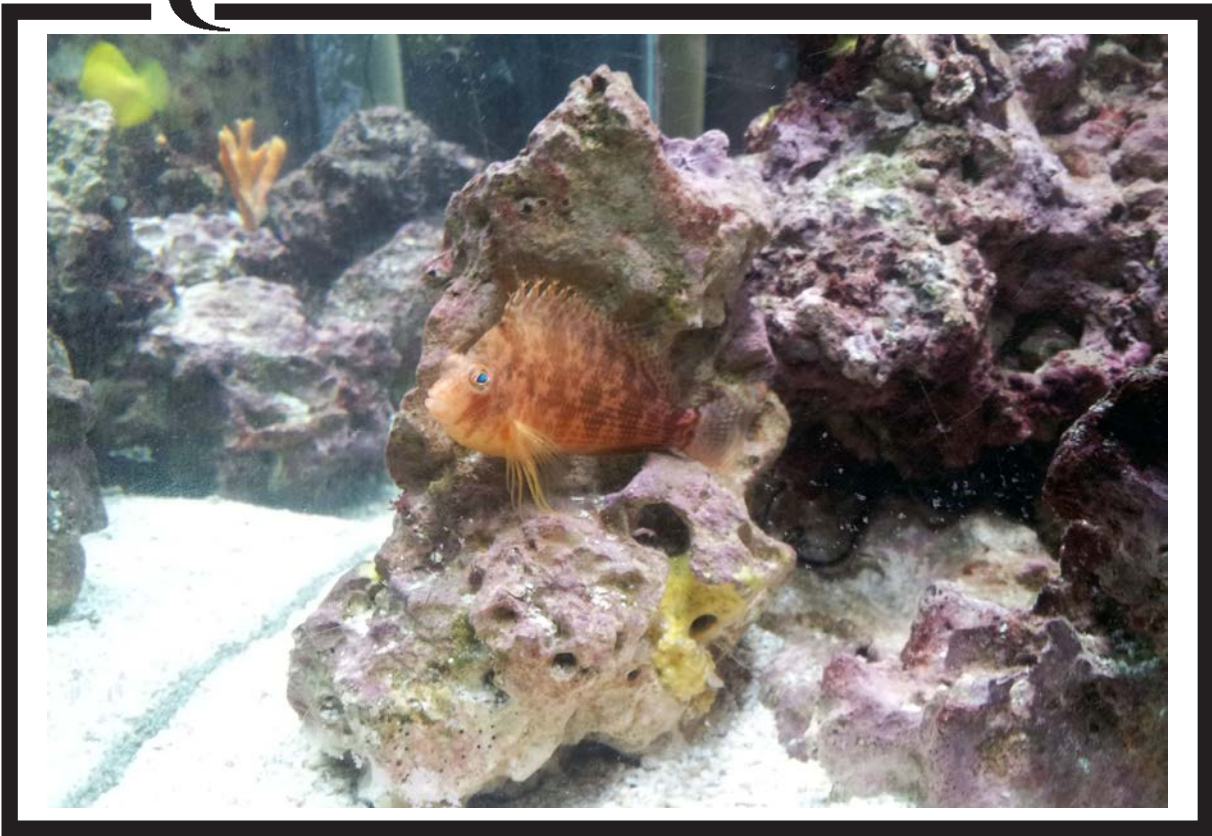


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June 2016
volume XXIII
number 4

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Series III Vol. XXIII, No. 4 June, 2016

ON THE COVER

A Mothers Day visit to Tampa was not devoid of fish exposure. This saltwater aquarium belongs to my sister Patricia. Some of the occupants are not visible from this angle, but the yellow tang and a sponge can be seen in reflection, as well as the hawkfish in the foreground.

Photo by Dan Radebaugh

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From the Editor

by Dan Radebaugh

You'll no doubt notice that much of this issue is devoted to the demise of Cameo Pet Shop – and rightly so. It's a sad occasion, but none of us is immortal – neither persons nor businesses. Cameo's was a life that meant something, to many people, and for many years, so in this issue we celebrate Cameo's contribution to this hobby, in this place, for those many years.

You'll notice that a couple of the articles dealing with Cameo originally appeared in these pages quite a few years ago – which leads me to another subject. It's taken some time, and quite a lot of work, but all issues of **Modern Aquarium** (Series III) – from its first issue in January of 1994 to May of 2015 are now available online. Just check the **Modern Aquarium** link on our website (GreaterCity.org) and you can find them all. This is really a treasure trove! Yes, there are many articles of historical interest. There are also many articles that are still very relevant to fishkeeping today, some of those by members you know, and some by those who have passed on.

Starting up a magazine, especially one intended to be a major contribution to its field, is a large

undertaking, and my hat is off to the folks (see photo below from the January 1995 issue) who brought it off, and to the club that supported this visionary project.

One of the things you'll discover as you look through these old issues (What? 1994 is *old*?) is that, back in the day, there were many 'theme' issues – for example, an issue devoted to saltwater fishkeeping, or an issue featuring women authors, or perhaps catfish or cichlids, to name a few such themes. Partly in homage to this tradition, I'm planning on devoting an upcoming issue to the subject of fish intelligence. Unlike in times not too long past, there is currently real research happening in the field of animal intelligence. If you have something you'd like to say on the subject, by all means submit it. Even if you only have an observation, send it to me. I would certainly be willing to devote some space to brief observations. As one noted ethologist puts it, "The plural of anecdote is data." I already have a couple of articles, and the promise of another, and I'll contribute an opener (not written yet – this may affect when this special issue actually happens). There must be some reason that attracts you to keeping fish. Is it in part their behavior? So send me anything you have that you think might be relevant!

If *you* have an article, photo, or drawing that you'd like to submit for inclusion in *Modern Aquarium*, it's easy to do! Email it to **gcas@earthlink.net**, fax it to me at (877) 299-0522, or just hand it to me at a meeting.



This is the notorious "Gang Of Four" at the first editorial meeting described in this article. Note the smiles — we had not yet realized the full impact of the task before us.

The participants are (from left to right, standing) Stephan Zander and Joseph Ferdenzi and (seated from left to right) Warren Feuer and Alexander Priest.



GCAS Programs 2016

It is our great fortune to have another admirable cast of speakers who have so graciously accepted our invitation to join us throughout the coming season, bringing us their extensive knowledge and experiences. You certainly won't wish to miss a moment of our prominent guests, not to mention the friends, fish, warmth, and camaraderie that accompanies each meeting.

March 2	Matthew Wickey from Tetra/ Spectrum Brands <i>Fish Nutrition</i>
April 6	Thomas Keegan <i>Ponds</i>
May 4	Tom Allison <i>Zoo Med Laboratories, Inc.</i>
June 1	Rusty Wessel <i>Fishes of the Maya!</i>
July 6	Ruben Lugo <i>My Adventures Keeping and Breeding L-numbers and Other Fish That Suck</i>
August 3	Silent Auction
September 7	Artie Platt <i>From Fish Tank to Fish Room: My Journey</i>
October 5	Mark Duffill <i>Loaches</i>
November 2	Joseph Ferdenzi <i>Killifish Demystified</i>
December 7	Holiday Party!

