

Northern Midwest ZNA Newsletter



Spring 2004

Friendship Through Scales

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My Experiences in Japan By: Adam Strysik (Part Two of Two)

One memorable day, a big parent fish requiring an injection was being especially uncooperative. While Toshinori held the fish upside-down and in place for the shot, Daisuke prepared to inject the fish with antibiotics. As Daisuke tried to inject the fish, the Koi splashed around violently causing Daisuke to move his arm and accidentally graze Toshinori's leg with the needle. This caused great laughter from all of us including Yaichi. Later in the day, I taught Toshinori to say, "My brother, Daisuke, injected my leg with antibiotics," in English. This was a great source of many laughs in the weeks to follow.

We also spent considerable time feeding the fish in the mud ponds on a daily basis as well as cleaning up the greenhouse and setting up for summer spawning. Feeding the fish was a great time to relax and take in the beauty of the Niigata mountainsides. At the end of the day, feeding the fish provided a relaxing recap of the days and weeks past. It also provided time to ask more questions about Koi and Koi production. Most of the time, I traveled with Toshinori during feeding and we fed the same "route", while Daisuke and Yaichi did their own separate feeding "routes".

Our workdays were often accompanied by visitors. Many times, other Mushigame breeders would stop by and look watch us cull for a while. I thought they were there to check me out as well as the tosai. I am sure that they asked (in Japanese) whether or not I was alright at culling or not. I liked the attention, and was

never self-conscious when other breeders were around.

Of all the breeders I met during my stay in Yamakoshi (besides Yagenji), I learned the most from Toshiyaki Sakai of Yamamatsu. He visited Toshinori's house many times during my stay and spent many hours teaching me the finer points of Koi through conversation, pictures, and drawings. Despite our language gap, I think the "meanings" of what he was saying were conveyed to me. I really looked forward to Toshiyaki's visits and his lessons. He was an enthusiastic teacher and great Koi producer.

When not working, I spent a lot of time conversing with Toshinori and playing the guitar. I am not at all good at guitar, but it was more entertaining than most of the Japanese television shows. On our once a week days off, Toshinori and I often spent the day with his friends. Although I only met these people a few times, they were always wonderful and caring towards me. They reminded me of my friends in America.

Barbequing, though different from the American idea of barbequing, was a common practice in Japan. One time we had a nice evening barbeque at Toshinori's house. There was so much food that I ate too much and got sick. It was fun though. Kobayashi made his own barbeque sauce that we coined "kobayashi sauce". It was a fun time.

My favorite, non-Koi related activity was bowling. I like bowling no matter if I am in America or Japan. We went 3 times and each was a memorable experience. The sight of a rather tall, long-haired American in a Niigata bowling alley is not exactly a common occurrence, so needless to say I was often the center of attention. I never bowled very well while in Japan, but I had a lot of fun doing it. Toshikatsu was an entertaining bowler and when we were joined by him, Kaneko-san, and Kobayashi-san, we had a fun and laughter-filled night.

As the summer progressed, the tosai got larger and the culling became more and more interesting. The third round of culling was the most enlightening of my Koi experiences. The idea of skin, sheen, and depth of color were really ingrained in my mind through these days of culling.

By the time August rolled around, I could see the impending end of my Japan experience. The last weeks were great, yet sad since I knew it was almost over. I still remember very clearly the last day of culling. It was hard to think that it was all over for the summer.

Over the last few days, I said my goodbyes to the many people I met during my stay. I attended the Mushigame matsuri festival and had dinner with Toshiyaki and some of Toshinori's friends. Until the end, I enjoyed myself greatly. On my last night in Japan, Kobayashi, Yaichi, and myself met at Toshinori's house. Yaichi told Kobayashi-san that I worked hard all summer and was impressed. I felt very happy knowing that I lived up to everyone's expectations and was very grateful for the opportunity to help the Yagenji business as well as experience Japan in the manner that I did.

On the last day we went to the Yagenji family house for breakfast and then said our goodbyes. It was tough to leave. Daisuke and Toshinori drove me to Nagaoka station and saw me off. The train rides and plane ride back was one filled with thoughts of a great summer and my imminent return to school.

