

## The WWW Approach to Judging Paphiopedilums (and various other musings)

By W.W. Wilson, MD

Published in Awards Quarterly Volume 22, No. 2, 1991, pages 129-131

At the October meeting of the American Orchid Society Board of Trustees, the Committee on Awards will recommend the first recipient of a new award, The W. W. Wilson Award. Annually the Committee selects the winners for the Nax Trophy and the Butterworth Award which are given for the Best Species and Best Specimen plants of the year, respectively. The W. W. Wilson Award will be given to the best exhibited plant of the Paphiopedilum Alliance for that year. The establishment of this new award was initiated by the members of Dr. Wilson's judging region, the Mid-Atlantic, and funds to guarantee its continuance were donated by orchidists from around the country. Although Bill Wilson is known to many members of the AOS, he is probably unknown to the great majority. His judging activities go back to the 1940s and he has been strong voice in the system ever since. I asked him to write a piece on the judging of paphs as he saw it, and he fell right into my trap. The following article does not tell us a great deal about judging paphiopedilums, but it does tell us a little about the man, Bill Wilson. Let it never be said that I do not know where he stands on an issue or that I will always agree with him, but certainly let it strongly be said, "Congratulations, Bill, for this fine tribute by your fellow judges of the American Orchid Society," - Don Herman, Chairman of the COA

In November 1990, the esteemed Chairman of the Committee on Awards asked me if I would write an article on paphiopedilums for this journal. What does the poor foot soldier do when the Commander-in-Chief asks for volunteers? He steps forward, salutes smartly and says, "Yes, sir." A couple of months went by and nothing happened, but I had the task in mind when I thought I'd better talk to the Commander-in-Chief and learn what specifically he wished me to cover. He said, "Write how WWW would approach judging paphiopedilums." I thought to myself, I can write that in one word, as in handling a porcupine, "carefully," but I had visions of a firing squad if I were so laconic.

Having written at least two previous articles, one in the AOS Bulletin (May 1983, page 452) and the other in this journal (Awards Quarterly, Vol. 14, #1, 1983, page 27) on judging paphiopedilums, I wondered what could I add to that which I had already written. Indeed, I thought of calling the editors and suggesting they take the earlier articles, put them in a blender and use what came out, but again, I could hear that last command: Fire! So, I thought about the situation in sort of an off-hand way. Nothing of note came to mind. As the time drew closer to the deadline, I made a few extra demands upon that old grey matter and strangely enough, I thought about my first day in physics class in high school.

It was and is a great school; it offered physics one year, chemistry the next, for juniors and seniors. The teacher was draped with many PhDs and other academic laurels the way some of the teachers were, but he was duly liked and respected by all the kids. His first lecture on the subject of physics included a few remarks about the care and tending of the laboratory (when we had learned enough to go into the lab) and a few other odds and ends. When he got down to the nitty-gritty of physics itself, he stated, "Matter is neither created nor destroyed." He stopped and looked around the class. Nobody said very much. In fact, nobody said anything. As I pondered the situation as a callow youth, I wondered what I was going to do about that statement. I did not, at that point, have any ideas of pioneering and creating new matter, nor was I bent upon destroying it. I did think a great deal about forces which, over billions of years, had been rearranging it, but having had these thoughts, I do not know why this statement should come back to me after all these years when I was trying to think about judging paphiopedilums. A bit unusual! I wondered if the old boy was going "round the bend, but, not being able to accept that, I tried to figure out the point of my musings.

Brains do work in strange ways at times. I am sure you are all aware that if you have a problem that seems insoluble one day, sleep on it. The brain quietly works on the problem while you are in the arms of Morpheus, and, indeed, upon awakening, sometimes the solution is at hand. Similarly, if you are angry with somebody and write him/her a hot letter, then sleep on it, usually by morning, your ire has softened and you won't send the letter (which probably shouldn't have been written in the first place).

