

# The Middlesex ee

The Middlesex Bee is the official newsletter of the Middlesex Beekeepers Association, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization; [www.middlesexbeekeepers.org](http://www.middlesexbeekeepers.org)

October 2017

“It was like a great bee come home from some field where the honey is full of poison wildness, of insanity and nightmare, its body crammed with that over-rich nectar and now it was sleeping the evil out of itself.”

Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

## August 26, 2017 MCBA outdoor meeting and hive opening

### Introductions

MCBA President Tom Fiore opened the meeting by thanking Ottavio for hosting the meeting, and invited people to visit Ottavio's kinetic sculptures and to ask him about the various beekeeping gadgets he has made. Tom then asked that anyone here for the first time to introduce themselves and give us a little information – where you're from, where you are in your beekeeping.

- Dan, from Medford; he's here with his father Bob, and they keep bees in Carlisle. They're first year beekeepers, and are struggling a little bit. They've had a swarm and are worried that they might now have a drone layer. Bob said that

he's friends with Ernie Huber (a longtime MCBA member from Carlisle).

- Mary Duane, from Worcester County; She's been keeping bees for over 20 years, and is the former Massachusetts Beekeepers Association president. She's thrilled to be joining us today
- Jeremy, from Waltham; It's his first year keeping bees – he has one hive, that was struggling and lost its queen mid-season, but now seems to be back in business.
- Lee, from Medford, he's here with his family and they're investigating whether to become beekeepers.

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## Save The Date

### Topsfield Fair

09/29-10/09, Largest Beekeeping Exhibit of any fair in North America  
207 Boston Street, Topsfield, MA 01983; <https://topsfeldfair.org/bees.php>

### MCBA Website Outage (both Public & Members-Only sites)

10/07-10/08, Upgrade / Maintenance work.

### Worcester County Beekeepers Association ALL DAY CONFERENCE

visit the WCBA website for more information: <http://worcestercountybeekeepers.com/>  
10/07, 9:00am-3:30pm Quabbin Regional High School, Barre, MA

### MCBA Indoor Meetings and Bee Talks

*First Religious Society Hall, 27 School Street, Carlisle, MA*  
10/27, 7-9pm, Dan Phillips: Competing in Honey Shows  
11/24, 7-9pm, Annual Auction, Bee Talk topic: TBA  
12/09 (Saturday), 6:30-9pm, Holiday Dinner & Rachael E. Bonoan,  
Tufts Ph.D. Candidate: Honey Bee Nutritional Ecology  
01/26, 7-9pm, topic: TBA  
02/23, 7-9pm, topic: TBA  
03/23, 7-9pm, topic: TBA  
04/27, 6:30-9pm, Annual Meeting, Officer Elections, Spaghetti Dinner

### MassBee Fall Meeting

visit the MassBee website for more information: <https://www.massbee.org/>  
11/11, time/location/speakers: TBA

### Legislative Update

Ottavio welcomed everyone to his home (saying that he enjoys hosting the club at his home every 2-3 years), and to the town of Belmont.

In February, Belmont had a public meeting to discuss potential regulations for beekeepers - Ottavio attended that meeting along with other MCBA officers and members. Since then, Ottavio has continued to provide information and support to the Board of Health, and is happy to announce that Belmont has a new very positive policy that supports a healthy co-existence between bees, beekeepers. *Editor's Note: You can see a copy of Belmont's new policy on the members-only website.* Ottavio said that as part of his promise to the town to support and educate beekeepers, he will be offering an 8-week beginner's beekeeping course this Fall and Spring. Mary said that MassBee has commended Belmont on their new policy, as opposed to the approach that Cambridge is taking. **Should we take a copy of Belmont's regulations to our town's Board of Health?** No, we'd only suggest doing so if your town is making noise about bees and beekeepers – don't go looking for trouble. If your town is proposing regulating beekeeping, contact the club and we'll help (at the Belmont Meeting Tom Fiore, Alix Bartsch, John Cheetham, and Tony Pulsone represented club and presented a beekeeper's perspective).

**Middlesex County's new beekeeping inspector** introduced himself at the meeting. Ori Ben-Shir was raised in Acton, MA,

and attended UMass for Agriculture, studying conventional and unconventional (no till) methods. After getting hands in the dirt went to work with MDAR for a season and began a beekeeping apprenticeship Dan Conlon of Warm Color Apiaries. He then went to Israel to study beekeeping in the dessert. He has now returned and is currently working with the other state apiary inspectors, and is starting his own farm in the western part of the state. You can reach him via email for questions ([Ori.Ben-Shir@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:Ori.Ben-Shir@MassMail.State.MA.US)). No one has been by to look at my apiary yet – will you be coming by? Ori said that he is making a tour of beekeepers' apiaries in Middlesex County, but that he was only hired about a month ago, he has a large region to cover (from Middlesex County out to the Berkshires) and will only visit apiaries that have submitted a request (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/farm-products/apiary/mdar-apiary-inspection-request-form.html>).

Ori said that his inspections change, depending upon when the inspection happens in the beekeeping season – for instance he is now looking to make sure that hives are prepared for the winter. Based upon studies out of Minnesota, if your hive has a Varroa destructor infestation the survival rate is about 25%. If your hive has Nosema, then it's chances for survival is also about 25% - but if a hive has both Varroa and Nosema its chances of survival drop to 13%. Likewise, if your hive is healthy and has neither problem its overwintering rate approaches 87%!

Ori said that he also performs field tests for Nosema. This time of year, he will look at a colony's honey supply, pollen supply, and the amount of bees. So your inspections are checking the health of the hive? Yes. **Is there a fee to have your hive(s) inspected?** No, it is a service provided by the state – the taxpayers are paying for it – the inspection program is mostly for commercial beekeepers, but when we're not working on them, then we're out doing hobbyists hives.

**What do you recommend for monitoring Varroa?** Ori said that he usually does alcohol washes and no longer recommends powdered sugar – in his personal tests of the same hive he found a drop of 2 mites with powdered sugar and 9 mites with an alcohol wash. However, Ori said that he doesn't believe alcohol washes are 100% accurate either. Paul Tessier

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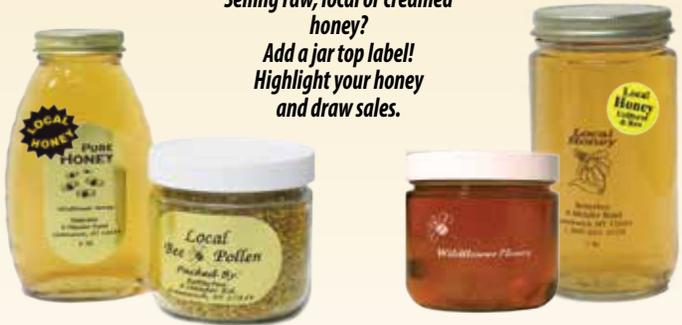
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(the Bristol County Apiary Inspector) said that he has been getting a higher concentration of mites using soapy water. Soapy water? Will a cup of bees survive that? Unfortunately no, it's like the alcohol wash – Tom Fiore mentioned that if you have a hive that needs to be put down, soapy water is the way to do it.

Ori, **have you found any American Foul Brood?** Ori said that so far no, he hasn't. However, he has sent in a couple of samples to a lab to check for American Foul Brood (AFB) and European Foul Brood (EFB), but the results are not back yet. A member said that he had a fight with Dr. Skyrm (Massachusetts Chief Apiary Inspector) about informing county organizations about any outbreaks so that their beekeeping members can take action (move their hives, or inspect them more often). Ori said that the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources is here for for Varroa, EFB, and AFB, and that the program is starting to get rebooted so that it's not only beneficial for beekeepers, but that we have an open

## Like Us on Facebook

Our Facebook Page has updates about meetings (delays/cancellations in Winter), and articles about bees - so the next time you're online, come visit!

communication line for everyone. The state's inspectors are getting together once a month to try to increase communication with beekeepers.