Articles submitted for consideration in **Modern Aquarium** (ISSN 2150-0940) must be received no later than the 10th day of the month prior to the month of publication. Please email submissions to gcas@earthlink.net, or fax to (877) 299-0522. Copyright 2016 by the Greater City Aquarium Society Inc., a not-for-profit New York State corporation. All rights reserved. Not-for-profit aquarium societies are hereby granted permission to reproduce articles and illustrations from this publication, **unless the article indicates that the copyrights have been retained by the author**, and provided reprints indicate source, and that two copies of the publication are sent to the Exchange Editor of this magazine. For online-only publications, copies may be sent via email to donnste@aol.com. Any other reproduction or commercial use of the material in this publication is prohibited without prior express written permission.

The Greater City Aquarium Society meets every month, except January and February. Members receive notice of meetings in the mail. For more information, contact: Dan Radebaugh (718) 458-8437 or email gcas@earthlink.net. Find out more, see previous issues, or leave us a message at our Internet Home Page: <http://www.greatercity.org> or <http://www.greatercity.com>.

President's Message

by Dan Radebaugh

As those who attended last month's meeting (and there were lots of you!) will recall, our speaker, Tom Allison from Zoo Med Laboratories, gave us a very informative overview of Zoo Med's product line, and also brought with him a wonderful assortment of high-end products for our raffle! It was a good night to be here, and a very good night to enter the raffle, as many did! A couple of days later I received an email from Joe Ferdenzi, telling me that he had received six large boxes from Zoo Med. Our heartfelt thanks go to Gary Bagnall, the founder and president of Zoo Med, for this very generous donation to our club!

Joe had also copied Jules Birnbaum and Ed Vukich on the note, and in the ensuing email chain Jules noted that NCAS is a participant in the Amazon Smile program, and wondered if we (Greater City) should also participate. Cutting to the chase, with Jules doing the follow-through, we are now listed with that program.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with it, Amazon Smile is a very nice (hence the smile) program on Amazon whereby people who purchase from Amazon can designate a not-for-profit group such as Greater City or any number of others (they have a long list of non-profits who have registered with them) to receive a donation routed through Amazon based on the price of each purchase.

It's quite easy to use. Rather than logging onto Amazon.com, you simply log onto Smile.Amazon.com instead. All of your account info (shopping cart, wish list, wedding or baby registry will still be there. On your first visit you will be asked to select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases. You can scroll through their list until you find Greater City. Amazon will store that selection, and from then on, any eligible purchase will result in a donation to Greater City. While it isn't a lot of money (.5% of purchase price), it is an easy way to help support the club. \$2 for a bag of plants at one of our auctions isn't much either, taken singly, but it adds up, and is a pretty painless method of giving. For full details of the program, go to Smile.Amazon.com. Thanks, Jules, for being alert!

Dan



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Cameo Pet Shop

1947-2016

by Joseph Ferdenzi

Over the years, I have, sadly, written many an obituary honoring the loss of a fellow hobbyist, especially those who were outstanding members of Greater City. But I never thought I'd write the obituary for a pet shop. Sadly, that day has come.

I have written an article before on Cameo Pet Shop for the pages of **Modern Aquarium** (April 1995—see page 12). Cameo has also been featured in a public broadcasting series, “New York Originals,” which was subsequently published in book form. As of this writing, Cameo is no longer in business. May 2016 was its final month of operation. Prior to its demise, it had become, by my reckoning and that of knowledgeable hobbyists I consulted, the oldest pet shop in the USA, having been founded in 1947. For a pet shop, that is quite extraordinary longevity.

The shop was started by Everett Byrnes, who, upon his retirement, turned it over to his son-in-law Steve Gruebel. Steve has been running it ever since, and he has decided that it's time to retire (he's been working at the store since he was 14—54 years of hard work!).

Steve is a storehouse of knowledge that will not be replaceable. He knows everyone, past and present, who has played a role in the pet industry in the New York City area. He is full of practical tips and advice

for maintaining all kinds of pets, especially aquarium fish and plants. His store also functions as a kind of local town hall in his section of Richmond Hill—everyone walks in there looking for advice and help—often having nothing to do with pets!

I've spent a lot of time at Cameo, and I can tell you that Steve is an amazingly kind person, with a great sense of humor. Need an example? He let a homeless person live in the back of the store (where he has a bed and a shower) for the better part of a year, and didn't ask for a cent in return.

I will miss going to Cameo, and looking at all the great fish and plants in vintage stainless-steel tanks. But I feel worse for future aquarists who

will not get the experience of being its customers. However, my biggest sense of loss will be my inability to just walk in any day of the week (the store was always open 7 days a week) and see my friend Steve, who would always impart some valuable knowledge, or make me laugh, and often both.



Steve with Gary Bagnall, owner of Zoo Med.



Steve with hobbyists Artie Platt (L) and Sal Silvestri.

I'm sure we all wish Steve the best in his well-deserved retirement, but the closure of Cameo Pet Shop is a tremendous loss for our hobby. Those of you who have been there over the years will no doubt agree.



May's Caption Winner: Sue Priest

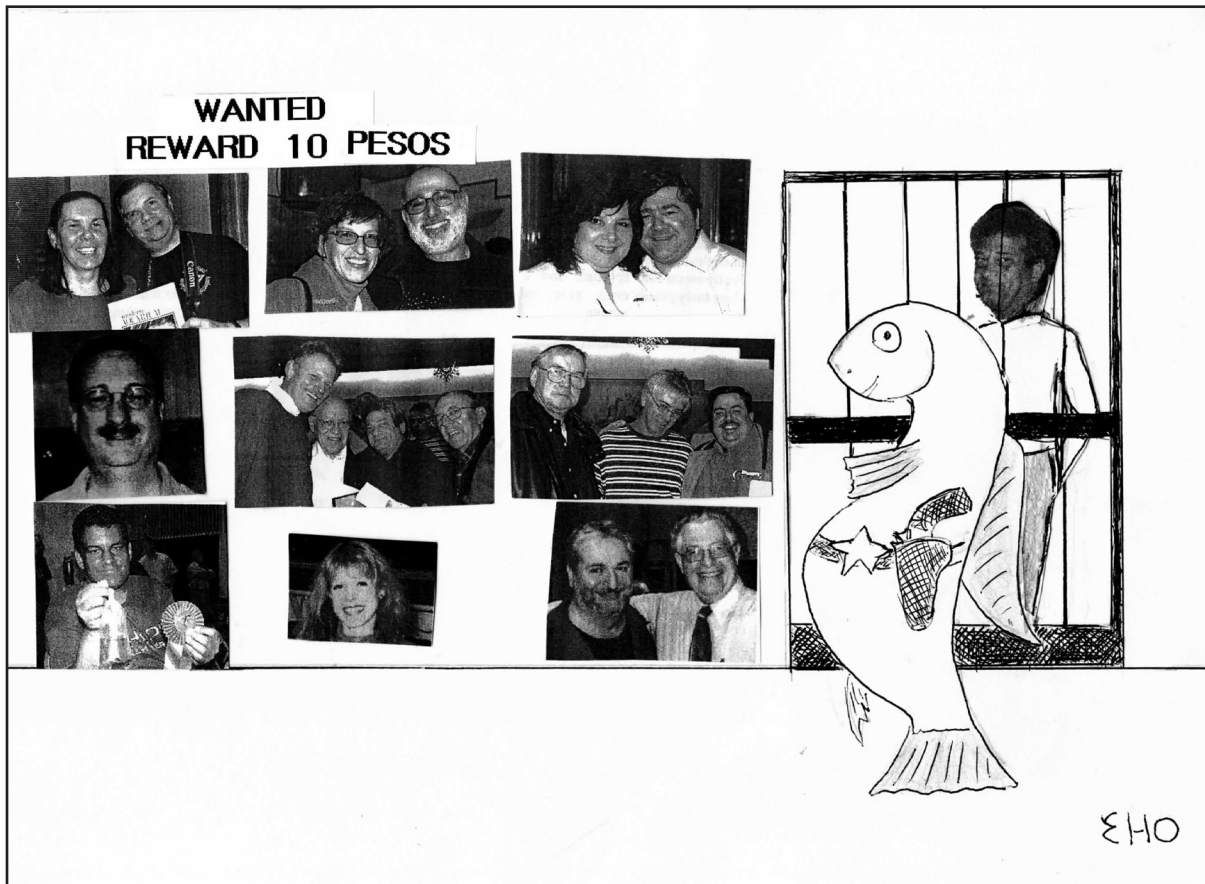


I've been sleeping so much better since we got this new waterbed!



