

Good Times at the AFA Convention

Marshall Liger, South Carolina State Coordinator

The 2004 AFA convention held in San Francisco, California was an honor for me to attend. I've been involved with birds at various levels for ten years and have been supportive of AFA for many of those although this was only my second convention. I firmly believe that the AFA is one of the most valuable organizations available to aviculture and we must each embrace it to make it thrive. After 30 years of existence, it has a lot to be proud of and its accomplishments are the very weight that can be used to protect our collective interests as we move into the future.

My trip started off on a positive note despite getting up at 4:00A.M. The airlines were operating smoothly and my flight actually arrived ten minutes early. I didn't think the airlines could accomplish such a feat! I navigated through the airport with ease and was at the hotel in no time. At the check in desk, I begged and pleaded until they "found" a room with a bay view. It was quite enjoyable to look out my fifth floor window and enjoy the bay view. I could open the window and the refreshing bay breeze would always invite itself in. I had arrived on Tuesday so I took the afternoon and went into town. It was a pleasant afternoon getting to play tourist, forgetting about all the normal pressures of life.

As State Coordinator for South Carolina, I attended the House of Delegates meeting on Wednesday. Some very valuable information was shared with us, including financial updates, a legislative briefing, the announcement of a new business relationship with Petco Company, and discussion regarding the new Fundamentals of Aviculture course. Also, the new Girl Scout Aviculture Program was revealed. I'm particularly interested in this program because I believe it addresses a critical issue facing aviculture....finding the next generation of aviculturists.

Wednesday night was the long awaited bash. It was an enjoyable environment that lent itself well to casual mingling. This is where the convention really started to come together for me. By chance, I met a wonderful lady named Katy Secor from Massachusetts. Katy was very kind by inviting me to sit at the table with her and her close friend Rena Fox who serves as New Hampshire State Coordinator. The three of us quickly became friends and I'll be forever grateful to them for the kindness they showed me throughout the convention by insuring that I was introduced to others and was included in group activities. Thank you Katy and Rena! We were graced by the presence of Wanda Elder



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herself and enjoyed the company of the Dwight and Beth Greenberg amongst others too. Great conversations were spawned at our table and the two hours flew by.

With Thursday came the start of general sessions that were to last three days. With so many great presentations, it was tough trying to make them all. Sometimes I would have to slip in and out of two concurrent sessions so as not to miss either of them. Add to that the difficulty of trying to spend plenty of time in the exhibit hall and to meet various other demands and I found myself in a whirlwind of excitement.

Regarding the presentations, it should be noted that the speaker committee did a good job of trying to balance all the presentations. There was something to suit everybody's interest whether you are a long time breeder or a new pet owner. What a tough job our AFA leaders have trying to balance the speaker schedule! Each speaker deserves a round of applause and a big thank you. Having presented for local groups myself, I respect how much effort goes into utilizing those 45 minutes. I learned a lot about medical matters from Drs. Ritchie, Speer, and Clubb. Laurella Desborough enlightened us all on legislative matters and the discussions regarding the animal welfare act were invaluable. Kashmir Csaky made it clear why Hyacinth Macaws are so special and Mark Bittner captivated his audience with an inspiring story and video clip from his upcoming video release about The Parrots of Telegraph Hill. The presentation that hit home the most for me was Matt Schmit's talk regarding "Pest Control in the Aviary." I live in a damp city situated at sea level, so I am forever battling pests. Thanks to this lecture, I've been able to implement some new protocols in my aviary and that alone makes the trip worthwhile.

I can't go without mentioning the exhibit hall for it's where I had some of the best luck of my life! First, it should be noted that the Passport program seemed to be very successful. I'm sure the vendors appreciated the traffic it created. I spent too much time drooling over Gamini's art, but then who hasn't? I bought too much stuff throughout the hall and later found myself unable to get it all packed for the flight home. The ongoing AFA raffles were very exciting for everyone and I won my share of loot. The exhibitors were having some wonderful raffles of their own and I had great luck with them too. I walked away from the Zupreem booth with \$5 cash. Later, I won a hundred dollar shopping spree from Jungle Toys. Imagine my surprise, and fear too

of having to get more stuff home! Then the ultimate prize came my way. I bought \$10 worth of tickets from Bird Endowment for a chance to win three original Gamini paintings of Caninde Macaws – a beautifully framed triptych valued at \$5,000. The shock of my life came when I won it! I simply couldn't believe my luck! All the admiration I previously mentioned wasn't in vain after all. I guarded the art with my life all the way home, petrified it would be damaged during travel. It's hanging in my home now and I'm so proud of it.

