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June 2014
volume XXI
number 4

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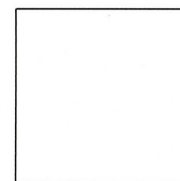
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modern AQUARIUM

Series III Vol. XXI, No. 4 June, 2014

ON THE COVER

Our cover photo this month features an adult smooth trunkfish (*Lactophrus triqueter*) swimming above a Caribbean reef. For more information on this striking fish, and more photos, see Steve Sica's "The Pea" on page 14.

Photo by Stephen Sica

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From the Editor

by Dan Radebaugh

One of the nice things about belonging to an active aquarium society is the number of things you can learn, and with fairly little effort, from other members, both directly and indirectly. You can pick up information while chatting over coffee, you can learn from the experience and practiced knowledge of our monthly speakers, you can even learn quite a bit by watching and listening during our monthly auctions. Then there's **Modern Aquarium**. You can learn about almost any aspect of the aquarium hobby from stories written by our members and guest contributors, and you don't have to have an eidetic memory—you can save the issues and refer to them later if the need arises! For instance, if I were to decide to start keeping seahorses, one of the first things I would do is look up some of Bernie Herrigan's "Seahorse Chronicles" that ran in **MA** about 10 years ago. What a great series! And there have been many articles on many subjects over the years that are well worth stashing away for future reference. Don't forget, the first issue of each year contains the index of all the articles published in the previous year. So if you want to find something you can just look at the index issue for the year, rather than page through all ten issues.

In this or any hobby of course, information can have variable shelf life, so we need to approach older sources with caution. Aquarists' relationship with water is a case in point. Not too many decades ago we didn't know as much about water chemistry as we do now, so a fair amount of aquarium practice was based on experience and if-then projection, rather than on applied chemistry. The nitrogen cycle is one aspect of this disparity of knowledge that comes to mind. In this issue of **Modern Aquarium** we can take a small peek at the different approaches to water management today and "yesterday." See Joe Ferdenzi's "The Nassau Pet Shop: Part II" and Jules Birnbaum's "Water and the Fishkeeper," and you'll see what I mean.

Photography is another part of the fishkeeping hobby that has seen enormous technical advances over the years. In "The Pea" Steve Sica treats us to some more of his dazzling underwater photography. After having seen so many of Steve's underwater photos, we may be tempted to take them for granted, but trust me, it ain't as easy as it may seem from just looking at the photos. For one thing, there's the whole scuba-diving thing. I spent a few of my young years living on a lake down near Tampa, and first learned to swim underwater—only some time later learning to actually



stay afloat. My father and his older brother were accomplished photographers, which in those days included a lot of darkroom work. I never really got to be much good at it, but I did from time to time help my dad test various methods of underwater photography, like putting a camera inside a sealed plastic container made for the purpose. It sort of worked, but what with the frequent dredging in the lake the visibility was never good enough for handsome results. A few years later, as a then aspiring singer, the hazards of scuba diving to ears and lungs steered me away from frogman aspirations. In short, both from the diving and the camera work aspects, I am really impressed by the consistently marvelous quality of Steve's underwater photography.

Speaking of photography, and bearing in mind our speaker Joe Ferdenzi's topic this evening (aquascaping), be sure and take a look at this month's Undergravel Reporter. Just spectacular! All this, plus Chapter 4 of Rosario LaCorte's "An Aquarist's Journey"!

* * * * *

Remember, we need articles. We always need articles! **Modern Aquarium** is produced by and for the members of Greater City Aquarium Society. Our members are our authors, and with ten issues per year, we always, always need more articles. I know several of you are keeping and/or breeding fish, or working with plants or inverts that I would like to know more about, and I'm certain other members would be interested as well. Share your experience with us. Write about it! If you're a little unsure about the state of your writing technique, don't worry – that's why there are editors.

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





GCAS Programs 2014

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 5	Harry Faustmann <i>Live Foods</i>
April 2	Rosario LaCorte <i>The Fish I've Worked With</i>
May 7	Leslie Dick <i>Fish Jeopardy</i>
June 4	Joseph Ferdenzi <i>Aquascaping</i>
July 2	Joseph Graffagnino <i>Tips & Tricks on Breeding Fish & Raising Fry</i>
August 6	Silent Auction
September 3	Joe Gargas <i>Water and the Aquarium</i>
October 1	TBA
November 5	Gary Lange <i>Rainbowfish</i>
December 3	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 2014 by the Greater City Aquarium Society Inc., a not-for-profit New York State corporation, or 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

The winners of the 2013 FAAS Publication Awards have been released, and we'll be handing out those awards during this evening's meeting. You can find the results in this issue on page 10 and 11. As you will see, we fared pretty well. One of our guest authors, Derek Tustin, also did pretty well. He and our own Al Priest placed first and second in the Author of the Year category, as well as winning other awards. Below, I've concatenated a series of emails from Derek on the subject of the awards, wherein he does a convenient statistical breakdown of our results.

"Hi, Dan. I got the results of the pub awards today. First off, congrats on placing for best publication, and congrats to the stable of excellent authors you have. Second, thanks for agreeing to publish my articles. Without you having done so, I wouldn't have won. GCAS won more awards and had more authors represented than any other club. I think that qualifies as doing rather better than well! And congrats on your personal first place finish in the conservation article category! Please do me a favor, and pass on my congratulations to all your authors. It was a privilege being counted in their number. Our daughter was born April 4th, so I'm under a time crunch right now, but once I ramp up again, hope you don't mind if I keep you in mind."

Take a look at the list of our member/winners, and congratulate them. Better yet, think of something you can write about!