So I was thinking about all the billions of years that this planet of ours has been rearranging matter into what confronts us today. That is, if you accept the tenet that matter is neither created nor destroyed. Maybe physicists do not believe that any more; I have not heard anything to the contrary, but I am not an avid reader of the subject. For want of a better term, let us just use the words, "Mother Nature," and we can marvel at the way sand, rocks, rivers, mountains, deserts and plains abound in all parts of the world. Also, the trees, the animals and the flowers that have been arranged them in incalculable numbers and configurations. To get to the point, somewhere along the line paphiopedilums and all the orchids came into being in a speck of time that probably could not be seen if compared to the eons that preceded.

To focus on the recent past, lots of things have been happening in the Paphiopedilum world. New species have been discovered; in fact, even "old" species have been discovered. Quite a number of people have set their minds and their pencils or toothpicks (or whatever) to imitating the birds and the bees, and have produced about 12,000 (plus or minus a few hundred) Paphiopedilum hybrids - maybe more if you count the ones that have not been registered. Now, here we are, actually part of the flora and fauna, as Homo

sapiens. We are supposed to judge these things. I guess, basically, this is one pattern of matter looking at another pattern of matter.

What we see on the show table, we are not supposed to rearrange; we are supposed to look at it as it exists at that time. That is what we judge - not how it looked yesterday or a week ago, and not how we might expect it to look tomorrow or next week or next month.

I have mentioned how Mother Nature created species and a few hybrids (and people are also in the act, at least as far as hybrids are concerned), but judges also have the task and responsibility of arranging and molding new judges to carry on. Let it be a masterful job of which even Mother Nature will be proud. We cannot do it in six days; sometimes I wonder if we can do it in six years, or ever. It should be an ongoing process that never ends. I have been judging for about 40 years and I look forward to learning something at every meeting. What is that bit of matter that we wish to mold, beat and cajole into a judge? Just another specimen of Homo sapiens, we hope with an added dash sapiens? He or she suffers through the student period, perhaps feeling less anguish and a taste of feeling his/her oats as a probationary judge, at least until the last couple of months. Then that final great day comes with the Region passes recommendations for elevation on to the Committee on Awards who, in turn, heaves it up to the Trustees. With approval all along the line, lo and behold a new judge appears upon the scene.

That judge is supposed to judge not only Paphiopedilums, but everything else in the orchid world that some other person decides to put on the judging table. Actually, what I say about Paphiopedilum judging can be said about any other genus. If I get a little bit more specific later on in this paper, maybe something will pertain only to paphs, but I would say first and foremost, that you are a judge and you are supposed to be able to judge any orchid. For instance, if you were one of only three judges at a show, you had better damned well judge every orchid. I must confess that over a period of many years of judging, I have sometimes looked with disdain upon those who withdraw from judging a new species or hybrid just because they have never seen one before. Their training should have been great enough that they would have enough of a feel, a grasp, a perception or whatever, of the subject that they could extrapolate the knowledge they did have in order to exercise judgment and make the call as to whether this "thing" that appears before them is worthy of being granted an award of the American Orchid Society. If there are eight or 10 or more judges around and someone chooses not to judge a particular plant (not for reasons of having a stake in that plant but because he feels he is not qualified), I think he had better get in there and judge it, listen to his peers and become qualified. This argument has gone on for many years. Nobody wins or loses the argument, but it persists. We should judge all orchids in the same fashion and with the same degree of intensity as we would Paphiopedilums.

The word "intensity" reminds me of a couple of incidents. When I attended Princeton, I participated in several sports, football being one of them. One football experience helps define the word. In those days, Princeton had an exceedingly good football team. Undefeated. People were always trying to dream up a contest between Minnesota (who was then one of the powers) and Princeton, or Pittsburgh and Princeton, but nothing ever came of it. Anyway, when the varsity practiced, it scrimmaged, of course, the scrubs. Being a scrub was an experience in masochism; it was no fun being mauled by the larger, faster and more skilled varsity. Why anybody would endure what the scrubs did daily is beyond me. They were not gung ho; they did try to follow that basic instinct of self-preservation. When trying to urge on the scrubs one day, one of the assistant coaches, a former All-American end, captain of the basketball team and eventually the Director of Athletics at Princeton, growled, "You guys have as much intensity as a piece of wet spaghetti." Indeed, that was a very apt appraisal of their efforts.

