

It's as easy as A B C . . .

AQUARIUM BASIC CONCEPTS



An Aquarium Guide FOR BEGINNERS

By: Ed Keene

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FORWARD

While sitting and having a cup of coffee with my best friend Barbara Brown one morning before work, and discussing the articles I was writing for the Delaware County Aquarium Society (DCAS), which is my local aquarium club, she suggested “why not take the articles I was writing and create a beginner’s book out of them?” Well, a poet I am not - nor an author nor a writer either. At least I wasn’t!!! Barbara’s idea kept haunting me, so several days later I created an index of what a beginner’s book might look like - at least one which I would write. I incorporated articles which I had already written and used them as my foundation and I then created a comprehensive index around them. I tried to include every facet of the hobby which I could think of, even those which I felt I was not totally knowledgeable in. After a few days the index was complete. Oh sure, it changed slightly over the course of writing this book, however, the essentials were there. Now it was down to a simple question. Should I attempt to write this book or shouldn’t I?

I created a list of pros and cons and I kept coming back to one key factor. My Son, Warren, was starting up his first aquarium. I gave him books and magazines to read about the hobby, but like any young man his age, he would rather be outside playing. I noticed that he did, however, read and re-read several times, every single article which I had written for the DCAS monthly publication. That made up my mind. From that moment on, I was bound and determined that I was going to write a beginner’s book. For sure, if only because Dad had written it, Warren would read it and, mayhaps, gain a firm foundation and understanding of the tropical fish hobby.

Believe me when I tell you, it was through sheer determination that I was able to write this book. It was primarily written on the train - going to and from work and then typed into my computer during the evening hours. I would like to thank my best friend Barbara for her extremely valuable assistance, for without her aid, this book would have been impossibility. In addition to her mental support and friendship throughout this under taking, she spent many, many time consuming hours during her train rides, editing and re-editing each and every one of the articles I wrote with a fine toothed

comb. Our book writing and editing partnership reached a somewhat comical stage at one point. It seemed that no matter how perfect I thought an article was, she would always come back with completely marked up pages, to which I would say, “Oh Man!!” On the other hand, every time Barbara completed editing the last of the stack of articles I had given her, I supplied her with more, to which she would reply “Oh poop!!” By the way, I am not covering up a bad word here - this is truly her own word. She never says the word you might have thought I was covering up. At any rate, Barbara I can never thank you enough for all of your help. Without you, I could not have successfully written this book!

☺ **Thank You Barbara!!!** ☺

This book is comprised of the multitude of articles which I have written for the monthly DCAS publication. They appear in their original format, hence you might see references to DCAS, or mention of events and/or guest speakers who were present at one of the club’s monthly meetings. I hope you enjoy the fruits of my efforts.



This book is dedicated to my Son,

Warren

who today, at age 13, is a beginning hobbyist.

Through the aid of my book and the personal knowledge gained in the forth coming years of his life, it is my hope that Warren becomes one of the experienced hobbyists of tomorrow.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

- ◆ It's as easy as ABC
- ◆ Why an Aquarium?

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Coming next month new in the “Fin Fax” a feature dedicated to those just starting out a memory jogger for the experienced hobbyist a feature for those embarrassed to ask a seemingly dumb question introducing

It’s as easy as A B C . . . Aquarium Basic Concepts . . .

The Fin Fax section geared toward the beginner and non-expert hobbyist

Fellow hobbyists, as useful knowledge is the great object of our desire, we ought to apply ourselves with zeal to the practice and wisdom of the aquarium hobby. Though the passage is difficult, the farther we trace it, the easier it will become. I suppose this statement could be applied to any task we do in life. If we are going to get involved in something, then get involved. Go all out, not just half-heartedly. Increase your personal knowledge and wisdom of what you are involved in. Learn as much as you can, and then practice and build upon that which you have learned. It might initially seem like a difficult and insurmountable task, but the more involved you become, the easier it gets!

This column will be a regular feature in each issue of the “Fin Fax”. Some of the articles will be slightly more detailed than others, however, all articles will be written with the beginner hobbyist in mind. The beginner should be as knowledgeable as possible before going out and purchasing their aquarium and equipment. The intent of this column, and the articles contained therein, is to provide much information and food for thought concerning the aquarium hobby, better enabling more educated decisions being made before aquarium setups are purchased. Unlike all beginner books that have you adding fish by page #3, this column will take a detailed look into the many decisions which should be made first and the many options available to select from. Sure, this column will eventually get to the setting up of your aquarium, but before we reach that point, we need to talk about many, many other things. Even the experienced hobbyist will find some topics of interest - mayhaps they will learn something they never knew as well. Some of the articles might seem simplistic in nature, however, they are being written for the beginner - one who knows little or nothing. These articles will assume the readers know absolutely nothing about the hobby. They will even bring up topics that might normally be considered common sense, however, are often overlooked by the beginner and quite often lead to disastrous results.

By no means am I an expert in the aquarium hobby, therefore, what I write should not be accepted as the only way to do things. The information I present in this series of

articles will be based upon my personal experiences, those related to me by other hobbyists, as well as professionals in the trade. It is also based upon the knowledge I have gained through books, magazines, and any other avenue of information I have been able to drive down. You will read about what works O.K., what works well, what doesn't work at all, and information to help guide you in making some decisions for yourself. Simply because something works well for myself and/or others, does not mean it will work well, if at all, for you. Likewise, if something works well for you, there is no excuse for you to stop there. Expand and improve upon it, and eventually share that knowledge with others. After all, that is what being a hobbyist is all about and what helps the hobby to grow.



