



Pacific Northwest Colony Mortality 1996

by Michael Burgett
Department of Entomology
Oregon State University

Honey bee colonies are nationally experiencing high mortalities, which has even recently received national attention (see *TIME* magazine July 15, 1996, The Flowering Crisis). While numerous individuals associated with the honey bee industry state various loss statistics, nowhere is this being better documented than the Pacific Northwest region of the U.S. For the past eight years results from the OSU Honey Bee Lab survey of regional beekeepers have shown annual colony losses are in excess of 20%. The results for 1996 show a colony mortality of 19% for commercial beekeepers, and a 33% loss for semi-commercial beekeepers. Both of these percentages are reduced from 1995 which, for regional commercial beekeepers, was 24% and for semi-commercial beekeepers was 38%. The losses for 1996 show at least a positive trend downward from the two previous years of 1994 and 1995, two years in which regional beekeepers experienced their highest losses.

A major factor for the high losses has been the introduction and spread of two species of parasitic mites, the honey bee tracheal mite (*Acarapis woodi*), which was first discovered in the PACIFIC NORTHWEST in 1985, and the Asian brood mite (*Varroa jacobsoni*), which was first detected in our region in 1989. These mites quickly spread and beekeepers should now consider them as

ubiquitous, which means that mite control programs need to be administered annually.

In addition to the direct mortality of colonies from mite parasitism, there are also suspected stress interactions when colonies are infested with both species of mites, a condition which should be considered as normal for our region. And we are beginning to understand the role of mites in the transmission of viral diseases of adult bees, such as acute bee paralysis virus, which adds an additional stress to colonies already weakened by mite parasitism. It should be pointed out that mite-caused colony losses are in addition to all previous mortality factors. We still have colonies dying from starvation, brood diseases, and predators.

43 beekeepers from Oregon and Washington provided the data for the 1996 survey. There were 21 commercial beekeepers (each owning more than 300 colonies) and 22 semi-commercial beekeepers (each owning less than 300 hives). A total of 38,414 colonies were owned by the beekeepers who cooperated in the survey. This is approximately one-third of the commercial and semi-commercial colonies currently registered

Table 1. Commercial Hives - Living Colonies by Date¹

	Jul. '95	Sep. '95	Oct. '95	Dec. '95	Feb. '96	Mar. '96
Number of Hives	36,485	35,430	33,788	33,109	30,783	29,399
Cumulative % Loss	0	3%	7%	9%	16%	19%

¹ 21 beekeepers.

Table 2. Semi-Commercial Hives - Living Colonies by Date¹

	Jul. '95	Sep. '95	Oct. '95	Dec. '95	Feb. '96	Mar. '96
Number of Hives	1,929	1,855	1,712	1,627	1,483	1,289
Cumulative % Loss	0	4%	11%	16%	23%	33%

¹ 22 beekeepers

in Oregon and Washington.

Tables 1 and 2 present the colony loss data by month. The most important dates for colony numbers are the first and last months,

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Editorial Offices - send news, announcements, letters, comments, and advertising to:

Ron Bennett, editor
11260 Simpson Road
Monmouth, OR 97361-9630
Tel: 503-838-2328
Fax: 503-838-6040
e-mail: ooffy@aol.com

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from the Editor's Desk

by Ron Bennett

This month's newsletter is just a little late. I wanted to wait until after the Summer Picnic to send out this issue with the idea in mind that I'd have an article on the Picnic and the visit to Central Oregon Seed. Well, the best laid plans...

We got to the picnic about an hour after everyone had eaten and were already packing up. But even at that, it was worth the time to see old friends, hear lies about how well their bees are doing, and learn some interesting beekeeping tidbits. Next year, you should make a point to try to come to these events, they are well worth the effort.

I hope to have an article from your President in the next issue, and we may have a most interesting report from the trip to Central Oregon Seed Co. next issue as well.



STATE FAIR - sign up is filling up fast for booth duty at the State Fair. The time slots are morning - 10A until 4P, and 4P to closing each day. You get a free pass for the day of your booth duty AND free parking! Call me and I'll try to find a slot for you!