Intensity story #2 - Quite a few years later, my son and I attended a University of Pennsylvania football game. Because neither Penn nor their opponents were particularly good that year, we were surprised to find the stadium packed. It turned out that the University was sponsoring a high school band contest and nearly all the bands in the area plus a number from outside the area were engaged in a music and marching competition in Franklin Field that day. Competition had continued throughout the morning and winners strutted their stuff at halftime. At the conclusion of the game, we left through a tunnel that runs around the bowels of the stadium, hoping to avoid most of the congestion. Rather, we came to a larger tunnel through which the bands were exiting the field. At this intersection, one of the bands was completely stopped, "marking time" to the cadence of the drummers. Being interested in people my whole life, I could not help but look through the din at the individuals in the band in front of me. Because the drummers were still practicing their art, most of my attention was directed toward them and I focused on one particular young drummer. I looked at his face, seeing - in the way he was exacting every last decibel from the drum he was beating - the most intensity I have ever seen in my life. I have seen many paranoid patients in my practice, have treated them, and hopefully have gotten most of them better. They are a most intense group, but this kid had them all beat. I watched him as he continued to beat out the time. A spot cleared and the band marched on, but I have never forgotten the intensity on that young man's face. If one of our U.S. pilots, flying a Stealth bomber, had dropped a smart bomb, directing it into the tunnel, that drummer would not have missed a beat.

When we approach judging, we should be intense, but not with that kind of intensity; nor with wet spaghetti in our back bones. We should be cool and collected and maybe have an extreme mental intensity for the task at hand. This motivation, however, should be well masked by a cheerful and come-what-may expression. No arguments. Discussion, yes, with

your colleagues on the judging team. I have seen some disastrous occasions on which some judges became a little too intense. Our group was having a hot discussion one night at judging; one of the judges invited another outside. The invitee said, "After you." The invitor never moved. He had lost control, but regained it quickly; the invitee was 20 years younger! End of discussion. Keep it under control, stick to your guns, perhaps, but listen to the other guy. Learn from what is being said. Offer your own suggestions and experience. Wisecrack a little if the situation permits, but do not use any hard words. We should be ladies and gentlemen. I believe these ideas are spelled out in somewhat different terms in the handbook; they should be heeded.

I have always felt that male judges should wear coats and ties, among other things, and ladies should be appropriately dressed, as most always are. Mother Nature has done her utmost to put orchids at the top of the list as far as flowers are concerned. It is up to us to maintain a décor appropriate with what we are judging. If we were judging dandelions, I could, perhaps settle for less. I realize that there has been a tendency toward more informality, even in this part of this part of the country, in the last few years, and I am also aware of more comfortable standards of dress that might prevail in Hawaii and other judging areas. Obviously, this is not something that should be legislated, but consider it. How would I approach judging? Bathed and shaved, appropriately dressed, well motivated, somewhere the scrubs and the drummer boy, a smile on my face, intending to listen raptly to every word uttered by other judges and to respond in a calm, even voice while uttering my own jewels. All this really is superfluous. Certainly, all judges would always behave impeccably.

As we continue to approach the subject of *Paphiopedilum* judging and the theatre in which it is conducted, there is a stump outside (in Philadelphia anyway) where well-intentioned judges and others (including damned fools) may ventilate their ideas, gripes, hopes, etc. It is called free speech. I just can't resist climbing up there. Thinking of judging *Paph* species compels me to include a few words on their behalf. We are, in my opinion, in jeopardy of losing the forward thrust and pioneering instincts and the freedom engendered by the discovery and dissemination of new *Paph* species and, indeed, old ones. If there are new species out there, we should find them and bring 'em back alive. The unreasonable placing of all *Paphiopedilum* species in Appendix I of CITES is deplorable, the motives for which, in my opinion, were also not too honorable. *Paphiopedilum druryi* is the only *Paphiopedilum* species that belongs on Appendix I at the present time. Perhaps the so-called authorities will change their collective minds once the pendulum begins to swing back from the far reaches of the arc where it is at present. In other words, I hope that we will again be blessed by the introduction of new species, not just to academia, which dangles on the edge of self-interest and greed, but to the orchid populace at large and legally. The present laws and regulations promote the illegal and indiscriminate collecting of that which we wish to

preserve. Forbidden fruit! I believe the commercial and private growers have done a far better job of preserving species, learning more about their growth habits and culture, and certainly, using them in hybridizing and selfing them to increase the population, not destroy it. Maybe I have not exercised due diligence, but I have yet to find an institution of higher learning that has done anything comparable to the work of Vacherot & Lecoufle, for instance, in preserving for the world *Paphiopedilum delenatii*.