Dan



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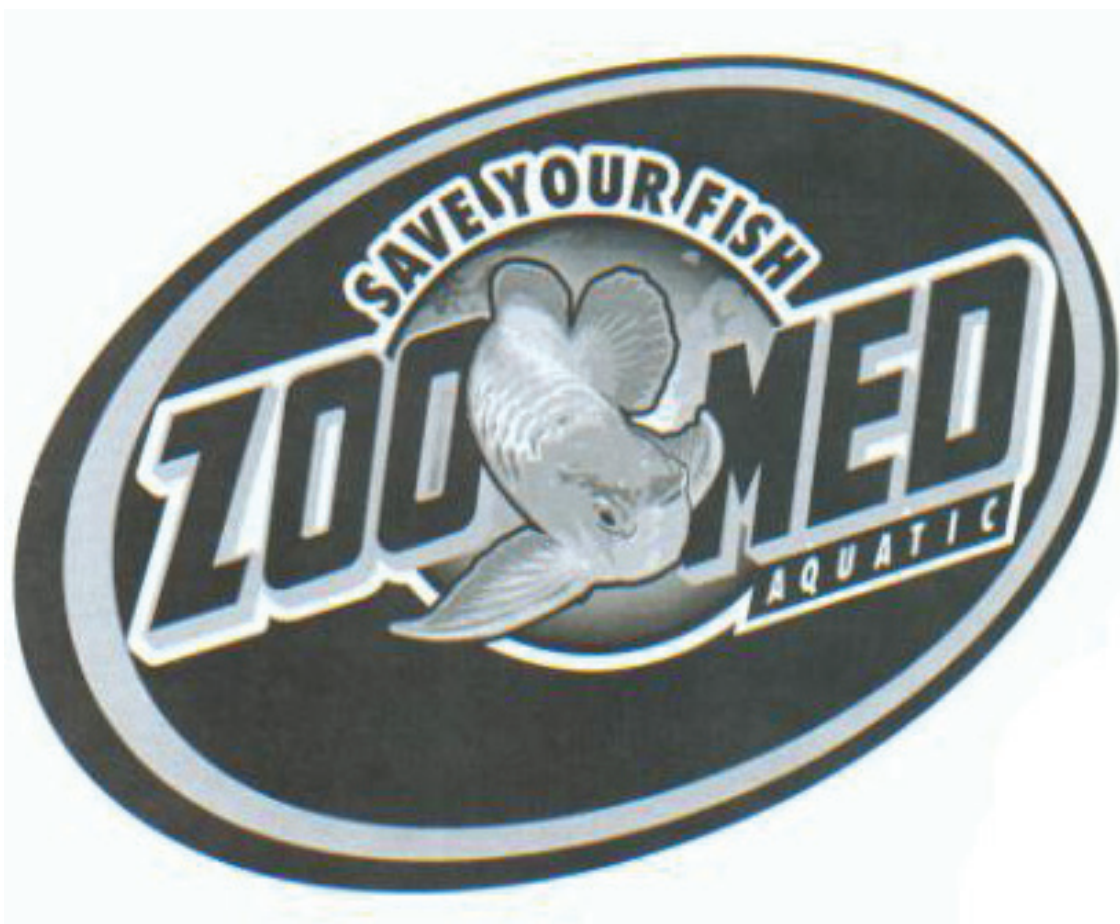
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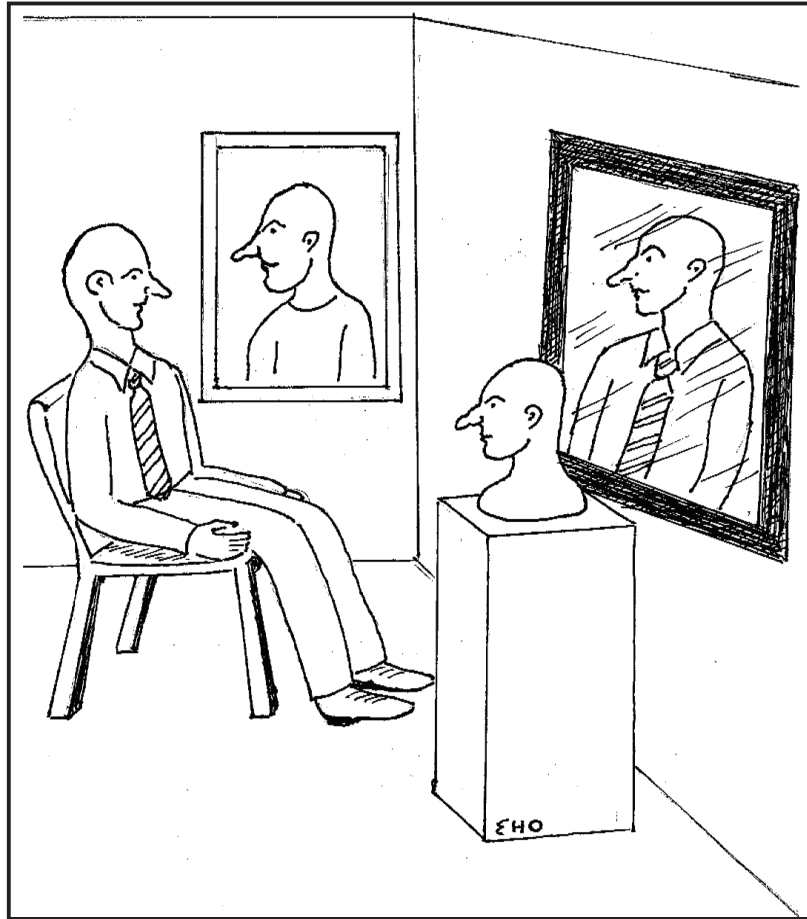
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May's Caption Winner: Leslie Dick



Artistic musings on my life as if I were a self-cloning crayfish.

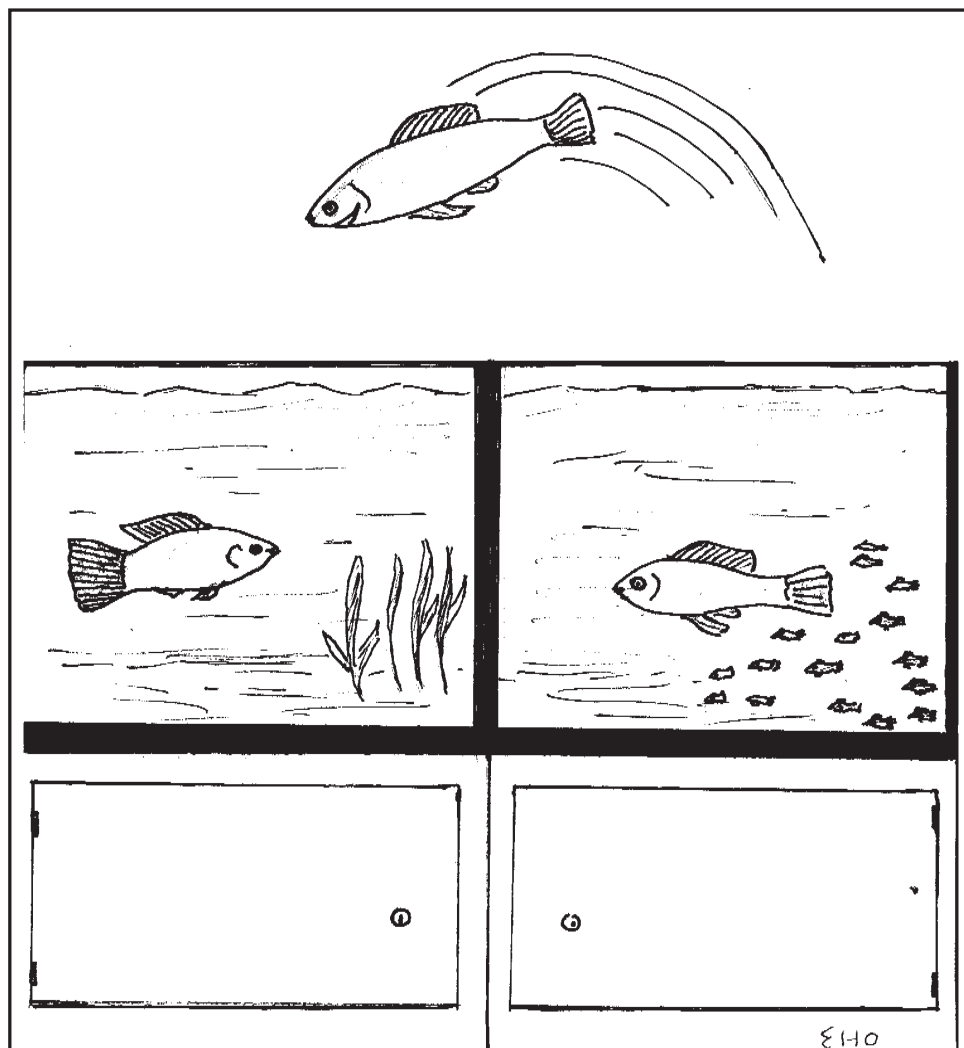
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The Modern Aquarium Cartoon Caption Contest

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:

The LFS Report

by Dan Puleo

LFS in the spotlight: Franklin Pet Center

212 Franklin Ave., Franklin Square, NY 11010
(516)775-8183

This month we aim our spotlight beyond the borders of our Greater City to the wilds of Nassau county, where we are fortunate to find the Franklin Pet Center. Conveniently located on Franklin Avenue a few blocks south of Hempstead Turnpike, it's less than five minutes from the Cross Island Parkway and well worth the trip.

I recently had the opportunity to spend some quality time with the owner, Manny, and found out that his involvement with the aquarium trade began like the rest of us—as a hobbyist. He related to me with great enthusiasm how back in the late 1990s he and a friend took the opportunity to acquire a breeding pair of scorpion discus direct from Japan, which cost them over \$2,200 with delivery! At that price they came with a full replacement guarantee if they didn't breed, but he never had to collect, since they laid their first clutch within twenty days and started raising their broods reliably with the second clutch two weeks later. Judging by the quality discus he had for sale today, his love of these fish continues.

