Herman Larsen: A Legend of Inspiration
By Mary Moss

On October 2, 2002, Oregon lost an exceptional beekeeper. OSBA lifetime member Herman Larsen of Junction City died on that day; he was 98 years old. Larsen was born on March 4, 1904 in Lucine, Utah. His parents were Heber and Viola Thompson Larsen. He married Shirley Warner in Vancouver, Washington on December 7, 1936. She died in 1994, of a bee sting.

Never one to sit idle, Larsen worked on the construction of the highway and tunnel at Cape Creek. He was also employed as a logger. During his life as a beekeeper, Larsen became a State Beekeeping Inspector. He managed as many as 600 of his own hives of bees, and took the time to mentor younger, less-experienced beekeepers. These accomplishments become even more remarkable when taking into account that Larsen had lost one of his legs in a freak accident. At the time, he was hauling cattle in a truck, and while sitting in its cab, the truck’s flywheel detached and pushed through the truck’s floorboards. It hit Larsen’s leg and sheared it off. After the amputation, he continued his own beekeeping endeavors and other pursuits, as well as his position as State inspector.

Dundee beekeeper Alan Ehry vividly recalls his 51-year friendship with Larsen. “I still remember the day I got interested in honeybees,” Alan says. “I was ten years old, and doing odd jobs for folks in the neighborhood. I was helping our next-door neighbor with gardening and other tasks. There were two beehives in the back yard there, and one day I went over to work and here was this guy removing some odd-looking outfit from his head. That was Herman, taking off what I later realized was a hat and protective veil. He told me, ‘I’ve been checking for disease in these hives.’

(cont. on page 2)
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(continues from page 1)

“Disease? In beehives? Well, I was fascinated! Herman saw that; he gave me an extra hat and veil to wear so I could look inside the hives. However, he didn’t explain how to wear the gear, and I think I ended up putting it on upside down and backwards! But, anyway, here was this first hive I ever saw, five stories tall, and Herman’s standing there, telling me about American Foulbrood disease. Then he showed me the inside of the hive, with infected bees, and said, ‘This is terrible, it has to be burned.’

“Burning a beehive? I’ll tell you, I knew all about AFB before I ever got stung.” From then on, Ehry continues, “I would go around spotting beehives and reporting those I found so Herman could inspect them.” By the time Ehry left to go into the Navy, he had taken up beekeeping and had around 130 hives. He’d bought some for as little as $2.00, and accumulated others from swarms. When Ehry returned and continued his beekeeping pursuits, his experiences of working in the bee yards with Larsen proved invaluable.

“Herman was an incredible inspiration to me, both as a friend and a mentor. I learned so much from watching and working with him.” Ehry describes how Larsen managed his own apiary. “He worked those 600 hives with his boom loader,” says Ehry. “He had built hive stands that were 14” tall, 6-8 feet long, and had a real system going. Herman used staples fastened onto the hive lids as hooks to lift them.”

Larsen was very successful as a queen breeder, running his queen mating hives in shallow supers with two compartments. “I was continually intrigued by his cleverness. He never let that amputated leg limit what he accomplished. It wasn’t a detriment at all.” In fact, Ehry goes on, “Herman used the ‘stub leg’ as a convenient pusher when he was loading up and tying down the hives. He was amazing.” Ehry remembers having heard Larsen mutter, “I may walk with a crutch, but I don’t supply my bees with crutches.”

Larsen also loved observing bees and making up new woodenware during the winter, says Ehry. “He had enough equipment to go in and service a large bee yard, replacing the woodenware with fresh equipment. That meant he didn’t have to rush to extract the honey he’d pulled off, due to super shortages.” Larsen was respectful, but feisty, Ehry recalls. “He usually reasoned with people, but he really told off a pesticide-spraying pilot one time,” says Ehry. “I had to chuckle, and told him, ‘You tell ‘em—that a boy, Herman!’”