The Modern Aquarium Cartoon Caption Contest

Modern Aquarium has featured cartoons before. This time though, you, the members of Greater City get to choose the caption! Just think of a good caption, then mail, email, or phone the Editor with your caption (phone: 347-866-1107, fax: 877-299-0522, email: gcas@earthlink.net. Your caption needs to reach the Editor by the third Wednesday of this month. We'll also hand out copies of this page at the meeting, which you can turn in to Marsha before leaving. Winning captions will earn ten points in our Author Awards program, qualifying you for participation in our special "Authors Only" raffle at our Holiday Party and Banquet. Put on your thinking caps!



Your Caption:

Your Name:

Pictures From

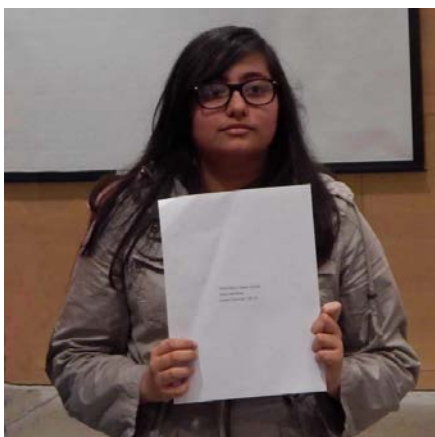


Our speaker Tom Allison brought us an excellent program, along with lots of goodies.



Tom told us that Zoo-Med has now been around for 39 years.

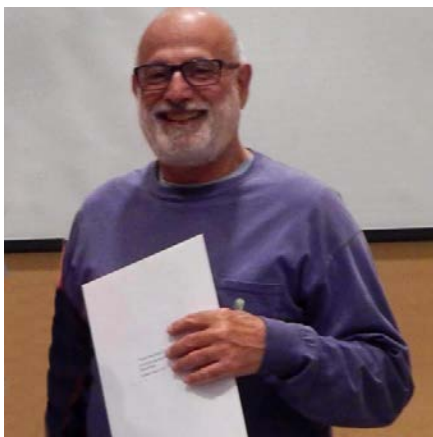
NEC Award Winners



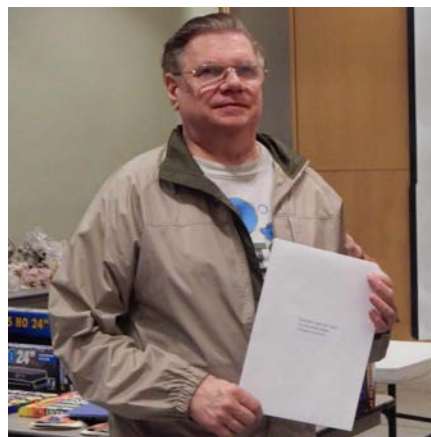
Lauren Ramroop
Artist



Joe Gurrado
Photo



Steve Sica
Article



Al Priest
Article

Our Last Meeting

Photos by Susan Priest



Ruben Lugo accepts an Author Award certificate.



Our monthly auctions always draw a crowd.

Bowl Show Winners:



1st place: Rich Waizman



2nd Place: Bill Amely



3rd Place: Rich Waizman

Door Prize Winner:



Harry Faustmann



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THE STATE OF THE ART IN FILTRATION?

by Jules Birnbaum

Since I perform large weekly water changes almost any filter will work. So why bother trying new filters? If you know me, then you know I like to try new equipment. New fish and equipment renews my enthusiasm for the hobby. I still get excited while awaiting deliveries of something new.

There are three tanks in our upstairs den. These tanks contained a total of five "Hang On Tank" power filters. Every few weeks I had to either clean or replace the filter pads. Even using longer lasting pads still meant periodically removing and cleaning all five pads. Then there was all the electricity consumed by having five electric motors running 24 hours a day. There was also some filter noise with five separate filters. Also periodic repairs, such as clogged impellers or other parts. The actual cost of purchasing those five individual HOT power filters was approximately \$200.

I won't discuss canister filters in this article, though I have used them. I personally found them very expensive, mostly poorly built, requiring too much maintenance, and heavy. They also had too many moving parts to worry about.

All five of my HOT (they were not very "hot") filters were recently replaced. I used two of Swiss Tropical's tower sponge filters with a larger sponge, and more water flow from two Jetlifters (special lift tubes) in each large sponge. My third tank is smaller,

and required just a simple small 3" sponge filter. The air pump I am using for all three tanks is a diaphragm pump that can handle 15 outlets. It is small, uses 15 watts, and is extremely quiet. (purchased from JEHMCO). The initial total cost of this new setup was approximately \$200.

Some of the benefits of my new filter setup are lower electric bills, less noise, few moving filter parts, lower maintenance (no filter pad replacement and related expenses). There is also room for expansion, because the air pump can handle 15 outlets. The negatives are the additional cost of the air pump and the sponge filters, removing the present HOT filters, aging the new sponge filters, installing the new pump with air hoses, and of course the cost of the new filter setup.

The new sponge filters were aged in my three tanks for six weeks while leaving the HOT filters in place. In this way nitrifying bacteria had time to build up in the new sponges. I should add that I did find homes for the old HOT filters.

If I had read this article a few years ago it would have saved me some meaningful dollars. I hope this gives you an idea if you are setting up a few tanks.



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A Jewel of the Aquarium Hobby: Cameo Pet Shop

JOSEPH FERDENZI

Whenever I want to feel young again, I don't have to go searching for the Fountain of Youth. All I need do is take a short trip to Richmond Hill, a quaint section of the Borough of Queens, in New York City. There, under the shadow of that mighty ribbon of steel known as the elevated subway line over Jamaica Avenue, sits an aquarium wonder by the name of Cameo Pet Shop. Inside are the rejuvenating waters of scores of aquariums as I remember from my early days as an amateur aquarist (circa 1965).

Mind you, these are not dusty, dry aquariums discovered entombed on some macabre show hosted by Geraldo Rivera. No, these aquariums are vibrantly aglow, full of shimmering fish and luxuriant growths of aquatic plants. They are a tribute to three generations of aquarium professionals from the Byrnes and Gruebel families.

Being a somewhat knowledgeable student of the history of our hobby, I feel I can say, without substantial fear of contradiction, that Cameo, having been founded in 1947-1948, is one of the oldest (if not the oldest) aquarium shops in New York City. Alas, venerable N.Y.C. establishments such as the Aquarium

Stock Company, established in 1910, have passed from the scene. As I write this (1995), Cameo is but three years away from celebrating 50 years — half a century — of continuous service to aquarists. This is an achievement that very few approach. For just a little further perspective on this achievement, allow me to remind the reader that when Cameo was established, that great aquarium magazine of my generation (I was born in 1953), Tropical Fish Hobbyist, had not even published its first issue (that event would not occur until some five years later, in 1952).

