

**PROFILE OF A GUPPY BREEDER**  
**Alan S. Bias**  
**PISTOLS, KNIVES or SWORDS**

Frank Schulterbrandt 2/29/2016



I have been raising guppies in some form or fashion for 47 years and specializing in swordtail guppies since the mid 1980's. My initial stocks were obtained from my late friend and long-time swordtail breeder Don Sauers, with subsequent importations of breeding stocks from select European and Asian breeders. Outcrossing only to add additional traits not found or identified within my existing stocks. From these limited sources, and basically a closed breeding program I have created a distinct Lowersword strain comprising many traits including: Blond /IFGA Gold (bb),

Metal Gold (Mg), Golden /IFGA Bronze / Asian Tiger (gg), Asian Blau (Ab), Emerald (VEG), Purple Body Mutation (Pb), Albino (aa), Pink (pk), Moscow (Mw), Tigrinus (Ti), Zebrinus (Ze), Snakeskin Body (Ssb), Stoerzbach (s).



**1:** When/how did you first get involved with tropical fish? When did you get involved with guppies and how long have you been raising guppies and why guppies ? My father had a large round bowl in front of my hi-chair when I was a year old. For the next several years he kept 5-6 tanks and bowls of guppies. When I was 8 years old he set up a 10 gallon tank in my bedroom, which was nearly 47 years ago. My first fish were a very large pair of HB Red Delta's from the local Department Store. I raised 15-20 male and female offspring to nearly the size of the parents with commercial flake food and minimal water changes. Likely the first and last time all in one...

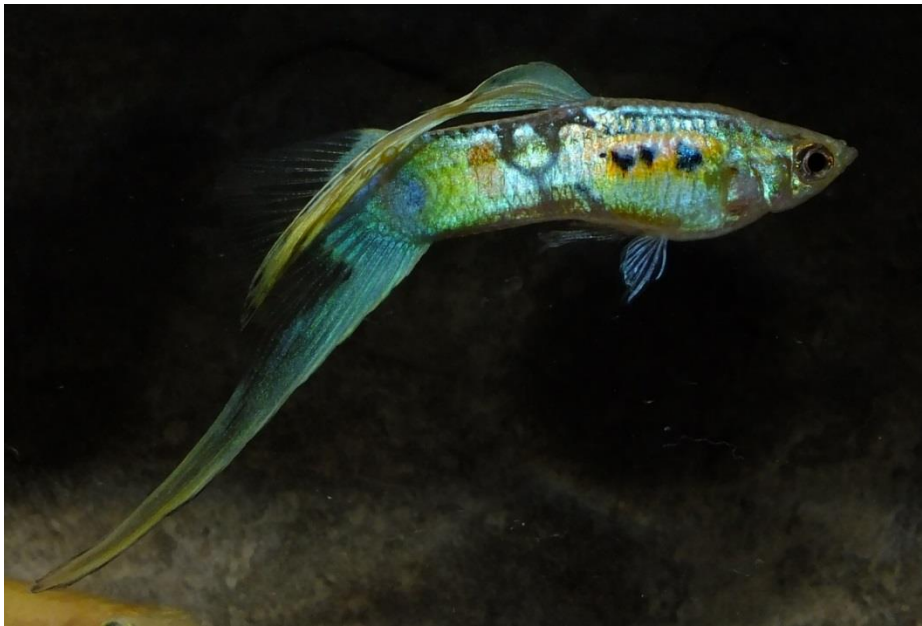
**2:** Did you belong to any club before joining the IFGA? Joined IFGA around 1982/3. "Old Man" Elvin Cooney and Bill Schoenbauer retired from Florida to Irvington, VA on what is known as the Northern Neck. Cooney referred to it as "god's country", and I always claimed he must have run short that day as Irvington sat about 30 feet above sea level. Shortly thereafter Paul Gorski transferred to Langley Airforce Base in Hampton, Virginia. The four of us formed the Greater Virginia Guppy Associates. A host of other long forgotten breeders joined us over the next several years. The notable exception being Bill Carwile of Rustburg, VA, who is still active today.

**3:** How many tanks do you have and what size tanks are they? Currently, I run just over 85 tanks of Swordtail Guppies. Most of my tanks are custom built using either 13" x 48" or 18" x 48" frames and 12-13" deep. Each of these tanks is divided into 4 – 6 – 8 compartments. Resulting in compartments sizes of 8.25, 7.5 and 5.6 gallons respectively. The remainder are standard 10 gallon tanks. All of my custom built tanks are drilled and plumbed for auto-fill and drain.



