

# NEWSLETTER

# Presidential Musings on Spring by Dan Boylan

Now that it seems that we have seen the last of cold weather for a while, the 2016 beekeeping season will begin in full gear. One of our board members (Scott Famous) has caught the first swarm of the year around here to the best of my knowledge. This is a good reminder that now is the time to be thinking of swarm management. Some simple techniques that help are swapping brood boxes and adding a super/supers. Swapping brood boxes buys time, but be sure you are not separating the brood when you do this. If the brood starts in the lower box and continues into the upper box, leave it alone. I'll be adding a super this week to hives that can use the room. Crowding can result in swarms as well. It's time to begin preparing

for splits, if you plan to make increases this year. I'm using pollen substitute and feed some hives one-to-one to stimulate brood rearing for splits around the end of this month. Don't feed hives with supers on unless you like concentrated sugar water honey.

I would once again like to welcome our beginners as they experience the exciting time of the year for beekeepers. Grafting for the cell program should begin in a few weeks, with cells most likely sometime in May. The summer picnic is on the horizon and don't forget the club has a honey extracting setup that members may rent for a nominal cost. I ask all, as you participate in our programs, to consider what talents you may add to our organization.

MCBA Motto: "Beekeepers Helping Beekeepers"

#### 2016 DUES

Have you paid your dues?
Dues for 2016 are due in January and it will
still only set you back \$15.

#### NAMETAGS!

Have you been wearing your nametag at our meetings? We all want to be able to call each other by name without the embarrassment of telling someone you don't remember their name. PLEASE WEAR YOUR NAMETAGS, PLEASE.

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### MCBA Spring Calendar of Events

**Apr 17 - 4-H Beekeeping Club,** 4-H Center, Dogwood Room, 6pm

**Apr 22 - Temple Earthfest,** 9am - 2pm -- Come visit MCBA's table at Temple University's Ambler Campus

**Apr 28 - General Meeting** 7pm, 4-H Center, Maple Room, **Speaker:** Sara Hall, Vegetation Management Project Manager at PECO, **Topic:** 

PECO's management practices along their power line right-of-ways – a potential source of honeybee forage.

April 30 - Package Pickups - Worcester Honey Farms, 2011 Shearer Road, Lansdale. Package pickup starts at 12 noon. Installation class at 2pm. To pre-order please go to the MCBA Marketplace page. \*\* Note New Date -- One Week Delay \*\*

# Uncle Mark Wants You



# To pay your MCBA dues!

Your annual \$15 dues payment is critically important to keep this organization going. Your support is vital to help pay for speakers, our website and its maintenance, the queen cell program, our bee hives at the 4-H Center, the AFB test kits, our educational materials and library, the hive wax dipping program, representation within the state, support for the hive irradiation program, the beginners class, the second year beekeeper class, and much more.

The MCBA needs your help to keep helping beekeepers like you.

Please mail in your annual \$15 dues payment TODAY to:

MCBA, PO Box 903, Skippack, PA 19474

# Beginners Off to a Great Start in 2016

by Mark Antunes



With spring comes the new bloom cycle from which our honey bees gather nectar in order to thrive. And with this new season there is another crop of beginner beekeepers eager to explore the wonderment of honey bees and beekeeping. I am delighted to be able to report to everyone that this year we have 64 new members of the MCBA who are taking part in the 2016 MCBA Beginner Beekeeping Course.

The first class is always a little disjointed, but with the help of several critical members (Dan Boylan, Kimberly Baccari, Tim Cherry, Cindy Yaskowski, Mick Newby and others), registration was completed, text books and class outlines were distributed and beekeeping equipment catalogs were provided. Because of the large class size we ran short of books and outlines, but I'll take that as sign of our success in promoting the course.

I must give recognition to my trusty and steadfast assistants who really make the class as good as it is – Walt Fitzgerald, Donald George and Chris Mancinelli. Even more important is the Queen of Caloric Kindness, Elinor Spring, who serves a great assortment treats and refreshments on the kitchen island of the Mapleroom.

This class is different that any I have taught before. I have been rethinking my approach to how the new-bees should get started and have come to the conclusion that they would be better served if the course began with information about our biggest foe, the Varroa mite. Keeping honey bees in the best possible condition requires us to think of mites from the time we get a package to start a colony or make a split in the spring.