Look at the Calendar on page 10 and notice the new date and location for the Fall OSBA Conference. Your VP, Charlie Mock, and Dr. Burgett are putting together a program even more interesting than last year's event. We'll have details next issue.



The focus this month is on hive losses and winter kills. Here in the Northwest we are fortunate to be able to take part in the ONLY longterm study of hive mortality. Read this month's report from Dr. Burgett and notice the results and what they may mean for NW beekeeping. Compare this information with the reports in last month's Speedy Bee from around the country (losses in the same state from 0% to 100% - what kind of data is that?) and be thankful that we have someone like Dr. Burgett here in the NW.

One of the perks of editing the Bee Line is that I'm on all sorts of beekeeping mailing list for organization like the OSBA around the country. One article of note is from Dr. Tom Webster of Kentucky State University, who has some interesting data on winter losses as well.

And, keeping with the treatment theme, we have an article from Dr. Tom Sanford of the University of Florida of AFB, which may be more of a problem in the near future.

Cont. from Page 1 which provides the data for the overall loss figures. For commercial colonies in 1996 this was 19%, down from the 24% of the 1995. For semi-commercial beekeepers the corresponding loss was 33%, down from the 38% loss experienced in 1995. The average annual loss over the past eight years has been 21% for commercial colonies and 26% for semi-commercial hives (see Table 3).

All commercial beekeepers are now practicing some form of chemical control for mite management. For varroa control, Apistan® is the material used by most beekeepers both because of effectiveness and because it is the sole material presently registered by the EPA for use against varroa. 76% of the commercial beekeepers administered Apistan® in 1995. For semi-commercial beekeepers 18 of 22 beekeepers (82%) utilized

Apistan®. Only a few beekeepers utilized no mite control, which is a significant change from past years. While we do not yet fully understand the interactions of mite parasitism with colony health, we do know that untreated colonies infested with varroa will ultimately die, and this can happen more quickly than we had previously believed. Many more beekeepers are utilizing vegetable fat "grease" patties for tracheal mite management and often in combination with menthol fumigation. Concerning chemical control programs for mite management, a positive sign is a reduction in the use of untested

and unregistered chemicals. The author wishes to thank all the beekeepers who took the time to fill out survey forms. Their collective efforts are providing the most accurate assessment of colony losses for any region of the U.S.

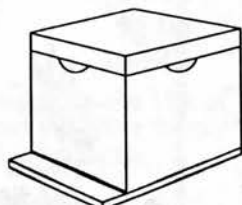
Table 3. Summary of Winter Losses for the period 1989 - 1996

	Commercial Colonies (>300) Loss %	Non-Commercial Colonies (<300) Loss %	Number of colonies in survey
1996	19%	33%	38,414
1995	24	38	50,058
1994	25	37	39,405
1993	17	33	21,791
1992	22	13	17,418
1991	19	17	20,624
1990	21	22	25,352
1989	22	13	10,812
AVERAGE	21%	26%	

Summary for the "Average" beekeeping Operation - 1996

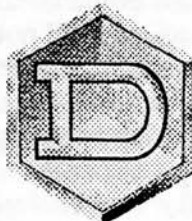
	Commercial (≥300 hives)	Semi-Commercial (<300 hives)
Average # colonies on July 1, 1995	1,830	88
Average # colonies on March 1, 1996	1,420	59
Average colony loss	19%	33%
Total colonies in survey	36,485	1,929
Total colony loss	7,086	640
Number of beekeepers	21	22

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er, producer/packers or importer who does not receive a ballot should contact Richard Schultz, the referendum agent.

Persons who have received an exemption from assessment for the entire representative period are ineligible to vote.

Details of the referendum will appear in the July 2, *Federal Register*. For additional information, contact Richard Schultz, Research and Promotion Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, Rm. 2535-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456 or tel. (202) 720-5976.

