February 6-9, 2003

South Coast Plaza, Crate and Barrel Wing, Costa Mesa. www.ocorchidshow.com or (714)964-3265.

San Francisco Orchid Society Pacific Orchid Exposition

February 20-23, 2003

Festival Pavilion, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. (510)339-8626.

Santa Barbara International Orchid Show "It had to be Orchids"

March 28-30, 2003 Earl

Warren Showgrounds, March 28-30, 2003. www.sborchidshow.com or (805)967-6331.

SBIOS Preview Party

Thursday, March 28, 2003

6 pm to 9 pm. \$40 admission benefits diabetes research at Sansum Medical Research Institute. Call 682-7638 ext. 243 for reservations or Sandy and Al Svoboda at 969-4536.

Summary of the January 2003 Meeting

- President Jeff Thompson welcomed four guests and one new member. He reminded everyone that the speakers' fund donation basket was on the back table. In addition, donations can be made to our treasurer, Carole Cowan.
- A reminder to all: ***Pay your annual dues!*** Dues are **\$25**. Checks should be made out to OSSB and mailed to Carole Cowan, 209 Cedar Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93108. Or pay your dues at the next meeting.
- President Jeff Thompson said he was looking to increase volunteerism in the society during the 2003 year. His first call for help was with the hardware for the Spring Show at the end of March. If you would like to help install the society's exhibit, let Jeff know. There will be other opportunities for volunteer help at the Spring Show, and other upcoming events. Talk to your board members if you'd like to help!
- OSSB will need your blooming plants for displays in upcoming shows. The Five Cities Show will be March 8 and 9; OSSB traditionally installs a tabletop exhibit. Talk to Jeff if you will have plants to loan. If you will have plants for the Spring Show, March 28-30, call or email Heidi at 563-2894 or g_pierce@juno.com

Program

Our January speaker, Dan Dickey, was past president of the Orchid Society of Southern California and one of the most highly regarded amateur growers in Southern California. Dickey took over his father's collection and now grows about 60% cattleyas, with assorted other genera like phals, paphs and dendrobiums. He regularly displays his plants in area shows with the philosophy that some of the best growers in the world are probably amateurs who have the time to bring their collections to peak performance.

Dickey began his potting seminar with the remark that, "My way is not necessarily *the way*." He has developed a method that works for him in his particular growing conditions. He looks for similarities between his orchids, breaking them down into two basic categories: monopodial orchids (plants with one stem, like phals or vandas); and sympodial orchids (plants with pseudobulbs and rhizomes like cattleyas or dendrobiums).

Dickey repots his cattleyas when he sees new root activity, irrespective of season. To unpot, he waters plants 20 minutes earlier to loosen the grip of the roots, then inserts a sterile kitchen (butter) knife between pot and root, moving away from the newest part of the plant. With a sterile razorblade, he cuts a seam in the roots at the back of the plant and crumbles out old mix from the center, being particularly careful not to damage the fragile roots in the front (newer part) of the plant. After all bark has been removed and the plant has been rinsed, he lets it rest. Sympodial orchids like cattleyas have fragile roots that die when damaged; by barerooting his cattleyas for 10-14 days in a humid environment (on a tray set atop a tray of wet sphagnum), he allows damaged roots to die so he may remove them before repotting. Less drought tolerant orchids like paphs rest for only a few hours to a day. Dickey noted that monopodial orchids (like phals) have more robust roots that withstand some cracking.

Dickey uses medium-sized bark and perlite, sifting his bark to get uniform size. Big pieces are soaked for 48 hours in a trashcan with 1 cup Physan (about 1 tablespoon per gallon). He uses only what floats, microwaving it while damp with a few tablespoons of water for 10 minutes. After this rests overnight, he adds 1 teaspoon dolomite lime (helps prevent salts from adhering to bark) per 5 gallon bucket of bark, then a 6 inch pot of perlite to keep the mix airy. For paphs, he uses 3 parts medium bark to 1 part sifted smaller bark before soaking. He stores prepared mix covered to keep it moist; any mildew that occurs quickly goes away when the mix is exposed to air.