Well the convention experiences did not end when the exhibit hall closed. We all just dispersed to other places. There were numerous restaurants within walking distance and regardless of which one you went to, you could expect to see other bird folks there too. Of course, the hotel had a great restaurant, a nice deli, and a sports bar that proved it

was the place to be after sunset as there was always AFA'ers blended throughout. I met many new friends and learned a lot of different things during these times. These bird people knew how to have fun!

Sadly, Saturday night came around and the end of the convention was near, but not before the banquet was held. The reception was a great time to get in some more meet-and-greet time. The silent auction was set up and people were bidding away. The collection of silver coins was quite impressive. I was so interested in the Black Palm Cockatoo coin that I inadvertently had bid on two of them and had the highest bid on both. Of course, I ended up losing both but that's okay. The banquet was great. The food was superb and the entertainment of Jim Hawley's enthusiasm was humorous. He doesn't have anything on his wife though... Boy was she excited to win that avian library or what! I got wrapped up in the excitement of the live auction and put in a few bids myself. Beth Greenberg just such does a wonderful job painting those ostrich eggs that I couldn't resist bidding. Congratulations to whoever won because it wasn't me. The banquet ended on a positive note when I won the centerpiece full of bird stuff. I thought the people sitting with me were going to choke me at that point...they were tired of my winning streak! Thanks to all who donated items for those baskets.

Although the convention was officially over, there was still more to be done on Sunday. Natasha Schischakin hosted a special session of the Fundamentals of Aviculture Course for those of us that could stay. There were even some students who hadn't attended the convention which was an encouraging sign of support. This course was quite informative and has the potential to be a very positive affair for the AFA. As enhancements are made and future modules are developed, I hope that the course proves to be successful around the country and maybe even the globe.

Alas, the whole event is over now. I'm sure Wanda and all the hard working AFA volunteers are thrilled to have it behind them but we know they are already planning for next year. I personally am looking forward to 2005 with hopes of reuniting with current friends, chances to make new friends, and most importantly I'm looking forward to the opportunity to learn new things and to all work together to secure a future for aviculture. I believe it is of dire importance that we strive to put politics to the side and focus on the main issue – preserving our rights to keep our birds and to keep them responsibly as we see fit without weighted regulations hindering our efforts. Together we can impact the future. The convention only lasts for four days. I encourage everyone to use the other 361 days in the year to our benefit. Until next year's gathering...

Marshall Liger
South Carolina State Coordinator



Photos by Sheldon Dingle

Left: Her first time at an AFA Convention, Rachel Alvarez, El Paso, Texas, enjoyed the activities.

Below: left to right - Mark Moore, AFA Store; Nancy Speed, Regional Director; Gary Lilienthal, Legal Counsel.



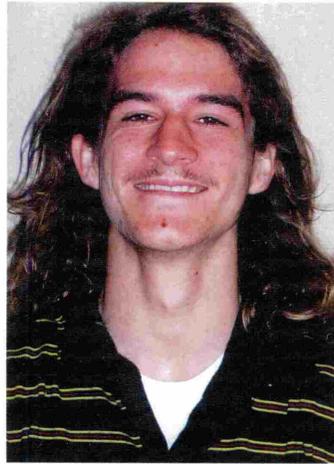


Photos by Sheldon Dingle. Collage by M. Jean Hessler

Young people at the Convention, the future of American aviculture.



Heidi Trudell, 19 years old, from Houston, Tx.

