

## Daytona: Reptile Talks the Night Before the Expo

**REPTILES' Sandy Quinn joined this year's roster of speakers in Daytona.**

August 28, 2009

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Here I am in the process of taking up all the "autograph real estate" on the front of Stevie's T-shirt. Sandy Quinn delivering her speech. My last blog ended with ReptileChannel web editor Ben Weiner and me finding ourselves stuck in Atlanta for an unexpected overnight stay on our way to Daytona, courtesy Delta Airlines. The next day, Friday, August 21, we resumed our journey and did finally make it to Daytona. Once there, we tracked down Sandy Quinn, my sales manager on REPTILES magazine and ReptileChannel.

Usually on the Friday before the show, Sandy and I visit with vendors while they are setting up for the weekend's free-for-all. I mean that in a good way, as the National Reptile Breeders' Expo is the country's largest reptile show – Gary Bagnall, the owner of Zoo Med Laboratories, described it this year as Mecca for reptile people – and the free-for-all is comprised of lots of reptile fans flooding the Ocean Center to meet and, hopefully, patronize the hundreds of vendors who are there to sell their wares, both live reptiles and amphibians, as well as everything you could possibly need to take excellent care of them.

This year, however, there was a new wrinkle in our usual Friday schedule. Bill Brant, the owner of The Gourmet Rodent, had asked Sandy if she would be willing to give a talk on Friday night, as part of the "Advances in Herpetoculture" symposium. For years, the "Turtle Talks" series had been presented on the Friday night immediately prior to the expo, and due to its popularity, it was thought an additional series would go over well, too. Thus, the "Advances in Herpetoculture" symposium was born. The Friday night before the show now features plenty of reptile-related talks between the two lecture series, covering a variety of subjects. This year you had your choice of everything from Hermann's tortoises and the turtles of Florida to marketing ideas for reptile businesspeople and the latest advancements in reptile caging – and more.

Sandy agreed to "perform," so Ben and I helped her to prepare by helping her with some read-throughs and ensuring that the A/V equipment in the room was functioning properly. Ben would be manning the laptop PowerPoint presentation during Sandy's talk. I would get to remain in the audience. Originally, Sandy wanted me up front with her and Ben, but when I pointed out that I would be serving no function other than just sitting there like a bump on a log, she deferred. I did make myself useful at one point, though, when I was asked by a young REPTILES fan named Stevie to sign his T-shirt. I had never signed a T-shirt before and I had to enlist his little sister to help stretch the shirt out so I could write on it.

Often when I'm asked by a youngster for an autograph – this began to occur more often after I wrote my three-book Beginning Vivarium Systems series about reptilekeeping – I like to write a little pro-reptiles note in addition to simply signing my name. On Stevie's shirt, along with my name, I wrote, "Hi Stevie. Never forget – reptiles rule!" This ended up taking up pretty much the whole front of his T-shirt, and I felt guilty afterward because I realized he was out to get other autographs, too, especially one from Bill Love, well-known herp world figure and, of course, longtime REPTILES "Herp Queries" columnist and photographer. Stevie was a big fan of Bill's, and I introduced the two just prior to Bill giving his talk, which I think may have made Stevie's night. Anyway, the other signatures Stevie collected had to be squeezed in around my wordy contribution.

Sandy's talk, fittingly enough because she is the sales manager for REPTILES and ReptileChannel, was the one about marketing. During it she provided ideas for reptile businesspeople to ponder regarding their marketing efforts in today's business and economic climate. Of course advertising in REPTILES magazine and its annual sister magazine Reptiles USA was suggested – Sandy called them "the best search engine you can buy" -- but online marketing was featured prominently in Sandy's discussion. This is an area of advertising that can no longer be ignored by companies that hope to make a go of it, and she had some good suggestions for how companies can enhance their profiles in today's herp marketplace.

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Bill Love presenting "The History of Herpetoculture." Bill Love's talk, just prior to Sandy's, was titled "The History of Herpetoculture." Among other things, it featured lots of old photos of well-known reptile guys. It's always fun seeing those old photos (speaking of herp history, check out my August 24 blog). Bill's talks are always very entertaining, and everyone

enjoyed this latest one. Following Sandy were David Northcott, another valued REPTILES magazine photo contributor, who spoke about advancements in reptile caging, and Eric Thiss, who discussed changes in herpetological publications over the years.

After both the Turtle Talks and Advances in Herpetoculture events were concluded, people gathered outside the meeting rooms to visit while snacking on hors d'oeuvres and beverages. All in all I think the talks were successful and enjoyed by all who attended them. They provide an additional reason for attending the National Reptile Breeders' Expo each year.

Speaking of the expo, who knows -- maybe I'll get around to writing about it in my next blog!

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