**How late in the season do you perform inspections?** Ori said that he'll check hives until the end of October, and that he's trying to get to as many people as possible while being as efficient as possible (He did 40-50 inspections last month). Alix said that he came twice to her apiary: once to perform a regular inspection, and a second time for a Tropilaelaps inspection. **What's Tropilaelaps?** It's the next problem facing our bees, but it hasn't found in the U.S. yet and that inspection is part of an USDA honeybee survey to make sure. Tropilaelaps is a worm/mite that is worse than Varroa.

**Alix Bartsch gave a brief recap of the EAS Conference.** She announced that Massachusetts has a newly certified Master Beekeeper (Carin Zinter from Amherst) and congratulated Tony Pulsoni on his third place finish in the small gadgets category for his Bee Lining Box. Alix mentioned that Professor Tom Seeley (Cornell University) mentioned Tony's box during his lecture. Next year's conference will be in Hampton Virginia, and the following in South Carolina. Massachusetts is competing with Maine for the 2020 conference. Dan Conlon and Mary Duane are heading that movement, please contact them if you're interested in helping. Alix said that the conference is informative – the rock stars of the beekeeping community (both research, commercial, and hobbyist) are there. John Cheetham said

## Bee Magazine Discount

MCBA members receive a 25% discount off subscriptions to *American Bee Journal*.

For a copy of the ABJ Association Member Subscription form, visit the *Club Business & Important Links* section of the MCBA members-only website:

[membership.middlesexbeekeepers.org](http://membership.middlesexbeekeepers.org)

that it was a lot of fun and you learn a lot. Alix mentioned that there is a short course for beginner beekeepers and tests to become Master Beekeepers on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. New research is presented on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. It's \$500 to attend, and it's worth it.

## Question and Answer period

**I'm thinking of using Oxalic Acid, have you ever tried applying more than one treatment?** Ottavio said that there are two ways to treat for mites using Oxalic Acid (OA): you can dilute it in sugar syrup and "Dribble" the solution onto the bees in the hive; or, you can vaporize the OA. Ottavio does 3-vaporizations in a row (weekly on the same day for 3 weeks). Oxalic Acid, when properly applied doesn't harm the

honey (it can be applied while honey supers are on) or the bees. It has been approved for use for several decades in Europe.

**Tony posted a topic on the members only forum**, regarding the making of **beeswax cloth wraps**, and I wanted to see how they're working out... Tony said that he brown-bags his lunch and found he was using a lot of plastic products – cling wrap and ziplock bags. He came across a do-it-yourself project for making beeswax food wraps – they're beeswax impregnated cloth that becomes waterproof. The directions seemed fairly straightforward: put a piece of kitchen parchment paper down on your ironing board, grate beeswax over a piece of cotton fabric, sandwich the cloth and wax with a second piece of parchment paper and iron away... Well, that was kind of a fiasco, and not quite as easy as it appeared on video – the grater got gummed up with beeswax and it didn't melt consistently (it was hard to gauge how much wax was needed), and finally being under the cynical and watchful eyes of Darcy (Tony's wife) didn't help. Tony said that it is easier to simply melt wax in the Presto-Pot that he converted for making candles and use a silicon basting brush to 'paint' the wax onto/into the fabric. *Editor's Note (In separate conversations with John Lewis, John mentioned that he used Jojoba Oil to make the waxed fabric more pliable, while Jen Reed said she uses [food grade] Mineral Oil).* **What are they used for?** They're a substitute for cling wrap.

**Should I be treating for mites this time of the year?** Well, first you should assess whether you have a high mite count. If you don't have cancer, don't go through Chemotherapy. This time of the year you should be evaluating your mite load twice a month. Rick Reault suggests that people treat their hives prophylactically – but remember he's a commercial beekeeper and that he has so many hives that the labor costs to evaluate each of his several hundred hives is cost prohibitive so he'll treat across the board monthly. You should test your hive and if there's a 2-3% infestation then you should treat and then evaluate AGAIN afterwards to make sure the treatment worked. The reason we suggest that you don't treat all hives all of the time is that we don't want to breed mites that are resistant to chemicals.

**Should I be feeding my bees?** If they're bringing in nectar, then you probably don't need to be feeding them. Know what's going on in your hives – if there's a small population then you should know why. Did they swarm? Did they supercede?

**What's the recommended treatment now if Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS) strips are a problem?** MAQS are extremely effective, and they're okay to use with honey supers on. The fumes WILL penetrate brood cappings and kill the mites that are sealed in there with the larva. But, you need to read the label and follow the directions. Use protection. Know the weather. They HAVE changed the formulation and if it's too hot (*Editor's Note: the recommended range is 50°-85° F. daytime temperatures*) it can kill the bees. You're more likely to have queen mortality if the temperature is greater than 85° within the first 2-3 days. With beekeeping treatments, knowing what the 7-day forecast is something that's very important to pay attention to. With MAQS the first 72 hours is especially important. John Cheetham said that he applies treatments late in the afternoon, or at nightfall. Mary said that she smokes the bees down into the box so she's not laying the strips down directly upon the bees and she only uses one strip rather than two.

**How long is bee's life span?** A month this time of year. In winter 6-months. Queens can last up to 5-years, but some people suggest that queens be replaced every 2 years. **Why would you replace the queen every 2 years?** Second year queens have a propensity to swarm, and if your queen lasted 2 years you're probably in the minority. An otherwise healthy hive will supercede every year. The bees want to swarm, to requeen themselves, they want to swarm. So, make splits, if you have a healthy queen that's 2 years old then she's a prime candidate for making a split.

**Is it a normal thing weak hive to have their queen killed during robbing?** It's possible that during a robbing episode that the robbers could kill the weak hive's queen.

Birgit said that she is doing an experiment this year and **trying a treatment free regimen**, her surviving colony is going like gangbusters. Her 3 other hives died overwinter, so she purchased 3 new packages. One of those turned out to be a great colony while the other two succumbed

to ants (by the time she noticed, it was too late). That beautiful package has produced 140 pounds of honey already – it was an amazing year, just like the golden days 30 years ago pre-Varroa. Birgit said that she didn't want to mess with the colony and hasn't applied any medication because of negligible overnight drops. How are you monitoring mites in your hives? Birgit said that she's monitoring the mite drops, through a screened bottom board on a sticky board. She's planning on leaving it alone and reporting what happens. *Editor's Note: Birgit sent me an email the day after the meeting: I just want to report: this weeks over night mite drop is... 112! The mite bomb fell! So, I just put on MAQS and am anxious to see what happens.*

**Mary cautioned that the mites may just be slow in building up, and cautioned members not to think that their hives are mite free.** You need to monitor, because the worst thing is when the mite population explodes in a hive in September and a hive that has otherwise strong characteristics and you think they're going into winter healthy and strong but they have a high mite population... well, then you're cooked.

**How many bees do you need for a sugar roll or alcohol wash?** 300 bees. A half-cup of bees is 300 bees.

**I have a scale under one of my hives,** and there was tremendous growth in the size of the colony and it's weight. But by the end of July that had stabilized to 394 pounds (including woodenware – frames and boxes). What

happened? Well, if it stabilized at the end of July, that corresponds with the end of the main nectar flow here. Birgit said that having a scale on your hives, and sharing the information with the club would be a good idea, so that people can learn about the flow in their area – she has been keeping bees for many years and knows what the flows are, and she can harvest to collect specific blooms (for example, right now dark honey is coming in, and she's hoping for some rain so that the Japanese Knotweed that's blooming can start to come in). Tom wanted to remind people that Goldenrod is flowing now, and when the bees are working it it gives off a smell which might lead you to believe your bees are sick; Birgit mentioned that Aster nectar has a bad odor too.

**I opened my hive, and saw some blood red nectar, what is it?** When did you see it? At the end of June, for a brief period. It was likely sugar syrup from a Hummingbird feeder. However, if you're seeing red nectar now then that's Japanese Knotweed. *Editor's Note: Bees love hummingbird feeders, but they make bee-proof versions... so if your neighbor ever complains about your bees in their feeder then offer to purchase a bee-proof feeder for them.*

Jen mentioned that **Tony has experimented using food coloring in his syrup.** Why would you add food coloring to the sugar syrup? Tony said that he wants to differentiate honey from real nectar, and so called "Funny Honey." In the spring if there are leftover frames, I want to

know what I can keep and extract and what to leave for the bees or give to new nucs/packages. Tony said that he's tried different colors, but has settled upon blue since the first year he used Green only to see strong hives bringing in green nectar (from Purple Loosestrife) and the next year he had switched to Red only to see Japanese Knotweed nectar coming in. There's no blue nectar around here that he knows of...

