

# THE HIVE TOOL

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## **President Frame**

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Best Wishes for a good year in the bee yard! As the new President of CMBA I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself and then what we can all look forward to from CMBA in 2007.

I confess I grew up as a city kid. Born in the Bronx, I was raised on Long Island, in Miami Florida and in Columbus Ohio. It wasn't until a few years after college that I moved to the country (southern Ohio) and became friends with a man about my age, a back-to-the-land type, who, among other natural pursuits, kept bees. I was curious and when I asked him what it was all about, like a true beekeeper, he was happy to show me. I was awed as he opened a hive and pulled out a comb covered with thousands of bees; I somehow immediately sensed the complexity of this amazing communal organism - with the many functioning as one - and I was struck by the gentle ease with which he handled the bees.

It was beautiful. I felt this was an aspect of the natural world I wanted to remain close to and I knew it would take a lifetime to truly pursue this craft.

So, like many of you, I purchased some equipment from a catalog, put it together, and got a couple packages of bees. The next year I had four colonies; the next, eight. Then everything changed. I joined the Peace Corps. Young and (over)confident, I volunteered to implement a C.A.R.E.-sponsored Beekeeping Extension and Research Project (BERP, for short!) in Belize, Central America.

(I should mention all this occurred before Africanized bees came to Belize) Those two years, working with bees fulltime, transformed my knowledge and understanding of honey bees and beekeeping. Basically, the project was designed to help subsistence farmers (predominately Maya Indians) get started in beekeeping to supplement their income and nutrition. I was also managing about three hundred colonies around the country for queens and nucs which could then be transferred to the new beekeepers. Fortunately for me, I had a mentor - an older mestizo gentleman who had worked with bees all his life and was willing to teach me what I needed to know to do the job (that's the Peace Corps for you sometimes). There were successes and failures and I could probably write a book about my time in Belize. Suffice to say, I came home having gained a world of knowledge and experience working with bees.

I returned to southern Ohio and for several years kept 40 colonies for honey and beeswax production. In 1987, circumstances brought me to Baltimore, yet I always managed to find a place to keep bees. You'd be surprised

how many colonies one can sequester in the side yard of an EOG townhouse in Rodger's Forge! (six, FYI - and a great honey location)! This was also when I became involved for the first time in an association of beekeepers. I'd never lived anywhere where there was a club like this before. In many ways it helped me keep going. I met Chuck and Carole, Lloyd, Jerry, Wil and Mary Geddes who let me put bees on their property. Little did I know mites were just around the corner and one fall I lost ALL twelve of my colonies. It was my CMBA involvement which gave me the help I needed, through both information and the personal experiences of other beekeepers. I am grateful for the help I have received from CMBA over the years and also for the fellowship of other beekeepers like myself. I now hope I can be of some service to the beekeepers of central Maryland in my new role as President.

Don't hold it against me, but I now live in Pennsylvania, near Stewartstown. I keep sixty colonies for pollination services and honey production. I plan to expand to 120 colonies; I figure that's my limit as a one-man operation.

I'm renovating an old barn into a shop and honey house. Life is good. I hope you all will have an opportunity to visit sometime in the coming year. We're planning on hosting the CMBA picnic in July at our farm. I'm also hoping to organize some field days up here related to equipment, extracting, and overwintering. I look forward to bringing the art and science (and pleasure!) of beekeeping to CMBA and it's membership in 2007.

In this issue of The Hive Tool you will find a calendar for 2007 indicating the important CMBA dates: regular meetings, board meetings, state fair dates, MSBA meetings, the EAS convention and so on. Put this calendar in a place where it will remind you about important bee association meetings and events, and where it can encourage you to get involved in these fun and educational activities. Keep it where you can add dates to this calendar as well - we hope to run some field days and workshops this year as yet to be determined. Maybe it will help remind you to return that book or video to the next association meeting!

Starting in January, our meetings will begin promptly at 7:30PM. But come early. From 7:00 to 7:30 there will be coffee, tea, and home-made goodies (hopefully made with honey!). This will also be a good time for "bee talk." Got a question? Got a story? One of those "you-won't-believe-it" bee anecdotes.