Looking back now, 3 months after my return to America, I realize how fortunate I am to have had my summer experience in Japan. I learned a great deal about Koi as well as people. Sometimes I wonder if the people who came in contact with me this summer learned from me as much as I did from them. Who can tell? It is hard to imagine that I made an impression on the Japanese people I experienced as much as they did on me.

My friends in America as well as in Japan made my dream a reality. After seeing and doing "Koi breeder" work all summer, I am even more appreciative of great Koi and the people who make them a reality. Yamakoshi is a special place, and the Koi breeders there are special people. The people I met and the things I saw will not soon be forgotten, nor will my appreciation for Nishikigoi. I am a better-informed Koi enthusiast and a citizen of the world, as a result of my summer experience in Japan.

Final Thoughts

I have been reading a small book called *Zen and the Art of Archery*, a narrative about a European Philosopher who studied archery with a Master as a means to coming to grips with Zen. It can be taken at a few levels...I am trying to see past the simplicity of the book and understand the deeper meaning.

Looking back, I am seeing more and more that I got schooled in "Zen" (or whatever you want to call it) this past summer in Japan. In culling through the thousands of fish, I often times had questions that had more than one right answer...and many times those same answers were not easily put into the words of either language.

There is definitely something to be said for experiencing things and having a teacher gently guide you towards "the light". A lot of learning...just haven't made sense of it all yet.

Also, I just remembered this...when I was laughing with you (Bob) about your complaints about riding the trains, I was thinking to myself, "I have had many a deep thoughts on those trains". I guess for me, in my three experiences, those trains were symbols of my great adventures...my leaving the realm of comfort and pursuing something.

Finally, I think of Toshiyaki as one of my greatest teachers this summer and his passion for what he is doing is unlike any other person I have ever known. When I saw him last, on my second to last day there, he said good bye in a way that implies "I'll see you again", as if to say this is just a beginning.

I hope he's right.



Two Indiana Visits in One Day

By Bob Brudd

In early May, NMZNA held its meeting at two sites in one day: in the morning we gathered just outside the small town of Ladoga, Indiana, and in the afternoon we moved to the outskirts of Indianapolis. Although it was a rainy day in general, the weather cooperated and provided big dry patches at both locations. Our first stop was to see Jim Bradley and his sons at their tilapia farm, which was situated in the midst of corn and bean fields. From the outside, it appeared to be just another large pole building with a metal skin; however, once we went inside we encountered a dark, moist and somewhat noisy environment made up of large above ground “ponds” containing 6500 gallons of water each and wall to wall fish.

The grounds and out-buildings surrounding the fish building were lettered with old filters, pumps and other devices that had been unsuccessfully employed to filter the water used by fish that were fed almost non-stop. Mr. Bradley, a former hog farmer, discovered two things about the filtration systems developed for aquaculture purposes, namely that they were very expensive and very inefficient. This led to many man hours eaten up every week to clean filters. Once he realized that this was going to be a never ending process, he decided to try his hand at another approach to the problem of waste removal. What he came up with is yet another tribute to American ingenuity.

The first challenge, however, was to come up with an economical approach to moving large volumes of water efficiently and cheaply. After burning up numerous motors, he discovered that a relatively cheap 1/3 hp motor with a long propeller shaft attached could do a reasonable job. Once, when he tried to move the propeller higher on the shaft to see if it affected flow rates, he couldn't get it to move back down. Deciding to simply leave it, he knocked it up near the top of the shaft and put another propeller on near the bottom. What he discovered was that although the flow rate wasn't altered, the original propeller, which was now just below the surface of the water, caused a lot of agitation and aeration. By putting a cylinder around the shaft, he not only moved the water from point A to point B, he fractionated it and at no additional cost!

Most of us in the hobby are now familiar with a device known as the Answer. In case you haven't seen one, however, it looks a little like a chromed out air cleaner on an old hot rod. Placed horizontally in a settlement chamber, the pond water passes through a screen with tiny holes in it that range from 100 – 200 microns. To keep the screen from clogging/blocking, a spray bar inside the device blasts the screen with water as it spins around. In theory, the crud falls off and settles to the bottom of the tank, thus permitting clean water to pass into the rest of the system.

Unfortunately, debris can still get through and the screens need to be cleaned regularly to prevent blockage. What Mr. Bradley has devised is a micro-screen drum that is set vertically and partly out of the water. It also spins slowly, and as it does so, a vacuum sucks all of the debris off the screen and into a waste sump that is automatically dumped when it fills. To keep the screen clean, a spray bar is set to go on periodically and blast it with water at 100 psi. The vacuum performs a partial water change of 200 gallons per day and the spray bar replaces the lost water. It is all run by a very low amperage motor.