**USDA Sets Dates for
Honey Promotion
Program Referendum**

WASHINGTON, June 28 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture is conducting a referendum among honey producers, producer-packers and importers Aug. 1-30.

Lon Hatamiya, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said producers, producer-packers and importers will vote on whether to continue the national research, promotion and consumer information program for honey.

The program's authorizing legislation, the Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Act, directs that the secretary of agriculture conduct a referendum among eligible honey producers, producer-packers and importers every five years after the date the program began. The referendum is to determine whether those voting favor continuing the program. The first continuance referendum on the honey program was conducted in August 1991.

Known honey producers, producer-packers and importers will receive ballots to cast in the referendum. Persons who produced, produced and handled or imported honey between Jan. 1, 1994, and Dec. 31, 1995, are eligible to vote. Any eligible produc-

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Basics in Northwest Beekeeping

by Ron Bennett

August is the month to wrap up your honey crop and start your efforts for next year. You should remove your honey supers and extract or prepare your cut comb. But, keep supers on your hives with a few empty combs on the colonies, specially those that are overly heavy with stores in the brood nest. You still have a lot of bees in your hive and even though the blossoms that are on now are not the most desirable for honey, the bees need something to do and somewhere to put the nectar. Honey that the bees produce now is the honey they will winter over with.

But, don't tempt robber bees by exposing honey. As you remove the supers from the hives, cover them immediately and remove them from the bee yard as soon as possible. Once robbing starts, it is very difficult to stop and can cause the death of several of your hives!

Yellowjackets are also normally a problem this time of the year and exposed honey will draw them right to you. This year we may luck out on the yellowjacket hordes. Seems that the winter flooding wiped out huge number of yellowjacket queens that normally winter-over near stream and river banks.

If you have not already started your fall treatment program, NOW is the time to start. Your queens will start laying eggs now that will be hatched brood by September first, and these are the bees that will be wintering over in your hives. You should have your Apistan strips in your hives to treat for *Varroa* mites and terramycin extender patties on the top frames to treat for tracheal mites and American Foulbrood.

Don't work the brood nest unless necessary. The bees that are being raised now are very important to your Spring success. Watch for any signs of robbing and reduce entrances to a bee space sized slot

after hot days are over.

Keep on the lookout for American Foulbrood and check your stored comb for possible wax moth infestation. And remember to remove Apistan strips after five weeks of treatment.

News from the National Honey Board

Make a Beeline for Applebee's

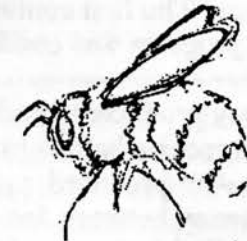
Longmont, Colo.—Applebee's, a 715-unit family-style restaurant chain, will launch a new honey chicken salad this summer.

Honey Almond Chicken Spinach Salad is described as "Fresh and then some!" Fresh spinach tossed in a tangy Oriental vinegarete is topped with strawberries, almonds, red onions and slices of honey-grilled chicken. Each chicken breast is drizzled with more than ½ ounce of honey.

This honey-of-a-salad will be featured on menu clip-ons, table tents and in free-standing newspaper advertisements. All promotional pieces feature the National Honey Board's honey bear logo.

Applebee's restaurants are located in 45 states. The salad will be part of the chain's Summer Fare '96 promotion, and will be available May 27-September 1.

Make a beeline to an Applebee's near you to try this new honey fresh salad.



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Plan Now for National Honey Month - September Will Be Buzzin'!

Longmont, Colo.—You're probably busy as a ... um, well, bee right now. But it's not too soon to start planning which of your local newspapers and radio/television stations to contact about National Honey Month. September is National Honey Month and it is also the traditional beginning of honey's high sales and usage season - a great time to "pitch" your honey business.

You don't have to be a big company to get attention. "Often, media people will prefer newsy items from small local businesses," said Mary Humann, marketing director for the National Honey Board. "The main thing is to remember that publicity results from a good story. Think about a story in terms of what will be interesting to readers and not what you will get out of it."

