

Convention 2003



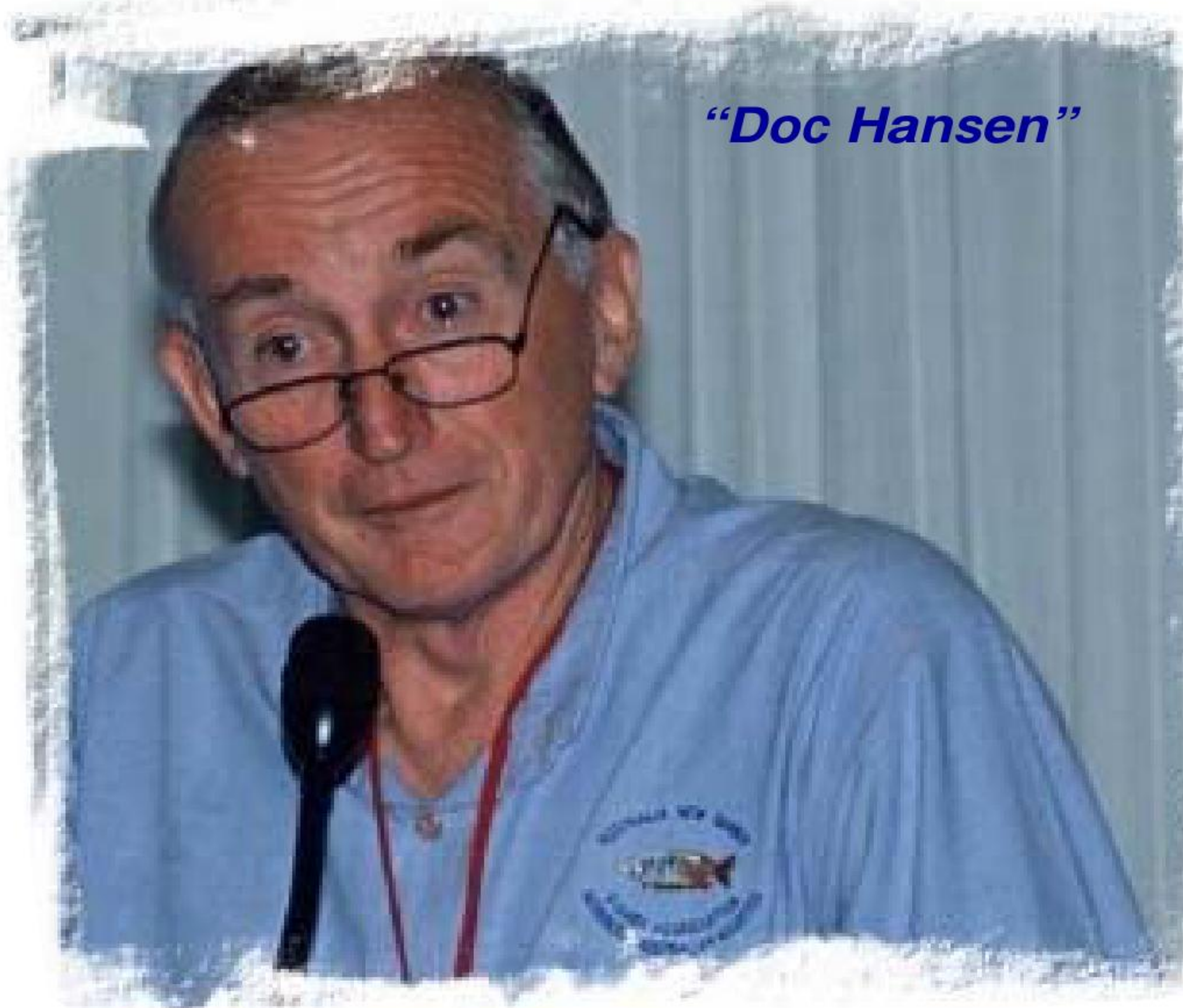
IMPRESSIONS FROM THE 2003 ANGFA CONVENTION

- Bruce Hansen

It hardly seems like a year since the highly successful convention last year in Port Macquarie but once again it was Queensland's turn to host the ANGFA convention over the October 25/26 weekend. There have been four held here over the years and the last three at the same venue, the Virginia Palms Resort and Convention Centre, because it has been so well suited to our requirements.