So why all the interest? Well, the entire system is in use at Quality Koi's farm at present, and from what I hear from Mat, working exceptionally well. As for the mechanical filter, it may be coming to a pond near you quite soon.

Part two of the meeting was at the beautiful home and yard of Jim and Lesa Rae Woods. They were kind enough to not only open their home to us on a wet and messy day, but to feed us like royalty as well. Since moving here from the east a few years ago, their Koi collection has been stored in a really impressive indoor basement pond. Last summer, Jim was able to start construction on the new pond. After excavating the hole, it was lined with rebar so that concrete could be pumped in. As this was going on, Jim and friends manually troweled the wet, heavy cement up the walls. This grueling work had to be done quickly before everything set up. If you've ever had to move a wheelbarrow filled with concrete, you know just how heavy it can be. The Woods deserve a great deal of credit for doing the bulk of the work, including digging the hole, themselves.



Member Tidbits Summer 04

Khan and Bob Franklin are in the process of building their dream pond. The filters have been delivered, a pit dug for the settlement chamber, and a pad poured to support the water quality system.

To get his filtration down to level of the pond and to hide it, he dug a pit in the back of the yard, poured a concrete pad and built cinder block walls. Once he had his three EA Nexus filters installed he built a deck over the top of the bunker and made sure to include a trap door access for maintenance. Jim coated the concrete with an attractive cream colored sealer and had it filled with water when we arrived. One of the things that you'll notice in the photos is that the water level sits well below the top lip of the pond. When asked for the rationale behind this decision, Jim explained that there was a heron rookery close by and that once the decorative edge was completed, it would be too far down for a heron to go fishing.

There were still rocks to be placed and fish to be moved, but you could tell that the finished pond was going to be absolutely beautiful. It was extremely gracious of our hosts to let us go slogging around in what was still a construction site and then enter their home.

Adam Stryzik graduated from college on Sunday, May 23, with a major in science and a minor in Asian studies. Five days later he departed for a month in China, after which he'll return home for a week before flying off to Japan for his second summer at the Yagenji Koi Farm in Niigata. He's still waiting to hear if he'll get a job teaching English in China this autumn.

Chester Bailey attended the Louisville Koi Show to learn the Koi show water quality routine from Joe White. Other NMZNA members in attendance included the Phelps, the Bateman's, the Weynschenks, the Karstens', and Bob Brudd, who helped judge.

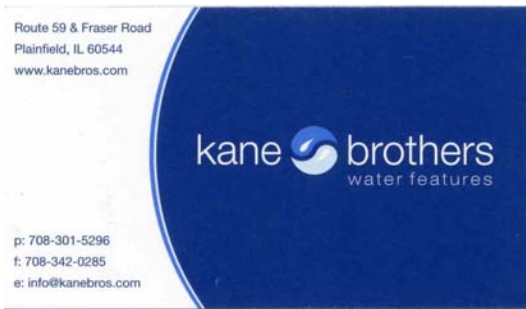
Speaking of Louisville, Mike Pfeffer not only entered fish in the show, he brought his lovely fiancée, Michelle, to the banquet on Saturday evening. They got married the following evening and then came to Carolyn and Charles' home on Monday to clean vats!



At the March presidents meeting in California a motion was made and passed that Bob Brudd be made a candidate in the ZNA judging program. He then participated in judging the ZNA So Cal show that same weekend.

Future Tidbits

If something's going on in your ponding life, make sure you send an email to Debbie Leschuck so that it can go into the next issue of the newsletter.



NMZNA Holds Fourth Annual Seminar

On Saturday, February 21, NMZNA held its fourth annual seminar. Presenters in the past have included Ron Goforth, Brett Rowley, and Dr. Myron Kebus, DVM. On the day of the meeting, the Kane brothers and JR Rizzi (our Koi show and meeting hosts) supplied coffee and rolls for everyone. In the morning session, which went from 10 - 12, our featured speaker, Mat McCann, manager of Quality Koi, took us through a digital presentation that showed us the construction and development of the 20+ acre farm.