When repotting, Dickey prefers pots with smooth sides (no ledges) and copious drainage holes on bottom and sides. He chooses a pot that compliments the size of the roots, ideally with the back of the plant against the side of the pot and the new growth near the center. He carefully works bark between the roots, with new roots winding up ½ to 1 inch below the top of the pot.

Newly repotted orchids must not wobble in their pots or the new roots will be damaged. Dickey has tricks to stabilize his plants. He tapes stakes on the exterior of the pot with masking tape, one stake per side, removing them after 2-3 months when they are

unneded. The plant is attached to the stake with twist-tie material. For added stability, he puts one or two small pots atop the bark away from the new eyes, taping these with masking tape. Before finishing with the plant, he makes sure it has a tag with the date of repotting.

He waters the next day, then every two weeks or

Portrait of Jerry Rehfield

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

One of the significant honors in the orchid world is to have a new hybrid genus named after one by a fellow grower. The esteemed *Oncidiinae* breeder Helmut Rohrl has just conveyed that honor on a fellow hybridizer, none other than our own Jerry Rehfield. From now on, crosses containing species from the three genera *Ada*, *Oncidium* and *Odontoglossum* shall be known by the artificial genus name *Rehfieldara*. Rohrl, writing about his new genus in the latest *Orchid Digest*, describes Jerry as "an accredited AOS judge, accomplished grower and well known hybridizer."

Who is this modest man? Most of us know Jerry as the expert who, with Paul Gripp, has discussed the plant table at our monthly meeting. But Jerry is more than a typical orchid grower and has led something different than a typical life. A glance at his study reveals a photo of ice skater Scott Hamilton autographed with words of thanks to Jerry; a browse through his hybrids reveals such names as *Oda*. Michelle Kwan. For about forty years, the Jerry Rehfield we know as an orchid grower was known to the ice skating world as a coach.

I chatted with Jerry recently and he told me that he became a professional ice skater at age 15, touring the country until he retired at 25. He was marrying his wife Louella and felt he should "get down to earth." But the world of savings and loans did not suit Jerry, and soon he found himself among television pioneers, ice skating on the program "Frosty Frogs."

Kids loved him. Moreover, they wanted to skate just like he did. Jerry, who thought he'd hate kids and hate teaching, became a coach for the money. To his delight, he discovered he loved kids and loved coaching. Though his daughter works with computer software and his son is a physicist, they learned to skate, too, his son ranking 4th in the US.

At about the same time Jerry was making a name for himself as a coach, he discovered orchids. "My best friend gave me a couple plants and they bloomed and" Jerry smiles, then laughs. He was hooked.

He joined his local societies and served as vice president and president in South Bay and Long Beach, plus found himself writing an orchid

so for 2-3 months. Plants receive lower light and low nitrogen fertilizer at ¼ - ½ strength.

Dickey is careful to wash hands between plants and to sterilize all his tools; knives go through the dishwasher, a 350° oven, and a TSP soak. He notes that high quality water, dry winters and stingy use of fertilizer help the bark last longer.

magazine for the Orchid Society of Southern California. American Orchid Society judging occurred at local society meetings, and soon he was encouraged to become an AOS judge. We know him as head judge for our society's fall show, but AOS judging took him to wonderful orchid places, such as Peru, Singapore, Venezuela and Colombia. Of AOS judging, Jerry remarks, "They're often wrong but they usually right it eventually."

When Jerry moved to Carpinteria 16 years ago, he was encouraged to become a Cymbidium Society of America judge. As he had in Southern California, Jerry exhibited at the Santa Barbara International Spring Show. Many of his plants may be recognized by their clonal names, involving some form of his wife Louella's name, such as *Sl*. Isabelle Stone 'Red Lulu' FCC/AOS.