Wanna brag? Wanna complain? -Bring it to the meeting and "bee talk." Our business meeting at 7:30 will include reports from committees serving CMBA and provide information on how CMBA can serve you better. (The suggestion box and name tags will be returning in January also). After Jerry's (in)famous Five Minutes, we'll break for five minutes and then have our program. January's speaker will be Larry Connor (who you know if you read any of the bee journals) and his topic will be about "making increase" (which, depending on your winter

loses, may be a very timely topic). Thanks to Lloyd for securing this well-known speaker. There will always be time for some Q&A with our programs, but our meetings will adjourn promptly at 9:00PM.

2007 will be a good year for CMBA. What will make it better will be your involvement. We will provide the opportunities and resources for you to become a better beekeeper, more knowledgeable and experienced, and best of all, it will be FUN!

I cannot end this article - my first President's Frame - without recognizing our Past President, Chuck Huselton, and the friendly face behind him, his lovely wife Carole. Thank you, Chuck, for your work as President of CMBA and thanks to both of you for your many, many years of service to this organization. Personally, I am grateful that through CMBA I was able to meet you and become your friend. I wish you the best as you continue to serve CMBA and into the future. We ALL wish you the best. Thank you!

## **January General Meeting Tuesday January 2, 2007**

Oregon Ridge Nature Center, 7:30 PM

Larry Connor is our speaker this month and will be talking about "Making Increase". Larry has just written a book with some new and not so new methods for increasing your number of colonies

## **Snow Cancellation Policy**

**In case of snow or ice on the meeting date, listen to WBAL radio before 7:00 PM. If Baltimore County's snow emergency plan is in effect at 6:00 PM, then the meeting is automatically canceled.**

## **Social / Hospitality Committee**

I need volunteers to bring goodies to the General Meetings, either purchased or home baked. We have a few who have already signed up.

January – Linda Allman  
February – Pete Tinsley  
March – Helen Nelson  
April - Gaylord Clark

We need volunteers for May – December. There will be a sign-up sheet on the stump at the next meeting. Please don't hesitate to contact. Anyone with new ideas and a willing spirit will be greatly appreciated.

This is a great opportunity for our new beekeepers to get involved.

Thank You,  
Carole Huselton

## **The Good, The Bad and The Ugly Of my early days of Beekeeping**

By

Linda Rains Allman

I started beekeeping in 1992. Some things I did right and was rewarded with success. Other things I did wrong and events did not go so well. Some things I did so wrong as to be downright ugly. This is what I learned.

### **The Bad**

In my first year of beekeeping, I only purchased one hive. Starting with one hive has the disadvantage of not allowing you to compare. An inexperienced beekeeper is unsure what to look for. With at least two hives, you may compare aspects such as brood appearance and production, number of bees flying in and out of the hive and temperament of the hive as well as honey production and general hive health. Many new beekeepers have no idea how many bees should be seen in an active healthy hive in the spring. The hive could be dwindling or unhealthy and you would not know it.

Speaking of the early spring, the warning to check your bees carefully in March can not be overstated. TS Elliott may have called April the cruelest month, but for beekeepers, I would nominate March. You get busy, you are thinking of your flower beds or your children's spring sports jump in the way. You don't get out to your bees in time. One year I didn't and I failed to feed them during those cold, damp March days. The result, a dead hive!

In my first years of beekeeping, I was often confused and uncertain about the best method of removing the frames for extraction. At the time, I only had a few supers of honey and did not want to resort to those unpleasant chemicals. By necessity, I invented the "brush and run" method of removing bees from the comb. My plan was to smoke the bees, brush the frames with the bee brush (an innocent looking tool despised by bees) and place the full frame sans a single bee into a new super to be carried off at my leisure. Right?

Well, not exactly. I ended up awkwardly brushing the bees off the first frame and dropping it into the empty super. The frame was hardly bee less and the bees rose up angrily at me. With each frame, the bees became more and more aggressive. Plus I still had too many bees! So, I decided to brush the frames, place them in a wheelbarrow, throw a tarp over them, and run like crazy to get them out of the apiary without the bees following after their precious honey! This method may be a good form of weight reduction but it is not a very efficient way to remove bees from frames. Using a chemical product proved much less painful and time intensive. Some beekeepers have luck with bee escapes as well.