Manny started as an employee at the old Pet Barn, which occupied the same location for many years, starting out in the saltwater department. When the owner of the shop decided to retire, Manny saw his opportunity, and four years ago he negotiated to become the new owner, and set out to make his newly named Pet Center once again a vital aquarium and pet store. In this I feel he has succeeded and should feel proud of what he has accomplished. Not only did he turn the store around, but he also survived having to start over a second time when he lost his entire stock to super storm Sandy. While he wasn't flooded, the store lost power for six days, and despite securing a small generator to power the air blower for much of the filtration, there was no way to heat the tanks, and by the sixth day whatever fish were still alive had their immune systems so compromised that within two weeks all had perished.

Nowadays the tanks are full of beautiful specimens. I took particular notice of some outstanding tank-raised German blue rams which were a bargain at \$8, and adult bushynose plecos looking

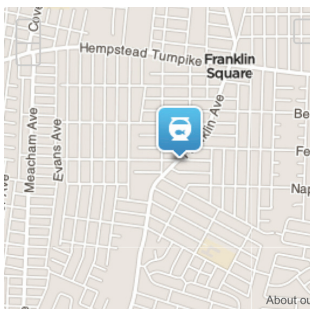
fat and happy going for \$15. It was nice to see albino paradise fish for \$6 each. For some reason I rarely see good ones anymore. For you cory collectors out there I saw some robust *C. elegans* for \$7 and *C. agassizii* for \$5. Over in the angel tanks the mixed half-dollar sized were 2/\$10 and larger blue zebra lace and gold marbles were \$15.

I also noticed some distinctive green severums. When I asked about them and why there was no price for them on the tank, Manny explained that they were direct shipped wild stock, and that they weren't up to his standards to put them for sale. "Another week or two and they'll be ready. Then I'll figure a price." It's nice to find a store that isn't just about getting the livestock out the door at all costs.

A real treat for me was seeing freshwater flounders again. I thought the tank was empty until some of the fine gravel decided to move! In the way of FW inverts, Manny was happy to show off the red cherry and black bee shrimp he's breeding, and the red-clawed crabs were priced right at \$5. In the plant tanks, of which there are many, I noticed some full bushy crypts for \$13 and *Anubias coffeefolia* for only \$11—a real bargain there.

Over in the saltwater room I noted an XL *volitans* lionfish going for \$85 and a good sized snowflake eel was \$40. They also had tank-raised percula clownfish going for \$23 each. Coral frags are \$35 and up.

Beyond all the fish tanks, I had the pleasure of having a gentleman by the name of Bruce show me around the rest of the shop. Here I was shown a respectable reptile department with some surprises. Besides the ball pythons, a very nice adult corn snake and a beautiful banana king snake. I was also impressed by the giant bird-eating spider, which I am told will grow to a one foot size. Then he showed me what I at first thought were common anole lizards. It turned out that these were actually Italian wall lizards which many years ago escaped captivity somewhere on the island and have become established in parts of Nassau County. "They've made it as far west as Elmont and Floral Park." Bruce says, "They'll make



it into Queens soon enough.” It seems that they are filling the ecological niche left open by the demise of the native blue-tailed skink, which became extinct many years ago.

They also have some very nice birds for sale that Bruce obviously pays a lot of attention to. The blue-faced conures are hand-tame and can say “Hi,” “Hello,” and “I love you.” Bruce also breeds Guinea pigs, hooded rats, and fancy mice on site, and again his caring shows through. Even though most are sold as live food for the reptile trade, all of these animals were clean, well fed, hand-tame, and seemed quite content. Bruce seems to take great pride in his breeding program, and there was no “animal” smell in the room, which says a lot to me.

There are also dog and cat supplies and foods, and a complete dog grooming service which has been running for 40 years in the basement, so you can get your dog done while you shop for a new addition to your collection of fishy friends. Who can beat that? Not me, certainly, so come on out to Franklin Pet Center and see what’s in the tanks. You won’t be disappointed.



This month’s LFS Report was originally distributed as a flyer at our December, 2013 meeting.



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The 2013 FAAS Awards

The results of the 2013 Publication Awards

by ALEXANDER A. PRIEST



The Federation of American Aquarium Societies (FAAS) has been around since 1973 as a service organization of and for the aquarium societies of North, Central, and South America. Originally formed by U.S. societies to fight a proposed Federal ban of importation and transshipping of tropical fish, it has become a source of information sharing among its members, and has expanded to accept membership of any society "in the Americas."

FAAS holds an annual publications awards contest for original articles from member publications. There were 289 entries from eleven different clubs for the 2013 competition. (Note that our neighbors, the **Brooklyn Aquarium Society** and the **North Jersey Aquarium Society** gave us some competition last year!) A complete list of winners, with article titles, are on the FAAS website¹. To save space here, only the categories and winners are shown. (See the Legend at the end of this article for more information.)

¹<http://www.faas.info/index.php/publication-awards/past-winners2/39-2013-winners>

Best Editor & Publication, more than 6 issues

1st: Jayne Glazier - Kwas

2nd: Dan Radebaugh - GCAS

3rd: Joel Antkowiak ACLC

HM: Mike Jacobs - TBAS

Best Editor & Publication, 6 or fewer issues

1st: John Todaro - BASNY

2nd: Chris Eichrodt - CCAC

3rd: Scott McLaughlin - CCOY

HM: Tim Pilat - MAS

Best Changing Cover, Original Artwork

1st: Mike Jacobs - TBAS

2nd: Joel Antkowiak - ACLC

3rd: Jayne Glazier - Kwas

HM: Ted Judy & Brian Torrealano (photos);