My husband and I are about to be beekeepers, and he's built a top bar hive. **Where and when can we buy bees?** In the spring, you'll have to buy a package. We suggest that you take a beekeeping course (club members offer classes in Newton, Acton/Boxborough, Tyngsboro, and Belmont). We don't suggest trying to start now, because it would be a waste of time – the bees won't have enough time to build up and it is very discouraging if you don't know what you're doing.

I'm a first year beekeeper, and the hive seems to be strong with lots of bees. It has a deep and two medium supers for the brood area, a queen excluder and another medium box atop that. **That top medium box is empty and only has wax/plastic foundation and it's been 3 weeks – what's going on?** We're just coming out of a nectar dearth – the plants aren't producing nectar or pollen so the bees aren't bringing anything in and they won't build comb if they don't need it (building honey comb is energy intensive). I would suggest removing the queen excluder and that box – normally bees around

here don't draw much wax in the fall, so if they're not going to use the space you should remove the box. **Should I harvest any honey from the medium below the queen excluder?** No, you shouldn't harvest anything, as the bees will need what they have now to get through the winter. Your priority is getting those 3 drawn boxes filled with bees and honey, and making sure your bees are healthy.

**Does anyone know a source for Varroa-resistant queens this time of year?** I'm down to one hive and it has a serious case of parasitic mite syndrome. Dan Conlon has Russian queens, and the Plymouth County club has been raising VSH (Varroa Sensitive Hygenics).



## Annual Equipment Auction

Have some extra frames? Don't like your Hive Tool? Think about donating unused or un-needed equipment to the club to raise money at our November Meeting & Annual Auction.

If you can't attend the November meeting, but have equipment to donate, bring your donation(s) to the October Meeting and/or contact one of the club's officers via email.

# Extractor



MCBA maintains a hand-operated Maxant 3100-series 9-Frame Honey Extractor for rent by current members. Rental includes everything you need to extract your honey, including:

- Electric hot knife for uncapping honey frames
- Uncapping Fork
- Uncapping Tank

### Terms:

- This extractor is available on a first-come, first-served basis to members only.
- The extractor is easy to transport in an SUV or Pickup, and is capable of being moved by one person with ease (however 2 people are helpful)
- \$15/day. Extensions may be available depending upon scheduling. Contact the Extractor Coordinator at [extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org) for information.
- The Extractor must be cleaned WITH COLD WATER before returning to the club.
- Any and all damage and/or maintenance issues MUST be reported to the Extractor coordinator immediately.

To reserve, contact Kathy at: [extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org) or by phone at: 617.549.7460

## September 23, 2017 MCBA outdoor meeting and hive opening

*Editor's Note: Thanks to Paula Herbert for taking notes at the beginning of the meeting, and Ed Culkin for recording the meeting once he arrived.*

**Should I wrap my hive in styrofoam?** Not a good idea, you should wrap in tarpaper – this helps to serve as a windbreak and will help bring heat to the brood chamber during the day. *Editor's Notes: I wrap my hives with 2" rigid foam insulation and take measures to insure airflow and moisture control.*

**What other measures should I take?** You should put mouse guards on now, and Jen R. noted that she keeps mouse guards on her hives year-round. Do not confuse the wooden entrance reducer with a commercially-made metal mouse guard. Mice can chew through the wooden reducers; the metal mouse guards have holes too small for mice but large enough for the bees to enter/exit. You need a moisture-control method. The homosote sound-proofing available at the big box stores cut to size, can be placed between the inner and outer covers – Tom said that he adds a spacer rim both above and below the inner cover, a space for feeding below and a space above the inner cover to separate it from the homosote board and space for the moist air to rise to.

**How long do the honey stores last?** It depends – on how many bees you have, on how much honey you have, it depends upon what the weather has been like. Ideally, if it's been in the 20°s outside and dry, your bees will cluster up and be relatively inactive – so they'll actually consume less honey to keep warm than if it's 35° or 40° F. At that point they won't be in as tight a cluster, they're going to be a little more active and consume more honey... So, it depends upon the weather as well as the number of bees you have – those factors will determine how quickly they go through the honey stores. Going into winter, ideally a full-sized hive should have 70-90 pounds of honey. John C. said 50-0 pounds is good (with a candy board), and Tom disagreed saying that you're taking a chance that low. Jen R. agreed and said that you're better off with at least 70 pounds.

**What's 70 pounds of honey look like?** Let's think about this. A deep frame will yield what, about 7 pounds of honey, thereabouts. So if we have 7 full frames of honey we should be all set? More is better.

## Food Stores needed overwinter in Middlesex County

**Full Size Colonies need 70-90 pounds of honey to survive winter**

**I Deep Frame holds 6-8 pounds of Honey**

**I Medium Frame holds 3-5 pounds of Honey**

**So, that's:**

**12-15 Deep Frames of Honey and Pollen**

**15-25 Medium Frames of Honey and Pollen**

John C. asked **what month [that you would need to have 70-pounds of honey] are we talking about here?** Tom said that by early November you should have at least that much honey still in the hive.

**What should we be doing now to assess the hive** to make sure it's healthy and that you'll have 70-pounds of honey by the end of October / early November. Jen said that first you should make sure that you have a healthy queen (good brood pattern, brood in all stages of development). A low-to-no mite count, and assess how much honey the hive has right now. If they don't have many frames of honey then you should begin feeding them 2:1 sugar syrup (Ratio of 2 pounds of sugar to every pint of water, or 16 pounds of sugar for every gallon of water). You want the bees to take it as quick as they possibly can – you don't want them to drink it you, want them to store it so don't give them a [single] quart at a time. Give them lots of jars and you want them to take it below as quickly as possible so they have a chance to remove the excess moisture and to cap it over as quickly as possible. You do not want excess moisture in the hive in case it turns colder suddenly.

**Will the bees take syrup quickly?** Yes. Jen said that she added two quart mason jars, along with a paint gallon and that hive took all of the syrup in 3 days. **How late into the fall would you feed?** Until the middle of October. This warm weather is really helpful for that – for bringing it down and ripening it up. Jen cautioned everyone that it is possible to ‘Over Feed’ your hive with liquid syrup if they don’t have enough to store it. The bees need space to cluster. They need empty comb to cluster: the bees enter the cells and cover the face of the comb and it’s this dense packing that allows them to cluster. If every single cell and frame is filled with liquid then the bees actually don’t have a place to go to cluster. **Do you feed your bees a pollen patty in the fall?** Jen said that yes, this year she did use pollen patties to stimulate brood growth - you don’t want to do that overwinter. **Can you use them as a substitute to the liquid?** No. That’s a different feed a whole different thing altogether – pollen patties are a protein substitute – protein is for brood and not an energy source such as carbohydrates in nectar and sugar syrup. I thought I read that you should feed them that instead? Well, you do want to make sure they have pollen in the hives so that they can start raising brood in mid-late winter (January and February). Tom said that generally there isn’t a shortage of pollen in hives around here when there’s normal late-summer weather.

**When do you start pulling off the honey supers?** Tom said that he pulls his off at the end of June – are you talking about honey you want

to take for yourself? We have two nectar flows one that ends sometime in July (depending upon the weather and your location) and one that’s going on now. Jen said that you typically pull your honey supers off end of June, or around July 4th and that gives them some time to gather nectar before the dearth hits and then we have a second lesser flow primarily of Goldenrod that begins mid-late August. Now is not a good time to pull your honey supers. Tom said that he only takes honey from the first nectar flow because personally and logistically he doesn’t have time to do a second extraction so his point of view is that he’ll take whatever they can give him through the end of June and from that point forward it’s all theirs and that simplifies his fall prep as well. Jen said that honey is the healthiest food for bees, it’s not sugar syrup or candy boards.