Friday evenings' AGM was a very quiet affair compared with some of the previous affairs – no high drama, no discernable voting blocs, just a few stalwarts who cared enough to attend and still want to see ANGFA continue. Many familiar faces were absent for a multitude of reasons and business clicked along at a great pace. All the usual reports, election of officers for the next term and then general business followed in quick succession, with the major item of concern being the future of "Fishes of Sahul". Several useful suggestions were raised and discussed. Another motion passed was extending the interval between conventions as well as the time of the year for them – the next to be in March/April 2005 in Melbourne. Then it was an early finish and a few quiet drinks and a chat.

Registration began at 8.00 am on Saturday morning at the trade room with coffee available as a "heart-starter" while attendees collected their convention satchels and prepared themselves for a weekend of "fishinfo" and "fishfun". The super-sized calico satchels emblazoned with the specially designed wanamensis-inspired ANGFA logo contained a wealth of informative brochures and publications, the smart-looking convention program book, hobby samples from some of our sponsors, posters on native freshwater fishes, an ANGFA pen and a commemorative coffee mug both of which feature the wanamensis logo.



"Doc Hansen"

On the trade table was displayed a range of awesome convention promotional gear – extra coffee mugs, to make up sets; great boesemani embroidered polo shirts and the superb blue warm-up jackets with the ANGFA wernereri logo embroidered on the front and the wanamensis screen printed in white on the back. And to top it all off we were able to offer the best value for money for years – shirts \$25 and jackets \$35. No wonder they went like hot cakes!! Finally the congestion-causer, the display tank provided by Steve Baines featuring colourful huge rainbows (especially the boesemani) and a school of superb male Pacific blue-eyes (from Kandanga).

Thanks to our sponsors, a superb collection of raffle prizes was on offer each session, with 8 prizes each draw –





Adrian Tappin

consequently attendees were happy to dig deep each time as they had 8 chances each time. Over the whole weekend we ran a major raffle of a framed aboriginal art high quality print donated by ANGFA NSW which was eventually won by Ray Leggett who generously donated it to one of our overseas speakers, Franz-Peter Mullenholz. Second prize was a special set of unique coffee mugs bearing the ANGFA design.

Once again Virginia Palms provided excellent service and high quality food and beverages to help keep things ticking over and smiles on faces. The convention proper got away almost on time with a welcome from the president of the local host society (yours truly) underlining that this convention was not only the 20th anniversary of “Fishes of Sahul” but also ANGFA Queensland itself. After an introduction to the two “founding fathers” who were able to attend, Adrian Tappin and Graham (Monty) Heidke, we were treated to a vintage Monty recollection of how it all began.