Toward that goal, our beginners have had the essential tools to combat this parasite. Packages have just started to arrive and the beginners already have sugar roll mason jars with #8 hardware cloth for the ring lids, 2" hive shims, and high quality 60 ML syringes for oxalic acid dribble treatments. As a source for oxalic acid, they were given the information for Steve Finke, our regional Brushy Mountain and Mann-Lake distributor. The students were directed to the website of Randy Oliver at www.scientificbeekeeping.com for all the dribble information. In addition, I pantomimed a faux dribble demonstration for everyone. If these beginners don't go astray, they'll make it hard for the mites to stay!

Ultimately all of us who already have bees should be pleased to know that those who are coming along in this year's class are being prepared to be good stewards of their honey bees.

#### Editor's Note:

Did you ever wonder why our club started the queen cell program? Wouldn't it just be easier to buy queens from others elsewhere? Perhaps, but the following article reprinted from ARS News Service, US Dept. of Agriculture tells you why. Our club is working hard to provide local queens which have not been shipped and whose sperm are not subject to extreme changes in temperature. Read on.

# USDA Research Identifies Factors Causing Premature Commercial Honey Bee Queen Failure

by Kim Kaplan Reprinted from ARS News Service, USDA

BELTSVILLE, Md., Feb. 10, 2016 -

Temperature extremes during shipping and elevated pathogen levels may be contributing to honey bee queens failing faster today than in the past, according to a study just published by <u>U.S. Department of Agriculture</u> (USDA) scientists in the scientific journal *PLOS One*.

"Either stress individually or in combination could be part of the reason beekeepers have reported having to replace queens about every six months in recent years when queens have generally lasted one to two years," explained entomologist Jeff Pettis with the Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland, who led the study. The Bee Research Laboratory is part of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Queens only mate in the first few weeks of life. Then they use the stored semen to fertilize eggs laid throughout their life. Queen failure occurs when the queen dies or when the queen does not produce enough viable eggs to maintain the adult worker population in the colony. Replacing queens cost about \$15 each, a significant cost per colony for beekeepers. Commercial beekeepers usually order their

replacement queens already mated, and the queens are shipped to apiaries from March through October. Researchers questioned whether temperature extremes during shipping could damage the sperm a queen has stored in her body. During simulated shipping in the lab, inseminated queens exposed to 104° F (40° C) for 1-2 hours or to 41° F (5° C) for 1-4 hours had sperm viability drop to 20 percent from about 90 percent.

In real-world testing, queens, along with thermometers that recorded the temperature every 10 minutes, were shipped from California, Georgia and Hawaii to the Beltsville lab by either U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail or United Parcel Service Next Day Delivery in July and September. Researchers found that as many as 20 percent of the shipments experienced temperature spikes that approached extremes of 105.8° F and 46.4° F for more than 2 hours at a time. Those exposed to extreme high or low temperatures during shipping had sperm viability reduced by 50 percent.

"The good news is with fairly simple improvements in packaging and shipping conditions, we could have a significant impact on improving queens and, in turn, improving colony survival," Pettis said.

## How Busy is Your Beekeeping Spring? by Mar

by Mark Antunes

I often get asked if there is a busy season for a beekeeper. For any beekeeper with a number of hives, spring is a very busy time of year. And obviously the more bees you have, the busier you have to be. In late March hives that died out during the fall and winter came back from being irradiated to sterilize them and eliminate any pathogens that could infect new bees going into them this spring. If you took part in that effort, then you know how your equipment had to be wrapped and prepared for irradiation, not to mention delivering and retrieving that equipment to and from Sterigenics in Salem, NJ.

If you were in the shoes of Will McCartney, then you would know what it is like to be busy by generously donating your time and energy for the betterment of other beekeepers. He allowed others to bring hundreds of hive boxes to his home for irradiation/sterilization, load them, and haul them down and back to Salem, NJ driving 130 miles on two trips paying over \$20 in tolls each time. Will certainly gets my vote for living up to the MCBA motto of, "Beekeepers helping other beekeepers."

I had new wooden ware that had to be weather proofed before I add honey bees into it. But thanks to Walt Fitzgerald, Don George, and Chris Mancinelli, the time and effort to do that got a lot easier for anyone with new hive equipment. They spent months researching how to best treat new equipment with a hot wax and resin dipping process. They worked on several designs and Walt drove to Mann-Lake twice to get the bulk wax/resin needed.

It was great to treat my equipment and get it



ready for use with such ease. Plus, I enjoyed the company of friends while doing so.

In early April, when it was fairly warm, I was making early spring splits from strong colonies that overwintered well. I swappped out frames of honey bees with brood, pollen, and honey to install in empty hive boxes with a new queen, and replace the frames I pulled out with frames of sterilized drawn comb. In order to do that, I need new mated queens, which were shipped to the area from Georgia where the season is considerably ahead of ours and from Hawaii where it is warm enough year round to raise queens. Picking up the queens required two separate trips and 90 miles of driving to get them. Then it took two days to make the splits and install the new queens.

