

A Brief History of the Early Days of the Mid-Atlantic Koi Club

by Dick Roemer

The Mid-Atlantic Koi Club (MAKC) formally began on Sunday, June 8, 1986, in a meeting at John and Helen File's home in Philadelphia, PA. The meeting was the culmination of John's desire to learn more about Koi. John had first seen Koi at Martin's Aquarium in Philadelphia and had been referred to Joe Zuritsky as the local authority about them. John saw Joe's ponds and fish and was introduced to *KOI USA*. Joe had been keeping Koi for many years, but had not had success in trying to start a club. John put a notice in *KOI USA* in the "Is there anyone out there" column and had received letters from Betty Roemer in Virginia, Bob Bransfield in New Jersey, and Len Smiley who lived just outside of Philadelphia. The letter writing continued for a while until the first meeting, which was attended by the folks mentioned above.

It was quickly decided that since there were so few Koi persons known on the entire east coast that the club would have to span the entire region in order to gain enough membership strength and knowledge to succeed. So, even from its very beginnings, MAKC has lived up to its name "Mid-Atlantic" and has included members from the entire region. The club began with a purpose of gaining and sharing knowledge and appreciation of Koi, a goal that has shaped and guided all our activities.

John File thus was the founder of the Mid-Atlantic Koi Club and was its first President, a position he held for the first three years. Since then, John has served as our long-range planner and a charter member of the Executive Board Advisory Committee, one of our three "Wise Men" who give sage advice whenever asked. John was the first to advocate that the MAKC sponsor the AKCA Seminar here on the east coast, so he can be thought of as the father of the 1994 Baltimore Seminar.

The second MAKC meeting was held that August at Joe and Renee Zuritsky's home just outside Philadelphia where everyone was treated to a real Koi thrill — seeing his lovely pond and the beautiful Koi that could be viewed either from the bridge over the pond leading up to his front door or through the window in his basement recreation room that is cut into the side of the pond. More new members attended the meeting, including Lester & Rhoda Berkow from New Jersey who hosted the third meeting. (They have since moved to south Florida where Lester has founded the Tropical Koi Club, while also keeping active in MAKC.)

It was at the third meeting that Allan and Judy Hobron attended from New York. Allan immediately volunteered to be the editor of the club's newsletter. He said it was the newsletter editor who became the center of activities of any club and he wanted to do it. So, that was the beginning of what has become the MAKC News. Allan was the editor of the newsletter for most of two years. The newsletter has served as a major unifying factor for our far-flung club. The current editor, Susan Boland, has served for the past several years and has made our membership magazine, *Mid-Atlantic Koi* into a nationally known and admired source of information on Koi lore and science.

The club's fourth meeting was at the home of Ed Gillenwater in Virginia, evidencing once again the geographical spread of MAKC. Again, members were treated to a marvelous display of beautiful Koi and also a lovely Japanese-style garden. Ed was the initiating force in MAKC's first Koi Show which was held in 1989 during the annual Koi Festival at Lilypons Water Gardens in Maryland. The first show was a very major undertaking for a new club, as we had to do it all ourselves, with no other club anywhere around to lend tanks or equipment or to give advice. Under Ed's leadership and planning, the show was a great success ... teaching us and many new members and potential members much about the beauty and appreciation of our lovely jewels of the pond. A major learning step for club members before having a show was having fish auctions which were held in June of 1988 and 1989. The auctions gave us