

COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

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Editor: mike ffrench

Now you know

Just in case you were wondering what happened to the June issue of the *Courier*, I was up in Alaska counting eagles and whales, and tromping across glaciers. I took a cruise ship up the inside passage all the way from Vancouver to Seward, then on to Anchorage and Denali.

Much to the chagrin of our neighbors in Ohio, Mt. McKinley has now been renamed Mt. Denali, a recent change that escaped most of us in the lower forty-eight. Mt. McKinley was named after President McKinley who had the misfortune to have been born in Ohio. At 20,300 feet, Mt. Denali (aka McKinley) is the highest mountain in the U.S. Now you know!

The Garden Club

Recently, I was roped in to give a talk on bees to a local Jackson gardening club. I was not too enthused about this project but, since I had committed myself to do it, I did it. And an enervating experience it turned out to be.

There were 26 women in attendance—no men. I set up a canopy in the garden and sprinkled chairs around it, with just enough to accommodate the ladies. The canopy was well back from the hives, as I did not want to distract them during my presentation by visitations from curious bees. On the table underneath the canopy I laid out my hive tools, an empty NUC, and other bee paraphernalia. I started of my talk with a joke; this always gets things off to a good start. If they don't laugh, you are in real trouble—they laughed!

In my pre-retirement days I had given many public speeches, but I realized I was a little rusty. I did remember to write out my presentation as a guide to steer me through without repeating myself.

Reading the guide reminded me of two things:

- a) How much I knew about bees
- b) How much I didn't know about bees

The latter being the longer of the two.

I started out by explaining what the various tools were for, and how important it was to have them handy when needed. I showed them the NUC and how the frames and foundation fitted into the hive. I did my best to put them at ease by explaining that the bees had a job to do, and stinging humans was not part of it. I invited them over to take a look at a couple hives.

Most of the women were curious and even ventured right next to the hive, when I advised them how to approach the hive without jeopardizing themselves. A couple of the ladies decided they would view the hive from a safe distance, i.e. from under the canopy.

I donned my bee-suit for a look inside the hive itself. I took the hive cover off and took a peek. The bees were busy as usual, and not having the same protection as yours truly, the ladies were leery of further investigation of bees living accommodation.

The talk lasted ninety-minutes, which went by faster than I expected. I took great pleasure in introducing bee keeping to people who ordinarily would not come into close contact with

them. The ladies were captivated by the bees and their place in the natural world, and asked very pertinent questions, which I answered the best I could. It was a good experience for me, as I along with most beekeepers, take our knowledge of bees (however limited in my case) for granted.

The formula for a good presentation is to have your program written down in the order of what you want to say. Keep your notes brief but succinct. Inject humor into your speech—a little smile goes a long way. If you have not done this before, go over your speech several times beforehand and practice your delivery. This may sound boring but it pays dividends in the long run. My audience of ladies of all ages was captivated, not by my personality, but by the information they were getting on a subject that interested them.

Editors note: There is an attachment of my program for your appraisal in the email.

The Empty Jar

The springs are warm
The winters are mild
The bees long since
Have returned to the wild

A forest of emptied hives
For you and me
As we search in vain
For a new bee tree

It comforts us little
To swear and cuss
So few of them
So many of us

Mankind yearns
For the return of honey
Of apiaries sacrificed
For love of money

No bees no more
No honey no wax
No product to sell
No profit to tax

Now our children grow not old
Victims of our search for gold
—Tom E. Wrot

*Chairman of the Committee
for Sustainable Agriculture*

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

C.O.M.B. officers
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Treasurer Kay Barber
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Deadline for next issue is August 4th