### **The Ugly**

I would like to state categorically that it is unwise both as a family member and beekeeper to open your hive on a hot humid August day in the middle of a family picnic, especially if it involves your in-laws. One hot sticky August day, my mother-in-law, a true nature lover, convinced me to open the hive to show her the bees. It was a sultry afternoon best spent drinking ice tea and lounging in the

hammock. The bees felt the same and they didn't want to be bothered. Basically, if they are hanging out in a beard off the front porch, leave them if you can! I opened the hive, they angrily rushed out and although my curious mother-in-law was enthralled and unstung, I could see my brother-in-law and sister-in-law from the corner of my eye, running back and forth swatting in front of their faces. They had been trying to play horseshoes and were assaulted by my angry bees. There were several facial stings with the resultant ugly swelling, and I was on the family black list for awhile!

When you open a hive and bees become aggressive, what should you do? In my early days of beekeeping, I thought that the proper approach was to "stand there and take it like a woman." I opened the hive on another hot humid day (this time I was thankfully alone at least) and removing a frame, a huge glob of wax complete with stinging bees fell on my feet and proceeded to administer their punishment. Rather than retreating to remove the stingers, I remained and put the hive back together allowing the poison venom to pulse into my feet. The result was that I could not go to work the next day before soaking my feet in a tub of ice water for the entire morning and finally limping into the office in slippers. Many people, including coworkers and bosses consider beekeeping to be an odd hobby at best and beekeepers to be a strange sort. Arriving at the office in this condition, did nothing to dispel those notions. Not a pretty situation.

The first time I saw wax moths I was shocked. There are a truly ugly and disheartening sight. I allowed a hive to dwindle down without storing it with moth crystals. The moths moved it with a vengeance. When I next opened the hive, the frames were a myriad of white webs, cocoons and disgusting squirming worms! Ugh! Even worse, they completely destroyed the comb and much of the wooden frames! They lay the eggs on the wood and when you try to remove the sacks it gouges out the wood. Once you have experienced wax moths in your hive, you never forget them and you will do anything you can do prevent them.

### **The Good**

But in the end, I learned from my mistakes and did a number of things right.

I attended the short course. Twice! The second time I got a lot more out of it. It was invaluable and it introduced me to CMBA. Joining an organization of beekeepers is not only fun (where else can you talk bee talk without seeing that glazed look in the listener's eye?) but it is educational. A good organization will keep your beekeeping on track with lectures, advice and answers to your questions.

I "did bees" with other beekeepers and accepted the advice of a mentor. It is great to have someone to run things by and bounce ideas off. It is also great to have someone to just take a look at your bees when you are confused about something you see.

I changed to Illinois supers for the sake of my back. A full deep can be extremely heavy. I find the Illinois supers much easier to work with. I use three Illinois instead of the two deep hive bodies.

I contributed bees to an MS victim. At the time, the woman lived down the street from me. She was convinced

that the bees helped her and I supplied her with bees twice a week. Although largely anecdotal, this is a fascinating treatment that does seem to help some people.

I did not get discouraged. We all have bad years, when our colonies die from neglect, starvation or the all present mites. We all have years when the weather is bad, we can't do bees as often as we like and the honey production is way down. In 2004, my husband, Mick, developed a dangerous allergy to my bees, passing out after a single sting. Consequently, I had to move my bees off my property. But that did not even stop me. Today I have two bee yards, one of them only three miles from my house. Meanwhile my husband is undergoing immunotherapy.

Finally, I started reading and writing about bees. As my experience and knowledge grew, I published articles about beekeeping in the local magazines. I speak to my daughter's third grade classes about bees. As the CMBA librarian, I know that there are many excellent books and videos out there for beekeepers. Some are how-to type books; others are more literary or philosophical volumes about the joys and hardships of our hobby. It is fun to explore this world. Stop by the library and see!

## **Thoughts Of A New Beekeeper**

Reprinted from Bee Culture December 2006

By Jory Shepherd

This is my tale of how a queen, 60,000 bees and a Beekeeper Extraordinaire changed my outlook on life.

Like so many others experiencing divorce, I was "living", but in a fog. Author Sue Hubbell described it as being "out to lunch" in her book, A Country Year. I know exactly how she felt, even though I wanted my divorce more than anything. My life was steeped in depression and anxiety. I truly believe that my family and friends were beginning to give up on me. I was scared to be alone because I wasn't sure what I was going to do next. I felt like I would never smile again.