If possible, when doing so this early, I stack the new colonies on top of a strong hives with a screened divider to get warmth from the strong colony below up to the small split above. Watching the late news on the night of Saturday April 2nd I heard that we could have 60

Continued on page 6

## How Busy...? (Continued from p. 5)



mile per hour winds. I knew this would topple my newly split double stacked colonies and kill the honey bees. So I dashed outside to strap them together on their hive stands, hoping they would survive. I grabbed my ratchet straps and headed into the dark to save my bees.

The clouds were illuminated by distant lightning. I figured I had 20-30 minutes, enough time to secure the colonies before the storm was upon me. Guess again Mr. Amateur Meteorologist! The front hit in 10 minutes and there I was, getting soaked with rain, pelted with hail, in a gusty thunderstorm with bolts of lightning that made me flinch and momentarily blinded me as I worked in the dark to save bees. That was not exactly the casual pastime endeavor of enjoyment in pastoral environs I portray to my beginner students. But as Don George said, "A normal person wouldn't understand, but a beekeeper would."

If you lost colonies you want to replace or are trying to make increases without making splits, packaged bees from Georgia are arriving. Installing a package does not require the attentive eye required to spot the queen when pulling frames of bees. However, putting in an early spring package is not a completely casual process either. One needs to have their new or cleaned up dead out hives properly set up and

ready to go along with sugar syrup and pollen substitute ready to apply. Then there is the weather to contend with. Snow on the day Jim Bobb arrived with his packages; and cold windy weather all that week. UGH! Need I say more?

By now I should have poked into every hive I have in all of my apiary locations. The weather was great very early and has been very bad of late to accomplish this task. On the morning of April 5th when I got up it was 24 degrees and snowing. And the extended forecast for that week was for cooler than normal weather. Conditions like that are not what I need for opening hives and making a complete inspection to see how the colony is performing and what is needed to best facilitate its success for the season.

Inside a hive the bees cluster around the brood which must be maintained a steady temperature between 94.1 to 98.0 °F for the brood to develop properly. Opening a hive and pulling frames to check the size of the brood nest and exposing it to the cold outside temperatures is not exactly a formula for success. If the brood gets too cold, it dies. That really hurts the development of a strong colony that could produce a honey crop.

Once the weather moderates and temperatures rise the full spring bloom will be exploding and so will the strong hives. Then checking every hive on a 10-day interval to prevent swarming will be a primary focus. Then I want to take advantage of the MCBA Queen Cell Program. There will be lots of nucs to make up with inserted queen cells to begin bringing along the next generation of colonies.

In short, lots to do and not enough good weather to get it all accomplished. I sometimes wonder why I, or any of us, persist at this craft. I guess it's because honey bees are so fascinating and because it is such an exciting challenge.

# Club Members Do Community Outreach

by Margaret Zittel

Last Fall Margaret Zittel asked the owner of Dublin Agway if she and a beekeeper friend could give a talk in the Spring to store customers on Pollinators and Pollinator Gardens. They agreed and on April 3rd, club members Margaret Zittel and Priscilla Bonsell gave a 30 minute presentation at the Dublin Agway on pollinators, who they are, why they are important, why they are having problems, and what people can do to help them. Thirty people were in attendance and more than half of them responded that they were interested in becoming beekeepers. Pollinator houses were on display, including a nuc box, a bat house, bird houses and solitary bee houses provided by club member Scott Famous. Lists of pollinator friendly and native plants were given to attendees, as well as free pollinator friendly seeds. It was a chilly, overcast day, but the attendees seemed eager to absorb the information provided and, hopefully, be able to make good decisions of how to live in our environment and help, not harm, all pollinators that are so important to the entire Eco system. This was a fun and rewarding thing to do, and we encourage all of you to reach out to your community in any way that you can and spread the word on how to help, and not harm, all pollinators, including honey bees, of course!



### **USDA** Research...

(Continued from P. 4)

Assessments of the queens sent in by beekeepers for this study found that almost all of them had a high incidence of deformed wing virus; *Nosema ceranae* was the next most commonly found pathogen.

Beekeepers had also been asked to rate the performance of each colony from which a queen came as either in good or poor health. A clear link was found between colonies rated as better performing and queens with higher sperm

viability. Poorer performing colonies strongly correlated to queens with lower sperm viability.