Another significant aspect of Cameo's longevity is that it has always been located in Richmond Hill. Any historical study of the hobby in N.Y.C. will reveal that Richmond Hill was once located in a "hot bed" area of our hobby — the southern Queens-northern Brooklyn tier of our great city — an area populated by many German immigrants who brought their love of the aquarium to our shores. The remnants of this important segment are visible even today in the old German "beer hall" a few scant blocks down Jamaica Avenue from Cameo.

And so, recently, the author and fellow GCAS member Mark Soberman, paid a visit to Cameo to interview its present owner, Steve Gruebel. As any member of GCAS who has visited Cameo will tell you, Steve is friendly, knowledgeable, and above all, candid and honest. He will not sell poor quality fish, plants, or anything else, just to make a "quick buck." For example, Steve has an excellent selection of aquatic plants, but you will not see one stem or leaf of the so-called "aquarium" plants sold in many stores that are, in reality, terrestrial plants -- plants that are not true aquatics and will eventually die when kept fully under water. Steve is also one of the few store owners who will attempt to repair aquarium equipment. He maintains an inventory of aquarium parts (remember those old-fashioned piston pumps) that few can match. Indeed, while we were there, Steve showed us some of his "antiques" (see accompanying photo), which include old pumps, airstones, tanks, and assorted paraphernalia. Another example of the personal

"... we can fix anything in about 10 minutes."



This article previously appeared in the April 1995 issue of Modern Aquarium.

touch is Steve's habit of personally picking out the fish he buys for his store. This habit entails going to wholesalers and picking out the best specimens. Anyone who has ever done this will tell you this involves considerable labor, a labor many store owners cannot or do not undertake. However, the difference that labor makes is discernable.

With your indulgence for some journalistic license on my part, here is the interview presented in a question and answer format. Material in brackets is provided by the author.

Modern Aquarium (M.A.): First, Steve, tell us your family connection to Cameo?

Steve: Well, the business was started in January of 1948 by Joseph Byrnes and his son, Everett Byrnes. In 1964, when I was 14, I was dating Everett's daughter (we're now married), and she got me a job here. I've been working here ever since. My wife and I have two sons, ages 10 and 6.

M.A.: Tell us how they chose the name "Cameo" for the store. It's kind of an unusual name for a pet shop.

Steve: Yes, it is. My wife's grandfather (Joseph Byrnes) went to the city [Manhattan] to register the business for sales tax purposes. He wanted to be affiliated with a mainstay in the neighborhood, which was the local movie theater. But, when he got down there, he forgot the name of the movie theater. He thought the name of the theater was Cameo, so he named it Cameo Pet Shop. Actually, the theater was named Casino.

M.A.: Do you know why your father-in-law and his father decided to go into the pet shop business?

Steve: Yes. There's a very simple reason. My father-in-law's sister had married a fellow named Henry Hessel. Henry owned a tropical fish importing business located right here in Richmond Hill. In fact, he was one of the biggest importers of his day [see Illustration # 1]. Henry suggested that they go into this business. He told them that he

imported all kinds of fish and they could have first choice of everything that came in, thereby assuring that their store would have the best fish around. Now, originally, the store was located at 104-06 113th Street, right around the corner from the Casino Movie Theater, which was located on Liberty Avenue near 113 Street. We were on a side street. Henry Hessel suggested we move to a busier street, and closer to him. So the store moved in 1950 to 115-10 Jamaica Avenue, which is directly across the street from the present location, 115-22 Jamaica Avenue, which we moved to in 1965.

M.A.: In your 30 years in the business, have you seen changes in the way aquarium stores do business?

Steve: A few. For example, in the early days, we could buy fish direct from big fish farms or distributors. In fact, we used to buy fish from Aquarium Hamburg in Germany. Then big fish farms started selling only to wholesalers. Now, that trend is reversing itself. I get a lot of lists from fish farms these days. Seems some of them are trying to cut out the middlemen, the wholesaler. Also, marine aquariums come and go in popularity. Right now, it is at its height of popularity. But, if the economy worsens, so will its popularity. We don't carry saltwater fish. Back in 1964, we tried it -- we had 10 marine aquariums. However, our experience was that, for the average aquarist, it was too complicated and costly. The upkeep is too involved for most people.

M.A.: So, you specialize in freshwater fish?

Steve: Yes. We base our business on freshwater community tanks and quality fish. I hand-pick every fish in the store. Every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday morning before the store opens, I make my rounds of the wholesalers. I pick the fish, have them bagged, load them into my station wagon, and bring them to the

Illustration #1

A very early ad for Henry Hessel, from a time when he still sold fish retail. Incidentally, this ad has some historical significance. According to Dr. Myron Gordon, a famous aquarist and world renowned expert on swordtails and platies, this ad represented the first time that red swordtails (*helleri*) with pink eyes were ever advertised for sale to the public. (source: Gordon Myron, Swordtails: Their Care and Breeding, T.F.H. Publications, no date, but circa 1958-60).

MARCH, 1942

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store. I also bring in plants directly from two suppliers in Florida, and sometimes I order hard-to-find plants from Singapore. I try to have an assortment of aquatic plants that no one else has.

M.A.: Do you encounter any problem in selling live plants to customers?

Steve: No, we sell hundreds of plants. I normally carry 30 to 40 varieties at all times. In most stores, they don't display the plants properly. I encourage people to buy plants. I like natural looking aquariums. The 70 gallon display aquarium that is located in the front of the store has been set up like that (full of many aquatic plants) for 3½ years, and I've hardly touched it. I could turn off the filter on that tank, and nothing terrible would happen. However, I even sell some of the plants in that tank. The only thing I get attached to are some of the big fish, like the black Pacu I have up front. I've had that fish for 22 years [it is huge].

M.A.: Another thing that is different about your store, besides all the aquatic plants, is that almost all the display tanks are of the old-fashioned stainless steel and slate variety. Don't they ever leak?

Steve: They all do. We originally set up most of these tanks when they were brand new, in 1965. Some of them are originals from 1948. When they leak, we repair them with silicone (the same stuff used in making all glass aquariums).

M.A.: I've heard that silicone won't adhere to slate.

Steve: We seal them from the inside. So, before putting the silicone down, we wipe the slate with lighter fluid or alcohol. As soon as that dries, we fill the crevices in with the silicone. It's just important to get the silicone down into the crevice between the slate and the glass, where it acts like a caulk and seals the leak. Sometimes, the slate itself cracks and leaks. There's

nothing you can do about that. But, I have spares laying around for when that happens. You can tell the quality tanks from 1948 by the rolled steel that the frames were made from. But, even they sometimes leak. So, we just patch them up with silicone.

M.A.: Getting back to aquatic plants. Has Cameo always been a promoter of keeping plants in the aquarium?

Steve: Oh sure. In fact, in earlier days, when everyone used to go on vacation for 2 to 3 weeks at a stretch, and before they made vacation feeding blocks, we would tell people to buy one or two bunches of *Anacharis*. If the fish got really hungry, they would nibble on the *Anacharis*. Also, if their filtration broke down while they were away, the *Anacharis* would provide some oxygen and be of environmental benefit to the aquarium. It would increase the fishes' chance of survival. In general, I think plants are very beneficial. Plus, I just like the way they look. I keep them in every tank.