Most of us are happy to grow blooming plants, but Jerry thought breeding orchids "seemed very interesting." It was 1955 and the great breeding boom had yet to occur. But Jerry thought, "I might as well try it."

Jerry learned about hybridizing in a manner that he recommends to all hopeful growers who want to try breeding. He talked with orchid growing friends and with authorities in the orchid world. He sought the wisdom of experienced hybridizers such as the great B. O. Bracey, whom he describes as "abrupt but very nice to me."

Cattleyas were what Jerry knew and grew, so he began with reds, producing such award-winners as *Slc*. Flame of India. In an era when there were few greens, Jerry worked on green cattleyas such as *Blc*. Pennsylvania Spring and *Blc*. Vermont's Green Mountains. Most of his crosses were sold in flask to others, particularly Stewart Orchids, who registered them. Stewarts benefited from his yellow hybrids and even mericlones some of them. Today, Jerry's attentions are on the blue cattleyas he has bred, most of which have yet to bloom.

AOS judges are required to know more than one narrow area of orchids, so Jerry found himself expanding his growing horizons. In the early 70s, he became interested in members of the *Oncidium* Alliance. But odonts and oncidids grew better in the cooler weather of Northern California; as a breeder, Jerry found himself in pursuit of hybrids that were

temperature tolerant – orchids in any climate. Thus began the work for which Jerry is recognized by such noted *Oncidiinae* intergeneric pioneers as Howard Liebman and Helmut Rohrl. Again, most of the crosses were registered and named by others who bought and bloomed Jerry's *Ada* hybrids and waterfall miltonias.

"Learn your species," says Jerry to other would-be hybridizers. For instance, he notes that *Onc. tigrinum* is a cooler grower but often makes warm progeny. By talking with other breeders, one finds out about such recessive traits as spots. Jerry

comments, for example, that some spotted cattleyas lose their spots in first generation hybrids, but regain them with careful second generation hybridizing.

Jerry's latest project has been to breed with *Sobralia* species. Most showy and colorful species are warm growers, but he is hoping for hybrids that are more temperature tolerant, able to grow outdoors in Santa Barbara. In typical Jerry fashion, he made the crosses, then sold them all.

When asked if he had any other advice for orchid growers, Jerry told me this: "Support your society." Good words!

Announcements

- **28th Annual Cymbidium Congress.** Saturday, March 29, 2003, at the Holiday Inn in Goleta. Full registration by March 1 is \$100 (late registration is \$125) and entitles the participant to unlimited admission to the Santa Barbara International Spring Show, admission to the show party on Friday, continental breakfast, buffet lunch, awards banquet, commemorative pin, auction, and, most importantly, six great lectures. The list of speakers is impressive: Kevin Hipkins from Australia on cym; Susumu Furuya of Japan on cym, CSA judge Tony Velardi on judging, Stig Dalström of Marie Selby Botanic Gardens on phrags, John Doherty of Canada on cyripediums, Barry Fraser of New Zealand on complex paphs. Registration forms can be found at www.cymbidium.org. For more information, contact Al and Sandy Svoboda at 805-969-4536 or stillisch@earthlink.net. Send registration to Cymbidium Congress, 231 Middle Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93108
- **No OSSB Sales Booth at the Spring Show.** With much regret, the OSSB board has decided not to purchase a booth at the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show. This year, the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate declined to split a booth with us. After reviewing the financial figures from previous years, the board realized having to pay a full booth fee probably would result in a net financial loss for the society.
- **Annual Dues.** Don't forget to pay your dues! Dues are \$25. Pay Carole Cowan at the meeting or send her a check, made out to OSSB, at 209 Cedar Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93108
- **Corrugated Fiberglass.** Looking for some? Call Jeff Thompson at 563-4376.
- **Best Wishes to Mike Hersh,** who is recovering from quadruple bypass surgery!

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