Tim Pilat (ed) - MAS

Best FAAS Related Article

1st: Joel Antkowiak - ACLC

2nd: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS

Best Exchange Column

1st: Zenin Skomorowski - Kwas

2nd: Zenin Skomorowski - Kwas

3rd: Zenin Skomorowski - Kwas

HM: Austin Braganza - MAS

Best Review Article

1st: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS

2nd: John Todaro - BASNY

3rd: Susan Priest - GCAS

HM: Dan Puleo - GCAS

Best Spawning Article < 500 words

1st: Richard Bressler - ACLC

2nd: Richard Bressler - ACLC

3rd: Joe Berberich - TBAS

HM: Steve Berman - GCAS

Best Spawning Article 500-1000 words

1st: Nick Ternes - MAS

2nd: Brian J Torrealano - MAS

3rd: Joe Graffagnino - BASNY

HM: Bill Flowers - CCAC

HM: Al Ridley - Kwas

HM: Rob McLure - MAS

HM: Andy Hudson - MAS

HM: Andy Hudson - MAS

Best Spawning Article > 1000 words

1st: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS

2nd: Jeffrey George - GCAS

3rd: Lisa Quilty - BASNY

HM: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS

Best Article on a Genus of Fish

1st: Helene Schoubye - TBAS

2nd: Derek P.S. Tustin - GCAS

3rd: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS

HM: Joel Antkowiak - ACLC

Best Article on a Species of Fish

1st: Joel Antkowiak - ACLC

2nd: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS

3rd: Nick Ternes - MAS

HM: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS

HM: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS

Best Marine Article - Fish

1st: Stephen Sica - GCAS

2nd: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS

3rd: Stephen Sica - GCAS

Best Article on Aquascaping or Design

1st: Don Rhodes - Kwas

2nd: Scott McLaughlin - CCOY

Best Article on Plant Maintenance, Cultivation or Reproduction

1st: Derek P.S. Tustin - SAS

2nd: Derek P.S. Tustin - SAS

3rd: Derek P.S. Tustin - SAS

HM: Chuck Davis - NJAS

<u>Best Show Article</u> 1st: Scott McLaughlin - CCOY 2nd: Joel Antkowiak - ACLC 3rd: Jayne Glazier - KWAS	<u>Best Original Artwork</u> 1st: Roy Smith - CCAC 2nd: Mike Jacobs - TBAS 3rd: Mike Jacobs - TBAS HM: Stephen Sica - GCAS
<u>Best Judging Article</u> 1st: Scott McLaughlin - CCOY 2nd: Chuck Davis - NJAS	<u>Best Cartoon</u> 1st: Elliot Oshins - GCAS 2nd: Bob Kulesa - ACLC 3rd: Bob Kulesa - ACLC
<u>Best How To or Do-It-Yourself Article</u> 1st: Gary Haas - ACLC 2nd: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS 3rd: Jules Birnbaum - GCAS	<u>Best Conservation Related Article</u> 1st: Dan Radebaugh - GCAS 2nd: Derek P.S. Tustin - GCAS 3rd: Rob McLure - MAS
<u>Best General Article on Society Management</u> 1st: Al Ridley - KWAS 2nd: Kurt Johnston - ACLC 3rd: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS	<u>Best Continuing Column by a Single Author or Author(s)</u> 1st: Joel Antkowiak - ACLC 2nd: Ed Koerner - KWAS 3rd: Susan Priest - GCAS HM: Larry Jinks - NJAS HM: Izzy Zwerin - BASNY HM: Dan Puleo - GCAS
<u>Best Article on Health or Nutrition</u> 1st: Jules Birnbaum - GCAS 2nd: Jules Birnbaum - GCAS	<u>Best Article, All Other Categories</u> 1st: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS 2nd: Warren Feuer - GCAS 3rd: Jules Birnbaum - GCAS HM: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS
<u>Best Collecting Article</u> 1st: Chris Cornell - CCOY 2nd: Rich Levy - GCAS	<u>Author of the Year</u> 1st: Derek P.S. Tustin - DRAS 2nd: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS 3rd: Joel Antkowiak - ACLC
<u>Best Traveling Aquarist Article</u> 1st: Scott McLaughlin - CCOY 2nd: Zenin Skomorowski - KWAS 3rd: Stephen Sica - GCAS HM: Joe Graffagnino - BASNY HM: Scott McLaughlin - CCOY	
<u>Best Humorous Article</u> 1st: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS 2nd: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS 3rd: Alexander A. Priest - GCAS	

Legend:

ACLC - Aquarium Club of Lancaster County - Tank Tales
BASNY - Brooklyn Aquarium Society - Aquatica
CCAC - Circle City Aquarium Club - Fancy Fins
CCOY - Cichlid Club of York - The Cichlid Chronicles
DRAS - Durham Region Aquarium Society - Tank Talk
GCAS - Greater City Aquarium Society - Modern Aquarium
KWAS - Kitchener-Waterloo Aquarium Society - Fins and Tales
MAS - Milwaukee Aquarium Society - Splash
NJAS - North Jersey Aquarium Society - The Reporter
SAS - Sacramento Aquarium Society - The Tropical News
TBAS - Tampa Bay Aquarium Society - The Filter

Water and the Fishkeeper

by Jules Birnbaum

I can only scratch the surface of this subject. After so many years of keeping fish I'm still learning more each day. Fish are very resilient, and will live in some very poor water conditions, at least for a period of time.

Every filter manufacturer and pet shop offers advice, but in the end it is our own experience that matters most. When someone is trying to sell something their views can become distorted. I'm not saying they are wrong, but they are somewhat biased. They are also biased by their own experiences. That is why I like to question authorities, and like to try new ways of doing things. I don't like to take a so-called authority's word for something without solid evidence.

Not being a scientist, I'll try to just relate my own experiences working with many kinds of fish, some of which require special conditions, based on where they were first discovered and when they were brought into the hobby.

The first thing for me to discuss with relation to aquarium water is our tap water. New York is blessed with very good tap water. The pH and hardness are ideal for most of the fish we keep. My community water authority provides us with an annual report, which is technical, but it can show us what is in our water that might be harmful. Drinking water contains chlorine, and if not aged or conditioned, this gas will kill your fish by burning their gills. Chlorine is a gas, and the simplest and best way for us to remove it is by aging and aerating the water for at least 24 hours. I can also change up to 50% of aquarium water straight from the tap without aging or using any conditioner. It's easy to make a mistake in the conditioner dosage, given the number of water changes we perform over time.

The measure of acidity, (pH) is on a scale of 0 to 14, with zero being battery acid. Sea water would be an 8. Bleach would be a 14. Neutral, such as blood, would be 7.0. Baking Soda would be a 9.5. Hardness is simply a measure of the amount of calcium and magnesium in your water. KH (carbonate hardness) and alkalinity are one and the same. GH is the general hardness. DH is *Deutsch* hardness, and not generally accepted now. The pH and hardness of my tank water is not often tested unless I'm introducing a new fish. Over time we develop a feel as to what is correct for fish requiring a certain level of pH and hardness. I also use only one thermometer, installed in one tank, and then I feel all the other tanks with my hand. The

feel you develop over time can save you time and money.

My fishroom has a 40 gallon container where aged water is always available when needed. We have also used this water for flushing toilets and cleaning when our water was cut off by a storm. This water is not completely safe for drinking, but plain chlorine bleach can take care of that. The dosage would be eight teaspoons for the 40 gallons, or five drops per gallon (Washington State Dept. of Health). Because of the violent storms we have been experiencing and the threat of terrorism this is a tip worth remembering.

I've learned a method for removing most of the chlorine from a fellow hobbyist who is a retired university science teacher. If tap water, under pressure, is blasted against the side of a 5 gallon can, much of the chlorine is dissipated. You can smell the chlorine while doing this. I have yet to try it on one of my fish tanks, so I would still let the water stand for a few hours, just to be safe.

We have all heard about cycling a new tank before adding fish (the nitrogen cycle). This is to allow nitrifying bacteria to build up in the filter and safely convert metabolic wastes (such as ammonia) into less toxic compounds. One can avoid this period, which can take a few weeks, by using a filter media taken from an established filter already in service, and also by not overstocking a new tank. You can also have a few extra sponge filters going in tanks containing fish so that aged filter media will be available when needed.

It is probably overkill but I perform 50% water changes on all my tanks every week, and add a small amount of powdered water conditioner in with the new water. The thin layer of gravel in each tank is vacuumed every other week. My box and sponge filters are cleaned along with the water changes or at least every 14 days. Sponges are squeezed out using aged water. Even using tapwater enough nitrifying bacteria remain, and the colony quickly grows back. I assume that most of you are not changing water and cleaning your filters this often. I do it because, as excess detritus builds up and accumulates in the filter media, vertical channels form, and since water follows the path of least resistance, much of the filter material will be bypassed. This makes the filter less efficient by inhibiting the growth of aerobic bacteria (the beneficial bacteria). The detritus buildup does not leave the tank of the unclean filter, so uncleaned filters can result in fish diseases and losses.

Some things to remember:

Dirty filter = high bio-load = high oxygen demand.
Clean filter = low bio-load = excess oxygen for fish.
You will notice a difference in the behavior of your fish when you keep the bio-load down.

I recently read about Texas State University's Genetic Stock Center, that uses swordtails for cancer research. They have 1,300 tanks, mostly 2 and 5 gallon, and amazingly use no filtration or aeration. Each tank has just one pair of fish, a thin layer of gravel covering half the bottom and a bunch of Java moss. The temperature is 78° F (no heaters) and the only light is from overhead room lights. Water changes of 25% to 50% are performed monthly, and sometimes less frequently. The water comes from their municipal water supply (hard and alkaline). A commercial product is used to remove the chloramine and chlorine. This tells me that if the bio-load is kept very low the water will be fine without frequent water changes. Who can argue with their success? However, for most of the rest of us it is wise to perform frequent water changes and clean the filters.

There are killifish breeders with many small tanks who also don't use filters, but use live plants such as Java moss. Their tanks have few fish, and they make frequent water changes using automated systems.