M.A.: Do you find that the majority of your customers can keep plants successfully?

Steve: Once they're properly instructed. Of course, it depends on what kind of fish they're keeping. You're not going to grow many plants with Silver Dollars or Pacus [voracious vegetarians of the characoid world]. If they're beginners, I recommend plants like *Hygrophila* or Water Wisteria — plants that grow quickly and don't require any special conditions, other than adequate lighting.

M.A.: What do you think of the practice of selling terrestrial plants like club moss (which is sold in the trade as "princess pine") as aquatic plants?

Steve: I don't buy plants like that. I won't buy any plants that do not grow under water. I don't buy painted fish, or injected fish, or anything like that, either. I don't believe in that.

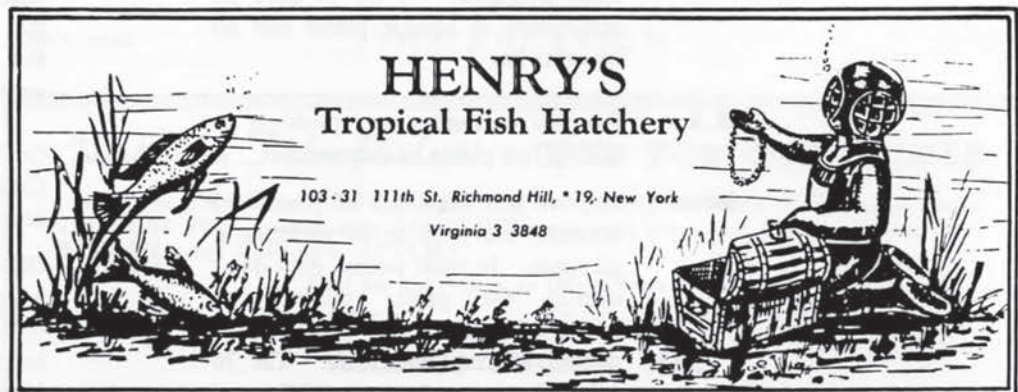
Illustration #2

An ad for Henry Hessel's wholesale operation from around the time that Cameo Pet Shop opened. Notice that Henry offered a large line of products as well as an extensive variety of fish.

14A

THE AQUARIUM

JULY, 1948



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BRIND'S * Antijerm, Tonicure, Plantgro, Fishdiet and Brin-fusoria

SUPREME Products * Piston pumps, valves, tees, scrapers, Pilot-light heaters, etc.

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M.A.: What do you think is the biggest mistake that customers make in dealing with pet shop owners?

Steve: Well, I don't think the customers make mistakes. It's the store owners who make the mistakes. Some don't take the time to talk to their customers and educate them properly. For example, a customer comes in to their store and wants to buy a Fancy Guppy and a Tiger Barb. Well, everybody knows those fish won't go well together, but the store personnel doesn't bother to educate the customer. I don't really think the customers make most of the mistakes.

M.A.: From what I recall, Cameo was an early advertiser in hobby magazines such as Innes' The Aquarium [see Illustration #2]. Did the Byrnes family try to draw the advanced hobbyist?

Steve: I think so. They wanted the educated hobbyist. But they also paid special attention to beginners. We still do that today. We will spend 15 minutes with a customer to explain such things as water quality and the needs of the individual kinds of fish. If they're successful, we have a happier customer who will come back to us for future purchases. Many times, they will graduate to a larger tank because of their initial success. The main complaint of most customers is that their tank is "cloudy." It's usually the same problem, the food -- they overfeed their fish. Once an aquarium is properly set-up, there is little to do, other than an occasional filter and water change, and feeding the fish. They look at the fish, and say to themselves, "Oh, they must be hungry." They have nothing else to do, so they feed the fish. The tank gets cloudy, the tank winds up in the basement, and then they're out of the hobby.

M.A.: What about overcrowding? Suppose a customer sets up a brand new aquarium and then starts picking out too many fish. How do you handle that?

Steve: Well, we don't let them do it. We tell them not to put the fish all in at once. We'll sell them just a few fish, but include a catfish, at first. Then we will tell them to see how these first fish do. If everything goes well, we allow them to buy more, but only up to a point. I'll especially try to get beginners to buy hardy fish such as Zebra Danios, Serpae Tetras, and Black Tetras. When they come back for more fish, I'll sell them whatever they want as long as they are compatible. The only time I will sell a customer fish that are not compatible with each other is if the customer insists on it. I've had people who tell me they have a tank with Swordtails and Platies, and they want to buy a Red Devil [a large carnivorous cichlid]. They insist they gotta have it. I tell them it will kill all the fish in their tank. But, OK, if they insist, I will sell it to them. We've built our reputation on being honest with customers and educating them.

M.A.: Do you ever buy fish or plants from hobbyists?

Steve: Oh, yeah, sure. They're some of the best fish you can buy. Not too many people can grow plants in quantity. It used to be that people would bring in buckets full of Water Sprite. Not any more. Even plants like *Nitella* and *Riccia* are hard to find these days. I can't even get that stuff from Singapore. That's a thing of the past. Those are great breeding plants. I buy them whenever I can.

Author: Do you ever have occasions when a hobbyist is asking too high a price for their fish?

Steve: Yes, on occasion. But then we just don't do business. No hard feelings are involved. But, for example, I prefer not to buy imported Angelfish. I am always looking for quality home-bred Angels. I also don't like to buy imported Guppies. You get them, they look OK, but in six months, they're all dead. So, I don't buy them. Same thing happened with imported Angelfish. They had some sort of virus. I refused to buy any.

An early Cameo ad. Note the other interesting advertisements.

22A

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- I haven't had an imported Angelfish in the store in 2 years.
- M.A.:** Now, your store also carries other kinds of pets and pet supplies. You've always had that?
- Steve:** Sure. It's a full line pet shop, with the exception of dog and cat food. You'll note that we are Cameo Pet Shop, not Cameo Aquarium.
- M.A.:** What percentage of your business does the tropical fish segment make up?
- Steve:** About 80%. Most of my business is tropical fish. That is what we are known for.
- M.A.:** Do you think that the small, individually owned pet shop faces extinction at the hands of large outlets and retail chains?
- Steve:** They will hurt a store that does not specialize. I specialize in tropical fish. They can't. They do not have quality fish like I have. And my prices for fish are competitive with theirs while offering better quality and a greater variety. Also, they don't carry the selection of aquatic plants that I have. Eventually, people who have bought fish tanks elsewhere will wind up here if they shop around. Then, they'll see the quality and competitive price we have. I'm not worried about the chain stores. They make me look good.
- M.A.:** Suppose a customer comes in with a problem, like a piece of aquarium equipment that isn't working, and you become aware that they purchased it someplace else. How will you handle that?
- Steve:** I tell them to bring it to me. I repair everything for free. That is, I don't charge for my labor, just the price of the spare parts I use to fix it with. I repair hoods, heaters, old piston pumps -- things that no one else fixes anymore. Generally, we can fix anything in about 10 minutes. I have cabinets filled with scavenged parts. If I have the parts, I can fix it. I've been repairing pumps for 30 years.
- M.A.:** What changes in hobby equipment have you noted over those 30 years?
- Steve:** The technology has gotten much better. For example, these Whisper® power filters are excellent, the best filters to come out since the Dynaflo® [which used to be made by the Metaframe Corp.; at one time, a division of the Mattel Toy Company]. Dynaflo® revolutionized the outside filter with the magnet drive. Whispers® are even better, with the motor sealed in. They are quiet, and, with their cartridge filter bags, they are easy to clean. The Willinger Brothers make a quality product [that company has since been purchased by Tetra, itself a subsidiary of the giant conglomerate Warner-Lambert]. In fact, a Whisper 3® is all that I use on that 70 gallon display aquarium in front of the store. If somebody wants to buy a more expensive filter, such as an Eheim® canister filter, that's OK, but it's not really necessary. I do not emulate stores that will sell someone a \$29 aquarium, but then advise the customer to buy a \$269 filter when one priced at \$38 will do. Also, in general, I try only to buy and sell American made products. That includes fish foods. I push American, not imports. I will not sell a customer unnecessary equipment. If the customer wants a certain piece of equipment, fine, but I will not oversell. In the long run, I have a more satisfied customer.
- M.A.:** Do you sell live food?
- Steve:** Yes. I sell all kinds of live food in season. I get deliveries every day. I sell a lot of tubifex worms. I keep them under continuous cold running water to purify them. After they have been purified (usually in 24 hours), I put them in shallow trays in the refrigerator, but without water so that they don't wallow in their own waste. I feed them to my fish in the store. I don't recommend fish be fed an exclusive diet of live food, but I do think live food is a beneficial supplement. For example, I will not generally sell tubifex worms to