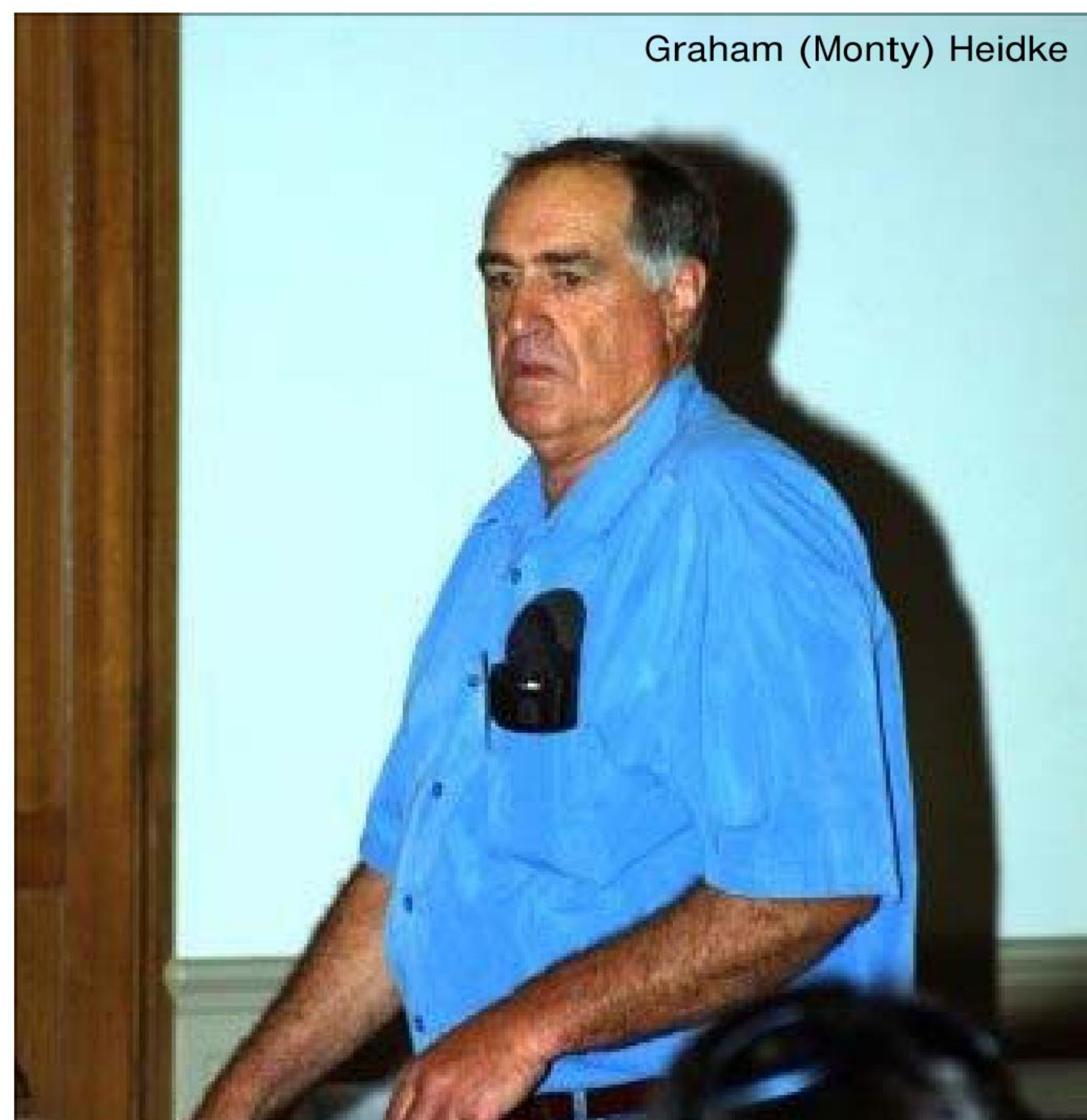
Derek Girkin chaired the first session beginning with a PPP (power point presentation) titled “Getting your feet wet with ANGFA” by Bruce Hansen who has been a “puddle pirate” for many years and encouraged members to get back to the basics – surveying and collecting. He shared his experience with most of the common techniques and gear and even had a few bits of gear to “flash” as props. Included was a distillation of the important principles of the ANGFA “code of conduct” as it applies to members in the field, bagging and transporting and home care of our captured specimens.

Continuing the back to basics theme, the next presenter was Doug Collom who issued the challenge to ANGFA members – “How will researchers in 2103 know what was in our streams in 2003 unless we in ANGFA get out there and start surveying and recording again?” It was a timely and impassioned directive aimed at getting us off our collective complacent backsides and out into the streams doing what ANGFA is superbly positioned to provide – regular, co-ordinated, quality surveys that will add to our information on native species and their habitats and enhance the reputation of the association.

After morning tea and a chat, the next session chaired by Rob Wager started in spectacular fashion with an AV from Gerry Allen featuring some of the most brilliantly coloured “cling” gobies ever seen. These fantastic fishes from the streams of some of the unknown islands of PNG flashed up on the screen for 15 minutes and had everyone wishing for more. What a pity Gerry was called off the program at the last minute – better luck next time.

Our next speaker was a stalwart of the early days of ANGFA Qld and still spends lots of time “out there” in the scrub – looking around (especially at native plants), taking photos and recording his observations. Glenn Leiper took us on an extensive tour of wet habitats in SE Queensland and showed us 40-50 native “wet” plants that deserve a place in our ponds (*see page: 9*). His breadth of knowledge and affection for these plants shone through and several plants I had never seen photos of before were a special treat. I even learned that a “Hairy Adriana” is not a Mediterranean miss 😊

Continuing our theme of basics Steve Baines put all his considerable experience (I was going to say weight) behind his presentation on keeping and displaying your fish well. Steve regularly wins best display awards at shows and his 10 golden rules of fish-keeping are worth repeating – don’t overfeed; do regular water changes; don’t overcrowd;



Graham (Monty) Heidke



Sicyopterus lagocephalus



“After morning tea and a chat, the next session chaired by Rob Wager started in spectacular fashion with an AV from Gerry Allen featuring some of the most brilliantly coloured “cling” gobies ever seen. These fantastic fishes from the streams of some of the unknown islands of PNG flashed up on the screen for 15 minutes and had everyone wishing for more. “



Sicyopus zosterophorum





observe aquarium inhabitants daily; choose appropriate filtration & aeration; position the aquarium well; set the tank up to suit the inhabitants; do regular maintenance; don't fiddle; enjoy your fish.