Then I saw an ad in the local newspaper which told of a Beginner's Beekeeping Course offered by the local beekeepers. Before I could stop myself I called and registered. As the night of the first meeting got closer my nervousness began to grow. I can't describe how nervous I was when I walked into a room full of strangers at the County Extension Office to take the Beekeeper Course! I have always been interested in honey bees and wanted to "keep" bees, but I get nervous among strangers. I looked around the crowd for a friendly face and then I spotted Howard. He looked up and caught my eye and smiled, but just a little. I secretly called him the Bee Master (you'll have to read the Keeper of the Bees by Gene Stratton Porter to understand that one!). I think it was his white hair that got to me.

I made up my mind to get my North Carolina Certified Beekeeper's License, get my own bees and "get out of there!" I didn't really want to hook up with any of the beekeepers. I'm a single mom; work full-time and I just don't have time for meetings and such. But before I knew what was happening, I was a certified beekeeper; Howard was my personal mentor and even better than that ... my

dear friend. Howard is one of North Carolina's few "Master Craftsman" Beekeepers, so I am very privileged to learn from him.

The day we were to enter a hive for the first time, it rained (of course). Instead we cleaned about a million of Howard's honey frames, maybe more. I learned really quickly that when he calls and asks what I'm doing to "beat around the bush" until he says what he wants, just in case it's something I don't want to do. While we were cleaning these honey frames something interesting happened. I found out our 44-year age difference doesn't matter because we can talk about anything. I found Howard's been divorced too, so there was a lot to talk about there. I felt like a little old man sitting in his barn cleaning honey frames in the rain, seeing who could out talk the other. I was finally beginning to live again and I still wonder how this man reached me when no one else could. I believe it was a combination of his understanding spirit and the magic of the bees. Here was someone who didn't judge me.

And then there were the wonderful honey bees! I realize now that if I had stuck to my original plan to ditch the beekeepers and try to keep bees on my own I would have already quit. The first time we opened the hives and the bees came out I wanted to high-tail it out of there, but Howard calmed me down. Underneath that sweet exterior, he can be pretty tough when he needs to be. He had to constantly fuss at me to slow down.

Howard gets me into some of the most ridiculous predicaments and I know that if he asks for about an hour of my time to count on it being three. He always has me drive his pickup when we visit one of his bee yards. It wouldn't be so bad except that his truck is a manual transmission! Once he sat on the back of the truck on a stool with a hive of bees, while I drove. I can only imagine how we looked going down the road, with Howard sitting on a stool on the back of the truck with a bee veil on, while I grinded gears and jerkily drove along with the him hanging on for dear life! I still laugh at the image, but I wasn't laughing at the time. I was too worried about him falling over the side.

Another time I got his truck stuck in a field of mustard greens and he had to get us out. I think it made him feel good when he drove right out of the field without a hitch! Then there was the time we were going to bum a bunch of old equipment infected with American foulbrood. Howard poured gasoline on the whole mess and lit the long wick he had made out of a trail of gas. I turned my back and the next thing I knew old inner covers and supers shot 10 feet in the air and almost gave me a heart attack from the enormous "bang." I can still hear Howard laughing.

Every time I opened my own hive, I found myself thinking of Howard and his situation. He lives alone and has failing eyesight due to complications from diabetes and I find myself constantly worrying about him. Does he want my sympathy? Heck, no! But he does want my friendship and my help. I only wish I had more time for him. Every new beekeeper needs a mentor like Howard.

As a new beekeeper I spent a lot of time with my bees learning their habits. I sat by the hive as often as I could just observing and making notes. I read every book I

could find on the subject, and when someone would call and ask for me, my daughter would say, "she's with the bees again!" My friends hated to see me coming, because all I talked about was bees, honey, pollination and anything else connected to beekeeping. I tried to convert everybody to beekeepers including my own mother.

I had been a beekeeper for a little over six months when I began to suspect that my bees had contracted American Foulbrood (from God knows where). I called Howard immediately and he had a friend drive him over and although he wouldn't say for sure, I could tell by his crestfallen expression that I was correct in my diagnosis. Later we found that 20 of Howard's hives were to meet the same fate. That was the day I realized how ferociously Howard loves his bees. When I found out that I must kill my hive to stop the disease from spreading I had to fight back tears and so did Howard! I didn't realize I had become so attached to my bees. Aren't beekeepers supposed to be tough? One of the other beekeepers called me a wimp, because I couldn't get rid of the infected hive and Howard had to do it. But Howard said that's okay, he was proud of me for recognizing the disease in the first place.