beginners because I've found they'll put too much in, and pollute their tank. So, to beginners, I recommend live brine shrimp. However, if they insist on tubifex, I'll tell them to buy a worm feeder, so that the worms are sprinkled out, as opposed to being dumped in in one big lump where they'll die under the gravel.

M.A.: What about daphnia?

Steve: Can't get that any more. I guess all the local ponds have dried up or gone bad. Of course, back in the early days, we used to sell a lot of it. In fact, we used to sell a lot of mosquito larvae. We even used to culture mosquitoes in wash basins in the airshaft of the store when it was across the street.

M.A.: Going back to a previous topic, have you noticed any trends in fishkeeping in the last 30 years?

Steve: Well, back in the late 1960's, we used to sell a lot of livebearers — Guppies, Swords, Platies — and also a lot of community tank fish such as Tetras. But lately, I've noticed a trend toward large, carnivorous cichlids such as Oscars and the like. It used to be relatively rare to sell an Oscar. I don't know what accounts for the change. Maybe it's an imitation of what we see in our mass media, the violence, seeing one fish devour another.

M.A.: Cameo has been in business nearly 50 years, which is quite an achievement for a pet shop. Why do you suppose that most pet shops don't stay in business very long?

Steve: Because most people who open them are hobbyists. You have to be a businessman. They buy fish because they like the way they look. I buy fish that I know will live and will sell well. You have to treat this as a business and not as a hobby. Most people don't realize you have to put in long hours (80 hours a week). Or they don't do their homework and choose a poor location.

M.A.: Have you given thought to moving out of Richmond Hill?

Steve: Not for the immediate future. I will say that the neighborhood has changed, and that I don't get as much foot traffic as I used to get. In fact, most of my business is from long time customers who drive in from wherever they live now. Recently, a guy from Pennsylvania was in to visit relatives who still live here, and he came by to purchase fish to bring back to Pennsylvania. I also get a lot of customers who remember visiting the store with their parents when they were children, say 20 or 30 years ago, and who now bring their own children to the store.

Cameo is a great store. It is a jewel of the past and future. Maybe one of Steve's sons will continue the business for another generation. But, just in case that doesn't happen, go there now.



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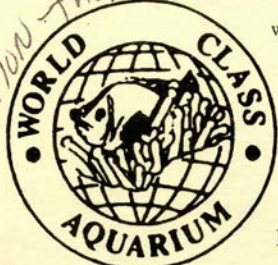


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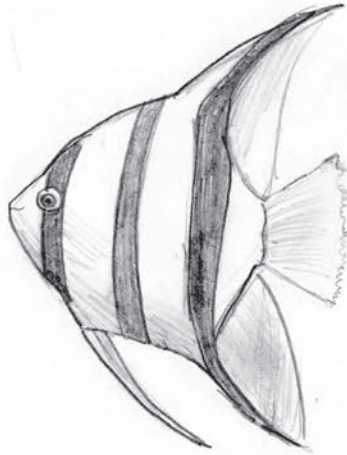
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A CAMEO PRIMER:

Perspectives on 70 Common Tropical Fish

by STEVE GRUEBEL

MA CLASSICS

Steve Gruebel is the current owner of Cameo Pet Shop, a family owned and operated store since 1947. Steve himself began working in the store some 40 years ago, and took over the store when his father-in-law, Everett Byrnes, retired. Needless to say, with that many years on the job, Steve has a wealth of practical experience when it comes to tropical fish. Cameo specializes in advising customers on how to maintain a balanced community aquarium. Therefore, the information presented in the accompanying chart is geared towards the hobbyist with that in mind. It is not intended to be a breeding guide. Please note that the "pH Preference" refers to a range no greater than 8.0 (alkaline) and no less than 6.5 (acid) — pH of 7.0 is neutral. For example, if it states that a fish prefers an alkaline pH, this means a pH between 7.0 and 8.0. No preference indicates that the fish can easily tolerate anything between 6.5 and 8.0. Also, with respect to the compatibility guide, please remember that this is generalized; some of the fish that are "best kept by themselves" may be compatible with similarly sized or aggressive fish, but they are simply not candidates for the average "community" tank.

- Joe Ferdenzi

	Best kept by Themselves	Community Tank	pH Preference		O.K. with plants?	Comments
			Alkaline	Acid		
Angelfish <i>Pterophyllum scalare</i>		✓	see comments		Yes	Wild caught - acid water home bred - alkaline water
Banded/Three-lined Rainbowfish <i>Melanotaenia trifasciata</i>		✓	✓		Yes*	*Only eats <i>Anacharis</i>
Betta/Siamese Fighting Fish <i>Betta splendens</i>		✓	✓		Yes	No Tiger Barbs or gouramis, as they will pick on bettas
Black Ghost <i>Apteronotus albifrons</i>	✓		✓		Yes	Predatory - as long as fish are too large to be swallowed; always hides
Black Neon Tetra <i>Hyphessobrycon herbertaxelrodi</i>		✓	None		Yes	Very peaceful
Black Phantom Tetra <i>Megalampodus megalopterus</i>		✓	None		Yes	Highly recommended
Black Ruby Barb <i>Barbus nigrofasciatus</i>		✓	✓		No	Like most barbs, it will pick on plants
Black Tetra <i>Gymnocorymbus ternetzi</i>		✓	None		Yes	Very peaceful

This article previously appeared in the November 2003 issue of *Modern Aquarium*.