After lunch, which was enjoyed by all, Bruce Hansen introduced the first of our overseas presenters, Gary Lange (Mister Rainbowfish in the USA). Gary formed the Rainbowfish Study Group over there to help popularise this group with the aquarium hobby and has an excellent reputation as a fish photographer. He illustrated his talk on the hobby in the USA with his own slides and made the audience green with envy when he flashed up slides of some of the newer species from Heiko Bleher that he had recently imported from Europe. Gems included "the millennium rainbow" (*Glossolepis* sp.), bright red at one and a half inches and nicknamed "the Heiko fish" because it is always showing off. There followed a series of images of species we may never see here because of our unduly restrictive import laws – *Melanotaenia parva*, *Melanotaenia angfa*, *Melanotaenia* sp. (Batanta Island), *Glossolepis doryti*, a beautiful small *Mogurnda* (*M. nesolepis*), a range of spectacular *Bedotia* species

from Madagascar and all in all a very enjoyable look at "the other side".

Next "cab off the rank" was Bruce Sambell and "Catching Them and Breeding Them". Bruce is not only an aquaculturist extraordinaire but entertains, educates, donates and enjoys life in general. He continues to be good to ANGFA, year after year and this year was no different. His Ausyfish farm at Childers comprises 200 acres of dams and ponds where he produces thousands of ornamentals and fingerlings for other aquaculturists. My lasting memory from his presentation is that of what seemed to be hundreds of Saratoga jumping over the cork line of his seine net. He continues to experiment with hormone induction of spawning in native fish culture and especially eel-tailed catfish.



"Millennium Rainbow"

