



## ‘Finders Keepers’

*FINDERS KEEPERS: Chowning-1961. Standards ivory-flecked caerulean blue on margins; falls ivory-flecked and bordered blue; style arms blue, gold line signal. I. brevicaulis X I. brevicaulis.*

I have grown this small Louisiana for a few years now in Arkansas, and grew it once before in southern California. I’ve never seen it in the glory it grew in at the Little Rock convention in the Hall-Helmkamp garden. Taller than I had ever seen it, the clump was in full, exquisite bloom. In my garden, the stalks are at most ten inches tall, and it doesn’t seem to clump. Rather, it forms a loose group of rhizomes in one area, which go dormant in the summer. I intend to move it into my shallow wet ditch and see how it grows there. The convention planting was a revelation.



*Frank Chowning’s ‘Finders Keepers’. Photo by Robert Treadway, Carlisle, Arkansas*

### Short Iris, Tall Tale

I am writing this because I was going through some of the old SLI newsletters one winter evening and in the March, 1981 issue, came across “Some Observations and Thoughts” from Frank Chowning that Editor Marie Caillet had printed. The one on this iris follows.

“There is a story ‘going the rounds’ that my registered hybrid FINDERS KEEPERS was collected by me in the wild; and that it acquired its name when I, with some friends, were on a hunt for wild iris and, being the first to see the plant in bloom, I rushed ahead of the others shouting, ‘Finders Keepers’! A good story, but it didn’t happen that way. This iris—a sport—first bloomed in the spring of 1958 in a bed of sister seedlings which were the result of a cross I

had made of very dark blackish purple seedlings in an effort to produce a ‘black’ iris. It increased rapidly and I gave rhizomes to several friends, including Caroline Dormon. When it bloomed for her the next spring she rushed off a postcard to me saying, ‘Frank Chowning, you didn’t originate FINDERS KEEPERS, the fairies made it.’ I have wished many times the fairies would make me another, substituting pink for the indigo markings on the present hybrid.”

No other Louisiana iris has the pigment pattern of this beauty. The blooms don’t last as

long as modern hybrids, but don’t let that keep you from growing and appreciating this gem. How lucky we are, that Frank Chowning, working for a black iris (later BLACK GAMECOCK certainly approached his goal), found and kept this seedling.

*Richard Sloan  
Alma, Arkansas*

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*Richard Sloan is the new Treasurer of SLI.*