AN APPRENTICESHIP IN BEEKEEPING

Rosanna Mattingly

Helga Moll has kept honey bees since she was in her teenage years. Similar to most long-time beekeepers, she can’t imagine life without them. She learned beekeeping as an apprentice to a Master Beekeeper in the village of Kaltenkirchen, Germany. To do so, she had to move away from her family for the first time and was terribly homesick. But, she says, she “learned a lot.”

Helga describes the man she apprenticed with as “old, but not retired.” He was a large, bull-doggish man with a booming voice and bulging eyes. And he was moody. He was also diabetic and today she understands that this may have played a role in his disposition. At the time, however, she only knew that he was sometimes nice and sometimes not so nice. In addition to keeping bees, he was a Master Stove-Maker. He had spent four years with schooling to learn how to build wood stoves with beautiful tiles “from scratch.”

Helga’s apprenticeship consisted of two beekeeping seasons with bee college during the intervening winter. During bee season, Helga lived with the Beekeeper’s family. When she wasn’t working bees, she cleaned house, worked in the garden, and dealt with the septic system. She remembers pouring material from the system in rings around tree trunks. Nothing was wasted. She had Sundays off.

The Beekeeper’s apiary was typical of the region and consisted of about two hundred colonies. Helga worked with the Beekeeper to move the bees throughout the season. They began in a bee yard full of rapeseed, after which they moved the bees to clover, then to linden, and finally to heather before taking them back to Kaltenkirchen.

Helga is known for her beekeeping and for the honey her bees produce. Since her youth, she has understood the value of good honey. World War II made that apparent to people in many countries. Helga describes the honey produced early in the
MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

The Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences held a stakeholders meeting with over forty representatives of agriculture, including OSBA, in attendance on March 20th and 21st, 2006.

Attendees represented a cross-section of the diverse food systems and natural resources that depend upon the college across the state. Fishing, forestry, cattle, seed, fruit, vegetables, and many other interests were present. About twenty branch experiment station superintendents, academic department heads, and other college administrators joined the meeting as well.

The objective of the two-day meeting was to hear all relevant and authentic perspectives about managing education, research, and extension within the current budget, and then to consider strategies to increase funding for the future.

Dean Thayne Dutson opened the meeting with a statement about the importance and value of agriculture to Oregon’s economy. Although education and research are vital, he noted that budget constraints make it difficult to address every specific critical need in a state with such a wide array of crops and natural resources. He pressed the group to think in terms of integrated food and fiber systems and the importance of working together for mutual benefit.

The college’s budgets, budget cuts, and the consequences of these cuts were discussed. Stakeholders then delivered their expectations of the college:

- Technological needs will increase as labor becomes more scarce and expensive.
- Agriculture research should continue to help Oregon grow a sustainable, globally competitive economy.
- The college must prepare a new generation of leadership across agricultural sectors and continue to help develop new markets for Oregon’s diverse agricultural production.
- The college, the experiment station, and OSU Extension must continue to be a source of unbiased, credible information and provide a forum for the discussion of new ideas.

Dean Dutson again spoke on a platform of working toward common goals. “The greatest promise for continued state support for education and research lies in a strategy based on common interests and collaboration,” he said.
As budget limitations make it tougher to meet the needs of all constituents, the college and its stakeholders must work together to make opportunities possible. Dean Dutson then mentioned “the beekeepers” as an example of one such effort.

Much discussion followed about investing state funds to leverage additional dollars from federal sources and the need for stakeholders (us) to help legislators and staff understand this principle.

Even with the ever-present talk of the shrinking dollar and budget cuts, I was encouraged by this meeting. As we continue working with the college to gain an Entomologist within the Department of Horticulture, we are, I believe, served well by heeding Dean Dudson’s words and identifying those with whom we can work in concert and collaboration toward a common goal. Thought through, it looks like a win–win.

Also, in reflection, it was very gratifying to hear Dean Dutson cite our work with the college and the OSU Foundation from the pulpit as his example. For those of you who have internet access, you may be interested in reviewing the OSU Department of Horticulture’s Strategic Plan. The site is: http://oregonstate.edu/dept/hort/. Once there, click on Strategic Plan.