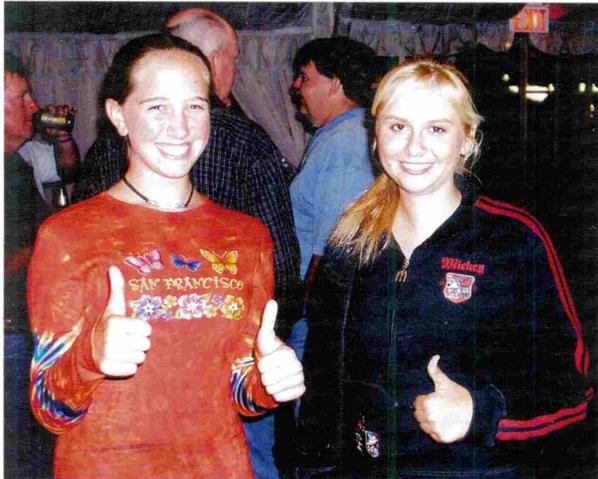


Nicholas Mooney, 20 years old, Orange County, CA



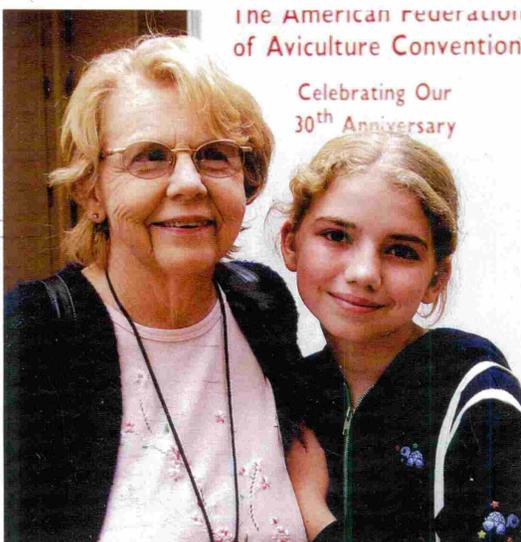
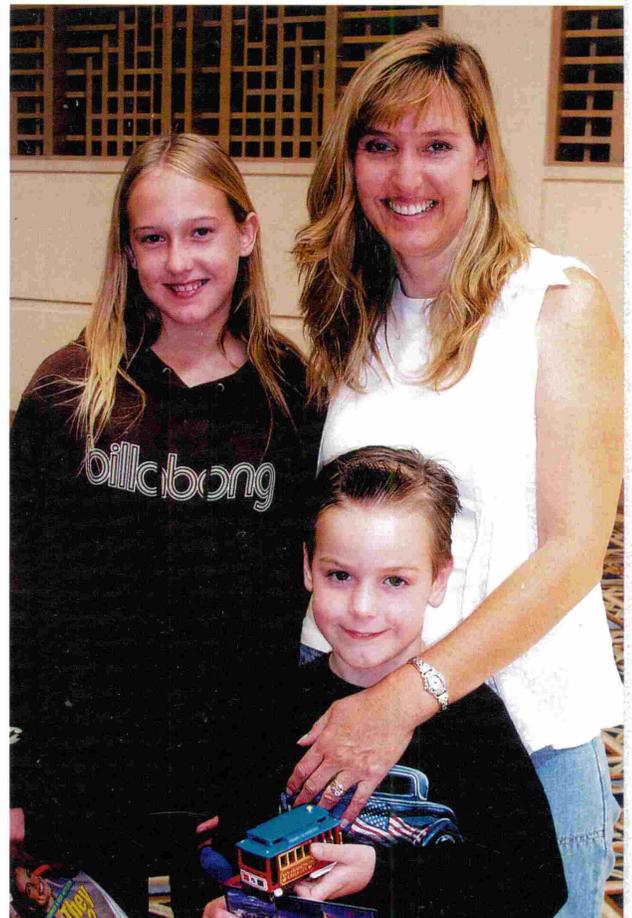
Photo by Sheldon Dingle

Ezna Khan, in back, the aunt of Fariel Ali age 16 and 9 year old sister, Farah, from Hayward, CA. They stopped by the Convention just to see the birds.

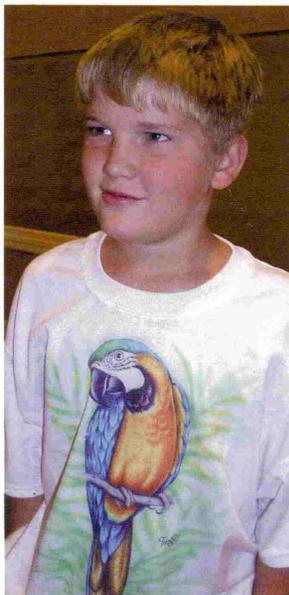


At left, Emily Frey, 12 years old daughter of Dr. Walt Frey, OK, and Alexandria Culp, age 16, southern CA.

Sharon Duncan, far right with daughter, Kate and son Nicholas, from San Dimas, CA



Victoria Clark, 12 years old, with grandmother Thelma Clark. Roseville, CA.



Mitchell Frey, son of Dr. Walt Frey



L to R: Laney Rickman with Marshall Liger, winner of Gamini Ratnavira's paintings of Caninde Macaws, and Gamini himself at right.



L to R: Jafet Vélez-Valentin, of USFWS Puerto Rico parrot project, with Marie Stafford.



Above, R to L: Mariana Mejia with Mayda Taylor. Mayda got lucky and won a table centerpiece decoration.

Below, R to L: During a raffle, Dwight Greenberg raises the drawing box full of tickets for "Thorn" Ray Davies, from Australia, to draw a winning ticket. It was "Thorn's" birthday and he had plenty of folks to help him celebrate.



L to R: Steve Garvin, Long Beach, CA., Rainer Erhart, Kalamazoo, MI., Howard Voren, Loxahatchee, FL.



L to R: Evelyn Candelaria and Kelly Tucker.

