



Beginning in 1975, I started growing orchids for fragrant flowers in the wintertime. My first purchase was three hybrids (*Cattleya*, *Phalaenopsis* and *Milioniopsis*) from the old Beall Orchid Company on Vashon Island. The *Milioniopsis* died the first summer, a victim of dry indoor conditions, spider mites and my ignorance. The other two lasted several years and I was hooked. Reading everything I could find about orchids, searching for species and some hybrids, I gradually learned which types would fit into my growing areas, on windowsills, under lights and finally in 1988, a small poly-film greenhouse. In the early days, printed catalogs and mail order were the only way orchid plants could be acquired. I learned the hard way to order plants only during mild spring and fall weather.

I joined the American Orchid Society in 1978 or '79 and read their Bulletin from cover to cover each month, turning first to the advertisements in the back. The Bulletin has been renamed, "Orchids," and modern color photography has vastly improved the look of this informative magazine. Time brought some needed changes, but the wide range of orchids that were once commonly available seems to have declined. Today, a few quality mericlone orchids are readily available in stores and shops. But once an orchid grower is looking out beyond the mericlone-growing stage, it can be difficult to expand an orchid collection with new and interesting plants.

Our mail carrier knocked on our door one day in Albany, about 1983, to hand me a flyer on the Cherry City Orchid Show the following weekend in Salem. Jim and I went to the show, the spectacular flowers dazzled us and we joined the Cherry City Orchid Society. Show competition drew me and for years, I selectively bought orchids that might bloom early in the spring for the Cherry City show. During the early 1990s, the Board tried to put a Cherry City display in every show in the Willamette Valley and along the Oregon Coast. For several years, we made it to every single show. It was fun, working together, planning a display and putting it up. Even taking a display down often provided the opportunity to "talk orchids" with other Exhibitors.

In the late 1980s, Marilyn Burritt, with her mother Diana Burritt who was an AOS Judge, would drive south to the Cherry City show from their home near Vancouver BC. Marilyn taught me how to work with the show entry-tag system, which has been used and refined by NW orchid societies for over thirty-five years. Diana Burritt was part of the PNW Judging Center, an all-volunteer staff who provides judging services to orchid society shows from Edmonton and Calgary in Alberta, Canada to Oregon's own Rogue Valley. Asked to join the AOS judging system as a Student Judge in 1998, I became an Accredited Judge in 2004 and a new world of orchid appreciation opened.

I've grown paphiopedilums and a variety of species and hybrids for a long time, but recently *Milioniopsis* have displaced paphs as my number one orchid genus. I still eagerly await first flowers from new seedlings, as I have for thirty-plus years. My favorite orchid is always the next to bloom. To quote the dedication in my first orchid book, written by Charles Marden Fitch, "For my friends around the world, I hope we will cultivate an understanding of each other and learn to live in peace. Let's begin with our mutual love of nature's beauty."

Bergen Todd