It is up to us and our collaborators to follow through. I’m confident we are up to the challenge.

Harry

THE BACKYARD BEEKEEPER

The Backyard Beekeeper by Kim Flottum (2005) is subtitled An Absolute Beginner’s Guide to Keeping Bees in Your Yard and Garden. And it is that. Yet it is a rich resource for seasoned beekeepers as well. As Mark Winston writes, “This is the liveliest, most entertaining, informative book about the keeping of bees I’ve seen in a long time. It’s full of useful, practical information, but written with a sense of fun, wit, and verve that is truly delightful. Reading The Backyard Beekeeper made me want to go out to enjoy my bees.” This book is filled, cover to cover, with straightforward and detailed information and images that explain exactly how to go about keeping bees—including how to install a package, light a smoker, inspect a hive, replace a queen, identify and manage pests and diseases, take off honey, work with wax, and keep records. And it doesn’t stop there. The Backyard Beekeeper includes carefully crafted instructions and recipes for making candles, creams, and soaps, along with main dishes, vegetables, sauces, and desserts with resources derived from the work of the honey bee colony. The book clearly reflects the author’s premise that a hobbyist beekeeper can keep bees well, accomplish much, have fun, and take advantage of all we’ve learned in the past 150 years. Enjoy! —RM
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(503) 581-9372

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Central Oregon Beekeepers
Meets 6:30 pm, third Tuesday, Bend
Deschutes Public Library, Hutch Rm
President: Dennis Gallagher
(541) 389-4776; denbend@coinet.com
Secretary/Treasurer: Glenda Galaba
(541) 383-1775; galaba@msn.com

Clatsop County Beekeepers
Meets 7 pm, third Wednesday, Astoria
Extension Office, 2001 Marine Dr, Ste 210
President: Steve Lindros
(503) 325-1127; slindros@hotmail.com
Vice Pres: Don Thompson; (503) 458-6714
Secretary/Treasurer: Marylyn Sanbrailo
(503) 717-8448

Coos County Beekeepers
Meets 6:30 pm, third Saturday (except Dec)
Ohlsen Baxter Bldg, 631 Alder St, Myrtle Pt
President: Thomas Kyelberg
(541) 297-4017; usvi@charter.net
Vice Pres: Spike Richardson; (541) 267-4725
Secretary: Marcia Burgdorf; (541) 888-5695
Treasurer: Jane Oku; (541) 396-4016
jane_oku@hotmail.com

Lane County Beekeepers
Meets 7:30 pm, third Tuesday, Eugene
EWEB Meeting Rooms, 500 E 4th Ave
President: Mike Harrington
(541) 689-8705; beekeeper@comcast.net
Vice Pres: Morris Ostrofsky
(541) 685-2875; ostrofsky@pacinfo.com
Secretary: Barbara Bajec
(541) 767-9066; mbartels@babastrodesigns.com
Treasurer: Nancy Ograin
(541) 935-7065; woodrt@pacinfo.com

Portland Metro Beekeepers
Meets 7 pm, second Thursday, Oregon City
Hous Auth Clackamas Bldg, 13930 S Gain
President: Sam Hutchinson
(503) 829-7744; samh@molalla.net
Secretary: Paul Hardzinski; (503) 631-3927
Treasurer: John Keeley
(503) 632-3682; keeley81@bctonline.com

Southern Oregon Beekeepers
Meets 7:30 pm, first Monday, Central Pt
So Or Res & Ext Ctr, 569 Hanley Rd
President: John Jacob
(541) 582-BEES; oldsol@jeffnet.org
Vice Pres: Brian Bolstad
(541) 512-2364; bolstad815@hotmail.com
Secretary: Mysti Jacob; (541) 582-2337
Treasurer: Laurie Boyce
(541) 846-0133; leanira@hotmail.com

Tillamook County Beekeepers
Meets 7 pm, first Thursday, Tillamook
Forestry Building, 5005 Third St
President: Bob Allen; (503) 322-3819
Vice Pres: Terry Fullan
(503) 368-7160; tfullan@nehalemeltel.net
Secretary/Treasurer: Wayne Auble

