

Orchid Society of Santa Barbara

An Affiliate of the
American Orchid Society

Next Meeting:

**Wednesday,
October 20, 2010**

Location: Louise Lowry Davis
Recreation Center
1232 De La Vina (at Victoria)

Meeting: 7:30 PM

Winn Winmaw
will speak about
In Search of Orchids in Burma

Come follow our October speaker on a wonderful journey in search of orchids in a country few of us will ever visit. Winn Winmaw was born in Burma, now Myanmar, before moving to the US in 1988. Recently, he has made several trips back to Burma in search of native orchids, including *Cymbidium lowianum*, *Vanda coerulea* and *Paphiopedilum charlesworthii*. Come see an armchair view of his travels, and a bit of the lovely and mysterious Burma.

AOS Judging:

The American Orchid Society's Central Coast Judging Center meets concurrently with OSSB in the small room at Louise Lowry Davis. To enter a plant in AOS judging, bring it by 6:30PM for registration. Note that AOS judging is separate from our society's monthly show table.

Needed: OSSB needs a new Vice President and a new hospitality chair person. Check page four for details!



Above: *Lc. Miss Wonderful* (*Mari's Song* x *L. anceps* 'Mendenhall'), the 82 point AM winner from a grex receiving an Award of Quality (given to 12 individual seedlings from the same grex) at the September 2010 meeting. The exhibitor was Santa Barbara Orchid Estate. All photos this newsletter courtesy Larry Vierheilig

CALENDAR

October 15-17, 2010

Southland Orchid Show, "Literally Orchids." The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA.

November 27-28, 2010

OSSB Fall Show, "Orchids Run Amok." Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. We will need volunteers to help with the show!!

OSSB Officers for 2010:

President - Frank Methmann

Treasurer - PJ Sanderson

Membership & mailing - Robin Hamlin

Directors: Khosrow Sadeghian, Angela Watt, Randall Umland

Visit the OSSB Web Site!

Vice President - open

Secretary - Heidi Kirkpatrick

Show Chair - Tom Ball

www.orchidsb.net

Summary of the August 2010 Meeting

❁ Program Report

George Hatfield of Hatfield Orchids in Oxnard spoke to the membership about his recent trip to the Australian National Orchid Conference. But before beginning his talk, George said a few words encouraging members to consider joining the AOS and/or CSA judging programs. It is a great way to learn more about orchids and to see orchids at shows and judging centers in Southern California. In addition to this promotion, George demonstrated just what judging does for us by presenting a CSA Bronze award to our own Don Brown for his *Cymbidium tortisepalum* var. *longipetalum* 'Faye Wong', exhibited at the 2010 Santa Barbara International Orchid Show.

George was the keynote speaker for the Australian National Orchid Conference, held this time in Melbourne, Australia. The conference rotates between Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, and people drive thousands of miles to go to the show. Though Australia has only about the population of California, the people are orchid fanatics. Melbourne has 28 orchid societies!

The orchid business is good for Australian vendors, too. A single spike cymbidium at the show sold for about \$75, while a two-spike plant would be \$190. George saw a four-spike *Cym.* Sarah Jean selling for \$130. Much of this is a result of the prohibitive Australian import law. All imported plants must undergo a mandatory 100% methyl bromide fumigation. Any poor plant that survives this treatment is placed for six months in state quarantine—at a charge of \$2 per square foot per day. Then there is the cost of the inspector, the cost of filling out the form, all with the result that Australia is a very closed market.

The city of Melbourne, in the state of Victoria, is on the coast where sailing is popular. Water quality is enough to make a Santa Barbara native weep with envy: 4 to 5 ppm salt levels. They endured ten years of a brutal drought, but the year George visited, the region had tremendous rain.

The theme of the show was "A Gift of Orchids," and this was reflected in some of the display designs. The first display George showed was installed by a phalaenopsis society, and George remarked on the

excellence of their culture.

Exhibitors came from other major Australian cities, including a Sydney commercial grower who displayed a tabletop of mini-catts and phalies. Also from near Sydney, Kevin Hipkins installed a display with *Cym. eburneum*, a plant, unfortunately for us, that is intolerant of salts and minerals in the water. This species is in the background of standard cymbidium breeding.

Cymbidiums dominate in Australia, and George, whose business is cymbidium breeding, commented that he felt like "a kid in a candy shop." Pendulous cymbidiums are popular in Australia, although their breeding is not yet as advanced as we see in the US. George noted, however, that Australian large cymbidium breeding is more developed in terms of color and size than we see in the US.

Though cymbidiums are immensely popular, Australians also love their native dendrobiums and a good paphiopedilum. Among the people of Australia, there is a fair amount of ethnic diversity as a result of immigrants from countries like Viet Nam and the Philippines. These cultures traditionally value orchids and have carried this love with them to Australia.

The show featured floral arrangements that would be familiar to visitors to the Santa Barbara show, but also arrangements that are much bigger, including several five foot floor-standing floral arrangements. Artwork was on display, too, including an exhibit of orchid stamps and envelopes.