So I didn't get to "Winter" my bees. Something I was looking forward to trying because a lot of beekeepers in my area lose their bees over the Winter from starvation or disease and I wanted to try my own luck. Again I was ready to quit before I even really started beekeeping. Howard intervened and I now have two packages on order for the Spring! I figure if Howard can lose 20 hives and come up swinging, surely I can pick myself up and do the same. I'm working on getting my hive stands positioned where Howard said to. He always hated the place I picked for my original stand! On cold days, I sit beside the woodstove in my basement, painting equipment and getting ready to put the bees in their new homes. (Our state has a gas chamber to treat equipment after it's been infected with American Foulbrood, so I'm thankful I don't have to buy everything again.)

As for Howard, the other day I decided to go see him. I didn't even call, I just showed up. I could tell he was pleased to see me. Before I left, he wanted to show me something in his basement and as we passed by his washer and dryer I could tell he wanted to ask for my help, but he hesitated. So I asked if there was something I could do for him. He sheepishly asked if I could sort his socks, because he couldn't see to match them up. While I sorted what seemed like an entire load of socks I asked what he would have done if I hadn't have happened along. He said he guessed he would have worn mismatched socks!

I'm so glad I saw that ad in the newspaper because I may never have met Howard if I hadn't. We're happiest when we're working side by side among the bees. And even though my bees are gone for just a little while, the thrill of being a new beekeeper is still there. And when things are a little slow in the beeyard, I can always sort socks!.

# 2007 CMBA Calendar of Events

## CMBA Meeting Schedule

January 2	General Meeting	July 16	Board Meeting
January 15	Board Meeting	July 21	Outdoor Mtg. & Picnic
February 6	General Meeting	August 7	NO General Meeting
February 19	Board Meeting	August 20	Board Meeting
March 6	General Meeting	September 4	General Meeting
March 19	Board Meeting	September 15	Board Meeting
April 3	General Meeting	October 2	General Meeting
April 16	Board Meeting	October 15	Board Meeting
May 1	General Meeting	November 6	Annual Meeting
May 21	Board Meeting	November 19	Board Meeting
June 5	General Meeting	December 1	Winter Dinner
June 18	Board Meeting	December 21	Board Meeting

## Other Beekeeping Events

February 17 - MD State Beekeepers Association Meeting 9AM - 5PM  
at Howard County Fair Grounds

March 8 - Beekeepers Short Course 7- 9:30 PM at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

March 15 - Beekeepers Short Course 7- 9:30 PM at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

March 22 - Beekeepers Short Course 7- 9:30 PM at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

March 29 - Beekeepers Short Course 7- 9:30 PM at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

April 2 - Beekeepers Short Course 7- 9:30 PM at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

April 14 - Beekeepers Short Course 9 AM - 2 PM at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

June 6 - 10 Eastern Apiculture Society Meeting held at the University of  
Delaware Newark, DE

June 16 - MD State Beekeepers Association Meeting

August 24 - September 3 Maryland State Fair Timonium, MD

November 10 - MD State Beekeepers Association Meeting at  
Maryland Department of Agriculture Annapolis, MD

## **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

David Papke, President 717-246-2339  
Steve McDaniel V. Pres. 410-239-7496  
Helen Nelson, Secretary 410-833-9535  
Bob Crouse, Treasurer 410-265-7999  
Jerry Fischer, State Bee Insp. 410-562-3464  
Oregon Ridge Nature Center 410-887-1815  
Chuck Huselton, Past Pres. 410-592-6598  
Lloyd Snyder, Editor 410-329-6671  
Editors E-Mail - [Irsnyder@clearviewcatv.net](mailto:Irsnyder@clearviewcatv.net)

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

General Meeting – January 2, 2007–7:30 PM  
at Oregon Ridge Nature Center. Our speaker  
this month is Dr. Larry Connor. Larry is a  
regular writer for Bee Culture, author of  
beekeeping books, publisher (owner of  
Wicwas Press), entomologist and  
beekeeping lecturer. Larry’s subject is  
“Making Increase”.

Board Meeting – January 15, 2007 – 6:30 PM  
at Oregon Ridge Nature Center.

## **Snow Cancellation Policy**

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date, listen to WBAL radio before 7:00 PM. If  
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