**Tom reiterated the point that when you feed you want to give it to them all at once,** you don’t want to give them little quart jars one at a time. You can also get brand new, unused paint cans from the big box stores. They’re plasticized on the inside so that they don’t rust and they’re great for wholesale feeding. Put some small holes from a nail into the lid; the lids sit really tightly and you can feed the bees a gallon at a time with each paint can (just suspend it atop some chopsticks or #2 pencils). John C. said that in a 10-frame Langstroth [hive] you can fit 4- gallon paint cans. That’s 40 pounds of 2:1 syrup... boom, you’re done right there. You’ll need an extra deep box to surround the cans,

and need to be careful not to spill syrup which can cause robbing.

**This is robbing season, which actually started 3-weeks ago. So go in, and get out.** Tom said that you’ll notice that your once-docile bees are now a little on edge because this time of year resources are beginning to get a little scarce and they really get protective of what they have. All the more reason to get in, and get out – they’re not going to tolerate you as well this month as they did in the late spring while the main flow was on.

**What about wasps?** I have a lot of ground wasps near the hive and when the undertakers are removing dead/dying bees from the hive the wasps will cut it into two pieces and take it. The dead bee? No, the bees that are alive. A month or two ago on the very top of the hive I had a multitude of halved bee bodies... Would you characterize your hive as strong or weak? It’s a strong hive. Tom said that he has seen wasps in hives that were on the weak side, but not strong hives. John said that maintaining strong hives are your best defense – wasps and bumble bees will try to get in there and if they do gain access into a strong hive they’ll come barreling out immediately. Jen said that a strong hive will take care of itself, but you can set traps for Yellow Jackets. There are commercial products with lures, but Jen said they don’t always work out so well; She did see a cool trap on You Tube where they cut the top off a 2-Liter Soda Bottle and inverted it so the cone is inverted and they filled it with Red Wine. She has seen where they add

meat and/or sugar syrup and a banana because apparently bees don't like the smell of bananas. Jen said that this recipe had Red Wine because it's an attractant for Yellow Jackets (and not honey bees) and this thing was full! The trap was put on the ground next to the yellow jacket nest – Jen admitted that she hasn't yet tried the trap for herself but it was just Red Wine and was on the Instructables website: <http://www.instructables.com/id/DIY-Yellow-Jacket-Bottle-Trap/> Honey bees won't be attracted to the alcohol of the red wine, so that's a good trap for yellow jackets. I don't know if it will work with wasps. John said that when the bees throw the drones out the wasps and yellow jackets will go after them, they're meat eaters. It's a bad time of year to be a drone.

**What's your brood supposed to look like this time of year?** Is it supposed to be as robust as earlier in the year? Is the queen supposed to be laying lots of eggs and stuff? Yes. John said that you want to have as many bees as possible as late into the fall as you can, 4-Deep Frames in a month. Right now, when you open your hive and you're looking down into your deep with brood, how many frames should people be seeing right now. John said that he's seeing brood on 6-frames, and that you better have eggs and brood and larva this time of year. If you don't, then that hive will not make it through winter. They haven't even begun making winter bees yet, so if you go in and don't see presence of a queen, and don't have any capped brood then that hive isn't going to make it. If you don't have brood in there, your options are to combine it with another hive if you have one making a single stronger hive, or find a young mated queen (and you won't have much luck this time of year finding one) and kill the old queen that's in there now and replace her with the new queen and do a slow release.

A lot of people will put new young mated queens into their hives in September, because they want a queen that will lay like crazy in the fall and push through the winter. Tom cautioned that that is a high risk strategy, because finding queens this time of year is not easy. John agreed, and added that **when buying a freshly mated queen to ask "How long has this queen been banked?"** In John's opinion, you don't want a queen that's been banked for over 2-weeks because she's been sitting around too long. **Can you explain 'Queen Banking?'** When queens are raised commercially

en masse, and they are mated and then retrieved so that they could be sold on. When they're retrieved they're put in little queen cages and all of the cages are assembled into little 'banks' of mated queens, a box above a queen excluder. The nurse bees are attracted to the mated queens and will feed them. When the queen seller sells a queen, they'll go into that bank and make sure the queen is alive – brushing off the nurse bees he'll give you the queen or mail her off to you for \$30-\$35. **Where can you buy queens?** There are people around the club that sell them, people across Massachusetts that sell them... but you have to ask how long ago the queen was mated and how long she has been banked.

Tom said that it's always risky with queens. It seems that in recent years getting queens in the spring from the South, and even locally it's a real crapshoot – even from the same source some queens will be great and others just won't make it. If you're lucky they'll get superceded, but you just don't have time for that now. Tom said that he restarted a hive with a package last spring, the queen was released and she was accepted by the bees and everybody was happy – she was running around and it looked okay... but then she never laid – she was just not performing. So, he got a replacement queen but decided to stay the original queen's execution while he picked up the new queen. When he went back into the hive, the original queen had started to lay – not great but a little bit. He decided to make a split and figured that the poorly laying queen would get superceded by her progeny when they weren't happy with her performance. Long term strategy, but in the mean-time he put in the new queen and she gets released, she starts running around, and she starts to lay... but she's not strong either and a couple of weeks later they've superceded her! But since it was June/July he had the whole summer in front of him he decided to let them sort it out, make themselves a new queen and let her get mated and whatever happens, happens. He had the summer ahead of him for the bees to figure it out. Now, that queen has a hive that is acceptable. But you can't do that in the fall!

**If you're going to combine a hive, should you do it sooner rather than later?** Yes, that's correct. How do you combine a hive? A newspaper combine is the traditional method – one sheet of newspaper between

one colony and the other with a few razor slits in the paper. By the time they remove all the paper the pheromones from the queen will have permeated into the additions atop the paper and they'll be one happy family. Jen said that during the summer on a warm day (she wouldn't do it now or on a cold day – she would spray both colonies with honey-b-healthy and that smell will interrupt their smelling and they'll groom each other and in that way they'll spread the queen's hormones around both colonies and they'll be as one sooner. You can't do that now because one it's getting cooler and a cold wet bee is a dead bee and secondly honey-b-healthy can trigger a robbing frenzy. Tom wanted to emphasize the point that you have to make sure that there's only one queen, one side or the other, but you have to make sure you get rid of one of those queens before you combine the colonies.

**What do you use to mark queens with, that's safe?** Tom said that he doesn't mark his queens, but that you can buy marking kits that have a series of colored pens, and before you start to try marking queens you would be best to start picking up drones, and holding drones, and marking drones so that the first time you're holding a queen it's not the first time that you're trying to gauge how much finger pressure to apply to keep the bee steady while you're marking it. Tom asked if others knew whether there are any devices to do so? Ed said that there are little tubes with a sponge on the end where you place a queen and squeeze the queen

to the checkered screen on the back that you tighten up to mark the queen and this year the color code is yellow. What was last year's color? White. There's a chart:

### Color Guide for Queen Marking

Year Ending	Color
0 or 5	Blue
1 or 6	White
2 or 7	Yellow
3 or 8	Red
4 or 9	Green

Tom said the thing about marking queens (it's great, it's easier to find a marked queen (nothing else in the hive is going to have a yellow dot, or whatever), but after you've been beekeeping for a while, and it doesn't take a long time, there's something in your subconscious from looking at frames for a while and your brain is just going to learn. It may be the shape of the queen, the movement, the cluster of bees, but all of a sudden your eyes will just be drawn to the queen. Ed said that this time of year you should not be messing around and trying to find a queen to mark her. Tom said that **this time of year, when there are a lot of bees, there is a good chance that you're not going to find the queen.** If you find the queen it gives you the peace of mind that you don't have to disturb it further and you can close it up – but you shouldn't expect to go into a hive and expect to see the queen every time.