An aerial view showed a huge piece of land devoted to both large and small mud ponds. The emphasis was on the last few months' construction of two 36 x 100 foot greenhouses. The two highlights of this part were the discovery of an aquaculture farmer/inventor in Indiana and the use of Rhino liner for the new indoor ponds. Rhino liner is a black spray on substance that we normally are used to seeing sprayed onto the beds of pick-up trucks, and yes, it's fish safe.

The Hoosier farmer once raised hogs, but his business failed and he switched to raising tilapia. Because commercially made filters and pumps for aquaculture were so expensive, he decided to invent something better. What he came up is a system that uses one 1/3 hp pump to move over 1,000 gallons/minute through a fine mesh screen, thus allowing for solids removal. The waste is then sucked off the screen. And get this - the pump also foam fractionates the water and allows for removal of DOC's as well. In all, the pump performs four functions: water movement, de-gassing, foam fractionation and oxygenation.

One of the interesting aspects of aquaculture that Mat shared with us was the cost element. In any business, there has to be a

standard against which one's expenditures are measured in order to figure out not only the total cost of production but profit as well. In the fish farming business, the unit of measure is dollars per gallon, and this is how building decisions are determined. At an average cost of \$300K per greenhouse, Koi farming isn't for everyone!



In the beginning, however, things in New Jersey were different. During the farm's first winter, they had to dig a 70 by 850 foot detention pond. All they discovered as they excavated was sand – not a good thing for retaining water. Then they came across a vein of clay that turned out to be an ancient river bed, which unfortunately ran in the wrong direction. Rather than spend \$500K to haul in clay, they mined the river bed instead and saved \$250K. After the clay was mined, the river trench had to be refilled for eventual mud pond construction. They mined enough clay to line every mud pond on the farm with a twelve inch layer. Finally, at Toshio Sakai's advice, they topped off the bottom of each pond with top soil to put nutrients into the water.

When they dug their first well the water had 10 mg/liter of iron, and it turned red soon after being exposed to air. They dug another deeper well with the same result. Eventually, by

going ever deeper, they found good water. It was decided that some of that water would go into tanks which in turn would be covered by two greenhouses, so twelve huge fiberglass tanks that came in sections were ordered from an aquaculture supply house in Colorado. When assembled, the twelve tanks were held together by 13,000 bolts, each of which had to be tightened a total of four times. Because of their design, each pond had protruding flanges that had to be accommodated when setting them in place; ergo, concrete pads, each with indentations, had to be poured.

Unfortunately, the bolts had been put in place in random directions, so the indentations weren't quite wide enough to accept the flanges. After chipping away, the tanks were finally set in place. The directions suggested that after putting twelve inches of water into each tank, twelve inches of backfill should be pushed around the sides. Then, disaster. It started to rain, and it didn't stop until each and every hole's sides had collapsed, taking each of the fiberglass tanks along with them. Total damage cost: \$35K. That August, Quality Koi held a grand opening for the farm anyway and hosted the MAKC's annual Koi show. In October, they gave the fiberglass tanks one more unsuccessful try that failed. They've since been scrapped but are being held onto for possible re-use.

The farm features twenty-eight tosai ponds, and because of the diversity of soils found on the farm, each has its own unique signature characteristics. The pH of the water averages 8.0, which Mat says is great for sumi, but masks the reds in young fish, thus making culling a bit more difficult. Each tosai pond measures 60 x 160 feet. The breeding technique employed at the facility to provide the tosai ponds with occupants is the same one employed by Toshio Sakai. One female is placed in a tank with up to four males, and when actual mating commences, the participants are separated, sedated and stripped of their eggs or milt. Then the "ingredients" are mixed together in a bowl using a feather, and then everything gets poured into a tank containing spawning brushes. The eggs are sticky and stick to the brush filaments until they hatch.

Mat explained that the first cull is easy because any fish that are all one color are eliminated as well as those showing defects. The exception, of course, would be showas where all

the solid black fish are kept. Eventually, when the fish are pulled for sale purposes, they're put into concrete ponds for two months so that the reds can properly establish themselves. Then it's time for final culling. Mat went on to show us the latest developments, which have already been described, and then it was time for lunch.