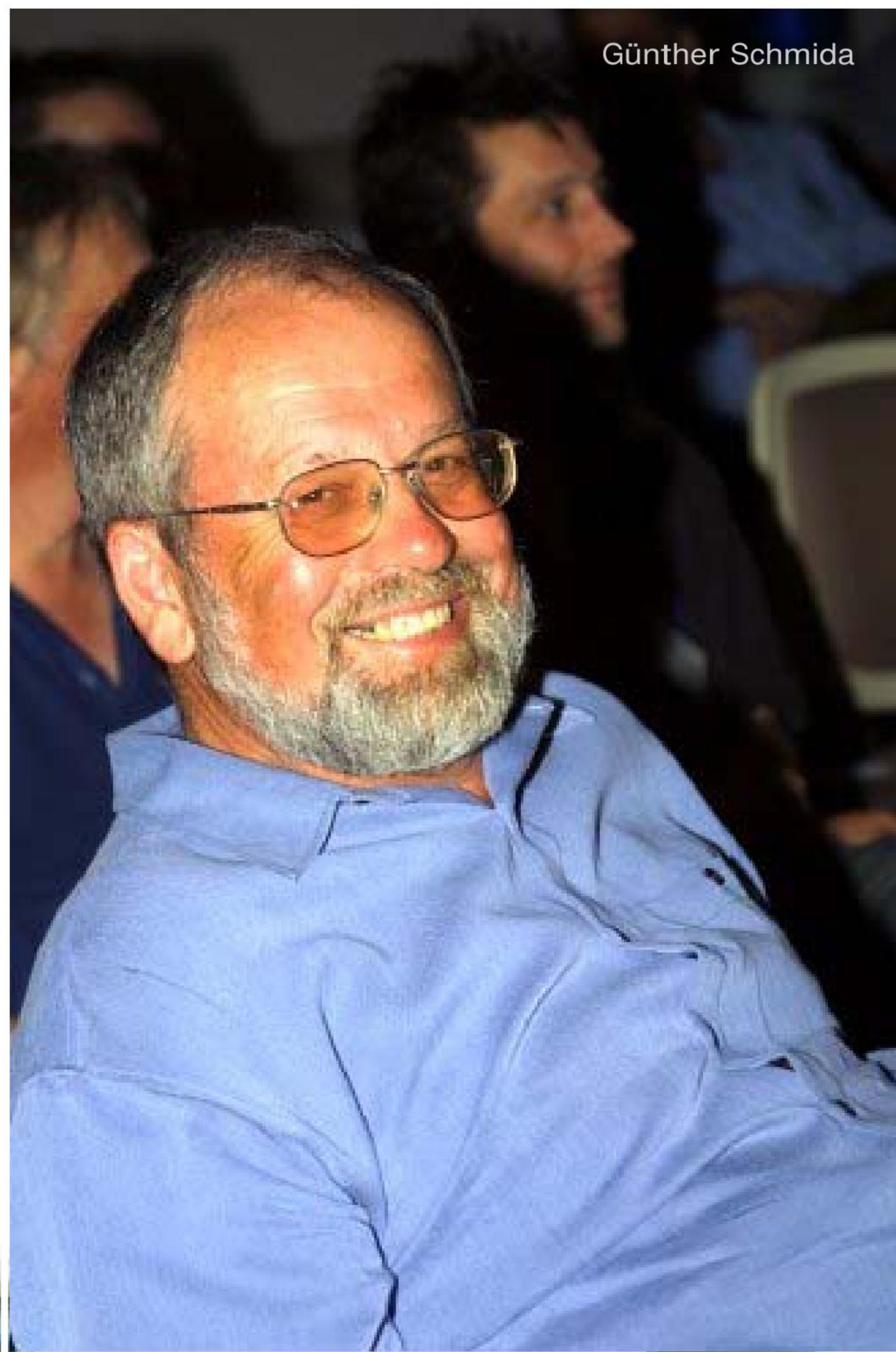
After a delicious afternoon tea shared with a thunderstorm, Geoff Gunston introduced Günther Schmida and his "Little Aussie Freshwater Fish Show". Günther is world-renowned as a wildlife photographer and especially for his shots of fish, frogs and reptiles. This was a magical and extensive tour through dozens of images – a "who's who" of Australian Freshwater Fishes.



There was superb shot after superb shot and accompanied by Günther's background gravely commentary with its wealth of information. His show alone was worth the entire cost of the weekend and he included a public thanks to the ANGFA members who provided many of the fish that graced his slides.

