



## ***The Fishy Little World of Diane Schofield***

**Home address:**

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Every so often when the wind is in the wrong direction and the sun hides the clouds, I feel a slight twinge of guilt over contributing to the delinquency of two minors who happened to fall into my clutches because they are my sons.

Randy and Ricky spent their formative years hanging around one tropical fish store and/or show after another. They didn't really seem to mind until Randy, the oldest one, locked himself in the bathroom of one of the largest shops. This apparently had one of those locks that you have to understand to operate. There was some sort of a ritual you had to go through to get it to work, such as hitting the door sharply three times, hopping back on your right foot two jumps, mutter alla-

ka-zam five times, take a giant step forward and the door would open. This, however, was a little difficult to explain to an eight year old child and it took the efforts of the whole staff to get him out. Since then he never has trusted tropical fish stores. Freud, I don't believe, has ever mentioned what effect a thing like this is apt to have on a child.

Nor did Freud ever dally around with the effect that falling into countless daphnia ponds can have on a formative youth. Whenever we would visit a hatchery that had any quantity of water more than a gallon, somehow or another Ricky would manage to fall into it. If it had the stench of a thousand dead bodies, he redoubled his efforts. Many times going back home we were tempted to have him run along behind the car, but were only deterred by the childrens' equivalent of the SPCA.

But my children are not to be bested for long — especially my youngest fledgling. Although fish per se are, by and large, not the world and all to either of them, they do take rather a kindly view of the so-called "fringe benefits" of the various shows. Therefore, when we would show at a spot like the Pomona Fair, it was most difficult to keep Ricky corralled in the building where the aquarium exhibit held sway. Too many more fascinating sights lay tantalizingly just beyond the door. Unfortunately Ricky is gifted with the same magnificent sense of non-direction that his mother has. Two steps outside the door and he was hopelessly lost. Therefore when I would be doing my stint by the side of the tanks, I would pin a note onto his little rompers that said, "If I am lost, please return me to the aquarium exhibit!" This worked jim-dandy for a while. Somebody was always hauling him back by the hand if he wandered beyond the range of his leash.

One day, however, some myopic soul found him who couldn't read the legend on his front and took him to the building where lost children are herded. As a result, while trying to explain to a visitor that the male swordtail didn't really use his sword to stab the other fish, I heard blasting out over the P. A. system, "Will the parents of Ricky Schofield please claim him in the Lost Children Department". There was nothing else to do but to hike over and admit that I owned him. But in

about another half an hour, the same tinny voice whined electronically, "Will the parents of Ricky Schofield *please* come and claim him!" Ricky had discovered that fame was his for a little concentration of looking sad, pathetic and utterly lost. He repeated this over and over again until we finally chained him down to a handy 40 gallon.

We labored under the delightful delusion that all of this had totally drained from his little mind after the Pomona Fair. Several months hence we paid a visit to Marineland of the Pacific and were absorbed in watching the assorted porpoises and whales cut their watery didoes

when intruded upon our preoccupation came an amplified voice, "There's a little boy here, who says that he's Ricky Schofield and his parents are lost!"

I don't quite understand it, but people say that they always seem to know that we are around when any public building has a P.A. system in it — Ricky can ferret it out. ■ ■ ■

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## DIRECTORY

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