**You shouldn't judge whether your hive inspection has been successful by whether you've seen the queen** – what you should be doing instead is looking for indirect indications that your hive is queen-right and that things are going well. First off, when you open the hive and give them a little smoke and start pulling out frames, are they totally disinterested in you, are they doing their own thing going about their business, totally disinterested to the fact that this frame has been pulled out of a hive. They all have jobs to do, and they can't be bothered or upset about you pulling a frame out. If they're mellow like that, not sort of running around agitated like they're over-caffeinated then that's an indication that you're probably queen-right. Then you start pulling brood frames and look at the capped brood – at the brood pattern: is it a nice consistent pattern of capped brood with pollen along the edges and honey up in the corners, then that's an indication of a healthy, well-laying queen that's doing well. Do you find a frame with freshly-laid eggs? Freshly-laid eggs look like little, tiny rice shapes at the bottom of a cell? If so, you know the queen's been there in the past day (or less), and at that point you've seen everything you need to see, and you don't need to see the queen at that point. But I like to see the queen to know that's she's in there... But the chances of squishing her go up the more you manipulate the hive. If you see the queen on a frame, then you need to be really careful because she's not just going to stay still until you get that frame

back in there! John C. added that if she's laying with her abdomen down into the cell then you'll never see her! He said that he teaches his students to NOT get fixated on seeing this one individual [in a hive of 40,000+] because you're just not going to have a good time.

John asked Phyllis (our September Meeting host) whether the top super was filled with drawn comb? A newbie asked him to speak in English. John answered that the top box on the hive is referred to as a "Super." He asked if it was filled with drawn comb? Yes. Are they storing honey in it? Yes. Are you going to take that honey? I don't know. Is there any honey in that middle box, the middle Deep? I don't know. When was the last time you went into the hive? About a week-and-a-half ago. Was it heavy? Yes, he has to pick them up, they're too heavy for me. John said that's good, there's honey in the deep... Tom suggested teaching the folks present some of our common beekeeping terms: John said that the two bottom boxes are called Deeps (that's the size of the box, 9 5/8" tall), and it looks like you have a queen excluder above your deeps and beneath your super. These are the things that John recommended to Phyllis and her husband: The bottom board should be 16" off the ground, which you have; you should have a mouse guard on now; your hive should be in more sun, if you can; you should remove the queen excluder now, you should determine how much honey you have. John said that he likes to go into winter with 2 deeps and a honey super (usually a medium box, 6 5/8" tall). John suggested moving the hive over, because the more sun that hits the hive throughout the day, the better. You can move your hive in the late fall (around November) to a place with more shelter from the wind. Tom suggested trimming off some overhead branches and moving the hive forward a couple of feet – this will potentially eliminate some of the shade, and won't disorient the bees. Jen added that it's easier to work a hive from behind. Tom agreed, and said that the bees are a lot more tolerant if their flight path isn't interrupted. People are sometimes hesitant to visit his hives, saying that they're afraid they're going to get stung – well, as long as you don't dress like a bear and stand in front of the hive, they're not going to bother you.

**In terms of winter preparations**, one of the things you have to consider is what sort of natural windbreaks do you have already in the yard where your bees are, and hopefully they are already facing either East or South. Are some of the trees around your hive Deciduous? Will the leaves fall, and even though the sun is lower in the sky will you hive still be getting some sun once the leaves are gone? John reminded everyone that you have to get to your hives in January, and think about whether you'll need to snowshoe in, or use a snowblower to get to the hive.

While digging in my yard, I came across termites. **Is there anything that I can apply to the termites that won't affect the bees?** Jen suggested using insecticidal soap, like what you would apply in your garden. What about treating the area around my hives for wasps? We wouldn't recommend doing that. Pat B. cautioned everyone to be very careful when applying pesticides. Our pets, our children can easily become exposed to them, and don't be lulled by the fact that they're commonly available. If you're a beekeeper, you shouldn't be using pesticides at all. Ed suggested using soapy water, as he gets wasps in the eaves of his house, a quarter-cup of soap to gallon of water. Tom said that soapy water is one way to get rid of a beehive. If it has American Foul Brood, and you need to get rid of the bees that's one way to do it.

**I'm concerned about condensation, my hive is in a low-lying area, are there ways to deal with the excess moisture?** Do you mean besides a homosote board? Will that absorb moisture? Yes, as will a candy board, the sugar will absorb moisture. There are a couple of different recipes on the members-only website. Jen mentioned that she knows a beekeeper that used a modified quilt box, and stuffed wood shavings into a pair of pantyhose and coiled them around rather than just dumping wood shavings onto a screen- or cloth- bottomed box. ●●

## What's Blooming Now?

Common Name	Scientific Name	Value	Plant Type
<b>September</b>			
False-chamomile	Boltonia Asteroides	Nectar & Pollen	Perennial
Japanese Bamboo	Polygonum Cuspidatum	Nectar	Perennial
<b>October</b>			
Witch Hazel	Hamamelis Virginiana	Pollen	Shrub

Information for **What's Blooming Now?** was taken from **Nectar and pollen plants of Massachusetts as observed in the central Connecticut Valley region** Special circular #27, Revised F.R. Shaw, Department of Entomology, University of Massachusetts, 2-2-56

## The Drone King

A newly discovered short story **by Kurt Vonnegut**. First published in the October issue of *The Atlantic*. A note from *The Atlantic*: While reading through Kurt Vonnegut's papers in the Lilly Library, at Indiana University, as they worked on the first comprehensive edition of his short fiction, Vonnegut's friend Dan Wakefield and Jerome Klinkowitz, a scholar of Vonnegut's work, came across five previously unpublished stories. Klinkowitz dates "The Drone King," one of those five, to the early 1950s, when Vonnegut hadn't yet written a novel and was only beginning to publish short fiction. Complete Stories will be published this month by Seven Stories Press.

**O**NE THING ABOUT THE INVESTMENT-COUNSELING BUSINESS: The surroundings are almost always nice. Wherever my work takes me, prosperity has beat me there.

Prosperity beat me to the Millennium Club by about 100 years. As I walked through the door for the first time, my cares dropped away. I felt as though I'd just finished two brandies and a good cigar. Here was peace.

It was a club downtown—six stories of snug hideaways and playthings and apartments for rich gentlemen. It overlooked a park.

The foyer was guarded by an elegant old man behind a rosewood desk.

I gave him my card. "Mr. Quick? Mr. Sheldon Quick?" I said. "He asked me to come over."

He examined the card for a long time. "Yes," he said at last. "Mr. Quick is expecting you. You'll find him in the small library—second door on the left, by the grandfather clock."

"Thank you," I said, and I started past him.

He caught my sleeve. "Sir—"

"Yes?" I said.

"You aren't wearing a boutonniere, are you?"

"No," I said guiltily. "Should I be?"

"If you were," he said, "I'd have to ask you to check it. No women or

flowers allowed past the front desk.”

I paused by the door of the small library. “Say,” I said, “you know this clock has stopped?”

“Mr. Quick stopped it the night Calvin Coolidge died,” he said.

I blushed. “Sorry,” I said.

“We all are,” he said. “But what can anyone do?”

**S**HELDON QUICK was alone in the small library. We were meeting for the first time.

He was about 50—very tall, and handsome in a lazy, ornamental way. His hair was golden, his eyes blue, and he stroked his mustache with his little finger as he shook my hand.

“You come highly recommended,” he said.

“Thank you, sir,” I said.

He brought his finger away from his mustache, and I saw that his upper lip was swollen on one side, as fat as a Ping-Pong ball. He touched the swelling. “A bee,” he said.

“It must be very painful,” I said.

“It is,” he said. “I won’t deceive you about that.” He smiled sourly. “Don’t let anybody tell you this isn’t a woman’s world.”

“How’s that, sir?,” I said.

“Only a female bee can sting,” he said.

“Oh,” I said. “I didn’t know that about bees.”

“You knew that about females, didn’t you?” he said. He closed one eye, and, with his face already lopsided from the bee sting, he looked crazy as a bedbug. “Law of life!” he said sharply. “If you get yellow fever, you’ll have the female mosquito to thank. If a black widow spider does you in, my boy, again—cherchez la femme.”

“Huh,” I said. “I’ll be darned.”

A sweet, doddering old waiter came in with coffee and cigars on a silver tray. “Is there anything else you want, Mr. Quick?” he said.

“Anything else I want?” said Quick. He rolled his eyes unhappily.

“Wealth, George? Power? Instant success?”

The waiter shrugged and seemed close to tears. “Mr. Quick, suh—we’s goin’ to miss you, sir,” he said.

