

## Personal Observations of AKA Convention Cleveland 2010

By *Gary Pack* W.A.K.O.

Not knowing whether the vegetables would allow me to get away, I had not made plans to attend the AKA Convention until the week before. I made the trip alone so as not to stick a friend with an empty seat and a room by themselves. I arrived on Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, about 11 am after an uneventful and quiet trip. The hotel was not easy to find for this country bumpkin. The Sheridan hotel entrance and pool were being completely reconstructed and the staff did a great job in not making it even noticeable. The staff was very accommodating the entire event and I might add that the rate was quite reasonable for an on-site airport hotel.

Starting killies in August 06, I had been at the WAKO (Wisconsin Area Killifish Organization) sponsored AKA Convention 2007 but with no killies to show, did a lot of observing and listening. So Cleveland basically was my "first" convention. Registration went smoothly. I had not gotten the \$35 ticket for dinner not knowing if this was the norm for WAKO members and upon being told yes was able to get one of the last seats. I had preregistered the show killies and this went fine also. I must say Max and Mrs. Jayne Luetermann did a nice job on the computer and were very pleasant under fire.

The co-chairs had decided to do something different in benching the fish. The new style had been explained via the web site, that being one would tank the fish outside the show room and someone would then take them into the show room for you. At the convention I did not see anyone explaining the procedure and there was some confusion as to what to do and how to label the tanks. I was fortunate in the fact that Gary Greenwood and Greg Schoenberg were just finishing and showed me the procedures. I think with more space other than one hallway table and a little more supervision this system would work just fine.

The Fish Factory (aquarium books and literature) and Ray "Kingfish" Lucas were set up in the fish sale room which was nice. I missed having the plants available as that is a nice WAKO feature.

Friday night I had a choice of AKA pizza in the hospitality room or a steak at Sullivan's Irish Pub including live Irish music. Let's see??? Jim Gasior and Chuck McLamb, thanks for asking. It was great spending time with you guys and the steak was good too. Thank goodness for Chuck's Garmin 650.

I should have paid more attention but I didn't get in to all of the workshops on Saturday but the ones I attended were Gary Greenwood and John Metzger's, Fred Behrmann's and Bill Shenefelt's. I'm sure other WAKO attendees will be able to fill in the other speakers.

As always I learned some new things listening to John and Gary and if the "full house" applies what they heard, there could be an increase in the killie population. Gary and John were very clear on how they manage their fish room, answered any question thrown their way and were just very easy to listen to. My kind of seminar.

Fred's talk showed us his Athens Aquatics fish room which, by the way, is over 8 miles from his home. Fred was fun to listen to and works very hard on his killies.

Bill's talk was on the details of water chemistry. I learned quite a bit here on how the different filtering systems worked and it was the easiest to understand explanation of RO I've heard.

As all experienced conventioners know, your registration number is key to getting in to the fish sale room early. A lot of effort goes in to listening for your group number and 10 minutes is not enough time. I feel the seminars suffer as one has to choose to go to a seminar, stand in the hall and listen for your number or do a little of both which is hard on the speaker with all of the moving around. From my observation a lot of killies were sold in the box sale and there weren't many left at the end.

Throughout the convention the PAKA (Pittsburgh Area Killifish Assoc.) crew was having a live fish and dry goods auction. They were very busy, had a lot of items and did a nice job. No I didn't win any fish!

WAKO organized the live foods and there was a large and varied offering which was set up as self serve. Nice money box! I think it was basically sold out as I didn't see John O'Conner have much to pack up.

There were approximately 294 pairs of killies in tanks, if Greg and I can count. The show room had plenty of room. I think the one negative that I took away from the convention was the lighting and set up. There were overhead lights and then a row of bright lights mounted about 2/3 of the way up the side walls. The top 2 rows of killies in each row did not have backing on Friday and had bright lights shining in from both sides. I noticed the fish not coloring up and seemed to be "washed" out. In my opinion there was a distinct difference in those in the open and those on lower shelves. Black construction paper was added in between top row tanks some time before the judging but I still don't think the killies on top showed well.

The Saturday evening banquet went well. As hotel banquets go, I didn't hear of anyone not having enough to eat and there was a large and varied selection. I didn't notice anyone from WAKO stay in for the speaker. The Michiana club was earmarked for show room break down and they had a limited crew so most of WAKO stepped in to help bag and clean up.



Gary Greenwood (right) receives the 2010

Killifish Exhibitor of the Year award

On Sunday morning there was some residual cleanup and truck loading and then the auction started right on time at 10 am. The photos at auction have always been a nice touch, in my opinion, but this auction did not have photos but rather a running list of from 5 to 7 pairs coming up for auction. I personally liked this feature as you can be prepared. Dave Hemmerlein, as always, did a great job as auctioneer. He has the ability to hold good prices and have fun while doing it. You

better not twitch or you might buy fish. With the Monday morning alarm set for early I got a little antsy and left at noon which I now regret.

With the long distance planning amongst the co-chairs I think they did a nice job. Having been in their shoes outside of the killie world, I know it is a lot of work and a thankless job. So here's a thank you to all who helped or had any part in the event.

I must finish by commenting on the fact that I am proud to say I'm from WAKO, as our presence was very evident throughout the weekend in every aspect of the convention. Oh by the way, there was a WAKO "unofficial" official photographer that will hopefully share his convention photos. I won't reveal his name but his initials are J.O.

I was able to spend time with good friends, meet new ones, see great killies, learn new ways of doing a better job in the fish room, meet AKAers that I've only known through their "by line" and just have an overall great weekend.

*Editor's notes:*

Photo by John O'Conner.

The 2011 American Killifish Association Convention will be Memorial Day weekend in Baltimore. More info about AKA conventions and Killies is available at [www.aka.org](http://www.aka.org)

Info about WAKO, including their annual show and auction, is available at [www.aka.org/wako](http://www.aka.org/wako) .