WHY AN AQUARIUM?

Well, why not?? Don't you just love people who answer a question with a question?? Me too! Seriously however, why not? For various reasons and on several occasions, I have found myself suggesting to different people who have never had an aquarium, to start one. Quite often I receive the reply, 'why an aquarium?'. I decided to put some of my thoughts into writing. Gee, if I make a few copies of this article, all I have to do is pass it out whenever I'm asked that same question. Hmmmm. Mayhaps you will do the same. After all, the more people who become interested in the hobby, the more people there will be who might become interested in joining our aquarium club. Sounds good to me!

O.K. - enough said. Back we go now to the question at hand. Keeping an aquarium as a hobby has many benefits. Being an aquarium hobbyist is a delightful pastime for both the young and old from all walks of life and from all the countries in this world - I won't talk about any of the other planets in the universe in this article. It is also a hobby which will return many hours of wonderful enjoyment, relaxation, and satisfaction. Granted it will take some time and effort on your part, but the rewards will far exceed your investment.

Stress relief

I think that most aquarium owners would agree that relaxation and stress relief are two of the top benefits you receive from your established aquarium. It is for this reason that I decided to get back into the hobby after an absence of several years. When you sit down in front of your aquarium and observe the fish swimming around, feeding, or just interacting with each other, you can become very relaxed. The longer you sit there, the more relaxed you feel. Observe and study the routine antics of your fish and zero in on a particular one or two. Before you know it, all the stress you had felt after your working day ended has virtually disappeared. It is often difficult to forget about, even if only for a brief period of time, those things which had us stressed to begin with. An aquarium, believe it or not, will do the trick. A well decorated and maintained aquarium has a way of adding peace and harmony to just about any environment. Aquariums will capture the attention of individuals in an inconspicuous and seemingly hypnotic manner.

Many will find themselves closely watching the fish, plants, and water movement without even being aware that they have been mesmerized.

Educational

There are many different species of fish, each having its own set of requirements. Some like warmer temperatures while others like cooler temperatures. Some swim near the top of the water most of the time, while others swim near the bottom. Different species feed differently. Basically, every fish is different and seemingly more interesting in various ways from others. There is a lot which can be learned by both adults and children. This seems to occur instinctively, as the interest to know such things as different species, behavior, and natural environments increases.

Each species comes from their own particular environment in their own little part of the vast underwater world. They come from all corners of the earth. Call it marine biology, call it nature, call it science, call it whatever you like. It is highly educational to learn, study, and understand the various aspects of the fish world and to learn how to duplicate their world, be it a lake, ocean, river or stream, in the comforts of your own home.

Expand upon your creativity

Duplicating their world. Hmmm. Herein lies a great opportunity for you to expand upon your creativity. You get to create their environment virtually any way you see fit. Sure, you need to supply the fish with the proper type of water conditions, but beyond that let your creativity run wild. The aquarium background, gravel, rocks, plants, driftwood, air bubbles, action type figurines, etc., are all based upon what you want to see and your creativity. This is generally an exciting part of the hobby for everyone involved when establishing your aquarium. Many times a hobbyist will eventually maintain more than one aquarium. Quite often each of their aquariums will have a different environment for the different species of fish they keep.

Learn responsibility

It becomes your duty to provide an aquarium which provides as much of a natural environment as possible to the fish you keep. To provide such an environment is relatively easy. The proper caring for and maintenance of that same environment is relatively easy as well. However, herein lies another great opportunity. This time the opportunity is learning about ownership and responsibility, more especially for children or young adults.

Additionally, once the responsibility aspect is under control, what a great feeling of pride and accomplishment you will be left with. Have you ever been invited to someone's home so they could show you their fish aquarium(s)? What a great sense of pride they must have.

Adds an air of grace and dignity

Aquariums generally are placed in special places in homes or in particular rooms where it is quite obvious to anyone who enters the home. A beautifully decorated and well maintained aquarium will generally add to the decor of any home or room. It might even become the centerpiece of the room it is in.

You will also find aquariums in many executive and professional offices these days, e.g. doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc. Why do you think that is? Well in addition to being calming and relaxing, they have a way of adding an air of grace, dignity, and distinction.

Meet other hobbyists and share your knowledge base

Being a tropical fish hobbyist will open many doors, friendships, and relationships for you. As you learn of other people involved in the hobby, you begin to have 'fishy' conversations and exchange ideas and thoughts. These people might be aquarium store personnel or, just like yourself, customers of the store. They may be family members, friends from work, or neighbors. You should inquire about a local aquarium club or organization. You may be pleasantly surprised to learn of a local club which has existed for years without you ever hearing about it. Virtually all club members are an excellent resource of valuable information and ideas. Many aquarium clubs also have guest speakers attending their meeting. Some of the guest speakers are professional hobbyists, well known throughout the local area. On the other hand, others are professional hobbyists who are known as authorities on particular, if not all aspects of the hobby, throughout the country, and/or the entire world.

In conclusion

If you decide to enter the tropical fish hobby, I wish you nothing but the best. It is indeed a very rewarding and worthwhile hobby to become involved in. Look me up sometime, and we can have a 'fishy' conversation or two.