You don't have to pay big bucks for an aquarium filter. If frequent water changes are performed it really does not matter what type of filters are used. This can save you as much as \$300 for one of these over-engineered, computerized monsters. Some say the water flow from the filter should be slow so the water comes into contact with nitrifying bacteria longer. Others like a faster flow to polish the water more. I sometimes run my filters slowly and at other times speed them up.

After much experimentation I favor box type filters being driven by a central air pump. It is easier to notice when they are dirty and need cleaning. If the bio-load is high you certainly can notice it. I can also buffer the water (maintain a stable pH) by using crushed coral or peat. When there are fry present I simply take the cover off the filter so they don't get trapped. Box filters are also very easy to clean. To properly clean a sponge filter you must squeeze it many times, preferably in a pail of aged water. This does not mean I don't use sponge filters, because I do. I also use the Poret type sponge filters that cover the entire end of the tank. These filters catch everything over a large area, and need cleaning just once a year. I also use hang-on filters, moved from tank to tank, to polish the water.

There is a new filter developed by a member of the Tampa Bay Aquarium Society called a Rocket Filter™. The developer, Joe Gargas, is a water expert who has written articles for **Tropical Fish Hobbyist**, and has 13 patents dealing with water management. He also was Director of Research for Wardley (Hartz

Mountain). This is a filter made of PVC material, and is a very sturdy, round box filter that looks like a rocket on a launch pad. The water enters the filter from openings in the base rather than from the top. There is pea-sized lava rock at the bottom and poly fiber of the kind used to fill pillows. The object of the design is to prevent the water from channeling around the filter material, and also to enable picking up detritus from the bottom of the tank. I am presently trying two, one for a 10 gallon tank and the other for a 20 gallon. They are not cheap (\$17 each). The air-driven box filter is nothing new, but the Rocket Filter is a new way of doing it.



Rocket Filter™ with lava rock.

There are many ways of getting to the same result, which is ideal water for your fish to live and thrive in. Without breaking the bank, have some fun—try them all! You might even want to design one of your own.



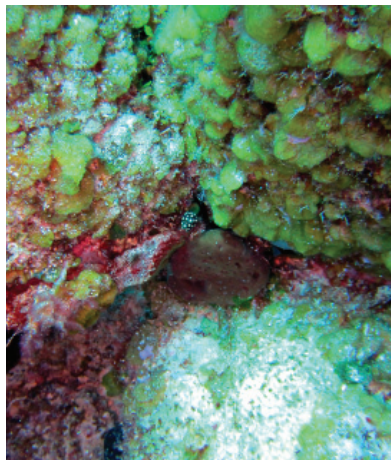
The Pea

Story and Photos by Stephen Sica

Now that Donna and I are dog owners, we are reluctant to travel and leave our Cordelia behind. Last year we did take her to North Carolina and Key Largo, Florida, but these long car trips can be exhausting to an aging body with a bad back and sciatica—mine, not Donna's. As a result, I have been combing through my old photos to see if there are any “side bar” stories that readers out there may find entertaining, if not educational.

About two years ago we traveled to Providenciales in the Turks & Caicos. It was a great trip. I recollect writing two articles: one about lionfish, and the second about the local sea life in general. I recall that the reefs were ten to twenty feet deeper than most in other Caribbean islands.

This year I decided to begin transferring my underwater photos from my old notebook computer to a newer model with a slightly larger screen. While doing this, I would have the opportunity to review a few photos to see if I missed a good story. Often, I look at photos from a recent trip and think to myself that there is a story there—although it's usually a brief one unless I write a lot of other non-fish stuff, or some other trivial nonsense to embellish it, such as this sentence.



Juvenile smooth trunkfish, also known as a pea, in a nook on a reef.

When we go for a morning or day of diving there is usually a boat trip out to the reef or wreck. We like to make conversation with the dive masters or instructors. Sometimes we pick up extra information or garner insight

about the sea life, dive site, or water conditions. The conversation is challenging for me, not because of the topic but the roar of the engine always restricts my delicate hearing. One of my favorite expressions is to just nod when I don't hear what is being said, or more honestly, “What?” Donna hears much better than I do. She is also much smarter than I, and is a better fact finder on the surface.

On a day in June of 2012, Nigel, our British dive master, was mentioning something about a pee. Although I thought that this was a strange topic, I knew very well that there was a good chance that I was clearly not hearing something important. A few minutes later we were busy listening to the formal dive briefing, struggling into our wetsuits, and gearing up, so I forgot about the pee topic.

We spent about forty minutes touring a beautiful reef, with Nigel in the lead. Near the end of the dive he pointed to a tiny, round, speckled ball-like object floating in a shallow nook in the reef. Donna looked first to allow me to leisurely photograph the object. When I looked closely I really could not see much, in part due to my mediocre vision, so I took two photographs and swam on my way. I had no idea what I had just photographed. I thought that it was a floating plant spore or the egg case of a fish. I forgot about it and went on my way to my next potential subject.

Back on the boat, we questioned Nigel about the small round object. He said that he was fortunate to find it. It was still in the same location that he saw it last week. Donna asked Nigel. “What did we see?” Nigel responded that it was the pea that he had told us about. I asked, “But what exactly is it? We never saw a pea before.” Nigel said that it was a baby trunkfish. “Huh? That's a fish? It looked like a tiny egg,” I said. Nigel reiterated that it was a juvenile trunkfish. I told him that it was too small for me to make much of it. I couldn't even tell that it was a living animal. I stared at the two photos on my camera back through the clear plastic waterproof case, but the fish was still too small to determine any features.



Adult Smooth trunkfish, *Lactophrys triqueter*.

When we returned home, I do what I always do when I observe a unique life form. I research it in my Florida, Caribbean, Bahamas Reef Fish Identification book. Indeed, the tiny object was a juvenile smooth trunkfish “about the size of a pea” to quote the book’s description. My identification book had an enlarged photo of the “pea.” You can barely make out a snout and several tiny fins. It is described as a “dark body covered with large yellow to pale yellow spots.” This article would not be complete without a photo comparison with an adult smooth trunkfish. Can you see the similarity? I didn’t think so.

An adult smooth trunkfish is distinguished by a mid-body area of pale honeycomb markings. The first time I saw this fish underwater, I thought that the marks were some sort of fungus. These fish are fairly common in Florida and the Bahamas/Caribbean area. You may occasionally see one in the Gulf of Mexico, south to Brazil, and north to Bermuda and even Massachusetts. An adult rarely grows larger than twelve inches, with six to ten inches being the average size. It usually swims singly above the reef at a depth of fifteen to eighty feet. Occasionally, the smooth trunkfish swims in small groups. I have never seen a group or school, but I have seen a number of solitary specimens while diving—or else I keep running into



Closeup of a juvenile Smooth trunkfish, *Lactophrys triqueter*.

the same fish. It’s difficult to tell, since almost all fish look like identical twins except for their size. This fish is unconcerned with divers. There is a golden variation of the smooth trunkfish—I have never seen one, but the fish is quite attractive. It has only been reported in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of Honduras.

Now I have to get back to my Turks & Caicos photos to see if I can squeeze out one more story. I wonder if there’s a fish out there that looks like a black-eyed pea. You just never know!



Smooth trunkfish, *Lactophrys triqueter*, and Giant Anemone, *Condylactis gigantea* on a reef.



Adult smooth trunkfish swims away into the reef.



