

COMB Courier

"I speak for those who can't speak for themselves"

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Editor: mike ffrench

On the high side

I once spent a week in Arizona on a dude ranch. We were each assigned a horse, which would be ours for the week. My horse was named Hollywood, by virtue of his having appeared in the movie *Young Guns*. The Grapevine Ranch was located in southeastern Arizona in the Dragoon Mountains, once a stronghold of Cochise and the Chiricahua Apaches: It was only 17 miles west by dirt road from the notorious town of Tombstone.

Hollywood was a willful animal whose capricious behavior gave me conniptions. Unskilled equestrian that I am, controlling Hollywood's behavior was like looking after a 3-year-old child that weighs ½ a ton. But, controlling Hollywood was much easier than controlling the behavior of my bees, who only weigh a few grams.

Each day we would take a trail ride, sometimes into the mountains. One day, while ascending the steep, narrow strip of rock that constitutes a mountain trail, I looked down into the depths below and considered my perilous position.

Apprehensively, I asked Gerry, the ranch owner and wrangler for the day, "Have you ever lost customer?"

"No, but I have lost a horse," Gerry said after a long pause.

"A customer's horse?" I said.

"No," he said, "mine."

I gulped. "What about you, what happened to you?"

Gerry managed a laconic smile at the memory, "I managed to get off on the high side, just as my horse went over the edge."

I spent the rest of the ride in silence, as I mulled the thought of going over the edge and into the chasm, horse and all.

I wondered, if Gerry keeps losing horses every year, can he afford to keep taking his clients on mountain trail rides? What does he need to change, the trails or the horses?

What, you might ask, does keeping bees have to do with trail rides, dead horses, and Tombstone?

As a hobbyist beekeeper I have to ask myself: Can I still stay in business while my bees keep going over the edge into the metaphorical chasm? Does it make any sense, business or otherwise? I can't sustain the winter losses indefinitely; I have to make a change. So what do I change? As a rank amateur in the bee game, I need some in-house instruction on where to place my bets. I can attend lectures until my ears bleed, and read manuals until my eyes ache, but it won't do me a damn bit of good out in the field where I need it most.

One of my side hobbies is bird watching, but I won't see many species from my kitchen window. It's all out there, all we have to do is find it.

C.O.M.B. Monthly meeting.
2nd Monday of the month 6:30pm.
MSU Pavilion, Farm Lane, E. Lansing

Waste not want not

To swarm or not to swarm: aye that is the question. Although you may be dismayed when your bees swarm and take off to destinations unknown, rest easy with the thought that you have launched some of your bees out into nature, with all its blessings.

Say it ain't so Gov

When transporting my bees and/or equipment, my heart is in my mouth: The constant jarring of the load due to the poor condition of the highway, threatens to upset my bees and destroy my equipment. The condition of Michigan roads is deplorable. They have entered the dark tunnel of neglect and dilapidation. Whenever I hit a deep pothole that threatens to eat my tire, I say the s-word. Snyder!

Ahoy techies

Two former COMB websites were sunk without trace, now we have a new website put together by COMB member, Brian Jennings. We wish him luck with this venture, and offer him all our support. Working in the public domain is not an easy task, one of the risks involved is to be stood up against a metaphorical wall while pelted with allegorical mud.

C.O.M.B. officers

President Mike Risk
Vice-President Dale Woods
Treasurer Kay Barber
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COMB Founder and ex officio
Dr. Roger Hoopingarner

Communications:

Editor Mike French
Asst. Editor Debbie Foote

Coming soon to a computer near you

New COMB website www.COMBbees.com

Brian Jennings, PMP Brian@JenningsWeb.com Home 517.655.2548 Cell
517.896.9919 www.JenningsWeb.com/Brian

Bee Read

If you have a comment, query, problem, or an interesting story or anecdote concerning bees that you would like to share with your fellow beekeepers, here is your chance. Send it in to mjbusybee@frontier.com or debbie.foote1962@gmail.com or hand it in at the meeting. Jane Carhartt may be contacted at janesbees@yahoo.com
This is your newsletter, make use of it!

Bee Classifieds

If you have any bee-related items you would like to buy, sell, or trade, this section is for you. This service is free for members of C.O.M.B. You may submit ads to Mike French or Deb Foote. There will be a nominal fee for associate members.

Deadline for next issue is June 3rd