Ehry laughs, remembering another day when he and Larsen were delivering a load of hives for a contract in a farmer’s orchard. Having no understanding of pollination procedures, the farmer adamantly insisted that the men place “one hive here, one hive over in that corner, and put one in the middle of each acre.” Larsen looked at the man and replied, “Now, let’s suppose you’re keeping cattle in a field. You wouldn’t put one cow in one corner, another in a second corner, and a third cow in the middle, would you, and expect them to all stay in
those same places the whole time? They might all
move to one corner, or they might all three be in the
middle of the field. Bees are no different. They
know how to do their job here, and,” Larsen said
firmly, “I know how to do mine.” At last the farmer
understood; Larsen had made his point. The hives
were placed in the customary cluster.

As an active lifetime member of the OSBA,
Herman involved himself in historian duties and
generously donated honey or cash to various worthy
causes. He never quit working. “In fact,” says Ehry,
“When we gave him a rocking chair for his
retirement, it went over like a lead balloon. Herman
curtly informed us that he ‘wasn’t about to quit.’”
To prove it, at age 80, Larsen went to the Coast and
bought a saw mill, including two caterpillars and a
backhoe. And, he continued with his beekeeping
pursuits. “He’s one of the best beekeepers I’ve ever
known, very memorable,” Ehry concludes. “I miss
him terribly. We need more people like him.”

After his wife’s death, Larsen’s daughter,
Helen Garner, came in and cared for him every day
while also taking care of her own husband, who was
in cancer treatment. Sadly, Helen died two days
after her father’s funeral, just as her husband’s
condition was starting to improve.

Larsen is survived by another daughter,
Darlene Hockema of Waldport; a son, Norman, of
Florence; a sister, 10 grandchildren, 18 great-
grandchildren and 10 great-great grandchildren.A
graveside service was held on October 8 at Rest
Lawn memorial Park in Junction City. West Lawn
Memorial Park and Funeral Home in Eugene was in
charge of arrangements. Memorial contributions
may be made to a charity of choice.

(Special thanks go to Alan Ehry and Florence Ames
for their assistance in producing this story.)

Mary Moss is a beekeeper and freelance writer who
lives in Forest Grove. She is a past officer with
TVBA and a member of the OSBA.

By Harry Vanderpool, WVBA

November/December

- November marks the end of our close
  association with the bees for the year. Cheer
  up! There are many things you can do to help
  your bees and your operation.
- Take a walk in your apiary weekly. Conduct a
  visual inspection of hive entrances. Watch for
  signs of mice or other animal vandalism.
- Try to disturb the bees as little as possible. As
  the weather cools down, the bees will cluster
  into a tight unit centered around the brood area.
  They must keep the brood warm regardless of
  outside temperature. If you must rescue a hive
  in the dead of the cold with a manipulation, try
to work around the cluster rather than through
  it.
- December 21st is the first day of spring in the
  bee world. Are you ready for your next year in
  beekeeping? It could be the best year ever! It’s
  “New Year’s Resolution” time, folks! Settle on
  a resolution that will improve you as a
  beekeeper and your operation as well.
- Sit down and make a winter “to do” list. Hang
  it on the fridge for a few days so you can add to
  it as things pop into your head. Make a final
copy and hang it where you can’t miss it. Now
get to work.
- Pull your bee trucks into your shop and set aside
  a couple of hours for inspection time on each
  one. Change fluids, bleed and adjust brakes,
pack wheel bearings, check lights, etc. Don’t
  put this off. If you do, it will not get done.
- Make a point to contact a fellow beekeeper once
  in awhile just for the sake of exchanging notes.
- Order supplies for next year, comparing prices
  before ordering. By all means, feed you
  beekeeper’s disease. Shoot for the quantity
discount! Doesn’t that idea just warm your
  heart?
- Does the thought of getting your books up to
date depress you? Consider looking into an
accounting program like Quickbooks®. These
programs make beekeeping fast, fun and
informative. They also help you to look at your
operation from a statistical point of view. Ask

Beekeeping in Western Oregon
an association member to show you their favorite program.

- Purchase all the seasonal supplies you will need in advance for holiday retail sales.
- On a piece of paper, write down all of the good reasons you have for not attending your local beekeeper association’s monthly meeting. Wad the paper up, and light your woodstove with it. Isn’t a small fire great for bringing us all down to earth. We would all really enjoy your attendance at the next meeting.