Quick threw back his head and tried to laugh heartily. It was a horrible laugh, full of fear and peevishness. “Why must everybody act as though resigning from the Millennium Club was the same thing as death?” he said. “Don’t depress me, man! Wish me luck!”

“Oh, I do, I do, sir!” said the waiter.

“I’ll have plenty of expert help on the outside,” said Quick. He nodded at me. “He’ll be handling the financial end, while I take care of research and production.”

The waiter looked at me miserably. “It ain’t gonna be the same aroun’ here without Mr. Quick,” he said. “I’ll come to work in the mornin’, an’ I’ll look in the barbershop, an’ I’ll look in the bar, an’ I’ll look in the shower room, an’ I’ll look up on the roof where the beehives is.” His eyes widened, as though he were telling a ghost story. “An’ Mr. Quick, he won’t be none of them places.

“An’ when I gets ready to go home at night,” said the waiter, “I’ll look in the periodical room, an’ Mr. Quick, he won’t be in there, sippin’ his brandy—just a-underlinin’ an’ a-underlinin’ an’ a-underlinin’.”

“Underlining?,” I said.

“Important things in the magazines,” said the waiter respectfully. “I reckon in the past 25 years Ah done throwed out tons of magazines Mr. Quick done underlined.”

Every word seemed to snap a vertebra in Sheldon Quick’s back. When the waiter left, Quick lay down on the couch. He murmured something, and his voice was like wind in the treetops.

“Beg your pardon?,” I said, leaning close to him.

“You are in the stock-and-bond business?” he said.

“I sell advice on them,” I said.

“I want you to sell some stock for me,” he said.

“I’ll be glad to look at your portfolio and give you my recommendations as to what to hold and what to sell,” I said.

He waved his hand feebly. “You miss my meaning,” he said. “I want you to sell stock in a new company of mine. That’s the way new companies raise money, isn’t it? Sell stock?”

“Yessir,” I said. “But that’s way out of my line. First of all, you’ll need a lawyer.”

Again he said something I missed.

“Are you sick, sir?,” I said.

He sat up, blinking blindly. “I wish he hadn’t said all those things,” he said. “The agreement was that nobody was going to say goodbye. Someday soon, nobody knows when, I’m simply going to walk out, as though for a breath of fresh air. And I won’t come back. The next thing they hear from me will be a letter, telling them where to send my things.”

“Um,” I said.

He looked around the room wistfully. “Well, I’m neither the first nor the last to go out into the world, to recoup my fortunes, to return.”

“Something happened to your fortunes, sir?,” I said uneasily.

“The money my father left to me is at an end,” he said. “I’ve seen the end coming for some time.” He curled his swollen lip, baring a long, white, wet fang. “I’m not unprepared. I’ve been planning this business for more than a year.”

“Look—about this business of yours,” I said, “I—”

“Business of ours,” he said.

“Ours?,” I said.

“I want you to be general manager,” he said. “I want you to see the lawyer, and get us incorporated, and do whatever needs to be done to put us in business.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Quick,” I said, “but I couldn’t take an assignment like that.”

Quick looked at me levelly. “Does \$200,000 a year sound like inadequate compensation for a man of your caliber?” he said.

The room seemed to go around slowly, like a stately merry-go-round. My own voice seemed to come back to me from a distance—sweet and flutelike. “Nossir,” I said. “Are you offering me that?”

“Nature is offering us that,” said Quick. He reached out and closed his hand on air. “We have only to reach out and take it.”

“Uranium?,” I whispered.

“Bees!” he said. His face twisted into a look of wild triumph.

“Bees?,” I said. “What about bees?”

“Sometime in the next month I shall call you,” he said, “and you shall see what you shall see.”

“When, exactly?,” I said.

“It’s up to the bees,” said Quick.

“Where are they?,” I said.

“On the roof,” said Quick. “Then you and I will call a press conference, to tell the world what it is we have to sell.”

The clock on the mantelpiece struck noon.

Quick winced with each strike. “In exactly 30 days,” he said, “my membership expires.”

He shook my hand, and opened the door for me. “When I call, come at once,” he said.

In the corridor outside, the old waiter was talking to a young one. “With Mr. Quick gone,” he said, “who’s gonna be Santy Claus at the Christmas party for the help? You tell me that!”

**T**EN DAYS LATER, Quick called me up. He was awfully excited. “They’re doing it!” he yelled into the phone. “It’s going on right now!” He hung up.

The man behind the rosewood desk waved me into the Millennium Club. The old waiter was waiting for me. He handed me a beekeeper’s mask and gloves, and hustled me to an elevator. The elevator operator took me straight to the roof.

On the roof was Sheldon Quick and 10 beehives. He was gloved and masked, wearing plus fours, a sport coat, and shoes with gum soles as thick as fruitcakes.

He was furious about what the bees were doing. He pointed to a hive. “Look! Just look, would you!”

Fat, clumsy, colorful bees were staggering out of the hive doors, bumping into one another, floundering around in circles, buzzing in hurt surprise.

Then little bees came out, whining in high-pitched rage. They stung the big ones again and again, and tried to tear them to pieces.

Quick lashed out at the little bees with one gloved hand, and with the other hand he scooped up the big bees. He stepped back, and dropped the big bees into a mason jar—tenderly.

“What is it?” I said. “A bee war?”

“War?” said Quick, his nostrils flaring. “I’ll say it’s a war! A war to the bitter finish! No quarter given!”

“Gee,” I said, “you’d think the big ones would be knocking the stuffing out of the little ones, instead of the other way around.”

“The big ones have no sting,” said Quick.

“Whose hives were they in the first place?” I said.

Quick’s laughter clanked with irony. “Your question is good enough to be chiseled in granite for all time to ponder,” he said. “The little ones are the females. The big ones are the males.”

**W**E WENT FROM THE ROOF TO THE BASEMENT, with Quick carrying his jar of bees. We went to a big room that opened off the stairwell. The only thing in the room was an office desk, which sat in the middle of the cement floor.

The old waiter had arrived ahead of us with cocktails and sandwiches. He bowed and left.

“Have you guessed it—the wonderful thing we’re going to sell?” said Quick.

I shook my head.

“I will give you the key word, and it will hit you like a thunderclap,” he said. “Are you ready?”

“Ready,” I said.

“Communications!” he said. He raised his glass. “To the so-called drones! If nature has no use for them, we do!” He nudged me. “Eh? Eh?”

He set his glass down hard on the desk, and a deep, lazy, fuzzy buzzing sound came from inside.

“This wholesale slaughter of the males takes place after the males have performed their most basic function,” said Quick. “They have risen in an insane spiral, pursuing the queen—higher and higher and higher!”

He swung his arms around, portraying a swarm of drones chasing a queen. “Until—presto!” he said. “One lucky devil gets her, the jewel beyond price. He dies instantly.” He bowed his head. “And when the rest go home, they are murdered—as you saw.”

“Gosh,” I said. “And you rescue the males?”

“Like the Scarlet Pimpernel in the French Revolution,” said Quick. “I attend the executions, and spirit away the innocent victims. I feed them and shelter them, and teach them to lead useful lives.”

Coyly, he offered me a riddle. “When is a drone not a drone?”

“I give up,” I said.

“When is a file drawer not a file drawer?” said Quick. He opened the file drawer of the desk. In the drawer was a big wooden box with a hole in its top.

Two drones came out of the hole, buzzed stupidly, bumped into each other, waddled back to the hole, and fell in.

“Here,” said Quick raptly, “we have the first all-male beehive in history—a sort of bee Millennium Club, if you like. The food, which I provide, is rich and plentiful. Fellowship is the order of the day. And there is time for reflection and a relishing of life, away from the senseless, thankless, harrowing rush-rush-rush and moodiness of the female workers. Take a drone away from his Millennium Club, and he will be back like a shot!”

Quick opened the top drawer of the desk and took from it a magnifying glass, a needle-sharp pencil, tissue paper, string, and soda straws chopped in half-inch lengths.

“A drone is not a drone,” said Sheldon Quick, “when he carries messages.”

