

# COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

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Editor: Mike French

## Happy New Year

- May your hives thrive
- May your bees find trees
- May you make money on honey
- May you collect sacks of wax

### *New Year's resolution*

Many of us make New Year's resolutions, which often fall by the wayside in a few weeks time. My favorite one is that I am going to be more attentive to my bees. This year I really mean it! The price of package bees is going through the roof, and I can't afford to rely on being able to afford them much longer. Therefore I intend to downsize, just a smidgeon mind you, and knuckle down to producing my own bees. This won't be easy, I understand that, but if I want to stay in beekeeping—and I do—I must go beyond buying bees, selling honey, and rendering wax.

I can get all the advice I need from COMB members, lecturers, bee books etc, but in the long run I have to get out there and chance my arm. As practicing beekeepers we all know that bees are in peril of becoming an endangered species. We do not get the support we need from the federal Department of Agriculture, or any other organization outside of our own. Farmers are only interested in volume, and will use anything that will increase that volume. We need to take a piercing look at how nature operates rather than what corn and soybean futures will yield. If we think only of the present, there will be no future for our children—or theirs.

### *Interview with a bee*

Working in my bee-yard I chanced to see a bee perched on the edge of my helmet. In a light-hearted mood and feeling jocular I spoke to the bee: "What do you think of beekeepers?"

"Trash!" the bee spat.

I was taken aback by the answer, before I realized the bee had spoken, "I beg your pardon."

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“Trash, scum of the earth,” said the bee, vehemently.

“Isn’t that a bit harsh?” I said defensively.

“Harsh but true,” said the bee, honing her stinger.

“But we provide a hive with all mod cons. Isn’t that a tad ungrateful?”

The bee gave me a disdainful look. “All you’ve done is make us dependent, which is not good for us—and in the long run, you either.” The bee clicked her back legs in annoyance.

I was intrigued. “What do you mean: In the long run?”

The bee glared at me. “If left to our own devices,” said the bee, obviously irritated at having to explain the obvious, “if left alone we can take care of our problems by selective breeding across a broad spectrum, unlike you humans who have reduced our breeding pattern to 400 queens. Let me ask you a question.”

“Fire away,” I said, hesitantly.

“What if we reduced half the human population to 400 females. Besides producing a shortage of females, it would also play havoc with natural selection, which is the cornerstone of all reproduction, no matter what the species.”

I made a feeble attempt to justify our behavior, “All we want to do is breed the best and most productive line of bees. And in doing so improve the traits that lead to healthy bees.”

“Healthy bees my ass,” said the bee, “all you’ve done is encourage the spread of disease, and now this scourge you call varroa. We call it something else.”

I didn’t ask what the something else was. Not believing I was talking to a bee I removed my helmet to get a closer look.

This action immediately energized the bee, who screamed, “Come on girls, he’s taken his armor off.” With this alarm, all the bees in the vicinity swarmed around me. I was covered head to foot in angry bees searching for place to plant their sting.

I went into a blind panic, thrashing the air and running away at top speed. I felt my body spasm and I sprang awake in a cold sweat. That’s the last time I eat fish and chips before I go to bed. I’ll put off a visit to my hives until next week.

## The Holy Grail

I think that’s the Holy Grail behind that tree, of course it could be just a tree with luminescent bark.

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

## 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](mailto:mjbusybee@frontier.com) or [debbie.foote1962@gmail.com](mailto:debbie.foote1962@gmail.com) or hand it in at the meeting. Jane Carhartt may be contacted at [janesbees@yahoo.com](mailto: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 February 3rd