You might be surprised at what the media considers newsworthy. Maybe this is a good year for a rare type of honey plant - and you expect to have some honey that people might not be able to find in the grocery store. Community service events such as a honey-tasting or a demonstration or lecture at a local school are especially suitable for the community bulletin board slots offered by the media. Don't overlook the value of a positive story. You might have the news "90-year-old grandmother packs her own honey"; or "60-year-old business still in the family and things are buzzin'."

The Honey Board is ready to help with news releases full of story ideas, recipes and honey and honey bee facts. National Honey Month press kits will be available in June, so you will have plenty of time to plan your promotion. To order your press kit, call Jami Yanoski at (800) 553-7162.

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Longmont, Colo.—The National Honey Board has a new catalog presenting 26 products available to help you in your efforts to promote honey. Next to the picture of each product, you'll find a brief description, a tip on using the product and the price. In the back of the catalog is a handy order form, or you may order products by calling a toll-free number.

To receive your free copy of the catalog, call (800) 553-7162.

Quick and Easy Honey Recipes

Longmont, Colo. - Quick and easy honey recipes are featured in a new handout from the Honey Board - perforated recipe cards that fit in a recipe box!

"A recipe leaflet is hard to file and easy to lose," said Sherry Jennings, communications and education director for the National Honey Board. "Your customers can tear off these honey recipe cards and keep them in a recipe box to be used again and again."

Three 3" x 5" perforated recipe cards are presented on 8½" x 11" handouts. Each recipe card has a taste-tempting photograph and a quick and easy recipe on the front. On the back of each card are several sweet tips for using honey.

The handouts are ready now for your use in promotions or to accompany your honey products. Beekeeping associations and assessment-paying supporters of the National Honey Board can order up to 500 recipe handouts per year free of charge. Additional handouts are available at five cents each.

To order handouts, call the National Honey Board toll-free at (800) 553-7162

American Foulbrood on the Increase?

by M.T. Sanford, University of Florida
from the May 1996 issue of APIS

In the rush to make increases in colonies, another result of high honey prices seems to be a rise in the incidence of American foulbrood (AFB). Almost eliminated from Florida apiaries last year, according to Mr. Cutts, the disease has resurged. Complacency appears to be the culprit, as beekeepers have failed to preventatively treat and manage their colonies to control this disease.

All beekeepers in Florida are required to register with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (see November 1992 *APIS*). This provides for an annual AFB inspection. Many beekeepers also feed the antibiotic Terramycin® on a preventative basis (see September 1994 *APIS*). If the disease is found, the colony is required by law to be destroyed along with the bees and honey by burning, the most effective way to destroy reservoirs of infectious bacterium. The state inspection service provides a small remuneration for colonies it destroys.

Because the bacterium produces spores that can survive for many years in hostile environments, there is more danger of spreading AFB than other bee diseases. This is especially true because the spores can survive in honey. Although robbing bees do spread the spores, it is probable that careless beekeepers are more responsible for outbreaks of the disease. Constant vigilance is the key, but the recent focus on making increase to take advantage of higher prices may have distracted beekeepers, allowing AFB to again become epidemic.

Given this set of circumstances, it is instructive to see how Florida's disease control program compares with some others. Recently, Mr. Nick Wallingford, president of the National Beekeepers' Association of New Zealand, provided some infor-

mation on the Internet concerning that country's activities in eliminating AFB.

According to Mr. Wallingford, there is evidence that AFB, caused by the spore-forming bacterium *Bacillus larvae*, will not develop unless more than 500,000 spores are fed to a honey bee colony. [Editor's note: Other information suggests that resistance to this disease is quite variable and can be selected for by breeding programs (See July 1993, January 1995, April 1995 *APES*)]. Mr. Wallingford quotes one author as saying that three possible states exist for a honey bee colony containing *B. larvae* spores:

*The numbers of spores brought into the colony are insufficient to infect honey bee larvae. As a result, they are not able to reproduce. The spores which are present will eventually be eliminated from the colony. These colonies are defined as not having AFB, but as being contaminated with *B. larvae* spores.