**4:** If you could, would you use 20 gallon longs vs the regular 10 gallon tanks for guppies? In my experience, there is no perfect size for rearing and grow-out of Swordtail Guppies, as long as the total inches of fish per calculated square inches of surface area remains constant. However, there is a known correlation for a perfect shape tank in rearing many species. In my experience and that of many breeders of days gone by a tank with length x width resulting in a nearly square surface area, and not of excessive depth, will allow for increased stocking ratio. Primarily from increased oxygen diffusion, this in turn aids filtration to produce more stable water conditions.

**5:** What are your favorite colors / types of guppies? Any Domestic Guppy is a good guppy if it is bred with a purpose and goal. Thus, worthy of appreciation, regardless of preferred or imposed standards. Typically, I prefer bright reflective color and pattern in grey body fish. In Blond reflective and solid pattern comprised of yellow color pigment and metal gold.





**6:** What was / is the hardest Guppy strain that you have worked with and why? I really do not view any strain as being harder than another to work with. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, at times varying between lines. If you understand the genotype comprising a strain, often this same understanding will allow you to visualize the limitations Mother Nature imposes on you as a breeder, regardless of established standards.

**7:** What accomplishment(s) are you most proud of as a breeder? Being able to share an acquired knowledge of guppy breeding and genetics with those who are willing to ask and take the time to learn. Nothing was more frustrating to me in my early years of involvement with the IFGA than the general lack of knowledge. Many breeders feel a need to protect their egos and take secrets of their breeding programs with them to the next life. In many instances breeders just do not know how to convey information. It accomplishes very little when the best info you can provide is along the lines of, "well if you breed your blues to Joe's fish they will have huge caudal, but if you breed them to Sally's they will fall to pieces." A young breeder learns little from such information...

**8:** How many times a day do you feed your guppies and what do you feed them? 2-3 times daily flake mixture. 2 times daily baby brine shrimp. Flake mixture is normally 50% vegetable matter and 50% meat based. Specific brands vary from time to time with little noticeable difference.

**9:** What is your water maintenance routine and your lighting system (how long the lights are on / off)? Lights over tanks normally come on at 8:00am and go off at 11:00am. Come on again at 5 and go off at 11:00pm. Additional lights on ceilings when I'm working in fishroom. Automated tanks 20-30% water change 2-3 times a day. Basically turn on the water when I'm feeding. All automated tanks have ¾" of paver's sand on the bottom of each tank. This is gravel siphoned on average once every 6-8 weeks. Manual tanks 1/3 siphon from bottom 2 times a week. Takes about 30-40 minutes drain and fill all tanks if done at once.

**10:** What was the funniest thing that happened to you while you have been breeding guppies? Sitting in a

hotel room with Old Man Cooney at an IFGA Annual in NY one year. Cooney while sitting on the bed pulled off his socks and was admiring the arches on his feet. All of a sudden with a big grin exclaimed, ***“Aren’t they pretty.”*** I about rolled out of the chair laughing. Highest arches I had ever seen, next to my flat feet.



**11:** What was the worst thing that happened to you while you have been breeding guppies? Being unable to find a remedy for worm infestations in the early to mid 1990’s. In the end, like many, I shut down my fishroom for several years, though still continued to work with wild-type. The sad part is the actual treatments that evolved among breeders through trial and error utilized the same medicines I had been using in my cattle and sheep for two decades.

**12:** When did you win your first IFGA Class Championships and for which class? 1987 – Swordtail Combined. About 2-3 years after I quit raising delta’s for show and concentrated solely on swordtails. Swordtail combined required you to show and place well in both single and double classes.



**13:** Besides Baby Brine Shrimp what are your two favorite foods to feed your guppies? 1. Spirulina & Kelp. 2. Ziegler Finfish Starter.

**14: How many lines of your favorite color strain do you have?** I view my entire lower sword strain as a “single strain comprised of multiple traits”. It is capable of producing dozens of phenotypical expressions. Normally, I only maintain two breeding lines in the strain; Line A (blond x blond) and Line B (grey x grey / blond). Each line may in turn further incorporate additional traits such as; albino, golden, Asian Blau, Stoerzbach, etc... At any given time within each breeding line I may be collecting fry from numerous breeding groups. Each geared toward sequential, lateral or backcross breeding’s. Outcross is for the most part limited to swapping blond individuals between line A and line B. My breeding lines are very fluid. I look at each individual litter produced to see if any individuals will become a member of a breeding group or grow out for show or sale.

**11: What was the most memorable event you have attended to date?** All shows are memorable for certain aspects. For me, without a doubt, the recent 18<sup>th</sup> World guppy Contest, held last Sept. 2015 in Tampa, FL stands out for many reasons. Being asked to make a presentation on genetics and in turn create a reference paper that will serve breeders worldwide for years to come. A chance to exhibit fish and interact with breeders from the far corners of the world. Though, first and foremost to be in attendance when Stan Shubel was honored for his many years of service to the IFGA, and dedication to Domestic Guppy Breeding by IFGA breeders from over a dozen states and breeders from around the world...