He opened the lid of the bee Millennium Club. It was teeming with drones. He dumped in the drones from the mason jar. “Welcome to civilization, little brothers,” he said. “It’s been a long time coming.”

**F**OR THE SAKE OF DRAMA,” Quick called down to me as he climbed the basement stairs, “you will be the president of a motorcar company, and I will be the president of a taxicab company. I am about to order a new fleet.”

“Anything you say,” I said, from my post by the desk.

Gaily, Quick waved a drone over his head, holding it firmly between his thumb and forefinger. The drone buzzed in alarm. Quick had kidnapped it from the file drawer.

He disappeared from sight, going to the top of the stairs. I heard him talking reassuringly to the drone.

A moment later, the drone plummeted down the stairwell, pulled up inches from the floor, and blundered across the room to the desktop. There was a piece of soda straw tied under his belly.

The drone rested, then started groggily for the open file drawer.

“Grab him!” yelled Quick. “Get the message!”

I chased the drone around the desktop with my hands cupped, but I didn’t have the nerve to grab him.

Quick had to come down the stairs to do the job. He handed me the straw with the message in it.

The drone, with a buzz of joy, dived into his club. There was a murmur of welcome inside.

The message was on a scrap of tissue paper. The writing was so tiny, I needed the magnifying glass to make it out. “Quote price on 400 taxis,” it said. “Reply by beegram. Quick Taxi Corp.”

“See?” said Quick. “You would have bees from my club, and I would have bees from yours. And a penny’s worth of honey would keep one of our little messengers operating for a year.”

“Don’t they make their own honey?” I said bleakly. It was just something to say—something to cover up my feelings. I felt awful. Quick was so happy about the drone business, was staking so much on it—and it seemed to be up to me to tell him what a fatheaded enterprise it was.

“Only the female workers make honey,” said Quick.

“Oh,” I said. “Huh. I guess that’s why the female workers knock off the males, eh? The males are nothing but a drain on the community.”

The color left Quick’s fine face. “What’s so wonderful about making honey?” he said. “Can you make honey?”

“Nope,” I said.

He was excited, upset. “Is that any reason to condemn you to death?” he said.

“Nope—heck no,” I said.

Quick gathered up my lapel in his fist. “Consider the philosophical and moral implications of what you’ve just seen!” he said intensely. “Bees are just the beginning!”

“Yessir,” I said, smiling and sweating.

His eyes narrowed. “The female praying mantis eats the male as you or I would eat a stalk of celery,” he said. “The female tarantula pops her little lover into her mouth like a canapé!”

He backed me into the wall. “What are we going to do with the male praying mantis and the male tarantula?” he said. He stabbed my chest with his finger. “We’re going to teach them to carry interoffice memos, to carry orders from foxhole to foxhole on the front lines!”

Quick let go of my lapel and looked at me disappointedly. “My God, man,” he said irritably, “you stand there with fishy eyes and a slack jaw, and I’ve just showed you the greatest thing in humanitarianism since the New Testament!”

“Yessir,” I said, “but—”

“The greatest advance in communications since the invention of wireless telegraphy!” he said.

“Yup. Yessir,” I said. I sighed and squared my shoulders. “If you’d discovered this before somebody else had discovered wireless telegraphy,” I said, “maybe you’d have something. But, good gosh, what person in this day and age is going to want to write eensy-teensy messages on tissue paper and send them by bee?”

He leaned against the desk, closed his eyes, and nodded to himself. “I should have expected it,” he said. “The chorus of ‘No, no, no—it can’t be done.’ Every innovator has faced that.”

“Yessir, I guess that’s so,” I said. “But sometimes the chorus is right. I mean, good gosh, what you’ve got here is competitive with carrier pigeons.”

His eyes lit up. “Aha!” he said. “And look how wide-open you have to leave a window for carrier pigeons!” He wagged his finger at me. “And tell me this: Can you use carrier pigeons indoors as well as outdoors?”

I scratched my head. “Everything you say against carrier pigeons is true,” I said. “But who uses carrier pigeons anymore?”

Quick looked at me blankly. His lips moved, but no sounds came. An automobile backfired in the outside world, and fear crossed Quick’s face like a cloud.

“I’m no genius,” he said softly. “I never claimed that, did I?”

“Nossir,” I said.

“Living quietly and decently seemed to be the best I could expect of myself, with my small store of talents,” said Quick. He was humble and reverent. “But once in this life, as I sat in the small library where we met, I was reading Maeterlinck’s *The Life of the Bee*—and I heard the thunderclap and saw the flash of inspiration.”

“Um,” I said.

“In that divine trance,” he said, “I bought my bees, experimented—and here we are.”

“Yup,” I said, wretchedly.

He raised his chin bravely. “Very well,” he said. “I have gone this far—I will go the rest of the way. I will put my findings before the greatest jury of all, the American public, and let them decide: Have I got the seeds of something useful to humanity, or have I not?”

Quick laid his hand on my shoulder. “We will call a press conference at once. Will you help?”

There was a lump in my throat. “Yessir, I will,” I said.

“Good boy!” he said. “You tear up tissue paper while I chop straws.”

**F**OR THE PRESS CONFERENCE, Quick chose a sober blue suit and the air of a historian. His eyes were red, and his head ached. For three hours he had been writing tiny begrams. The messages were a secret, known only to him and to God.

The conference took place in the auditorium of the Millennium Club. Quick had splurged, using some of the little money he had left, on a buffet

and cocktails for the gentlemen of the press.

Five gentlemen of the press came—three reporters and two photographers. Quick had prepared for 100.

The five sat in the front row, eating and drinking. Quick stood on the stage. I stood behind him, with his entire fleet of drones in a wooden box. Each drone had a message tied under his belly. By a window stood the faithful old waiter, ready to open the window at a signal from Quick.

Quick had explained his experiments, his theories, and his inspiration. The time was coming when I was to open the box and release the history-making cloud that would fly out the window, down three stories, through an open basement window, and into the first all-male beehive in the desk.

The bees themselves seemed to sense the excitement around them. They bumped their heads against the lid of the box and kept up a steady, anxious, eager buzzing.

“The history of man’s advance,” said Quick impressively, “has been the history of encouraging that which is good in nature, and discouraging that which is bad. For millions of years now, nature has been throwing away, like so much garbage, one of her wisest, gentlest, most beautiful creations—the drone, whose only crime is that he does not make honey.”

Quick raised his finger. “Now!” he said. “Man comes along, and declares in the face of this cruel waste: ‘There is more to life than this crazy, sick-headed preoccupation with honey, honey, honey, everything for honey—and death to anybody who can’t make honey!’”

Quick’s voice became husky with emotion, as though he were praying for a multitude. “We welcome the drones today to the fruits of freedom and equality. Down with tyranny wherever we find it! Down with the tyranny of honey! Down with the tyranny of the self-centered and vain queen! Down with the tyranny of the narrow-minded, materialistic female workers!”

Quick turned to address the box. “Life and liberty are yours!”

I opened the lid and dumped the box.

The drones tumbled to the floor in a seething heap. And then, one by one, they took to the air, forming a ragged circle over our heads.

“Pursue happiness!” shouted Quick.

The old waiter threw open the window.

The drones bungled around the room for several minutes, until some found the open window. The swarm strung out in a line and went out the window, over the park below.

The line started down, and we cheered. And then something went wrong. The line went up again, and drifted out over the park.

“Down! Down, boys!” cried Quick.

The drones seemed to be looking for something. And then they found it—not down, but up. They arose in an insane spiral, higher and higher above the park, until they were out of sight.

“A queen!” sobbed Quick. “A queen!”

**T**HE PRESS CONFERENCE MOVED into the basement with its refreshments, to wait by the bee Millennium Club. The hive in the file drawer was empty. A basement window was propped open, but nothing came in except little gusts of soot.

Quick was strangely at peace. The appearance of the queen seemed to have blown every fuse in his nervous system.

After an hour of waiting, he said in a distant voice to me, “Go up on the roof and keep a lookout for our faithful messengers from there.”

I went to the roof, and found the drone fleet there. They were back from the mating, dragging their message cases, swaggering triumphantly toward the homes of their birth—the hives from which Quick had rescued them.