Tualatin Valley Beekeepers
Meets 7:30 pm, last Friday, Beaverton
OSU Ext, #1400, 18640 SW Walker Rd
President: Todd Balsiger
(503) 357-8938; toddbalsiger@comcast.net
Vice Pres: Andrew Schwab
(503) 537-0506; Pyr4ausi@verizon.net
Secretary: Preston Gabel
(503) 530-1436; preston@gabelhaven.com
Treasurer: Walt Amour; (503) 690-9930

Willamette Valley Beekeepers
Meets 7:30 pm, fourth Monday, Salem
Chemeketa Comm College, Bldg 34, Rm A
President: Fritz Skirvin; (503) 581-9372
Vice Pres: Mike Rodia
(503) 364-3275; droidia@yahoo.com
Secretary: Evan Burroughs
(503) 585-5924; n7ifj@qwest.net
Treasurer: Susan Rauchfuss
(503) 391-5600; smokfoot@cyberis.net
NEWS FROM THE REGION

Central Oregon Beekeepers
Thom Trusewicz says that he proposed a bee school to Glenda Galaba, and then, “even with only three-weeks notice, it was fantastic!” Central Oregon Community College let them use a beautiful lecture theater at no charge. And seventeen beekeepers traveled through the snow for the six-hour class. They now plan to make bee school in Bend an annual event.

Lane County Beekeepers
The April newsletter will soon be archived at: http://www.lcbaor.org/Newsletter.htm. Mike Harrington notes the nice piece by Jonathan Loftin about LCBA’s bee school in this issue.

Portland Metro Beekeepers
As Sam Hutchinson says, by the time The Bee Line comes out, this April’s Bee Day “will be history.” He reminds folks that George Hansen generously provides the bees and his barnyard for this annual event filled with hands-on demonstrations and sharing of information useful for both new and experienced beekeepers. Sam notes that the group will consider swarm control in May. The meeting will be a general discussion of methods used by the more-experienced beekeepers with references to articles published in beekeeping magazines. The June and July meetings will consider harvest and preparation for winter, respectively. The group will continue its monthly roundtable discussions.

Southern Oregon Beekeepers
Mysti Jacob reports that the group is continuing work on their research project and preparing for bee school March 6. The event is for beginners and will cover everything from honey extraction to hive maintenance.

Tualatin Valley Beekeepers
Todd Balsiger says that TVBA cancelled the group’s conventional meeting for April, and instead invited everyone to attend the Bee Day at George Hansen’s. He notes that Bee Day is informative and especially worthwhile for the group’s beginners. The May meeting is set as another field day, this time at Dan Hiscoe’s. Among other things, the day will include a look at Dan’s queen-raising efforts. Vice-President Andrew Schwab has suggested that TVBA purchase a small extractor that the group could rent out to members; that way it could pay for itself. Andrew will be doing the “hive inspection” presentation at Bee Day. Todd recently spoke to Jerry Velley, who has agreed to do a presentation on beekeeping in Thailand, probably in July. Jerry has a very interesting story to tell—for example, he pays workers about a $1 a day to pick mites out of cells! They are not Varroa mites but something worse—smaller, faster, and more deadly. So, there’s another mite from Asia we don’t want. Jerry uses extreme caution to avoid bringing any of these mites back to the States.

Taking a Pulse
Sheryl Johnson at Ruhl Bee Supply says she’s made hundreds of phone calls these past weeks to let beekeepers know that their package bees were going to be late because of weather conditions in northern California. She says that package bee breeders have told her this is the worst year in over fifty for conditions that allow the queen to be mated and the bees to build up. This is unfortunate because it is a particularly busy year. In addition to the many people starting in bees this season, many are returning to beekeeping after time away.

At GloryBee, Margaret Forsythe is seeing lots of folks dealing with swarms. They are purchasing swarm traps and pheromone lures, and adding their names to GloryBee’s list of people available to collect swarms. (The list also includes those with swarms to be collected.) In addition, folks are buying equipment, often preassembled (for swarms needing to be hived quickly!). Their bee weekend went well, with beekeepers coming from as far away as Colorado. Dick Turanski did the demonstrations for installing package bees indoors—
Taking a Pulse (continued from page 5)

and then groups went out to do the actual installations quickly in the rain. Beekeepers have had many questions about when to check the bees after installation, how to see eggs and larvae, how often and how long to feed, and how to treat Nosema.