*Adult honey bees are able to detect diseased larvae before they exhibit any visual symptoms of AFB. They may remove these larvae so that the colony will not appear to be diseased when inspected. [Author's note: This is the basis for selection programs that emphasize "hygienic" bees.] Because larvae are being affected by the pathogen and *B. larvae* spores are being produced, the colony is considered to have a non-clinical case of AFB.

*Where there are larvae or pupae in a honey bee colony exhibiting visual symptoms of the disease, the colony is defined as having a clinical case of American foulbrood.

Elimination of AFB has never been achieved on a national scale in New Zealand, according to Mr. Wallingford. It is possible, however, for the following reasons:

*New Zealand has a relatively small population of the species that is affected by the disease. There are currently just under 300,000 registered beehives in the country. There are also an unknown,

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but nevertheless small number of unregistered beehives, and an unknown number of feral honey bee colonies. [Author's note: Feral or wild honey bee colonies can be reservoirs for the disease. A recent colony found in a bait hive in which disease control programs were carried out.]

*New Zealand is an isolated geographic area that receives no natural introductions of honey bees from outside its borders. Imports of honey bees and honey bee products into New Zealand are also restricted by agricultural quarantine measures. This makes the continual introduction of further B. larvae into the country unlikely.

*B. larvae has a low infectivity compared to many other pathogens. By destroying beehives with clinical cases of American foulbrood, carrying out proper and periodic inspections, and taking care with the transfer of beekeeping materials between hives, it is possible to reduce the concentration of spores below the level where they can become infective. As a result, the occurrence of AFB in beehives can be eliminated, even though spores of the causative organism can persist for long periods of time.

*There are a number of reported cases of New Zealand beekeepers successfully eliminating AFB from their beehives. If these beekeepers can do this, it is possible for others to do the same.

The goal of the New Zealand program, Mr. Wallingford concludes, is to reduce the reported incidence of AFB annually by an average of 10 percent of the first year's reported incidence, over the first five-year term of the strategy, and down to 0.1 percent by the end of the second term (the year

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2006). The three keys to the success of this program are adequate inspection, proper diagnosis and the elimination of clinical cases, exactly the conditions found in Florida last year.

Given the Florida experience, New Zealand's program is theoretically possible. Maintaining the low AFB level once it has been achieved, however, will no doubt be the greater challenge.

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OFFICERS

President:
George Hansen
30576 Oswalt Road
Colton, OR 97017
503-824-2265

Vice president:
Charles Mock
27977 S Schiewe Drive
Colton, OR 97017
503-824-3456

Newsletter Editor:
Ronald Bennett
11260 Simpson Road
Monmouth, OR 97361
503-838-2328

Secretary - treasurer:
Phyllis Shoemaker
1874 Winchester NW
Salem, OR 97304
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REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Central Oregon:
Bob Morgan
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Eastern Oregon:
Dave Lefore
Rt. 3 Box 207E
Milton-Freewater, OR 97862
541-938-3286

Metropolitan Area:
Chuck Sowers
4390 Lords Lane
Lake Oswego, OR 97035
503-636-3127

North Coast:
Bob Allen
P.O. Box 434
Garibaldi, OR 97118
503-322-3819

South Coast:
Joann Olstrom
3164 Maple Court
Reedsport, OR 97467
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Southern Oregon:
George Steffensen
1634 Fish Hatchery Road
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RESOURCES:

Dr. Michael Burgett
Department of Entomology
Cordley Hall 2046
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331-2907
Telephone: 541-737-4896

Dr. Lynn Royce
Assistant/associate
Department of Entomology
Cordley Hall 2046
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331-2907
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S.O. Research & Extension Center
569 Hanley Road, Central Point

President: Stan Kee, 541-664-3238
Vice pres.: John Campbell, 541-664-4867
Secretary: George Steffensen,
541-474-4305

Tillamook County
Meets 7 p.m. first Thursday;
Fish & Wildlife Bldg.,
4909 Third St., Tillamook