The female workers came whining out to meet their brothers. In a matter of minutes, Quick’s drones lay dead or dying, buzzing their last in mournful mystification.

**W**ITH A HEART AS HEAVY AS A STONE, I went back to the basement and told Quick the news.

He took the news calmly. He had banked the fires of his hopes during the long wait. And now, like the gentleman he was, he let the fires die quietly.

“You would think,” he said, “that there would be one out of the many whose intellect would rise above his instincts.” He stood and smiled

gamely. “With him, we might have sired a new and nobler race of bees.”

He shook hands all around. “A fiasco, gentlemen. I apologize.” There were tears in his eyes. “Report me as a fool, if you must,” he said. “But report me as a fool with one of the kinder, grander dreams of our time.”

He bowed, and left, climbing the stairs alone.

**T**HE NEWSPAPERMEN AND THE OLD WAITER left soon after, and I was alone.

Footsteps passed the open window, and I saw Quick’s feet go by. He had picked the moment in which to leave the Millennium Club, probably never to return.

I closed the window, and drank to the health of Sheldon Quick, to the memory of his drones.

There was a gentle bumping sound against the window.

I opened the window, and let in a single drone. He was horribly maimed, with wings torn, legs gone.

He flew to the file drawer, crawled to the hole in the bee Millennium Club, and fell in. There was a weak buzz inside—the buzz of a soul fulfilled.

He was dead.

I took his message, and read the words Quick had written over and over again for all his bees to carry.

“What,” Quick had written, “hath God wrought?”. ●●●

### *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

*Excerpt from a poem by William Butler Yeats*

### **Cleaning Your Hive Tool(s) and Smoker**

This time of year, my tools are covered with wax and propolis - but no need to worry! All you need is boiling water, a piece of steel wool, a pair of tongs, a disposable aluminum pie plate, some oil, and a plumber's torch.

Boil some water, fill the pie plate and soak your tool(s) for a minute or two. CAUTION, your hive tools will now be HOT, so use the tongs to pick up the tools up out of the hot water. The sticky mess on your tools will easily wipe off with the steel wool. I finish by oiling my tools with coconut oil.

Depending on usage and fuel source, the inside of your smoker may be coated with a layer of creosote, which you can remove easily by burning it off with a plumber's torch.

### **What does "the bees' knees" mean?** *By Catherine Giordano*

The bees' knees is an idiom that is used to describe something we like a lot. It is the very best of its kind; it is something excellent, something of very high quality.

Do bees have knees? It turns out they do—sort of. Like all insects, bees have six sections to their legs, each connected by a joint. These sections are called the coxa, trochanter, femur, tibia, metatarsus, and tarsus. The one most like a knee is between the femur and tibia.

But what is so excellent about the knees of a bee? That particular joint is no more remarkable than any of the other joints on the bee's legs.

Bees do have a specific structure on their rear leg called pollen baskets. The bees stuff pollen into these hairy protuberances to bring it back to the hive where it is mixed with honey to make bee bread to supplement their diet when blossoms are in short supply, like in the winter. This is a pretty nifty feature, even an excellent feature, so perhaps that is why we say that something really excellent is "the bees' knees."

That explanation seems contrived. Let's look back to the origins of the phrase for a better explanation. The phrase became popular in the 1920's along with some other silly sounding phrases meaning essentially the same thing—the cat's pajamas, the snake's hips, the kipper's knickers, and the sardine's whiskers. However, the bees' knees is the only one that refers to a real anatomical body part. It is also the only one that has not died out.

The best explanation is that the "bee" in question is actually a man named Bee Jackson. He was a world champion Charleston dancer who was very popular in New York in the 1920's. The Charleston dance requires a lot of knee movement--hence the bees' knees. The phrase has probably lingered in the lexicon not only because it is a clever pun, but because it rhymes, and it just plain sounds funny. You can't hear "bee's knees" without wanting to laugh. ●

## Use Protective Gear when applying Treatments

MCBA member John Sallay provided the following information, because it was really frustrating while he was trying to learn how to use the MAQS and the OA vaporizer, all of the instructions and websites emphasized that "Protective equipment is necessary" – but no specific protective equipment is recommended. Neither John, *nor the club*, endorses any specific products – we're just providing information on what John used. In addition to the typical beekeeping jacket/veil and gloves, long pants, and shoes/boots, you'll need...

**Nitrile Gloves** – Although the oxalic acid instructions approved by the EPA call for 14 mil thickness nitrile gloves, 8 mil powder-free gloves seem to be adequate

- The nitrile gloves sold by Brushy Mountain are 8 mil, though 8 mil Liberty Duraskin powder-free, blue nitrile gloves are available much more economically in bulk packages from Amazon
- These nitrile gloves are available in a complete range of sizes
- The XXL size gloves fit over beekeeping gloves, if you want protection against both the acid treatment and the bees

See: <http://libertyglove.com/products/hand-protection/disposable-gloves/duraskin/disposable-nitrile/industrial-grade-nitrile-disposable-gloves-powder-free-79>

**Goggles** – Brushy Mountain's oxalic acid treatment kit comes with Rugged Blue economy safety goggles (SFTEYGG1000021192). They're also available on Amazon.

- These have a flat polycarbonate lens that is scratch resistant and is encased in a vinyl goggle that hugs the face, so vapors do not come in around the sides
- These goggles use an elastic strap that goes around the head
- They meet ANSI Z87.1 and CE EN166 standards

See: [https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=safety-goggles](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=safety-goggles)

**Respirator Mask** – The 3M protective mask that I bought is a 3M "half facepiece" protective mask in medium size (#6200/07025).

- The 6000 series masks are a little less expensive than the 7000 series masks, which I think have somewhat better construction.
- These two series come in both half facepiece and full facepiece
  - I got a half facepiece model since I have separate eye protection goggles which work fine
  - Also, I was somewhat concerned about my respiration fogging the clear visor of a full facepiece model.

See: [https://www.amazon.com/3M-Respirator-6200-Respiratory-Protection/dp/B007QY8X2K/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1500079054&sr=8-2-fkmr0&keywords=3M+Half+Facepiece+Reusable+Respirator+6100%2F07024%28AAD%29%2C+Respiratory+Protection%2C+Small+%28Pack+of+1%29](https://www.amazon.com/3M-Respirator-6200-Respiratory-Protection/dp/B007QY8X2K/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1500079054&sr=8-2-fkmr0&keywords=3M+Half+Facepiece+Reusable+Respirator+6100%2F07024%28AAD%29%2C+Respiratory+Protection%2C+Small+%28Pack+of+1%29)

**Cartridges** – With these reusable masks you also need to purchase the cartridges specific to whatever you are protecting against.

- The 3M technical service folks said that the less expensive model **6001 Organic Vapor Cartridge** would also work for our oxalic and formic acid mite treatments (\$9.62/pair vs. \$22.89/pair on Amazon for the formaldehyde/organic vapor P100 cartridge).
- The respirator cartridges can be reused, potentially several times, but 3M does not specify how many times. Since the cartridge acts like a sponge, it depends on the concentrations of exposure, temperature, and other factors. However, you know when you need to replace the cartridges when you either smell/taste the acidic gas while you are using the mask, or the cartridge is clogged with particulates and you can no longer breathe through the mask properly.
- For storage of these cartridges in between uses, remove the cartridges from the mask and store them in a sealed Ziploc type bag.

See: [https://www.amazon.com/3M-6001PB1-1-Organic-Replacement-Cartridge/dp/B000XBKLE/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1500078826&sr=8-1&keywords=3m+6001+organic+vapor+cartridge](https://www.amazon.com/3M-6001PB1-1-Organic-Replacement-Cartridge/dp/B000XBKLE/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1500078826&sr=8-1&keywords=3m+6001+organic+vapor+cartridge)



# Middlesex County Beekeepers Association

## Membership Form

\$15 Annual dues per family, **payable to MCBA**. Mail this form and payment to:  
Ed Culkin, 9 Johansen Drive, Marlborough, MA 01752. OR bring it to a meeting.

*Please print CLEARLY, and fill out the ENTIRE form.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Family Members' Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hives do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal  or New Membership

## CLUB OFFICERS

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