BEEKEEPING IN WESTERN OREGON

Harry Vanderpool

May

Don’t let colony stores get below two or three full frames of honey. Depending on your location, elevation, and the weather, periods of dearth are still possible.

Supply water in apiaries and outyards. Small wading pools made of hard plastic provide an inexpensive water source. In addition to water, add rocks or boards for bees to land on.

Inspect colonies at least every other week. Replace as many crummy frames as you can. Toss the old frames into a burn barrel and light a match before you change your mind!

Keep an eye out for American foulbrood. If you do not know how to identify it, ask a senior beekeeper to accompany you during your hive inspections.

Check the calendar and remove Varroa mite strips according to instructions.

Place honey supers on hives only after spring medications have ended, Varroa strips are out, and any prescribed rest period (e.g., with Api Life VAR). Read the labels!

Stay a step ahead of any tendency to swarm with thoughtful timing of your annual requeening program and by making splits and nucs. Supering ahead for honey and increasing ventilation seem to help as well.

Set out some extra hives with empty frames to serve as swarm decoys.

Consider trying procedures you’ve been interested in but haven’t yet attempted. Enjoy your life with bees!

Attend the meetings of your regional beekeepers association. You are truly missed when you aren’t there.


BEE-GINNING

Thom Trusewicz

It was probably ten years ago when my friend Terry in Nehalem uttered the words that changed my life. We were out having a pizza with three other burley guys wearing flannel shirts. It was a Tuesday—men’s night out.

Looking at our group, one would imagine we were having conversations about elk hunting and football scores, or telling lies about all the steelheads we had caught. In reality, we conversed about books, foreign films, and culinary arts. With five guys at a table, it was often possible to have more than one conversation going at once.

There was a momentary lull when soft-spoken Terry leaned toward me and said, “Thom, honey bees have changed my life.”

OK!?! That opened up a new arena of discussion. Terry had recently started keeping
bees. He was still learning the craft, and he didn’t feel comfortable divulging too much about something he did not yet understand very well.

After that, Terry seemed to mention honey bees changing his life once a year—every spring. This is the time, I now understand, when package bees are available to install in hives.

After hearing Terry repeat the words for several consecutive years, I figured it was time to experience what he promised to be a life-changing experience.

The preamble to a visit to the apiary included instructions on how to behave around honey bees. Movements should be slow and purposeful. I should never stand in front of the hive entrance. I needed to remain calm, and, if a bee were to bump me, I was to heed that as a warning and respectfully walk away. If the bees were flying too close to my face, I was to hold my breath. Bees seem to consider the carbon dioxide of our exhaled breath as a signal of a predator. I was also given instructions on how to remove a stinger if a bee did make contact.

I walked calmly with Terry up to his bee yard. We were dressed in regular clothing. Terry assured me that it would be safe because we would not be doing any invasive inspections. Honey bees zipped past us in all directions. It wasn’t at all disconcerting; in fact, it would be better described as wondrous.

Terry lifted the outer and inner covers of one hive to show me the colony enclosed within. The honey bees were walking purposefully along the top bars from frame to frame. Though they were exposed to outside light and air, they showed no concern.

I survived the inspection unscathed. My bee yard confidence was high. Terry asked if I would help him and lift one side of a hive while he lifted the other. The hive needed a slight repositioning for some reason. Terry lifted from the bottom board while I assumed the bottom board was attached and therefore lifted from the box. There was an awkward shift and a tip, and guard bees boiled out of the entrance. We had to put the boxes down before we could “respectfully walk away.” That wasn’t fast enough for one bee. She bumped me twice and then stung me in the wrist. I was initiated.

I followed the instructions on how to remove a stinger, but my wrist swelled and ached for several days. Though I was stung, I thought of it as having been bitten by the bug. An observer from the outside would have been able to see my transformation as though I had just been bitten by a vampire. I would wander the Earth in search of good nectar sources. I would wake in the night thinking of solutions to mite infestations. I now had bee fever, and I wanted—no, needed to become a bee keeper.