One of the local societies specialized in species, which translated to an amazing exhibit of a multitude of *Pterostylis*, an Australian terrestrial orchid notable for its hooded flower. Also on display at the show were other Australian natives, including an amazing, red *sarcochilus* with a flower the size of a Kennedy half dollar! George noted that members of this genus make very good cymbidium companions and grow robustly outdoors here.

Of course, no Australian show could be complete without the Australian dendrobiums, and this one featured some very large and impressive plants. Some of these were grown in astonishingly shallow pots, and George had to wonder how they didn't tip over.

There were *Den. kingianum* hybrids of gorgeous white with fuchsia markings. There were also *Den. speciosum* plants growing in half meter slabs of tree fern with lava rock in the center. The yellow forms are prized and sell at a premium.

Among the non-Australian orchids were first bloom odontoglossums and a vibrant color palette of masdevallias. We might find their Grand Champion—*Phal. amabilis*—unexciting, but George noted that these are rarely seen in Australia, and the winning plant was a well-grown specimen.

Among the exciting cymbidiums on display were *Cym. Obeaston* and *Cym. Winter Fire 'Splash'*. *Cym. Eye of the Tiger* is a *Cym. suave* hybrid that was floriferous in a three inch pot. Saucer culture for cymbidiums is very popular in Australia, probably in part in response to the recent drought. This involves growing cymbidiums with the pots sitting in saucers of water, and poking holes in the sides of the pots near the bottom. Of course, good water is a necessity for this sort of method.

Exhibition ideals are a little different than ours. Because the flowers are the focus, Australians are not afraid of a naked pot, and often don't disguise their pots. George found some of the large, yellow name tags to be distracting; here, exhibitors are encouraged to use unobtrusive tags.

George found that the top potting medium was New Zealand pine bark (Orchiata bark). Next was diatomite, which, as an Australian product, was very cheap. Third most common was Tasmanian sphagnum moss, and George could not say enough superlative things about this product. Tasmania is a cold island off the southern coast of Australia. The sphagnum from Tasmania is a beautiful, fluffy moss that doesn't break down. Australians use it particularly for masdevallias and odontoglossums.

Potting supplies were hugely expensive. Plastic pots were \$2.50 to \$3. The orchid hobby, however, is alive and thriving in Australia, where unemployment is 6%, minimum wage is \$18 Aussie dollars an hour, and Sydney and Melbourne are considered among the top five happiest big cities.

After the show, George was fortunate enough to

visit some local growers and shared some of his photos with us. He visited with the hobby grower Colin Gillespie, a transplanted South African engineer who grows in a 20 meter long greenhouse with polycarbonate roof and glass sides. His very high-tech operation had aluminum benches with wire mesh on top. Light was very high, around 4500 foot-candles, but there were swamp coolers galore. Watering was done via timer and each plant has its own spaghetti tube supplying water. Gillespie also injected hydrogen peroxide with his water to help oxygenate the mix. Common with many Australian growers, Gillespie used "yo-yos" to tie up the tips of spikes. The yo-yos are a ratchet system with a hook that pulls flower spikes straight up. While this does not make the graceful arch favored by many in the US, it does overcome spike deficiencies. However, there was no deficiency in the *Cym. Khan Flame* George saw in Gillespie's greenhouse. He called it the best red he's seen, with 15 big flowers on a single spike.

George also spent time with Graham Morris of Valley Orchids, who spoke at the Cymbidium Congress here in Santa Barbara several years ago, and he visited Kimberly Orchids, owned by the Sutherland family. They grow cut flowers in a "Bush House" with plastic on top and saran on the sides. Spikes are gently drawn upward by a plastic clothespin and elastic band, which George found more satisfactory than the yo-yos.



Another award-winning *Lc. Miss Wonderful*. This cultivar received an 81 point Award of Merit at the September meeting.

New Vice President and Hospitality Chair Needed!

Societies run on the efforts of volunteers. Many of us on the board have volunteered before. I have written the society newsletter for about a dozen years now. Frank Methman has been president and vice president in the past. PJ Sanderson has been treasurer for several years. We would be delighted to welcome a new crop of volunteers to make sure the society continues to function.

If you are intimidated by volunteering for Vice President

or Hospitality, consider splitting the duties with a friend. Just be sure to volunteer! Email me at orchidtrain@cox.net or call Frank at 566-0839 for info.

Happy News!

Congratulations to Phil and Angela Watt on the birth of their daughter, Phaedra Alexandra Watt. I hear that mom and baby are doing fine. Dad sounds a little dazed in his emails, but that is probably a combination of joy and sleep deprivation.

Show Table Results

Larry Vierheilig took top honors on the show table with the interesting intergeneric *Zygonisia* Cynosure 'Blue Bird'. Second was a four way tie between Don Brown's green *Neofinetia falcata*, his outdoor-grown *Paph.* St. Swithin, TJ Bloominger's miniature *Dendrobium hercoglossum*, and Bill Robson's floriferous *Maxillaria lepidota*.

Photo: The Award of Quality photo for *Lc. Miss Wonderful*, taken by Larry Vierheilig at the September 2010 AOS judging session. The group of plants was exhibited by SBOE.