"We saw wide variation in both pathogen levels and sperm viability in the queens that were sent in to us, and sometimes between queens from the same apiary in July and September, so there is still more research to do. But getting queens back to lasting two years may well be one of the links in getting our beekeeping industry back to a sustainable level," Pettis said....

# Dipping Makes Pre Season Hive Prep Easy

By Mark Antunes

Photographs by Walt Fitzgerald

For those of you who may have missed the e-mails and information on our website while spending the winter relaxing in the Florida Keys, there is something you should know.

After a year of planning, cost pricing, estimating, and several detailed drawings, the new MCBA wax-resin dipping apparatus is up and running. It has to be the best made one-of-a-kind, custom-built, stainless steel, multi-hive box capacity, gas fired, hive dipping contraption any bee club owns, this side of the Mississippi!

The frozen and snow covered ground was broken on the property of our hosts, members Ann and Charlie Breinig, in early March. Unfortunately, no one thought to bring along those shiny chrome plated ceremonial shovels that top level executives in expensive suits always pose with at the site of a major ground breaking construction event. So we had to make due with Don's old wooden handled spade he's had for over 30 years. It still worked, even if it didn't look pretty.



The well-crafted dipping tank and burner shroud fabricated for us by member Jon Continued on page 9

Kutzner, along with the burner, was installed on the newly poured concrete pad. The blocks of solidified wax-resin solution were placed in the dipping tank and a bench built for us by Donald George was brought in to complete the basic set up. It's almost better than the patio lounge at the local country club, but you can't wax dip there.



The woodenware wax dipping began in late March with our esteemed president, Dan Boylan, offering his new equipment for the trial run. Wow! What results we can achieve with this super-de-duper highly scientific secret formula process. And, if you are really clever, you can do custom decorative branding to make your hives really special.



## Dipping ... (Continued from P. 8)

Not only was the process quick (only 10 minutes in the boiler and out per batch), but also it was fun. Kids and adults alike all enjoyed it and had a great time. If there had been honey baked desserts served, this would have been better than the last MCBA picnic.



Things were going really well when, all of a sudden, it went to the dogs. But what great dogs they were! After giving everyone and everything a thorough inspection and passing the sniff test, they were just as pleased as their two legged companions, giving the entire event a wag of the tail.





So, if you missed out and want to get in on the next dipping party, go on our website at <a href="https://www.montcobeekeepers.org">www.montcobeekeepers.org</a> and look for the tab on Wax Dipping. Find out how to get your wooden ware looking like you had it custom finished by a fine furniture maker and make all the others, with painted hives, jealous.

# MCBA Marketplace

Would you like to advertise in marketplace? If you have beekeeping-related products to sell or services to offer, please send your advertisement to the newsletter editor at: <a href="mailto:annbreinig@me.com">annbreinig@me.com</a>



#### 2016 Nucs for Sale

For 2016, I will have several kinds of nucs available, each consisting of five medium depth frames of adult bees, including three frames of brood of varied ages (all of which are offspring of your queen), as well as pollen and honey. You will take the nuc home in a waxed cardboard nuc box (\$10 deposit), from which you can transfer them to an eight or ten frame medium depth box.

- Overwintered nucs containing a locally raised 2015 queen, brood, pollen and honey. By definition "survivor" since it will have come through the 2015-2016 winter to Spring, the five frame medium nuc has a queen raised from my local survivor stock, the queen mother having survived one to four years in SE PA. These nucs are more expensive due to my work caring for them in late Summer, Fall and Winter. They will be available as soon as brood rearing is well underway and populations are increasing in Spring, which is weather dependent. These will be the earliest nucs I have available, likely the end of March. \$350
- Nucs with 2016 Carniolan queens from

- Hawaii. Five frame medium nucs with Carniolan queens purchased from Hawaiian Queen (http://www.hawaiianqueen.com/ourqueens-1.html). Three frames of her brood, as well as nectar and pollen. Likely availability is the end of April. \$155
- Nucs with 2016 New World Carniolan queens from Northern California. Five frame medium nucs with Carniolan queens purchased from Strachan Apiaries (http://www.strachanbees.com/about\_us.html). Three frames of her brood, as well as nectar and pollen. Likely availability is the end of May. \$155
- Nucs with locally raised 2016 queens bred from local survivor mothers. Queen mothers may be of Italian, Carni, VSH or other desirable stock; all queen mothers have survived one to multiple winters here in SE PA. Five frames of bees, three frames of your queen's brood, as well as nectar and pollen. Likely availability is June-July. \$155

See the following sites for a discussion of the pros and cons of starting a colony with a nuc vs a package:

http://www.centrecountybees.com/2011/02/where-to-get-bees-for-your-first-hive.html

http://extension.psu.edu/business/startfarming/news/2015/obtaining-honey-bees

I am PA licensed (C2015-75, through September 22, 2016) to sell Queens and Nucleus colonies. As part of this program, my queen rearing apiaries are inspected by the PA Department of Agriculture twice a year, typically at the beginning and end of the active beekeeping season. I use no antibiotics in my beekeeping operations.

