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**Category 18**  
**May 2005 SWAM**  
**Southwestern Michigan Aquarium Society**

**ALA Convention 2005 –**  
**The (Fish) Race in Indianapolis!**

By Darrell R. Ullisch, SWMAS

Well, I'm home from the ALA Convention in Indianapolis, and I've decided to do a report on it. I was told they had one of their largest turnouts, the show had 163 entries, which is a new high since they've started having a separate convention. Somewhere over 100 attendees, so they are growing nicely.

I arrived Friday afternoon around 2 P.M., and the only ones set up were Kingfish and Schadle's bookstore. A few of the Circle City members were around, tables were in place, but no entries, as there was no one to register them yet. I got together with Mike Schadle, as I was going to be using his computer for my program that night. Only one glitch, and it didn't really affect the program, so I left it alone. It was around 5:00 before the Ohio folks got there to start setting up for the show. As the first program, my presentation was scheduled for 7:00, and I was as nervous as a guppy in a tank full of Oscars!

Well, we did uphold the ALA tradition of starting late, it was about 7:30 when I finally got started. I did a PowerPoint presentation on Practical Swordtail Genetics, and I didn't hear any snoring! Even Jim Graham and Erich D. stayed awake. Half the stuff I had rehearsed at home left my brain, so the program was only about 45 minutes. That was followed by a talk from Omar Dominguez Dominguez (no, I didn't stutter, that's his name) on Conservation Efforts in Mexico. I didn't catch the whole thing, but part of it was using Axolotls as an "umbrella" species to protect others. Apparently, the Axolotls are used as food and for making medicine. By making them commercially important, the area gets protection, which also saves numerous threatened or endangered fish.

The hospitality room was a suite, and it turned out to be across the hall from my room, so no sense in going to bed early, right? Stanley from Syracuse, NY, (sorry, I forgot his last name) brought a few cases of various microbrewed beers. I sampled at least 6 or 7 Friday night, some were pretty good. Circle City ordered pizzas, and there were soft drinks and other snacks as well. Lots of good talk that night, and Jim Langhammer said my presentation was, for all intents and purposes, correct. I crawled across the hall around 1:30 AM, which wasn't really that early because of the time change.

Saturday started with a Live Foods talk at 9:00 AM (yes I did get there!) from CCAC President Joe Fleckenstein, never saw a packed room at a 9:00 AM talk before. (Probably because I usually don't get there myself!) That was followed by a Rusty Wessel Mexican Collecting talk about 10:30. All the talks were packed (yes, even my Genetics talk!) After lunch break they spent almost an hour trying to locate an old-fashioned slide projector for the old-fashioned Jim Langhammer (aka the Godfather of Livebearers). Last talk was Alexander Cruz on Limias, I don't keep many of those, so I didn't go.

At the banquet Saturday night they handed out the show awards. They have 3 Best of show : Domestic, Goodeids, and Other Wild Type. Pat Hartman of Kalamazoo took

both wild-type awards. Also, for the second year in a row, Megan Fraley of Ohio won the Chairman's High Point award. She's only 15! Turns out Megan was also the winner of TFH magazine's Young Writer contest. Seeing young people this active really gives us hope. Michael J. Schadle (Mike of the Fish Factory aquarium books and literature and a SWMAS member) was named a Fellow of the ALA. Back in the early days, when the group was still struggling, Mike took over as Editor, and put out 50 consecutive issues ON TIME. (I've got a long way to go!) Even after giving up the Editor's job, Mike continued to handle the publishing and mailing duties. He invariably donates a great many fish and books to the ALA auction for the Vern Parish Fund (ALA's version of Guy Jordan, for cichlid people). Mike currently handles the Archives for the ALA, among other things.

Speaking of the Vern Parish fund, they announced two grants for this year instead of the usual one. The academic committee couldn't narrow it to one, the graduate students' proposals were so impressive. They awarded full \$600.00 Grants to both, but that left the Vern Parish Fund a little short. The *Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc.* presented a check for \$300.00 to cover the shortfall, and at least two other groups matched that later in the weekend, so the Fund continues to grow.

Charlie Grimes did the banquet talk on fish photography, except in his own inimitable style, of course. SWMAS members are familiar with Charlie's sense of humor, as he visited us earlier this year. Hit the hospitality again after that, we finished off the beer that was brought from Syracuse, NY. This time I managed the crawl across the hall around 2:15 AM.

Got up Sunday about 8:15 AM, and prepared myself for the auction (which meant figuring out how much money I had left). Managed to pick up 3 of the 4 bags I wanted, including some of Darrell Mefford's (my OTHER "Brother" Darrell) Peppermint Swordtails. When I was out of money, I ran around taking pictures of people. Collected my travel money, who would have expected that to be almost as much as one night of the hotel room! And gas was relatively cheap in Indy!

They're not quite as crazy as Cichlid people, but the Livebearer folks are a lot of fun. For the first time, they actually announced next year's (2006) convention site and date at THIS convention (ALA is usually a few months late doing that - like 6 or 7). They'll be in Joisey (New Jersey for those who don't speak the language). April 28-30, if I remember correctly. I believe North Jersey is the hosting club. No speakers named yet, but I hear they're trying to get some of the UK livebearer guys over again.