President: Bob Allen, 541-322-3819
Vice pres.: Fritz Hoffman, 541-842-6856
Sec.-treas.: Gregg Cline, 541-842-6323

Tualatin Valley
Meets 7:30 p.m. second Wed.
PGE Building,
Old Scholls Ferry Road & Murray,
Beaverton

President: Chuck Sowers, 503-636-3127
Vice pres.: Jim Marshall, 502-642-3319
Secretary: Michael Lau, 503-591-8864
Treas.: PattiJo Campbell, 503-690-9341

Willamette Valley
Meets 7:30 p.m. fourth Mon.;
Room 112, Building 50,
Chemeketa Community College, Salem

President: Walt Nichol, 503-585-5705
Vice pres.: Richard Farrier, 541-327-2673
Secretary: Ron Bennett, 503-838-2328
Treasurer: Fritz Skirvin, 503-581-9372

Calendar of Events

August	8	Portland Meeting, Oregon City
	13	Lane County Meeting, Eugene
	14	Tualatin Meeting, Beaverton
	16	Coos County Meeting, Coquille
	22-Sep 3	State Fair, Salem
	26	WVBA Meeting, Salem
Sept.	5	Tillamook Beekeepers
	10	Lane County Meeting, Eugene
	11	Tualatin Meeting, Beaverton
	12	Portland Meeting, Oregon City
	20	Coos County Meeting, Coquille
	23	WVBA Meeting, Salem
Dec	6-7	OSBA Fall Conference, Seaside

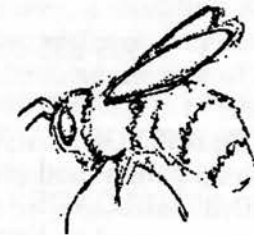
Cont. from Page 3 nometrically. Do the we really need to pay for one more treatment, on top of all the other bee-keeping expenses? Let's look at the numbers and see.

According to the survey, beekeepers who used Apistan, vegetable shortening, and Fumidil B lost 19% of their hives on the average. Beekeepers who used Apistan and vegetable shortening, but did not use Fumidil B averaged a 38% winter loss. From this we estimate that someone with 10 hives will save 38%-19%=19% of their hives by using this treatment. 19% of 10 hives is just under 2 hives.

What is the cost to replace those 2 hives in the spring? If they are started from 3-pound packages, which cost around \$35 each, that's \$70. In addition, there's the lost productivity because a colony started from a package will rarely make surplus honey that year. Let's be very conservative and estimate the harvested honey from an overwintered colony will average \$15, or \$30 from two colonies. So with 10 hives who uses Fumidil B for Nosema would average around \$70+\$30=\$100. This does not consider the fact that hives with Nosema rear less brood and build up more

slowly in the spring, which also leads to less honey production even if they do survive the winter. It also does not consider that ordering and installing packages is extra labor, that your preferred package supplier may be sold out early, that they may not come in time to pollinate your fruit trees, etc., etc.

What is the cost to treat 10 hives with Fumidil B? That's about \$12 to \$15, depending on whether you buy the big jar or the little jar. So for \$12 to \$15 this beekeeper is saving at least 6 to 8 times that amount, on the average, and a fair amount of trouble. Case closed.



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Technology has finally caught up with our mailing list. You will note that there is a date code after your last name. This is the date of expiration of your membership. We have tightened up on past due membership dues. You will stop receiving the *BeeLine* and your membership will be inactive 60 past the due date. If you feel we are in error on your date, contact Phyllis Shoemake at the address on the inside front cover.

Membership and Publications

Membership in the Oregon State Beekeepers Association is open to anyone who has an interest in bees and beekeeping. You do not need to own bees or reside in Oregon to join the OSBA. OSBA Membership is \$15 per person and includes a vote in all OSBA elections, discounts on other bee-related publications, 10 issues of *The Bee Line*, and more. And, if you are already a member of a local group, your group will receive \$1.00 from your OSBA dues. Foreign membership is \$23.

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