

THE MAKING OF A GRAND CHAMPION

by
Leon Glicenstein

On April 9, 2003 Hoosier Orchid Company [HOC] had the honor of having one of its plants – *Lycaste Golden Emperor* ‘Hoosier’ – chosen to be Grand Champion of The 23rd. New York International Orchid Show. At the same time it was raised from an AM/AOS [84 points] to an FCC/AOS [91 points], and further it received The Ben Berliner Memorial Award for the Best Maxillaria Alliance in Show.

Erich E. Michel transported the plant to the show, set-up and placed it artistically into Hoosier’s exhibit, and accepted the awards and accolades for the Hoosier Orchid Company.

I have been asked by Jim Watson, editor of *Orchids*, to relate some of its history and tell how I grew this plant.

When I arrived at HOC a few years ago, we had a number of mature and nearly mature plants of a *Lycaste* [*Aphrodite* x *Concentration*]. These plants came originally from a nursery long out of business. As they began to flower a few were clear yellow with some ruby red in the throat, others had brown pigment in the sepals with yellow petals and lips. In March, 2000 I took one of the yellow ones to the Western Pennsylvania Show in Pittsburgh, PA. At that time it had only two flowers and it was granted an AM/AOS. Since we did not know who hybridized this beautiful creation, we registered the hybrid with the fortuitous name of *Lyc. Golden Emperor*, with the clonal name of ‘Hoosier’. [A second plant of this grex, one with brownish pigment in the sepals, received an AM/AOS in 2002. The clonal ‘Fishback Creek’ was placed on this plant.]

When the plant received its FCC/AOS it had five flowers. It is interesting that, within measuring error, the flowers for both awards had a natural spread of approximately 12.6 cm. [4.9 inches]. As shown in Charles Marden Fitch’s beautiful award photograph, it is a clear medium yellow with ruby-red markings in the throat. In the comments for its FCC/AOS award it stated “...awarded for superb form and fantastic color.” The substance was described as “outstanding and hard”; indeed, the sepals are at least 3/8” thick.

The plant is grown in the cool house at HOC. Night temperatures during the winter are 52F, day temperatures about 68F. During the rest of the year we try to get as close to these temperatures as possible. [We do have evaporative cooling in this house, but it is not too easy to maintain these temperatures in the hot, humid Indiana summer.] I have it potted in a mixture of two parts Rutgers Mix to one part Promix HP. It is repotted every other year. It is presently in a 10” plastic azalea pan, has 5 backbulbs and one lead growth. I expect to sever the rhizome between the second and third backbulb to encourage another growth. I hope that this will give us a back-up plant. At the same

time it will be potted down. When in active growth the plant is frequently watered with dilute fertilizer, but allowed to dry a little between waterings. During the winter months, when the plant is dormant, it is kept cool and dry, only giving enough water to keep the pseudobulbs from shriveling. Watering is resumed when the new growths begin. The light conditions are about 50% shade during the day, but it gets full east light in the morning.

As a hybridizer for HOC I will obviously be using this plant in our breeding program. Lycaste Golden Emperor 'Hoosier' was described in The Greater New York Orchid Society's Newsletter as "...probably the finest yellow lycaste in the world at the present time." But this is not enough for us. We want to make an even better large flowered yellow Lycaste. To this end, we have in flask my hybrid of this plant with Lycaste skinneri alba 'Joe Deifel' FCC/AOS

Plant appearance is important for awards. The night before Erich was to leave for New York I groomed the plant. I trimmed off the leaves that were beginning to turn yellow prior to normal leaf abscission. I staked up the flowers so that one could look into the flowers and therefore they could be seen better; four in one group and a fifth to the side. It was one of many plants that were taken for the exhibit. But the rest was history.