I can understand the intellectual zeal and scientific curiosity in carving up a plant of a new species to study, sketch, preserve and "publish" a specimen, but would it not be better to propagate that plant first? It is noteworthy, indeed, that some laboratories are bulging with dried specimens that have been stored for years and not yet described. With a little TLC, these plants could have been grown and not sacrificed until it was reasonable to dissect them. A certain very skillful collector has been pilloried. We have not had an open-minded Bulletin. I read the entire January 1990 issue, front to back, which took one side of the subject, not a word on a contrary view. I waited patiently for the next issue, knowing it would be devoted to the other side. Other than a vague letter or two on the subject, no comprehensive articles have graced the pages of our Bulletin since. This is as behind the Iron Curtain; obviously, no equal time. I have reason to believe the editor will be sent such a communication soon, and I will look forward to its publication.

Now, off the stump and back to the real intent of this article. Since the last paper I wrote on this subject, I find that I really have nothing to add to the judging of complex paphiopedilums except to broaden the petals and raise standards in general. I have, however, a few suggestions and exhortations once again concerning species, primary hybrids and now vinicolors.

In judging, a new species, a little hesitation should be exercised. I refer to the first award, an FCC, given to *Paph. armeniacum*. Experience has shown that, in reality, it was a pretty said specimen. In defense, a number of people who were at the judging of the first *Paph. armeniacum* told me that it was an emotional experience for those present, i.e., the judges. That is no excuse. I wonder how many judges we would elect to our common-please benches or superior court if we thought they were going to hand down decisions based on emotion. To me, any judge (orchid or otherwise) should divorce politics, influence and emotion from his or her decision-making processes. So much for the first award to *Paph. armeniacum*. We cannot take it back. It is a great species, and I expect to see many fine things materialize as the fruits of more and more hybridization using this species are seen. My colleagues, I exhort you to do the right thing, but do not go overboard. As far as judging new plants of old species is concerned, new and better clones certainly may be found, particularly in our selfing programs. Make sure they are good enough to be awarded. Look up the previous awards to the species at hand; is the one before us significantly better? Standards should go up with the passing of years.

In judging primary and other hybrids using species, remember what has gone into the make-up of the hybrid and judge accordingly. It has been published many times in the past that one should know the parents and, indeed, I think this is a must for every good judge. If you do not know, look it up. There is no disgrace in hitting the books, just knowledge.

Now the vinicolors. I like the vinicolors, but I have the strong opinion that far too many awards have been given to them because of their dark red color, with unfortunate disregard to their shapes and other characteristics which, at best, have been questionable. In view of the fact that the two Paph. callosums involved in most of the breeding are certainly lacking in good shape, I am willing to make great allowances for the shape. Nevertheless, we do have standards and I think that, as in riding a roller coaster, the first downward dip after being hauled to the top of the structure is probably the most exhilarating. I think we have passed that point now and we must smooth out our thoughts on the matter and vigorously raise our standards. Some beautiful colors are seen and they should be given every consideration, but there is more than color to be considered. I think we should be much more demanding in the area of shape and other factors. When vinicolors are crossed with complex hybrids and, similarly, when any species or other hybrid of lesser complexity is crossed with what we consider a complex hybrid, I believe we should adhere to the standards that are required for complex hybrids because what are we doing except making another complex? We certainly are not making the new hybrid less complex, and we do not wish to lower our standards. I would expect the judges to continue to raise their sights and demand more.

What I have said in the last few paragraphs is about as specific as I can be concerning the types of Paphiopedilums discussed. So get your coats and ties out of moth balls, put a stump outside of your judging halls, write your congressmen and raise a little hell, and on to the judging of Paphiopedilums as per the approach of WWW. If there are other thoughts, I am sure this journal would be happy to publish them, and I would be delighted to read them. Is it not time to abolish the HCC?