Bee-Mail from the Honey Board


Provide a Natural Energy Boost for Athletes: Download a new “Honey and Exercise” brochure from the National Honey Board. Not only does the brochure highlight athletic performance and honey research, but it contains recipes for three flavors of HoneyAde, the honey sport beverage everyone can make at home.

National Honey Board Publishes Scientific Compendium: Humans have used honey for more than 8,000 years, according to documented sources. This natural sweetener has been used for everything from healing wounds to soothing coughs. The National Honey Board has summarized the numerous research studies conducted on honey in a published compendium titled “Honey-Health and Therapeutic Qualities.”

The new 28-page document sets the foundation with a narrative of honey’s history including references dating as far back as 460 BC with Hippocrates applying honey as a wound healer. Other research includes honey’s antimicrobial characteristics and the positive effects on disorders such as ulcers. The antimicrobial properties as they apply to food safety and food-borne pathogens are also outlined. An emerging area of research for the NHB concerns honey as a source of energy. Conclusions in the compendium note that honey “potentially offers many of the performance advantages of the sports beverages and gels that are commonly used by athletes.”

Additional research topics that are presented in the compendium include antioxidant activity including its use for food preservation and human health, prebiotic properties and other areas currently under investigation, including dental health.

The document is now available for health care professionals, food scientists and manufacturers and will be posted on the Honey Board Web Site at www.nhb.org/foodtech.

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Bee-Mail is available online at honeybuzz@nhb.org.

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How many beekeeping associations are there in the country? How do I find out more about them? There are hundreds of city, country and state beekeeping associations as well as many national and international organizations.

To locate beekeeping associations in your state, navigate to www.honeylocator.com. From the home page, click on the arrow next to “select all states.” Click on your state and then click the “learn more” button. Scroll down to the “State Honey Industry Associations” listing.

From our friends in Southcentral Alaska -
Simple Honey Pie

Try this for your holiday dessert!

1 cup honey
3 tablespoons butter
1 cup chopped pecans
3 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
dash nutmeg
9” pie shell, unbaked

In a saucepan, bring honey to a boil. Remove from heat. Quickly and carefully beat eggs into honey. Add butter, vanilla extract, pecans and nutmeg. Pour into pie shell and bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes, or until filling is set. Makes 6-8 servings.

Antibiotics on Honey
Dr. Eric Mussen, reprinted with permission from UC Apiaries Sept/Oct 2002

The recent discovery of traces (0.3 to 34.0 ppb) of the antibiotic chloramphenicol in honey had rocked the honey industry. Many countries are sampling and analyzing bulk honey shipments for illegal antibiotic residues.

How could an antibiotic get into honey (or crayfish)? Probably by the use of the antibiotic in hives to prevent or cure bee diseases. This is not a new procedure. Antibiotics frequently are used in animal health programs to prevent disease and promote faster growth. Our use of oxytetracycline in swine, poultry and honeybees are examples.

The problem comes from the use of unregistered antibiotics. In the case of chloramphenicol, that antibiotic is reserved in US medicine for combating stubborn, resistant bacterial infections of humans. Chloramphenicol is a very potent antibiotic. In a very few people it can cause a lethal blood disease, even then administered in miniscule amounts. Thus, the big concern over chloramphenicol.

From the point of view of honey, there are no “tolerances” for antibiotics. A tolerance is the maximum amount of a substance residue that is permitted to be is a product after the substance has been used as a “pesticide” application.

In the cases of oxytetracycline and fumagillin, when used as labeled, there are no detectable residues in honey. However, that may not always be the case.

The ability of analytical laboratories to find residues has continued to be refined over the years. When the labs could accurately measure only ppms (parts per million), then a “trace” meant a very few parts per million or a fraction thereof. Now labs can quantify most chemicals to ppb (parts per billion) that are one thousand times smaller than ppm. “Trace” currently means a very few parts per billion or even parts per trillion (a thousand times smaller yet.)