	Best kept by Themselves	Community Tank	pH Preference		O.K. with plants?	Comments
			Alkaline	Acid		
Bleeding Heart Tetra <i>Hyphessobrycon erythrostigma</i>	✓		None		Yes	Nippy; good to keep with barbs
Blue/Three-Spot Gourami <i>Trichogaster trichopterus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Except for bettas, which it will pick on
Blue Acara <i>Aequidens pulcher</i>	✓		✓		Yes	Typical territorial cichlid
Boeseman's Rainbowfish <i>Melanotaenia boesemani</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Bristle-nosed Catfish <i>Ancistrus sp.</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Good algae eater
Bronze Cory <i>Corydoras aeneus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Very peaceful
Buenos Aires Tetra <i>Hemigrammus caudovittatus</i>	✓		None		Yes	Nippy; hardy
Clown Knifefish <i>Notopterus chitala</i>	✓		✓		Yes	Big; carnivorous - will eat small fish
Clown Loach <i>Botia macracanthus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	May pick on flat-sided fish, like discus
Common Hatchetfish <i>Gasteropelecus sternicla</i>		✓	None		Yes	
Common Pleco <i>Hypostomus punctatus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Can get very large - can damage Amazon Sword plants
Convict Cichlid <i>Archocentrus nigrofasciatus</i>	✓		✓		No	Don't recommend them; very aggressive, but easy to breed
Discus <i>Symphysodon aequifasciatus</i>		✓	Neutral		Yes	Minimum 80°F; finicky eaters - mostly live foods
Dwarf Gourami <i>Colisa lalia</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Dwarf Suckermouth Catfish <i>Otocinclus affinis</i>		✓	None		Yes	Short-lived algae eater; inexpensive; won't bother flat-sided fish

	Best kept by Themselves	Community Tank	pH Preference		O.K. with plants?	Comments
			Alkaline	Acid		
Peter's Elephantnose <i>Gnathonemus petersii</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Jumpers
Firemouth <i>Thorichthys meeki</i>	✓		✓		No	Territorial
Flying Fox <i>Epalzeorhynchus kallopterus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Algae eater
Giant Danio <i>Danio aequipinnatus Danio malabaricus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Long-lived; center to surface dweller
Glass Catfish <i>Kryptopterus bicirrhus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Glowlight Tetra <i>Hemigrammus erythrozonus</i>		✓	None		Yes	
Goldfish <i>Carassius auratus</i>	✓		✓		No	Likes cool water - shouldn't be kept with tropicals
Green Terror <i>Aequidens rivulatus</i>	✓		✓		No	Very beautiful, but aggressive
Guppy <i>Poecilia reticulata</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Harlequin Rasbora <i>Rasbora heteromorpha</i>		✓	None		Yes	Singapore/Florida farms water is 7.2 pH
Jack Dempsey <i>Nandopsis octofasciatum</i>	✓		✓		No	Very aggressive - how do you think they got their name?
Kissing Gourami <i>Helostoma temminckii</i>	✓		✓		Yes	They get large and become aggressive; will pick on flat-sided fish, like discus
Kribensis <i>Pelvicachromis pulcher</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Easy to breed
Leaf Fish, South American <i>Monocirrhus polyacanthus</i>	✓		✓		Yes	Predatory - will eat small fish

	Best kept by Themselves	Community Tank	pH Preference		O.K. with plants?	Comments
			Alkaline	Acid		
Marble Hatchetfish <i>Carnegiella strigata</i>		✓	None		Yes	Not as hardy as the Silver Hatchetfish, but excellent community fish
Molly, Sailfin <i>Poecilia latipinna</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Neon Rainbow <i>Melanotaenia praecox</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Very pretty
Neon Tetra <i>Paracheirodon innesi</i>		✓	None		Yes	
Oscar <i>Astronotus ocellatus</i>	✓		✓		No	Gets very large; will dig up plants
Pacu <i>Colossoma macropomus</i>	✓		✓		No	Gets very big; eats plants; will eat small fish
Panda Cory <i>Corydoras panda</i>		✓	None		Yes	
Paradisefish <i>Macropodus opercularis</i>		✓	None		Yes	A little aggressive; keep with fast moving fish; great snail eaters
Pearl Danio <i>Brachydanio albolineatus</i>		✓	None		Yes	
Pearl/Lace Gourami <i>Trichogaster leeri</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Good community fish; tends to be less aggressive than other gouramis
Peppered Cory <i>Corydoras paleatus</i>		✓	None		Yes	
Pictus Catfish <i>Pimellodus pictus</i>	✓		None		Yes	Predatory - will eat small fish
Platy, Southern <i>Xiphophorus maculatus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Platy, Variable <i>Xiphophorus variatus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Pristella Tetra <i>Pristella maxillaris</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Very pretty when kept under the right conditions
Rainbow Cichlid <i>Herotilapia multispinosa</i>	✓		None		No	Doesn't dig as much as other cichlids

	Best kept by Themselves	Community Tank	pH Preference		O.K. with plants?	Comments
			Alkaline	Acid		
Ram Cichlid <i>Microgeophagus ramirezi</i>		✓	None		Yes	Most come from fish farms
Red Eye Tetra <i>Moenkhausia sanctaefilomenae</i>	✓		None		Yes	Fin nippers
Red-tailed Black Shark <i>Epalzeorhynchus bicolor</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Can only be kept one per tank - rogue individuals can become territorial
Red-tailed Catfish <i>Phractocephalus hemioliopterus</i>	✓		None		Yes	Gets very large - will eat anything that fits in its mouth
Red Zebra <i>Metraclima estherae</i>	✓		✓		No	Can be aggressive
Rosy Barb <i>Barbus conchoni</i>		✓	✓		Some*	All barbs nip soft plants - Yes with Java Ferns, <i>Anubias</i> and Amazons
Rummynosed Tetra <i>Hemigrammus bleheri</i>		✓	None		Yes	Original location is acid water
Serpae Tetra <i>Hyphessobrycon serpae</i> <i>Hyphessobrycon minor</i>		✓	None		Yes	<i>Serpae</i> has stripe behind gillplate; <i>minor</i> has a dot behind gillplate, and is usually a deeper red
Severum <i>Heros severus</i>		✓	None		No	
Siamese Algae Eater <i>Crossocheilus siamensis</i>		✓	✓		Yes	
Silver Dollar <i>Metynnis hypsauchen</i>		✓	None		No	
Silver/Bala Shark <i>Balantiocheilus melanopterus</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Very good jumpers
Swordtail <i>Xiphophorus helleri</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Also jumpers
Threadfin Rainbowfish <i>Iriatherina werneri</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Peaceful, but should be kept by themselves or with very peaceful fish like small rasboras or corys

	Best kept by Themselves	Community Tank	pH Preference		O.K. with plants?	Comments
			Alkaline	Acid		
Tiger Barb <i>Barbus tetrazona</i>		✓	✓		No	See comments on Rosy Barbs - nippier than Rosy Barbs - keep with small cichlids, or with fast moving fish like danios
White Cloud Mountain Minnow <i>Tanichthys albonubes</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Can be kept at cool temperatures, less than 60°F
Zebra Danio <i>Brachydanio rerio</i>		✓	✓		Yes	Good first egglayer for beginners



Editor's note: Several of the scientific names in this article have undergone revision since it was published back in 2003.