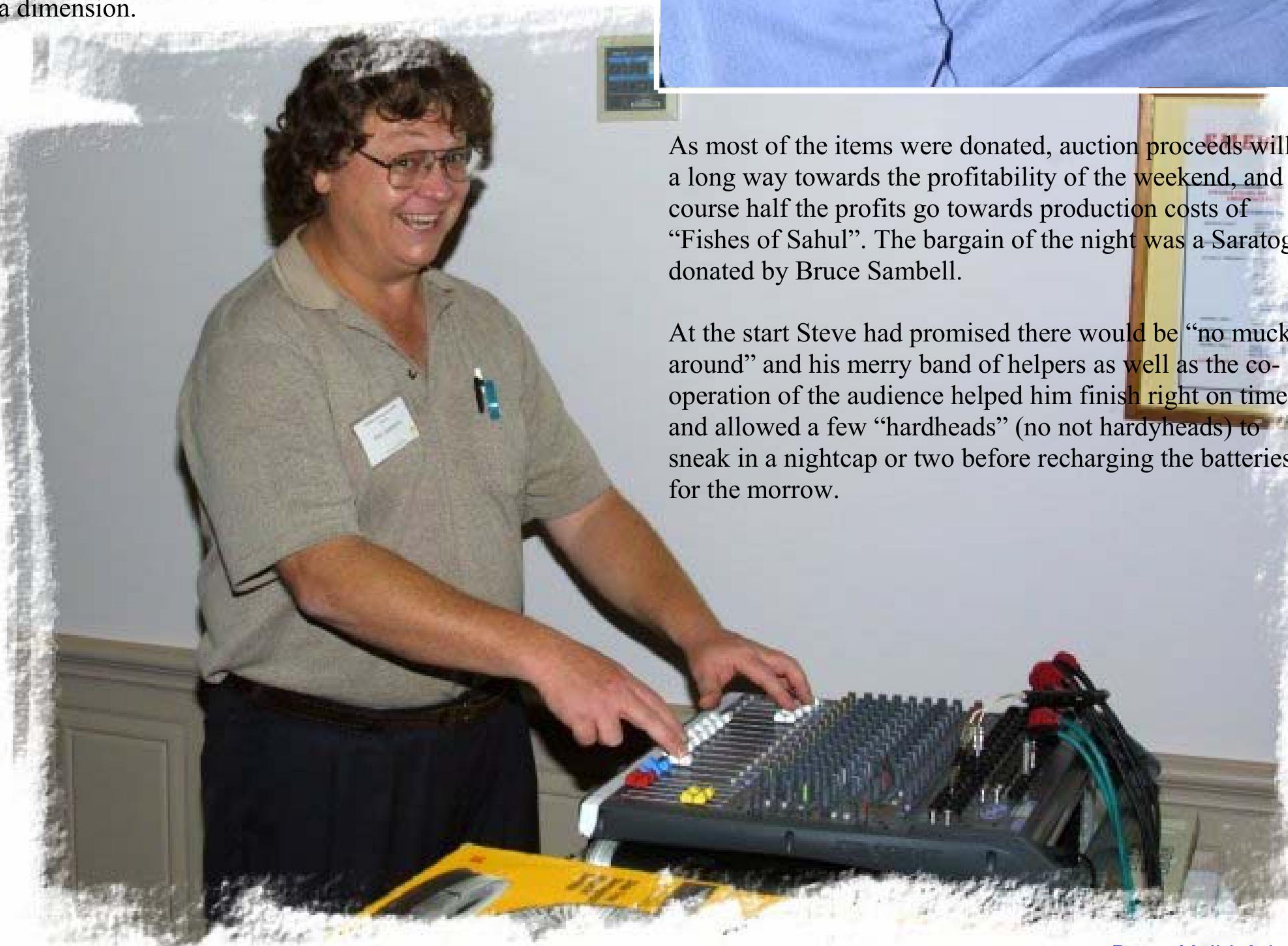
All too soon the days' proceedings were over and it was time to move over to the restaurant for pre-dinner drinks and savouries as a prelude to the official ANGFA Convention Dinner, which started at 6.00 pm to allow us to begin the traditional ANGFA Convention Auction at 8.00. As usual the meal was up to the high standard we have come to expect from this venue and put everyone into a nice contented mood to move out for the auction. Once again the auction was one of the high points of the weekend – with a huge array of fish, plants, books and other hobby-related items knocked down to enthusiastic bidders at mostly reasonable prices.

Auctioneer Steve Baines might not make much of an impression on a cushion but he sure impressed the audience and the whole show went off very efficiently indeed. The professionalism that characterised the whole event was underlined by being able to flash up images on the screen (via the computer) of the fish being auctioned. Once again we were indebted - the invaluable talents of Barry Meiklejohn who worked tirelessly behind the scenes the whole weekend to make sure the AV equipment added that extra dimension.



As most of the items were donated, auction proceeds will go a long way towards the profitability of the weekend, and of course half the profits go towards production costs of "Fishes of Sahul". The bargain of the night was a Saratoga donated by Bruce Sambell.

At the start Steve had promised there would be "no mucking around" and his merry band of helpers as well as the co-operation of the audience helped him finish right on time and allowed a few "hardheads" (no not hardyheads) to sneak in a nightcap or two before recharging the batteries for the morrow.



Barry Meiklejohn



Sunday morning dawned fine and clear with not too many “sore heads” on show. What was on show, however, was the ANGFA Anniversary cake, which eventuated from the efforts of Heidy Rubin and it looked spectacular. After the “viewing” it was removed, to be sliced up for morning tea. Heidy then proceeded to introduce the first session of the program. The opening PPP was from Norbert Grunwald, who is the “heart and soul” of the IRG in Germany – “*A Weekend with ANGFA*” resulted from his last trip out here 7-8 years ago when he joined ANGFA (QLD) on a surveying trip to the Tin Can Bay area. Thanks to Norbert’s personal values, his delightful presentation contained the informative essence, some of the beauty of the fish and habitats, the fellowship and the practicality of the weekend and all livened with his own special quirky sense of humour. Next time hopefully Norbert will accompany his presentation in person.