An excellent article on this topic was written in the Summer 2002 edition (issue #108) of Beelines, published by Saskatchewan Provincial Apiculturist John Gruszka. In the article a table shows the changes in detection limits for some antibiotics from 1999 to 2001: Tetracycline 0.1 ppm to 0.007 ppm; Oxytetracycline 0.1 ppm to 0.006 ppb (that’s six parts per billion!); Chlortetracycline 0.0 ppm to 0.010 ppm; Sulfa drugs 0.1 ppm to 0.015 ppb.

It is obvious that it is going to be very easy to determine what chemicals have been placed into hives, even more so a year earlier. The more persistent the chemical, the more readily it will be found. Keep this in mind if you decide to use an “alternative treatment” for AFB control.

Currently, oxytetracycline (in a powdered sugar “dust”) and fumagillin (in syrup) are “used up” when applied as instructed. Apparently, due to the fragility of oxytetracycline (Terramycin®), even use in extender patties has not led to problems.
If the registration of future antibiotics for control of American and European foulbrood goes as I have heard, then we probably will have residue tolerances set and we will have to use tylosin and lincomycin differently than we used oxytetracycline in the past.

The new antibiotics will be labeled for “therapeutic” use only, but not for “prophylactic” use. That means you have to see the disease signs (one or more sick larvae) before you use them. They will not be registered for preventive treatments.

This is the fallout of concerns about chronic, preventive use of antibiotics leading to selection of resistant strains of bacteria. In the case of swine and poultry, etc., there is evidence that antibiotic resistance in domestic animals has transferred microbes to humans. I doubt that this would be a problem with honeybees, but regulations are written for general applications, and exceptions for specific cases are very difficult to acquire.

Thus, as a beekeeper, you will have to wait until there are sick larvae containing millions of infectious spores before you can make an antibiotic application. It only takes a couple of weeks to develop a roaring case of AFB that can infect the rest of your colonies and the colonies of anyone else within flight distance. So, you are going to have to be checking those colonies real frequently to avoid disaster.

Conference Report
By Ray Varner

The Fall Conference was very well attended this year. My thanks to the Committee who worked hard to pull it all together. There were many folks working behind the scenes to make sure all those details were taken care of so the Conference would run smoothly.

I noticed high attendance at all the presentations, up to and including those held late Saturday afternoon. Often the ranks have thinned by then, but not this time. Our speakers were dynamic and made timely presentations. I hope those of you who attended went home with useful information.

Next year’s event will be the regional Northwest Corner Fall Conference, and facilities have been booked in Hood River to accommodate attendees from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska and British Columbia. New Vice President Harry Vanderpool is already hard at work!

The editor will be contacting speakers from this year’s conference in hopes of presenting articles based on their presentations. Hopefully you will see those in future editions of The BeeLine.

Hope you all have a good holiday season!

10 Rules of Successful Beekeeping
reprinted courtesy Clatsop County Beekeepers Association

1. The bees are all that matter, not the honey, not the pollination. If you put the bees first they will pollinate your plants and provide you with honey. If the bees are not your top priority you may lose all three.
2. **Never** mess with your hive when it is rainy, cold or windy.
3. Inspect your hives thoroughly when you do open them up, but leave them alone as much as possible. Let the bees do their job.
4. If you are unsure about any hive condition ask other beekeepers for advice. You are responsible for making the final decision.
5. Read and study as much as you can. Get a good book on beekeeping, subscribe to a good magazine like Bee Culture or the American Bee Journal, get to know other beekeepers by attending local beekeeping meetings.
6. Medicate bees on time. Follow the directions on medications. Do not over or under medicate.
Remove medications on time, and do not install honey supers until the recommended post medication time had elapsed.
7. Keep all equipment clean and in good repair.
8. Don’t be cheap, buy good equipment, good bees, good tested and approved medications.
9. Don’t be discouraged if a hive does not thrive. Beekeeping is often a puzzle, but this puzzle most often has a solution. Learning from mistakes makes better beekeepers.
10. Reread and memorize rule #1.