Part two of the session was a judging exercise, but not the usual beauty contest that we're all used to. Instead, Mat brought seven sankes that had survived 5 culls and put them into a six foot show tank. Everyone was given a packet that had pictures of all seven fish on the cover. Inside, two fish were shown on each page next to a little grading chart. We were to determine the quality of each contestants hi (red), sumi (black) and shiro (white) colors, as well as sheen, pattern and body structure. Ranking choices were poor, fair, good and outstanding. Finally, we had to determine what to do with each fish: sell at a low wholesale price, sell at a slightly higher wholesale amount, sell for \$100, or keep for another year of grow-out. In essence, we had to play breeder - not buyer.

We divided into three groups and had ten minutes to evaluate the fish, which had been placed in bowls for easier viewing and handling. Yes, we were encouraged to handle the fish and even take them out of the water to get a better look at sumi and, in particular, reds. Mat demonstrated that the best way to evaluate reds on small fish was to hold them in both hands and bend them until the red scales separated. In the lowest quality fish, you could see white as the scales moved; in the next grade of fish, you saw yellowish skin underneath the scales; and, in the best grade, you saw a continuation of the red.

In the end, none of them were really keepers - they would have still been in New Jersey if that were the case, but a couple came very close.

When all the groups were finished Mat took us through each of the fish, polled our responses, and then let us know his thoughts. One sneaky thing that he did was to include a fish that was very slightly deformed. No one caught it.

I think Chester Bailey said it best:

Matt did a great job presenting yesterday. He has a great personality and I love the British accent. I have a new understanding about Koi farms now. The overhead and logistics to create and then maintain a Koi farm are not for the weak hearted and unskilled. I have a new and fresh appreciation for a Koi that retails into the thousands. Dealers are certainly buying at risk until they master this art of buying and selective breeding and harvest.

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Calendar of Events MEETING SCHEDULE

June 26th We'll meet at Mark and Janet Hare's home in Kentland, for the club's annual sojourn to Indiana. It's an easy drive for folks in Illinois and if you take advantage of the same shortcut that you use to get to Kevin Clark's, you don't have to go on the Borman Expressway or I-65 at all.

August 7th Our gracious host for this event will be Keith Vander Woude and his wife Nancy. It's the pre-Koi show meeting, where we'll work out logistics, pick on Nick and Debbie, I mean pick Nick's and Debbie's brains to make sure that no mistakes are made, have some fun and look at some fish.



Directions for the upcoming meetings are as follows:

June 26th – Mark and Janet Hare – directions provided by Janet:

I don't know what shortcut people take to Kevin's, but if you stay on 41 South to the town of Kentland, you continue on 41 south 3 miles past the stoplight at the intersection of US 24 & US 41 in Kentland. You will see a sign for county road 800 N (it is a yellow sign), and a Waterscapes sign on the

corner. Turn right (west) and go a little over a mile.

We are the first set of houses on the right hand side of the road. Mark's mother lives in the brown ranch style home, and we live in the old white two-story farm house. You can see one of the water gardens in the front yard, and there is a Waterscapes sign in the front as well. Our phone number (in case anyone gets lost) is 219-474-5436, but it is really very simple, we're just a mile off of US 41 on 800.

Both Mark and I are looking forward to being your hosts at our little "Ponderosa" , and have a good old fashioned country lunch planned as well.

Thanks!
Janet



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August 7th – Keith & Nancy Vander Woude :

From Indiana, take I-65 to I-94 and head towards Chicago. At the first exit in Illinois, which is Torrance, go south 1/2 mile to Ridge Road (tr. light) and turn right. Keith's house is the first one encountered on the left hand side of the road. Note: on weekends the construction zone on I-94 has posed no problems since there are still 3 lanes open in both directions.

For Illinois members, it's somewhat like going to Kevin Clark's. Get to I-80/94 and head towards Indiana. For those of you in the western burbs, I-294 will do this quite nicely for you. Then, instead of getting off at 394 like you would to get to Kevin's, go one mile further towards Indiana and get off at Torrance. Then follow the above directions.

Please R.S.V.P. as these dates approach to let our gracious hosts know how to go about feeding the masses.

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Notes from the Editor:

For your convenience I have enclosed our 2004 NMZNA member list and the 2004 Ledger sheet provided by John Suich.



In Memory of Millie.....

It's hard to believe that a year has come and gone already. Some friends come and some friends go. But the most dearest and treasured ones are the ones we will never forget.

We miss you Mil!



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