I purchased several books and spent the fall and winter reading about honey bees. The following spring I started my first two colonies. Since then, I have observed and played a part in the lives of my colonies. I find joy in the scent of a colony on a warm summer day. I love the smell of propolis on my fingers. I love the first taste of honey each year. In spring, as I install my new colonies into their hives, I anticipate the joy my apiary will bring in the months ahead.

And now, every spring, I can be found leaning toward the ears of friends and quietly telling them that honey bees have changed my life.
Apprenticing with Bees (continued from page 1)

A map of the bee yards Helga worked in during her apprenticeship. Site I contained rapeseed, Site II, clover, and Site III, linden. The heather site (not shown) required an overnight drive. Helga included this map as part of her apprenticeship journal. One night during Helga’s second year of apprenticeship, she was unloading bee hives in the heather bee yard with the Beekeeper by the light of the headlights of his truck. He instructed her to open the entrance of one of the hives. She did as she was told and was stung “two hundred times.” She dropped to the ground unconscious. There was no chance of calling a doctor as the closest town was three hours away. To this day, she would rather take the time to put on a veil than risk the possibility of ever getting stung like that again. We’ll learn more about Helga’s veil and some of her other means in an upcoming issue of *The Bee Line*.

spring from rapeseed as solid white, like butter, and “so good.” It had to be extracted as soon as it was produced because it crystallizes quickly, after which extracting is not possible. The clover honey was similar to that we’re familiar with here. Linden honey is light and aromatic. In Germany at that time, the government planted trees for honey bees. In addition to linden trees, chestnut, pear, cherry, plum, and apple trees flanked country roads. And people would often smell the honey before they would buy it. In contrast to these lighter honeys, the honey from the heather bee yard, which was located on a high plateau with sandy soil, was dark—almost green in color, thick, and rich in taste. It too had to be extracted quickly.

Extracting honey involved constant work, not only because of the plant species but also because of the equipment. Bee hives were “all...
one piece.” There was no possibility of adding supers. The hives were the size of two of what we know as “deeps.” And they were heavy. All of the work, including the lifting, was done by hand. The hives held removable frames, ten on the bottom for the brood and ten on top for honey. A queen excluder separated the two layers. Although Helga and the Beekeeper used a truck to move the hives from one bee yard to another, she rode a bicycle to reach the bee yards to work the bees. A cart attached to the rear of the bicycle held any extra hives, frames, and other equipment. These trips between the bee yards and town generally covered a distance of many miles.

The bee college Helga attended during her apprenticeship was held in Bad Segeberg. Helga remembers the beautiful flower gardens and trickling fountain on the grounds. There she studied the anatomy, life cycle, and functions of the honey bee. She dissected bees and saw such diseases as the protozoan *Nosema apis* through a microscope. And she received an A+ on her final exam. Her requirements for graduation also included a daily journal, which she titled *Dos Bienenreich (The Bee Kingdom)*. The journal speaks wonderfully of her care and attention to detail, her artistry, and her whimsy. Helga has also kept the newspaper clipping announcing that she had completed her apprenticeship. Some time afterwards, she taught her Dad how to keep bees and remembers helping him find the queen. He thanked her many times and told her that there could not have been a nicer way for him to retire than to begin to keep bees. He ended up managing sixty hives at one time.

Helga’s fascination with bees and beekeeping continues to this day. Her gardens are like a park, landscaped in every detail, full of wonder and, of course, plants for the bees. Her bee house—which shields her hives from both the sun and the rain, her equipment (pipe, goose feather, and all), and her methods are a study in function for beekeeping. And she constantly feeds her quick mind through observation, questioning, and ongoing reading about honey bees, bee diseases and pests, and beekeeping practices of all kinds. When Helga says, “My bees are happy,” the smile on her face lights up the world.
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Membership in the Oregon State Beekeepers Association is open to anyone with an interest in bees and beekeeping. You do not need to own bees or reside in Oregon to join. OSBA membership includes a vote in OSBA elections, discounts on publications, and ten issues of *The Bee Line*.

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A swarm in May...is worth a load of hay!

Oregon State Beekeepers Association is a nonprofit organization representing and supporting all who have an interest in bees and beekeeping.

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