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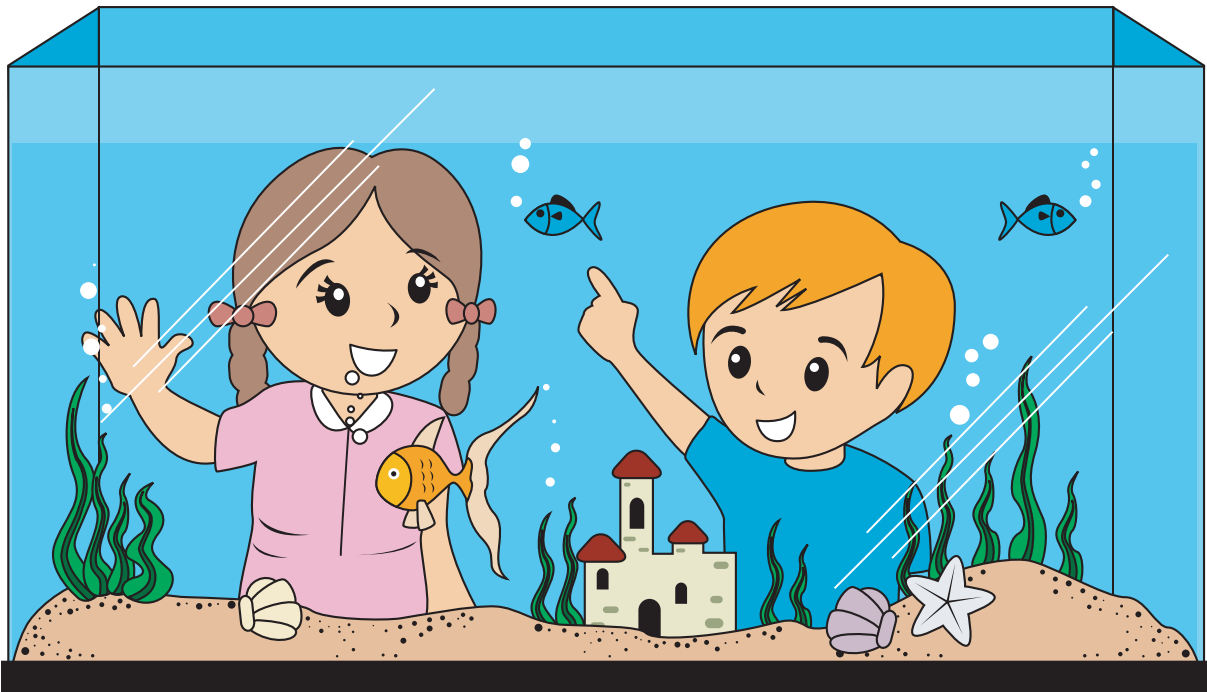
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Support Fish in the Classroom!

If you have any 5 or 10 gallon tanks, or any filters, pumps, or plants that you could donate to NYC teacher Michael Paoli's classrooms, could you please bring them in or email Rich Levy (rlevy17@aol.com). If you'd like to donate larger tanks, be sure and email Rich so he can make sure Michael can accommodate it.

The Nassau Pet Shop

Part II

by Joseph Ferdenzi

Some time ago I wrote an article about the now-defunct Nassau Pet Shop (**Modern Aquarium** August 2012). Fortunately, I share these articles with my friend Lee Finley, a very knowledgeable hobby historian. Lee is also a long-time collector of aquarium hobby literature and ephemera, which he often shares with me. Nevertheless, I was extremely surprised and delighted when, a few weeks after my article appeared, he provided me with the extraordinary letter that is the subject of this article.

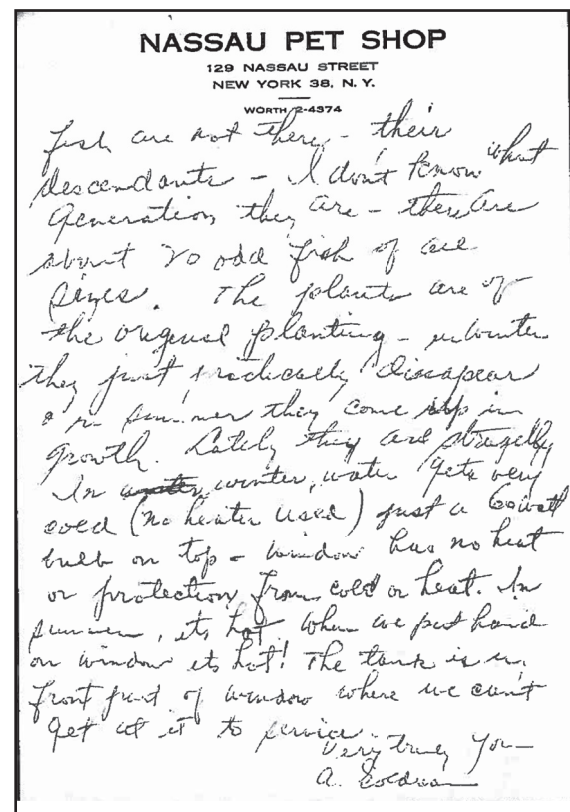
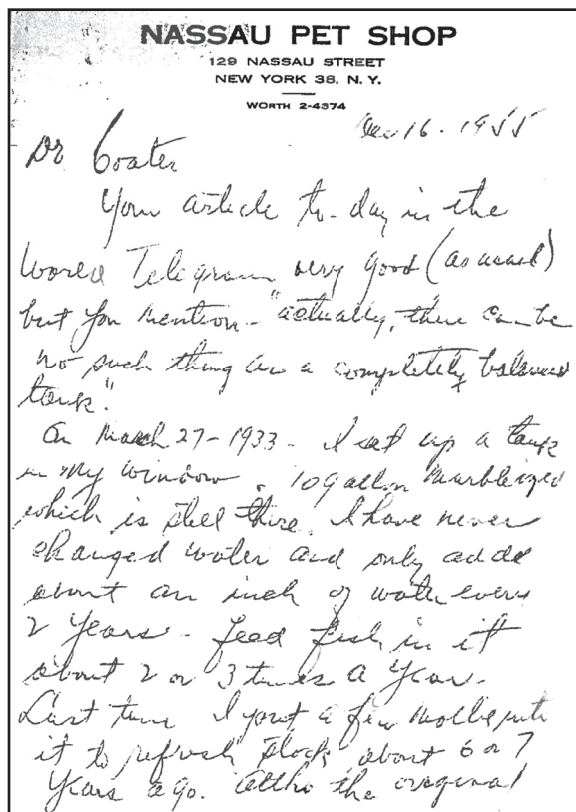
As the earlier article recalled, one of the memorable features of the Nassau Pet Shop was an aquarium displayed in one of its shop windows. The tank's "claim to fame" was that it purported to illustrate the ease with which one could maintain a "balanced" aquarium with no regular water changes. As it turns out, judging from the contents of this letter, the owner of Nassau was a fervent believer in the concept of the balanced aquarium, as were of course many others at that time.

The letter (below), dated December 16, 1955, is addressed to Christopher W. Coates, then the Curator of the New York Aquarium, which at that time was located at Battery Park in Manhattan. Indeed, the letter

is preserved only because it was written to Coates, who stapled Goldman's letter to a copy of his letter, and kept both on file. The Nassau Pet Shop letter was written (as best I can make out from the handwriting—the entire letter is hand written) by A. Goldman, who appears to be the owner.

He begins the article by complimenting Coates on his "very good" article that had been published that day in the **World Telegram** (a newspaper). But he takes issue with Coates' statement that "actually, there can be no such thing as a completely balanced tank." Goldman seeks to refute this by telling Coates about the ten gallon tank that he himself had set up in the store window in 1933(!). He says that he has never changed the water, and that he has only added "about an inch of water every 2 years." He mentions that the tank houses mollies, that it has no heater, and is lit with a 60 watt bulb.

Coates responds on December 21 (see page 17), and begins by writing (this letter is typed) that he has heard of Nassau's "famous 'balanced' aquarium." Coates then goes on to explain what he meant by his statement that there was no such thing as a completely balanced tank. In doing so, he explains his theories,



600 miles an hour, a speed at least modestly in excess of even our best local commuter trains. His feat would have been impossible, too, without the fine organization of the National Guardsmen along his route who fueled and maintained his plane with a speed and excellence that are most impressive. The day of routine coast-to-coast daily commutation is obviously still some time away, but Lieutenant Conroy's magnificent feat demonstrates that that day is nearer than most of us have realized.