To get on the nuc list, go to my web site: http://vincemasterbeekeeper.com/contact/

### **Worcester Honey Farms** 2016 Honey Bee Packages & Queens

#### **Print and Mail Order Form**

(Packages SOL  *Check www.pabeekeeper  Name  Address  City, State, Zip  Please put down the following you in case of unforeseen circle  Felephone(s)  Email	com for up	to-date packa	ge arrival times	_ _ - :	
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queen marked & clipped*  Italian queen		\$26.00		$\dashv$	Cancellation Policy
Italian queen marked		\$30.00		_	ull refund up to 30 days before
Italian queen clipped		\$30.00		1 1	cheduled pickup Date, 50%
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The number of packages are limit accept any more orders for that of www.pabeekeeper.com.					
Do you plan to attend the free pa	ackage ins	tallation dem	o on the day	of the pick	sup? [] 2:00 pm
Comments	-		-	-	

Package Pickup: Worcester Honey Farms, 2011 Shearer Road, Lansdale, PA, 19446. If you cannot pickup your packages on the scheduled afternoon or evening of pickup, you must make prior arrangements. Otherwise, your package will be donated to the Montgomery County 4-H Beekeeping Club. More Information: visit <a href="www.pabeekeeper.com">www.pabeekeeper.com</a>, or call 610-584-6778.

Worcester, PA 19490

2016 Package Order Form Version 4.0

#### PENNSYLVANIA MONTGOMERY COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

## 2016 Beginners Beekeeping Course

Are you interested in beekeeping but have never done it before? Have you started raising honey bees and want to lean more? Perhaps you have been raising honeybees for a few years and just want some refresher techniques. If so, then the **Montgomery County Beginners Beekeeping Course** is just the right thing for you! It offers classes that are timely to your seasonal beekeeping needs with a hands-on session in the apiary followed by lessons full of beekeeping insight and information in a classroom.

**WHEN:** The course consists of 8 classes from February to September. March to September there will be hands on activities in the apiary that start at **6:00pm** followed by classroom activities starting at 7:00pm. *Please note - the first class will be entirely in the classroom so no veil or equipment is needed. It begins at 6:00pm in the 4-H Center.* After the first class veils will be **mandatory** at the apiary. Anyone who does not have a veil will not be permitted near the hives.

WHERE: The Montgomery County 4-H Center, Route 113, Creamery, PA.

**COST:** A single student receives membership to the Montgomery County Beekeepers Association, membership to the Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association, one ticket to our fabulous fall banquet, educational materials, and eight great classes with hands on apiary experience for only \$120. The "couples" rate is for two adults living at the same address and includes all of the above plus an additional banquet ticket for a total fee of \$160. Class size is limited and enrollment will be allotted on a first to register-first enrolled basis. Do not expect to walk in and be seated.

MCBA New Beekeepers Course				
Name				
Address				
City/State/Zip				
Email Address	Phone Number			
	Make Checks Payable to "M.C.B.A."			

#### MCBA LEADERSHIP TEAM 2015-2017

#### MCBA Leadership Team 2015-2017

PresidentDan Boylandpboylan@comcast.netVice PresidentTim Cherryzendiver4@gmail.com

Secretary Kimberly Baccari <u>kimberly@baccariprowriters.com</u>

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### Send in your Dues today for Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

Name_	-				
Address	-				
City/State/Zip					
Email Address_	_				
Phone Number					
Dues are applied on a calendar year basis. January 1 <sup>st</sup> to December 31 <sup>st</sup>					
New membership Renewing membership					
MCBA DUES \$15.00 per household* per year \$					
PSBA DUES** \$20.00 for one person per year or \$25.00 per household per year \$	_				
TOTAL ENGLOSED \$					

<sup>\*\*</sup> We recommend: that you also pay dues for PA State Beekeepers in order to encourage research on bee health, and promote efforts to dissuade local township and boroughs from restricting beekeeping. You will also benefit from the 10 annual state newsletters and information sharing. (\*household = 2 adults and all children living at one address.)



Montgomery County Beekeepers Association PO Box 903 Skippack, PA 19474

## [Recipient]

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

Address Line 4