The next session was “*Fishtank Filtration*” from Greg Ure, who has been a supporter of the club scene here in Brisbane for as long as I can remember. It seems that every time I go along to a club meeting for “anything” (native fish, cichlids, other tropical fish, orchids, bromeliads, cordylines etc) Greg is a member of that society. It was almost a surprise the other day to find he wasn’t at the Queensland Finch Society meeting. Greg is an enthusiastic photographer of these multiple interests of his and over the years he has compiled an extensive array of photos of many marvelous adaptations that various individuals and institutions have made to the range of filter types available to the hobby. I’m sure he had most of the audience thinking about how they could use some of those ideas.

Franz-Peter Mullenholz has made many trips to Australia with his wife Ulli and has entertained us several times at ANGFA Conventions with his superb audiovisual impressions from those excursions. They just seem to get better and better – he has now embraced digital technology and this show was a DVD version (with English translation) of his presentation to the IRG conference in Europe this year. He showed us the “*Kimberleys*” – the way they did it. And it was great! The bumpy Gibb River Road, the spectacular Mitchell Falls, the fantastic fish, the unique landforms, even his damaged toe!! All in all it was a top show from a top bloke. I could watch his presentations all weekend.

After morning tea Monty Heidke earned his keep by presenting for the next session which started with a brief barrage of fish slides from Greg Ure to get us focusing again and the “thread” was that there are more than just rainbowfishes to look at in the native fish hobby here. Then Chris Marshall, a FW ecologist with the State DNR, talked to us about “*River Health*” and how it is assessed and monitored and especially the use of indicator organisms. Apparently selected species of algae, aquatic macrophytes, aquatic macro-invertebrates, frogs, turtles and fish all are useful indicators. He introduced us to the “Ausrivias” scheme and the concept of reference sites used to standardise the assessments. Chris was a Queensland ANGFA committee member for several years and

concluded his presentation with an appeal to ANGFA, and other interested groups (such as catchment associations) to work with the Department in standardising our survey techniques against theirs so all the data can be used more meaningfully in the future. We look forward to this.

Toni Radcliffe was our next presenter. Her UQ Honours project was on the behavioural ecology of FW fish and examined the impact of *Gambusia* and *Swordtails* on the local rainbowfish, *Melanotaenia duboulayi*. She showed us the methodology used and the results she obtained when she examined the effects of these feral species on the schooling behaviour of the rainbowfishes around habitats of varying complexity. The results certainly showed evidence of significant behavioural change and interestingly showed that rainbowfishes seem to prefer plenty of open spaces with wood nearby rather than plenty of plants. Perhaps the future conservation of this species might require some attention to instream habitat if it is to compete satisfactorily with these “urban invaders”. The University of Queensland continues to encourage students to work on our freshwater inhabitants and we applaud their efforts.

After an excellent lunch, everyone was quite mellow and Gary Lange kept us that way with an entertaining collage of some of his favourite fish shots from many areas of the world of aquarium fish, with a few “characters” from the local hobby thrown in for good measure. The show, with accompanying music had something for everyone and reminded us that Gary is a “grand master breeder” of many different groups of aquarium fishes. Following this Bruce Sambell expanded on some aspects of his role as aquaculture spokesperson on the various government committees and organizations and where they fit in with each other. He then went on to describe how the “bag limits” for freshwater fish was derived and how it should work to minimise commercial exploitation of wild fish stocks but still allow hobbyists to enjoy their pursuits.

After afternoon tea the final session of the convention was over an hour of spectacular slides of some of “*Australia’s Not So Cuddly Critters*”. Günther Schmida’s photographs of reptiles, frogs and fishes are world famous - this presentation showed us why. We were treated to a kaleidoscope of images in quick succession with brief verbal “notes” on each from Günther’s encyclopaedic knowledge. The time flew and all too soon it was time for me to thank the attendees and helpers, encourage them to get out there and survey and hand over to the recently re-elected national President, Derek Girkin, for the final wrap-up and exhortation to turn up for the next ANGFA National Convention in Melbourne in 2005.

In summary, if you didn’t come you missed one of the most enjoyable, most comfortable, least contentious conferences ever. Unfortunately the theme of “*Back to ANGFA Basics*” didn’t get through to enough of the potential audience to allow us to make money for the future production costs of “*Fishes of Sahul*” so there will have to be some soul searching at a budgetary level.