Topics of The Times

In the murky An Ancient green water of a Family tank in the window of Fish of a pet shop on Nassau Street swims a family of black mollies. These little tropical fish, about as long as the bowl of a tablespoon, customarily keep house in the waters of Mexico and the southern United States. Scudding around their downtown Gotham fish tank, though, pecking at the bottom and stirring up little storms of sediment with every squiggle, they seem to be equally at home. They should be. Theirs is a family home, a tank of ancestral memories, a legendary place to be hallowed by its present residents. The legend is explained to passers-by on Nassau Street if not to the mollies themselves by a sign pasted on their tank: "This aquarium was set up March 27, 1933. The water has never been changed."

Neither have the The Same fish. This is not to Though Not say that the five or the Same six black mollies currently living there are the same fish who moved in on March 27, 1933. Hardly. Every twenty-eight days a new generation of black mollies comes along. Therefore, since that day in 1933 when the tank was filled and stocked with an unremembered number of black mollies, 288 generations have lived and died there. But the family is the same. There is no question about its lineage. At times in its history the living group has numbered fifty or sixty fish. At other times a dozen have dwelled in the tank, while the present complement, as far as can be seen through the seaweed, is even smaller. "They go up and down," says Frank Schneider, one of the store's employees. But up or down, few or many, they swim as a family. They are at home, indeed.

How can the same Balance few gallons of water Is the support an innumerable Secret fish for twenty-two years? The secret, if you can call it that, when Schneider genially discloses it to anyone who asks, is that the tank is biologically balanced. Enough vallisneria—an aquatic plant which is found in the dictionary adjacent to Valley Forge—grows in the tank to provide the fish with everything they need, including privacy. An electric light bulb burning constantly in the tin roof of the tank keeps the vallisneria alive and thriving. As long as the bulb burns, photosynthesis does the rest. Moreover, the bulb is changed seasonally: higher wattage in the winter, lower in the summer. Its heat convinces the mollies that they are living in the tropics after all. This proves that mollies are either quite gullible or adaptable.

Almost six inches of Eons sediment have accumulated at the bottom of Inches the tank since March 27, 1933, when it was filled. (That was the day the sun shone with a halo over Buffalo, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported favorably on the St. Lawrence Waterway Treaty, and the 64-year-old President of Chile beat a man with his cane for insulting him.) The sediment has become stratified over the years and looks like a colored plate in an old geology textbook. Who knows what fossils lie embedded in it? Who knows how it accumulated, or from what? Dust, probably; dead mollies, although mollies are supposed to eat their dead; old vallisneria; even pinches of tropical fish food dropped in by the management and rejected by finical young mollies.

If a customer Aristocrats wants to buy some in mollies for his own the Window aquarium, he must content himself with fish of relatively questionable ancestry, because the mollies in the window tank are sacrosanct: to be venerated, not sold. Common mollies, no less black or wigglesome, go for nineteen cents. A potential buyer, lured into the store by the window display, studied a tankful of them intently. Then he turned to a clerk: "I've got a TV lamp with a place in it for fish. You think a few of these would set it off okay?"

and the divergent views on what constitutes a balanced aquarium. He concludes that he does not believe Nassau's tank is a balanced aquarium in a very strict scientific sense, but he acknowledges that, in a traditional sense, a person "may consider your tank to be a balanced one."

The correspondence is cordial to say the least. Coates, by the way, also reveals that he has passed the shop and has seen the tank in the window. This is unsurprising, as Nassau Street is not all that far from Battery Park.

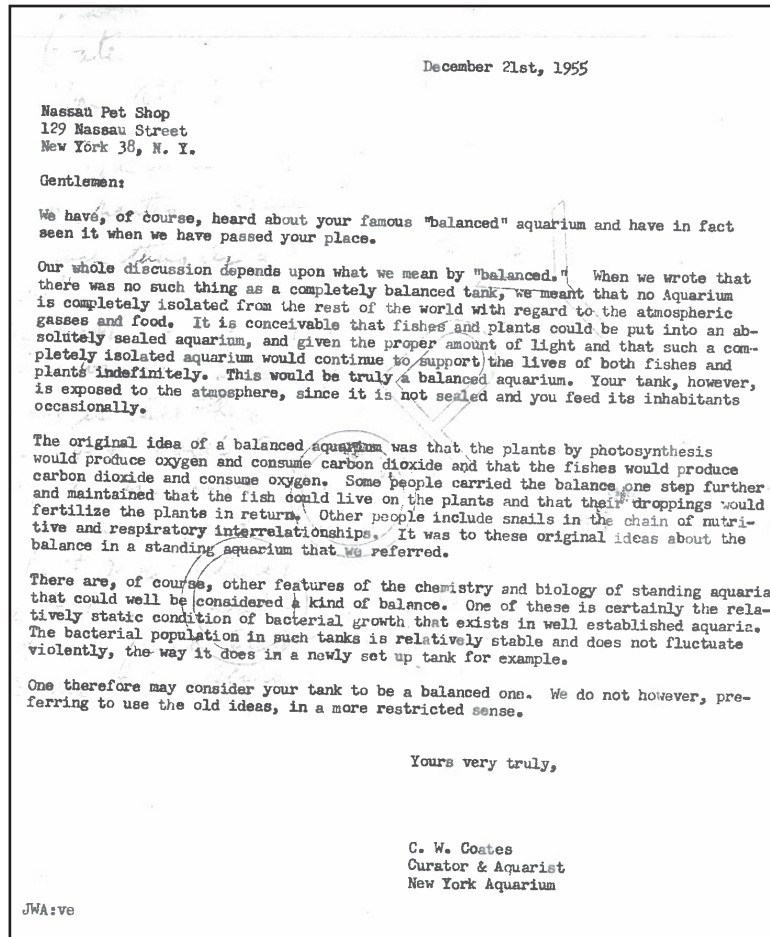
In addition to the details about the tank revealed by its owner, there is another wonderful source of information about that famous tank. Only some seven months before Goldman wrote his letter, there was a column (see facing page) written about the store and its tank in **The New York Times** ("Topics of the Times," Monday, May 23, 1955). It goes into amazing detail about what purportedly makes it a balanced aquarium, and describes the longevity of its population of mollies. But best of all for those of us with nostalgic memories, it quotes the sign I alluded to in my first article on the Nassau Pet Shop. Let's see how it compares to what

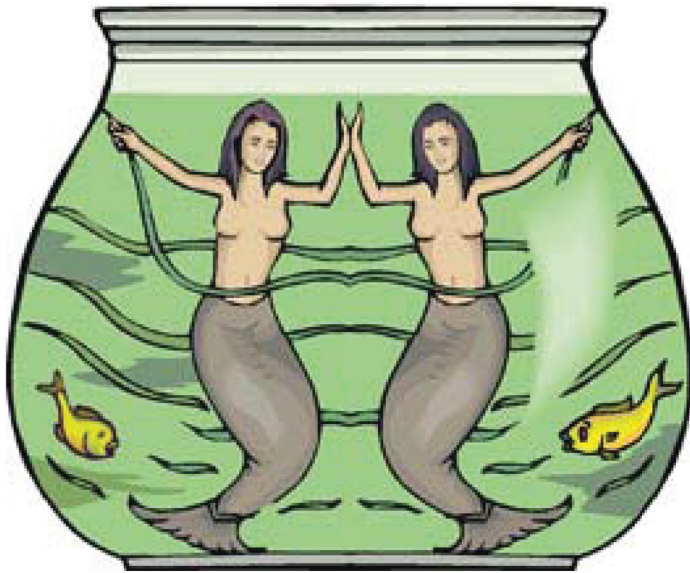
I wrote ("This tank was set up on August 15, 1942. Other than replacing water lost to evaporation, no water changes have ever been made, and no filtration device has ever been used."). Well, as it turns out, all the sign read (at least in 1955) is, "This aquarium was set up March 27, 1933. The water has never been changed." Wow! Well, I got the date wrong, but considering I

last saw that tank around 1970, I pretty much remembered the gist of it. Interestingly, I somehow "remembered" the part about replacing evaporated water even though that is only mentioned in Goldman's letter, which I read for the first time *after* I wrote my article. The **Times** article also mentions plants (*Vallisneria*) and that the tank had six inches (!) of sediment.