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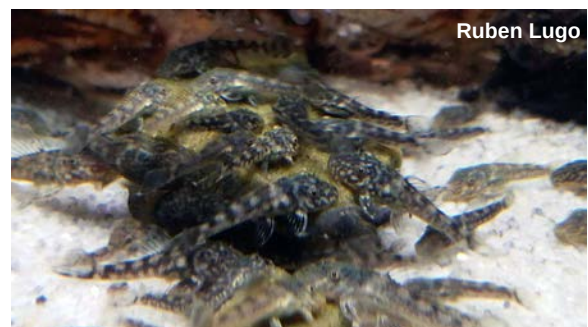
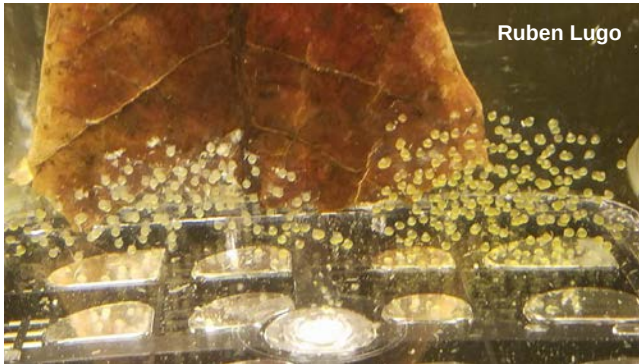
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Fishy Friends' Photos

by Greater City Aquarium Society Fishy Friends

***B**elow are photo submissions to our “Fishy Friends” Facebook group. I’ve left the subjects unnamed, but not the photographer. If you see a shot you like, and want more info, ask the photographer about it! I’m sure he or she will be delighted to tell you!*





GCAS Happenings

June

March Bowl Show Winners:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | RICHARD WAIZMAN | BETTA |
| 2 | BILL AMELY | BETTA |
| 3 | RICHARD WAIZMAN | BETTA |

UNOFFICIAL 2016 BOWL SHOW TOTALS:

BILL AMELY	13	ED VUKICH	5	RICHARD WAIZMAN	9
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A WARM WELCOME BACK TO RENEWING GCAS MEMBERS NICHOLAS CAPUTO, PETER GOLDFIEN, MICHAEL HENDERSON, RON KASMAN, RUBEN LUGO, AND MICHAEL AND BONNIE LOWETH!

Meeting times and locations of some of the aquarium societies in the Metropolitan New York City area:

GREATER CITY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: July 6, 2016

Speaker: Ruben Lugo

Topic: *My Adventures Keeping and Breeding L-numbers and Other Fish That Suck*

Meets: The first Wednesday of the month (except January & February) at 7:30pm:

Queens Botanical Garden

43-50 Main Street - Flushing, NY

Contact: Dan Radebaugh (347) 866-1107

Email: gcas@earthlink.net

Website: <http://www.greatercity.org>

BIG APPLE GUPPY CLUB

Meets: Last Tuesday each month (except Jan, Feb, July, and August) at 7:30-10:00pm.

Alley Pond Environmental Ctr.: 228-06 Northern Blvd.

Contact: Donald Curtin (718) 631-0538

BROOKLYN AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: June 10, 2016

Speaker: Rit Forcier

Topic: *Goodeid Livebearers*

Meets: 2nd Friday of the month (except July and August) at 7:30pm:

NY Aquarium - Education Hall, Brooklyn, NY

Call: BAS Events Hotline: (718) 837-4455

Website: <http://www.brooklynaquariumsociety.org>

LONG ISLAND AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: June 17, 2016

Speaker: TBA

Topic: TBA

Meets: 3rd Fridays (except July and August) 8:00pm.

Room 120 in Endeavor Hall on the State University at Stony Brook Campus, Stony Brook, NY

Email: Margaret Peterson - president@liasonline.org

Website: <http://liasonline.org/>

EAST COAST GUPPY ASSOCIATION

Meets: 2nd Tuesday of each month at 8:00 pm.

Alley Pond Environmental Ctr.: 228-06 Northern Blvd.

Contact: Gene Baudier (631) 345-6399

NASSAU COUNTY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: June 14, 2016

Speaker: None

Event: *NCAS Dollar Auction*

Meets: 2nd Tuesday of the month (except July and August) at 7:30 PM

Molloy College - Kellenberg Hall ~1000 Hempstead Ave - Rockville Centre, NY

Contact: Mike Foran (516) 798-6766

Website: <http://www.ncasweb.org>

NORTH JERSEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: June 16, 2016

Speaker: Rachel O'Leary

Topic: *Dwarf Hillstream Fish*

Meets at: Don Pepe's Restaurant

Contact: NJAS Hotline at (732) 332-1392

Email: tcoletti@obius.jnj.com

Website: <http://www.njas.net/>

NORWALK AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: June 26, 2016

Speaker: Charley Grimes

Topic: *Dead Fish*

Meets: 8:00 P.M. - 3rd Thursday of each month except for July & December at: Earthplace - the Nature Discovery Center - Westport, CT

Contact: Sal Silvestri

Call our toll free number (866) 219-4NAS

Email: salsilv44@yahoo.com

Website: <http://norwalkas.org/>

A New Meaning to “Fish Meal”

A series by “The Undergravel Reporter”

In spite of popular demand to the contrary, this humor and information column continues. As usual, it does NOT necessarily represent the opinions of the Editor, or of the Greater City Aquarium Society.

The world’s largest underwater restaurant, at the Hurawalhi Island Resort and Spa, is set to open later this year in the Maldives.¹ Diners will have panoramic views from every angle of the room during their experience, so they will literally be “eating with the fishes.”

The finished structure will measure about 59 feet across by 16 feet high and weigh 452 tons. It was transported to the Lhaviyani Atoll of the Maldives in pieces. The shipping and logistics firm hired to get the pieces from New Zealand to the Maldives said that just planning for the delivery took 12 months.

The restaurant was lowered onto concrete platforms 5.8 meters below the water surface. Guests will enter via a staircase from a little hut on the jetty. Through the restaurant’s acrylic arches and the large panoramic windows, diners will be able to enjoy unparalleled sights of the crystalline water and the Maldives coral reefs.

It took four trucks to get the trailer-loaded structure across five miles of New Zealand roads. Then the full package was transported by sea to the Maldives, where the restaurant’s steel base and acrylic dome will eventually be situated 19 feet below the surface of the Indian Ocean. The floor of the restaurant will sit atop steel piles that were constructed a year in advance, leading up to the ten months of construction still underway.

Now, if I just so happened to be in the vicinity of the Maldives, I *might* be tempted to have a look; but this project seems to be a bit excessive (and I can always enjoy a snack while viewing my own tanks for a similar—and less costly—experience).



References

¹<http://www.digitaltrends.com/cool-tech/maldives-worlds-largest-underwater-restaurant/>

Fin Fun

Down Mexico Way

Can you identify which of the species of freshwater fish listed below are endemic to Mexico?

Fish	Endmic to Mexico	
	Yes	No
<i>Astyanax jordani</i> (Blind Cave Tetra)		
<i>Ctenopoma acutirostre</i> (Spotted ctenopoma)		
<i>Chapalichthys pardalis</i> (Polka-dot Splitfin)		
<i>Herichthys steindachneri</i> (Steindachner's Cichlid)		
<i>Devario aequipinnatus</i> (Giant danio)		
<i>Dionda dichroma</i> (Bicolor Minnow)		
<i>Pterophyllum scalare</i> (Angelfish)		
<i>Trichogaster microlepis</i> (Moonlight Gourami)		
<i>Goodea atripinnis</i> (Blackfin Goodea)		
<i>Botia almorhae</i> (Yoyo loach)		

Source: Fishbase (<http://www.fishbase.org/>)

Solution to our last puzzle **ROOTS OR RHIZOMES**

Plant	Rhizome	
	Yes	No
<i>Aponogeton rigidifolis</i>	X	
<i>Cryptocoryne parva</i>		X
<i>Riccia fluitans</i>		X
<i>Anubias barteri</i>	X	
<i>Ludwigia repens</i>		X
<i>Bolbitis heudelotti</i>	X	
<i>Nuphar japonica</i>	X	
<i>Lemna minor</i>		X
<i>Anubias nana</i>	X	
<i>Echinodorus ozelot</i>		X



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