The combination of Goldman's letter and the **Times** article has revealed all the

details about the "famous tank" that captured my imagination as a boy just starting out in the hobby. I am so grateful to people like Lee, who preserve our hobby history so that I can share these stories with you!





BOWL SHOW RULES

There is a Bowl Show at every GCAS meeting, except our Silent Auction/fleamarket meeting (August) and our Holiday Party and Awards Banquet meeting (December). These shows are open to all members of GCAS. Rules are as follows:

- Only current GCAS members may enter fish in the Bowl Show.
- There is a limit of 2 entries per member per meeting.
- Unlike some other clubs, every month is an “open” Bowl Show at the GCAS (i.e., there is no “theme,” such that one month cichlids are judged, the next livebearers, the next anabantoids, etc.).
- Any fish that wins any prize (1st, 2nd, or 3rd) may not be entered again in the same meeting year.
- The current Bowl Show Coordinator is Leonard Ramroop, who usually also serves as judge (although guest speakers are often asked to do the judging honors).
- 2.5 gallon containers are available for use (brought to the meetings by the Bowl Show Coordinator), but entrants are responsible for providing enough (and suitable) water for their fish.
- For a fish too large (or too small) for those containers, entrants must supply a suitable container, which must be clear on at least three sides.
- Only one fish per container (i.e., no “pairs”).
- No plants, ornaments, or equipment (filters, airstone, etc.) are allowed in the judging tank (an external mirror, or opaque cards between containers is acceptable, as is a cover that does not obstruct side viewing).
- Points are awarded: 5 points for 1st Place, 3 for 2nd Place, and 1 for 3rd Place.
- Ribbons are awarded: blue for 1st Place, red for 2nd Place, and green for 3rd Place.
- The person with the most points at the end of the meeting season receives the Walter Hubel “Bowl Show Champion” trophy at the Awards Banquet.
- The decision of the judge(s) is final.
- A running UNOFFICIAL total of the points awarded is printed in **Modern Aquarium**. Only the tally of points maintained by the Bowl Show Coordinator is official.
- **In case of ties:**
 - 1st Tiebreaker – most 1st Places
 - 2nd Tiebreaker – most 2nd Places
 - 3rd Tiebreaker – most entries

AN AQUARIST'S JOURNEY

by Rosario LaCorte

Chapter 4

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Pictures from Past winners of various awards



Jules Birnbaum



Warren Feuer



Joe Graffagnino

Bowl Show Winners



2nd Place: Mario Bengcion



1st Place: Ruben Lugo



3rd Place: Carlotti DeJager

Door Prize Winners



Michael DeSantis



Emma Haus

our last meeting

Photos by Susan Priest

The GCAS plays **JEOPARDY!**



Our host, Leslie Dick, with GCAS President Dan Radebaugh



Dan Puleo assists in choosing the teams



Team captain Pete D'Orio (2nd from left) with (left to right) Denver Lettman, Carlotti DeJager, Team captain Sharon Barnett (2nd from left) with (left to right) Rod Mosely, Warren Feuer, Sue Priest, and Mario Bengcion



Jeopardy				
GCAS History	NEC History	Who am I?	Name that fish!	Anything Goes
Q \$100	Q \$100	Q \$100	Q \$100	Q \$100
Q \$200	Q \$200	Q \$200	Q \$200	Q \$200
Q \$300	Q \$300	Q \$300	Q \$300	Q \$300
Q \$400	Q \$400	Q \$400	Q \$400	Q \$400
Q \$500	Q \$500	Q \$500	Q \$500	Q \$500
Final Jeopardy				

And the categories are . . .



All the participants got \$5.00 in GCAS "funny money," displayed here by Sue Priest



Leslie gets the last word!



GCAS Happenings

May

Last Month's Bowl Show Winners:

- 1 RUBEN LUGO
- 2 MARIO BENGION
- 3 CARLOTTI DEJAGER

UNOFFICIAL 2014 BOWL SHOW TOTALS:

MARIO BENGION	11	WILLIAM AMELY	5	RUBEN LUGO	9	RICHARD WAIZMAN	1
CARLOTTI DEJAGER	1						

A WARM WELCOME BACK TO RENEWING GCAS MEMBERS STEVE BERMAN, ROGER BREWSTER, LAMONT BROWN, PETER GOLDFEIN, BEN & EMMA HAUS, ARTIE MAYER, AND JERRY O'FARRELL!

A SPECIAL WELCOME TO NEW GCAS MEMBER JILLIAN JOUAN!

Here are meeting times and locations of some aquarium societies in the Metropolitan New York area:

GREATER CITY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: July 2, 2014

Speaker: Joseph Graffagnino

Topic: *Tips & Tricks on Breeding Fish & Raising Fry*

Meets: 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 (718) 458-8437

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 13, 2014

Speaker: Chuck Davis

Topic: *Gizmos, Gadgets & Other Good Ideas*

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 20, 2014

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@lisonline.org

Website: <http://lisonline.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 10, 2014

Speaker: Mark Denaro

Topic: TBA

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 19, 2014

Speaker: TBA

Topic: TBA

Meets at: The Lyndhurst Elks Club, 251 Park Avenue, Lyndhurst, NJ 07071

Contact: NJAS Hotline at (732) 332-1392

Email: tcoletti@obius.jnj.com

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

NORWALK AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: June 19, 2014

Speaker: TBA

Topic: TBA

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/>

No Contest

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.

This month our scheduled speaker's topic is "Aquascaping." I admit I don't pay much attention to aquascaping myself. My fish don't know their cave is plastic and that there are no topless mermaids holding bubbling clam shells in the wild, and they don't seem to care!

On the other extreme, if you will, are those tanks that can only be considered works of art. I've seen many aquascaped aquariums in hobby magazines, but these, from a "Planted Aquarium Design Contest" held in Moscow last November are just unbelievable. There are 164 entries shown on the website of all4aquarium.ru¹ so this is just a very small sample.



Whisper of the Pines



Wild West



Change of Seasons

¹ <http://all4aquarium.ru/en/events/plant-design-contest-2013/entries>



Fin Fun



CODE WORD 21-18-8-19

That is the not-so-secret code for the word FISH. (The code is revealed below.) Your task is to de-code the following sentence. Hint—it can be found elsewhere in this issue. Once you plug in a few letters, you may be able to guess the rest of it.

“ 20 18 5 22 9 12 8 26 9 18 12 26 21 18 8 19, 26 13 23 19 22
4 18 15 15 20 22 7 26 11 26 18 9 21 9 12 14 18 7 ”

Here is the code: A B C D E F G H I J K L M
26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Answer to our last puzzle: **FISH JEOPARDY**

- 1) **Labyrinth fish** - What are: b) fish that can breathe atmospheric air
- 2) ***Artemia nauplii*** - What are: a) newly hatched brine shrimp
- 3) **Dolomite** - What is: b) a substance to harden water
- 4) **8.3 pounds** - What is: a) the weight of water (1 US gallon)
- 5) **William T. Innes** - Who was: c) an American aquarist, author, and publisher
- 6) **Discus** - What is: c) a genus of cichlids

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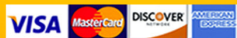
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